

# Boundaries and Beyond

China's Maritime  
Southeast in Late  
Imperial Times

A large, bold, black calligraphic character '明' (Ming) is positioned on the right side of the cover. The character is written in a dynamic, expressive style with varying line thicknesses and a sense of movement. It is set against a light beige background that features a faint, larger-scale calligraphic watermark of the same character.A large, bold, black calligraphic character '海' (Hai) is positioned on the right side of the cover, below the character '明'. It is written in a dynamic, expressive style with varying line thicknesses and a sense of movement. It is set against a light beige background that features a faint, larger-scale calligraphic watermark of the same character.

Ng Chin-keong

# **Boundaries and Beyond**

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China's Maritime Southeast  
in Late Imperial Times

耕海：明清东南沿海与  
传统藩篱的移位

*Ng Chin-keong*



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## Preface

This collection includes 14 selected essays on maritime China in Late Imperial times. The three earliest pieces originate from a Master's thesis that was written in 1970 and the most recent pieces are the English versions of two conference papers presented in 2010 and 2013 respectively at the National Cheng-kung University of Taiwan. The rest were published in the 1990s and 2000s. The main title of the volume "Boundaries and Beyond" provides some sort of frame of unity for the different topics.

My choice of the word "boundaries" as a concept has been inspired by John Hay's ideas in his introduction to the edited volume *Boundaries in China*. Hay mentions all sorts of boundaries that have been "drawn for specific purposes, demarcating particular regimes of powers.... The demarcations are erected as barriers...." Ritual is a good example. While its principal purpose is for "the maintenance of stability in a system", it can also be seen "as a dynamic system, rather than simply as a frozen body of pre/proscription". The former situation "inherently sets it against the forces of change". However, "its inception ... is a reaction to those forces, which are therefore always implicit in it. Ritual is not 'non-change', but rises to demarcate a fundamental boundary between stability and instability."<sup>1</sup>

The main heading of the book title, "Boundaries and Beyond", highlights the two contesting forces of continuities and discontinuities that characterized China's maritime southeast in late imperial times. Boundaries were in the process of shifting. They were there for the purpose of maintaining stability, status quo, or law and order. The state prescribed which occupations were perceived to be fundamental and which secondary. Besides this function, boundaries also worked to protect the powerful, the wealthy or the interest groups who often had the privilege of setting the boundaries to prevent others from inflicting harm and destruction upon them. There were also boundaries of activity set to demarcate the land and the sea and between "us" and "them". In actuality, boundaries were not strict demarcations separating the space within them from that outside them. Boundaries were in a state of flux, driven by the emerging socioeconomic forces and hence embodied dualistic characters of "tradition" and "change".

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1. *Boundaries in China*, ed. John Hay (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1994), pp. 8–9.

In accordance with the content of each topic, the 14 chapters are grouped into four parts. Part One provides a long view of the development of maritime East Asia. It places China's southeastern coast in late imperial times in the broad perspective of maritime East Asia and the Asian Seas over a long period of some two thousand years. One salient feature of this maritime world was its flexibility and inclusiveness, allowing people from within or without to assume different roles as commodity producers, traders, shippers, cargo carriers or consumers in the long-distance shipping trade. Part Two depicts the orthodox perceptions of viewing and responding to the changes or challenges. Part Three reviews the undercurrent of social and economic forces that had the effect of modifying the existing boundaries. Part Four examines the transnational movements crossing the borders, altering the status quo and creating new types of boundaries.

Parts Two to Four are arranged under three sub-themes that seem to indicate a chronological sequence of movement in three stages from tradition toward change. In fact, they illustrate a continuous process of interactions throughout late imperial times between the status quo and challenges as shown in all the chapters. In other words, status quo and change did not preclude each other, rather, both were responding to the current social and economic forces. Although tradition remained strong, change was also occurring all the time, either in the form of a deep undercurrent or as an increasingly visible phenomenon.

As regards the conventions, the volume uses Pinyin romanization and simplified Chinese characters in general for the Chinese terms or publication titles. However, the Wade-Giles or dialect-pronounced names are kept in accordance to the scholars' own preference. An older form of romanization is applied to a few Chinese place names, such as Amoy, Soochow and Canton that were commonly used in the older western writings. There is also no conversion to Pinyin for such place names as Taipei that follow the local usage. For the Chinese characters in the article or book titles, the complex form of characters is kept for the pre-1949 publications, the historical texts of Imperial times or the printed materials from outside mainland China. Place names in Southeast Asia are as complicated. In general, names that have long been used in the past in English literature have been chosen. Among them are the Moluccus, Celebes, Bantam and Malacca. When discussing shipping trade in the Malay world, however, either the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago or the Indonesian Archipelago are the terms used depending on the geographical extent of the activity. When it comes to the modern period, the more familiar term in western writings, the Indian Archipelago, is also used.

No attempt has been made to update the contents of the essays to accommodate later works by other scholars. Other than the editorial refinement, the essays are kept in their original form and style.

# Acknowledgments

## *Chronological Table of Chapters*

Date	Title	Source
1970	Managing maritime affairs in late Ming times	An outgrowth of a chapter in my MA thesis written in 1970. The thesis chapter was reproduced in <i>Nanyang University Journal</i> , no. 5 (1971): 81–100.
1970	The changing landscape in rural south Fujian in late-Ming times: A story of the “little people”(1)	An outgrowth of a chapter in my MA thesis written in 1970. The thesis chapter was reproduced in <i>Nanyang University Journal</i> , no. 6 (1972): 189–213.
1970	Gentry-merchants and peasant-peddlers in offshore trading activities, 1522–66: A story of the “little people”(2)	An outgrowth of a chapter in my MA thesis written in 1970. The thesis chapter was reproduced in <i>Nanyang University Journal</i> , no. 7 (1973): 161–75.
1991	The case of Chen Yilao: Maritime trade and overseas Chinese in Qing policies, 1717–54	First published in <i>Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade, C. 1400–1750</i> , ed. Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag for Sudasien-Institut, Universitat Heidelberg, pp. 373–400.

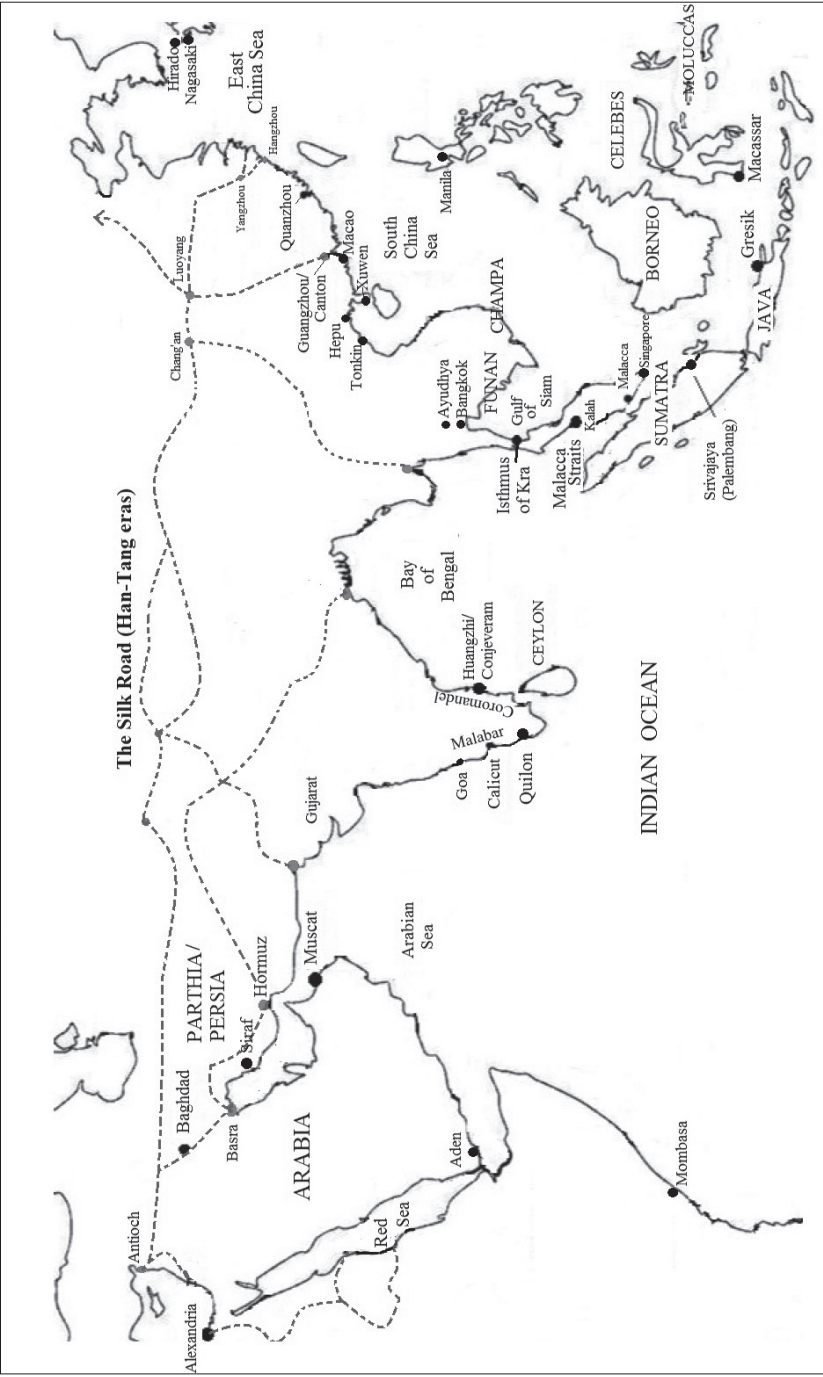
1994	Liturgical services and business fortunes: Chinese maritime merchants in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries	First published in <i>Maritime Asia: Profit Maximisation, Ethics and Trade Structure c. 1300–1800</i> , ed. Karl Anton Sprengard and Roderich Ptak. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 75–96.
1995	The Amoy riots of 1852: Coolie emigration and Sino-British relations	First published in <i>Mariners, Merchants and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History</i> , ed. K.S. Mathew. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, pp. 419–46.
1995	Trade, the sea prohibition and the “Folangji”, 1513–50	First published in <i>The Portuguese and the Pacific</i> , ed. Francis A. Dutra and Joao Camilo dos Santos. Santa Barbara: Center for Portuguese Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, pp. 381–424.
1997	Maritime frontiers, territorial expansion and <i>haifang</i> (coastal defense) during the late Ming and high Qing	First published in <i>China and Her Neighbours: Borders, Visions of the Others, Foreign Policy (10th to 19th Century)</i> , ed. Roderich Ptak. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 211–57.
2001	“Are these persons British or Chinese subjects?”—Legal principles and ambiguities regarding the status of the Straits Chinese as revealed in the Lee Shun Fah affair in Amoy, 1847	A rewritten version of a paper presented in 2001 at the Workshop on “China and Southeast Asia: Historical Interactions”, held at the Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong.

2003	Treaties, politics and the limits of local diplomacy in Fuzhou in the early 1850s	First published in <i>Power and Identity in the Chinese World Order</i> , ed. Billy So, John Fitzgerald, Huang Jianli, and James Chin Kong. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 239–67.
2004	“Shooting the eagle”: Lin Changyi’s agony in the wake of the Opium War	First published in <i>Maritime China and Overseas Chinese in Transition, 1750–1850</i> , ed. Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-keong. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 373–86.
2007	Information and knowledge: Qing China’s perceptions of the maritime world in the eighteenth century	First published in <i>The East Asian Maritime World, 1400–1800: Its Fabrics of Power and Dynamics of Exchanges</i> , ed. Angela Schottenhammer. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 87–98.
2012	Expanding possibilities: Revisiting the Min-Yue junk-trade enterprise on the China coast and in the Nanyang during the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries	The essay originates from a Chinese version published in <i>Haigang, Hainan, haidao: Haiyang shi lunwen ji</i> 海港·海難·海盜：海洋史論文集 (Ports, shipwrecks and Piracy: Collected essays on ocean cultures), ed. Cheng Wing Sheung 鄭永常. Tainan: The Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, National Cheng Kung University, pp. 25–70.

2015	Commodity and market: Structure of the Long-distance trade in the East Asian Seas and beyond prior to the early nineteenth century	The essay originates from a Chinese version published in <i>Dongya haiyu wangluo yu gangshi shehui lunwenji</i> 東亞海域網絡與港市社會論文集 (Collected essays on networks and port communities of Maritime East Asia), ed. Cheng Wing Sheung. Tainan: The Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, NCKU.
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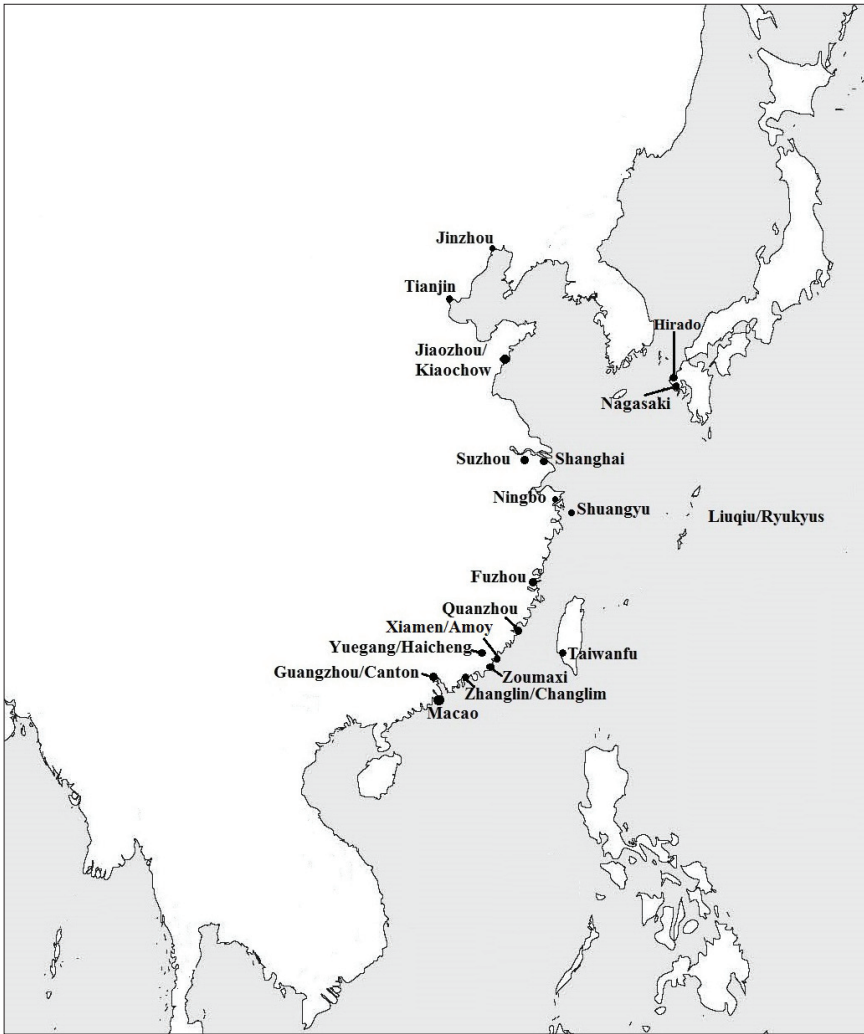
As indicated above, I would like to record my thanks to Harrassowitz Verlag, Franz Steiner Verlag, Hong Kong University Press, Professor João Camilo dos Santos at the Center for Portuguese Studies, UCSB, Professor Dr K.S. Mathew, and Professor Tai Hua at the Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, National Cheng Kung University for granting me their kind permission to include in the present volume my essays that first appeared in the volumes published/edited by them.

I would like to thank many colleagues and friends who have helped me in one way or another in the publication of the present volume. They have been unsparing of their time either in responding to my queries about a number of references that I use in footnotes, or helping verify their authors, the exact Chinese/Japanese titles or other publication information. They include Akira Matsuura, Ei Murakami, K.C. Yap, Kai-Yiu Chan, Su Hsia Yang, Koh Keng We, Clement Liew, Wee Tong Bao, Shenqi Shu, and Apicha Chutipongpisit. I am grateful to Christine Chan who was a great help in drawing the three maps for the book. Thanks to Roderich Ptak, Dietmar Rothermund, Karl Anton Sprengard, Angela Schottenhammer, Francis A. Dutra, João Camilo dos Santos, K.S. Mathew, Cheng Wing Sheung, Billy So, John Fitzgerald, Huang Jianli, and James Chin Kong for the original publication of my papers in their edited volumes. I am indebted to Kwan Siu-hing who kindly read and commented on Chapter 13. Matthew Piscioneri and Rosemary Robson greatly contributed to the refinement of the text. The Chinese characters 耕海 (*genghai*, or “ploughing the sea”) depict how the Chinese seafarers from China’s southeast had for centuries perceived their maritime life. It is a great honor that Mr Shen Yunzhi, a South Fujianese calligrapher from Zhao’an, agrees to grace the page with his elegant brush writing. I must thank Shen Huifen for introducing Mr Shen to me. Last but not least, I want to express my appreciation to NUS Press for publishing this collection of my selected works. My thanks go to Peter Schoppert, Paul Kratoska and Qua Lena at the Press. While Peter keenly supported the project, Paul offered his useful suggestions and Lena ably guided the production process.



Map 1: The Asian Seas, Trading Regions and the Silk Road in Historical Perspective





Map 2: China Coast and Trading Ports (Sixteenth to Early Nineteenth Centuries)



Map 3: Maritime East Asia and Trading Ports/Regions in Historical Perspective



# PART ONE

## **Maritime East Asia in Historical Perspective**

*Chapter 1 provides a panoramic view to put the chapters in Parts Two to Four in a broader context. It surveys the development and sustainability of long-distance shipping trade in the East Asian Seas and the western part of the Asian Seas. The geographical unity of maritime East Asia is illustrated by the popular participation of its people and also viewed from the port-to-port as well as port-to-hinterland linkages. With the arrival of the western Europeans in Asian waters in the closing years of the fifteenth century, maritime trade in the Asian Seas entered into a global age.*



# CHAPTER 1

## Commodity and Market: Structure of the Long-distance Trade in the East Asian Seas and Beyond Prior to the Early Nineteenth Century

### Introduction: Studies on Maritime History

Maritime East Asia as a geographical concept has been gaining acceptance among scholars in recent years.<sup>1</sup> It covers the two maritime spaces of Northeast and Southeast Asia. Examining Fernand Braudel's depiction of the Mediterranean Sea, one finds the same situation that enables the concept to be borrowed: the area of the East Asian Seas encircled by their surrounding lands "is not even a *single* sea, it is a complex of seas; and these seas are broken up by islands, interrupted by peninsulas, ringed by intricate coastlines".<sup>2</sup> For centuries, shipping trade had facilitated connections between the northern and southern parts of the East Asian Seas. Unquestionably the littoral populations around the connected seas

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1. See, for example, Ch'en Kuo-tung 陳國棟, *Dongya haiyu yiqian nian* 東亞海域一千年 [One thousand years of the East Asian Seas] (Taipei: Yuanliu chubanshe, 2005). The author treats the East Asian Seas as a unit; Takeshi Hamashita 濱下武志, "Haiyu yazhou yu gangkou wangluo de lishi bianqian: 15-19 shiji" 海域亞洲與港口網絡的歷史變遷: 15-19世紀 [The historical change in maritime Asia and networks of port cities], in *Haiyang shi congshu 1* 海洋史叢書 1 [Maritime history series 1]: *Gangkou chengshi yu maoyi wangluo* 港口城市與貿易網絡 [Port cities and trading networks] (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2012). In the paper, Hamashita surveys the political, trading and cultural interactions in the East Asian Seas; and Francois Gipouloux, *The Asian Mediterranean: Port Cities and Trading Networks in China, Japan and Southeast Asia, 13th-21st Centuries* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2011), that sees the East Asian Seas as the Asian Mediterranean.
  2. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (London: Harper & Row, 1972), Vol. 1, p. 17.

were the direct beneficiaries of the common economic activity. In fact, in one way or another the producers of trade goods, traders and consumers in the hinterlands and seafarers were all interrelated in the trade. In this sense, the boundary of maritime East Asia consists of both the seas and lands of the two regions that form a coherent geographical entity.

Studies on maritime regions often refer to the ideas of both Fernand Braudel (1902–85) and K.N. Chaudhuri, who published their respective works in 1949 and 1985. “The idea that the study of a civilization might be named after a sea originated with Fernand Braudel”, as his admirer K.N. Chaudhuri remarks in the very first sentence of his own book.<sup>3</sup> Writing in the preface to his English edition in 1972, Braudel highlights one salient feature of the sea that embraces both plurality and unity when he says that, “[t]he Mediterranean speaks with many voices; it is a sum of individual histories”.<sup>4</sup> Despite the different cultures and religions, the Mediterranean regions embodied their unity and coherence because “the Turkish Mediterranean lived and breathed with the same rhythms as the Christian, [so] that the whole sea shared a common destiny”.<sup>5</sup> He believes that, “history cannot be really understood unless it is extended to cover the entire human past”.<sup>6</sup> One must take the journey “through the long expanse of history”.<sup>7</sup> In other words, such a history “could only be written in the *longue durée* and from a long perspective”.<sup>8</sup> The long view allows one to discover that, “all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles”.<sup>9</sup> The Mediterranean must be viewed in its broadest geographical context because “Mediterranean history is an aspect of world history”.<sup>10</sup> Among other points, Braudel emphasizes the importance of exchange, especially long-distance exchange: “It is imbalance that creates exchange and therefore leads to progress.”<sup>11</sup>

The second of these two influential works on maritime civilization is the book by K.N. Chaudhuri. The author was fascinated by Braudel’s

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3. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 1.

4. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, p. 13.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

6. Fernand Braudel, *Memory and the Mediterranean* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), p. xxv.

7. *Ibid.*

8. See Oswyn Murray, “Introduction” to Fernand Braudel, *Memory and the Mediterranean*, p. xvii.

9. Braudel, *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, p. 20.

10. See Murray, “Introduction”, p. xix.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. xix–xx.

triple analytical foundations, namely: time, space and structure.<sup>12</sup> He proposes to explore “the unity and diversity of Indian Ocean civilizations through the study of long-distance trade”.<sup>13</sup> Studying the topic has enabled him to discover that, “the sea which washed the desolate beaches of Suez or the marshes around Basra provided an unbroken means of travel all the way to China”, and that the myriads of traders, commodities and markets along the way are the best manifestation of diversity and unity.<sup>14</sup>

A large number of the studies on the various aspects of the subject have been produced on maritime trade in East Asian waters. To build on this large body of scholarship, the present survey attempts to track the long historical development of maritime trade in the East Asian Seas up to the early decades of the nineteenth century when the European powers began to attain dominance. Attempts will also be made to clarify a few contending interpretations in the different writings. The discussion revolves around the structure of long-distance trade as seen in the movement of commodities from their areas of production to their end-markets. Without doubt, commodity and market are two propelling engines of long-distance trade. However, the movement of commodities from the area in which they are produced to their end-market does not necessarily imply a process of direct shipment. Often, the commodities were sent through transfer stations and transshipment centers. When describing the trade movement from the Red Sea to South China in early times, Paul Wheatley observes, “Possibly this would be better described as a series of trade-routes, for during this period no one group of merchants operated throughout its length and no one category of merchandise travelled from end to end.”<sup>15</sup> His depiction of long-distance maritime trade holds good for the developments over many centuries thereafter. In other words, the merchandise was brought to the transfer station to be transshipped to the designated market. This was a salient feature of the structure of long-distance trade. This structure is considered to mean the different composite segments within which the trade is operated. In other words, long-distance trade contains several layers in its structure, namely: (1) the local layer of activity of gathering merchandise from its production-area, often by small traders

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12. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*, p. 2.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3, 6.

15. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Geography before AD 1500* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1961), p. 282.



or peddlers; (2) the regional layer of transferring the merchandise to the transshipment center or *entrepôt*; and (3) the linkages between the transshipment center and the end-market that were operated by other groups of maritime merchants and inland traders. In short, the whole process involved a multitude of trading groups and complex operations.<sup>16</sup>

## **The Asian Waters by the Fifteenth Century: The Nanhai Factor**

For many centuries, the maritime trade of East Asia thrived, teeming with activity carried out on a sustainable level. The southern segment of maritime East Asia, known as the Nanhai (the South Seas, or Maritime Southeast Asia) in the ancient Chinese texts, played an indispensable role in the long-distance trade in Asian waters throughout the period in question. For some 1,500 years, this trade was a considerable factor in contributing to the successive emergence in the Nanhai of various maritime and regional powers, characterized by their ability to exert dominance over large areas within their sphere of influence and control their strategic maritime trade routes.

### ***Catalyst of Long-distance Trade: Commodities and Markets***

As Anthony Reid observes, “Southeast Asia’s products found their way into world markets very early.”<sup>17</sup> Among its major exports were cloves, nutmeg, pepper, aromatic woods, gums, resins, products of forest-dwelling fauna and the harvest of the sea.<sup>18</sup> From China came handicraft products, including silks, ceramics and metal-ware. In K.N. Chaudhuri’s words, the medieval trade of Asia was really founded by the demand for

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16. Not only the long-distance trade along the sea routes experienced the multi-layered structure and a multitude of participants; one sees a similar structure in inland long-distance trade. One example is the case of eighteenth-century China. William T. Rowe mentions the four-level structure of the commodity circulation. See his “Domestic Interregional Trade in Eighteenth-century China”, in *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History: Van Leur in Retrospect*, ed. Leonard Blussé and Femme Gaastra (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Co., 1998), pp. 186–7.

17. Anthony Reid, “Humans and Forests in Pre-colonial Southeast Asia”, in *Nature and the Orient: The Environmental History of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Richard H. Grove, et al. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 112.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 112–3.

the four great products of East Asia, namely, sandalwood, black pepper, silk and porcelain.<sup>19</sup>

The most important regional market for Nanhai products was the populous country of China that had augmented its demand in the fifth and sixth centuries, a period which saw the growth of Buddhism. This growth resulted in a shift in market demand from supplying the needs of the imperial court and high officials to meeting the demand of worshippers in other urban centers outside the imperial capital. Consequently, there was a surge in the import of such “holy accoutrements” as incense (gaharu wood), ivory and sandalwood stupas and statues, and glass vessels used in temple rituals, as described by Wang Gungwu.<sup>20</sup> By the Tang (AD 618–907) and Song (AD 960–1279) dynasties, the Chinese were kept busy acquiring a great variety of the Nanhai products to meet the demand from a population of diverse social levels. As Paul Wheatley observes, “An inventory compiled in 1141 listed no less than 339 items of import, of which the most important both by value and volume were aromatics and drugs.”<sup>21</sup> Many traders from South and West Asia also came to procure these products.

Prior to the sixteenth century, pepper was one of the most valued commodities imported into China. In fact, the country had become the largest market for pepper in the world not later than the Yuan period (AD 1271–1368). Observations made by Marco Polo are most revealing: “[F]or one shipload of pepper that goes to Alexandria or elsewhere, destined for Christendom, there come a hundred such, aye and more too, to this haven of Zayton (that is, Quanzhou in Fujian on the southeast coast of China), for it is one of the two greatest havens in the world of commerce.”<sup>22</sup> On account of the large quantity imported, pepper had entered into the daily life of the general populace. Writing in the period AD 1512–15, Tomé Pires (AD 1468–1540) observed that the chief merchandise being exported to China from Malacca (Melaka) was pepper. “[T]hey will buy ten junk-loads a year.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, T’ien Ju-k’ang

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19. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*, p. 39.

20. Wang Gungwu, “The Nanhai Trade: A Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea”, *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 30, 2 (1958): 53.

21. Paul Wheatley, “Geographical Notes on Some Commodities Involved in Sung Maritime Trade”, *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 32, 2 (1959): 31.

22. *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, trans. and ed. Henry Yule (3rd ed.; London: John Murray, 1929), Vol. 2, p. 235.

23. *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, From the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512–1515*, trans. Armando Cortesao

says, “In the 15th and 16th centuries, the average annual total amount of pepper purchased by the Chinese has been estimated at 50,000 bags, or two million cattles; that is, almost equivalent to the total amount of pepper imported into Europe from the East in the first half of the 16th century.”<sup>24</sup> Not surprisingly, the bulk of the pepper produced in Sumatra and West Java flowed into the huge market of Ming China (AD 1368–1644).

Among other Nanhai merchandise exported in large quantities to China from Malacca were cloves, incense, elephant tusks, tin, Borneo camphor, red beads, white sandalwood and the black wood that grows in Singapore, as reported by Tomé Pires.<sup>25</sup>

A whole array of trade goods was shipped from China including such items as raw white silk, satins, damask, gauze, seed-pearls, musk, alum, saltpeter, sulfur, copper, iron, copper vases, cast-iron kettles, bowls, basins, boxes, fans, needles, brocades, ceramics, sugar and salt. Tomé Pires considered salt to be one of the great items of merchandise produced by China. Some 1,500 local junks would come to buy the item after it had arrived in the port and, in turn, they would distribute it in the surrounding region.<sup>26</sup> Pires’ description of the junks arriving from China tallies well with the general pattern of their cargoes in the following centuries, goods that both catered to the high-end market and supplied the general populace with their daily necessities.

### ***Ships, Navigators and Trade***

The earliest record of long-distance seaborne trade between China and India via Southeast Asia comes from a Chinese dynastic history some 2,000 years ago. The passage is cited in full below:

From the barriers of Rinan, Xuwen and Hepu, it is about five months’ voyage to the country of Duyuan. It is about a further four months’ voyage to the country of Yilumo, and yet another twenty odd days’ voyage to the country of Shenli. It is rather

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(London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944), Vol. 1, p. 123. Tomé Pires arrived in Guangzhou (Canton) in 1517 as the first Portuguese envoy to China.

24. T’ien Ju-kang, “Cheng Ho’s Voyages and the Distribution of Pepper in China”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, no. 2 (1981): 187. Pepper was the most valuable export to Europe from the mid-sixteenth century until the 1820s. See *Southeast Asian Exports since the 14th Century: Cloves, Pepper, Coffee, and Sugar*, comp. David Bulbeck, et al. (KITLV Press, Research School of Pacific Studies, ANU and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), p. 5.

25. *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 123.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 125–7.

more than ten days' journey on foot to the country of Fukandulu, whence it is something over two months' voyage to the country of Huangzhi. The customs of the people are rather similar to those of Zhuyai (Hainan). These countries are extensive, their populations numerous and their many products unfamiliar (rare and precious objects). Ever since the time of Emperor Wu [141–87 BC], they have offered tribute. There are chief-interpreters attached to the Yellow Gate who, together with volunteers, put out to sea to buy lustrous pearls, glass, rare stones and strange products in exchange for gold and various silks. All the countries they visit provide them with goods and companionship. The trading ships of the barbarians transfer [the Chinese] to their destination. It is a profitable business [for the barbarians], who also loot and kill. Moreover, there are the hazards of wind and wave to be encountered and [the possibility of] death by drowning. If these are avoided the outward and return voyages take several years. The large pearls are at the most two Chinese inches in circumference. During the Yuanshi period of Emperor Ping (AD 1–5), Wang Mang, [in his capacity] as counsellor, and desirous of manifesting the brilliance of his majestic virtue, sent rich gifts to the King of Huangzhi, at the same time commanding him to dispatch an embassy to present a live rhinoceros [as tribute]. From Huangzhi it is about eight months' voyage to Pizong. It is about a further eight months' voyage to the borders of Rinan and Xianglin. In the south of Huangzhi is the country of Sibucheng. From there the envoy and interpreters embarked on their return journey.<sup>27</sup>

The text reveals several interesting pieces of information about the trade routes, ships and navigators, the character of the trade and the navigational environment of the Straits of Malacca. No later than the first century BC, Han China (206 BC–AD 220) and Huangzhi (Kanci; Conjeveram), a kingdom located on the southeastern coast of India, had established contacts. They exchanged luxury goods with each other, a trade that clearly suited the taste of the court and the high-end market. The ship(s)

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27. The Chinese text appears in *Han shu* 汉书 [Standard dynastic history of the Han], *juan* 28b (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1970), Vol. 6, p. 167. The translation is taken from Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, pp. 8, 11, except for the place names that have been converted to Pinyin. Scholars interpret the text somewhat differently. See for example, *Hsu Yun-ts'iao* 许云樵, *Nanyang shi* 南洋史 [History of the Nanyang] (Singapore: Xinzhou shijie shuju, 1961), Vol. 1, pp. 44–5; O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study of the Origins of Srivijaya* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 33–4; and Wang Gungwu, "The Nanhai Trade", Chapter 2.

embarking from China departed from the west coast of Guangdong, sailing south along the coast, eventually entering into the Gulf of Siam. The party landed at the narrow neck of the northern Malay Peninsula, or at the present-day Kra Isthmus in southern Thailand. Crossing the Isthmian track to the west coast overland, the travelers continued their journey by sea again to reach Huangzhi. The whole journey required “several transfers” on “barbarian ships” to reach the destination. It recounts that the voyage did not follow a direct sea route from China to India. Should this indeed have been the case, the several missions from Huangzhi during the first century BC were probably serviced by transfers to reach China. On the return voyage, however, the Chinese envoy departed from a country south of Huangzhi, possibly Ceylon, and traveled all the way by the sea route, most likely via the Straits of Malacca. The journey was extremely hazardous because they would often encounter pirates who looted and killed. The account reveals that there was traffic frequent enough to attract the presence of piracy in the Straits. Other hazards that travelers often encountered were storms and shipwrecks.

Turning to the ship(s) the Chinese party boarded on the first leg of the voyage, Wang Gungwu believes that the travelers embarked on Chinese ship(s) sailed by the Sinicized Yue people from the southeast coast of China. Paul Wheatley also says that, “Yue sailors were almost certainly the carriers of both merchandise and merchants” in the Gulf of Tonkin and on the South China coast.<sup>28</sup> Their suggestions are supported by archeological finds that point to the navigational skills of the Yue people as early as the Neolithic Age.<sup>29</sup>

The most revealing part of the text is the mention of “several transfers” on board “barbarian trading ships”, a statement that clearly indicates that these “barbarians” were participants in pursuing trade along the sea route. But who were these “barbarian” carriers? By then the Yue on China’s southeast coast had already been incorporated into the Chinese empire and would therefore no longer be considered foreign people. In the first two centuries AD, the rise of Funan in the lower Mekong Valley and Champa on the southeast coast of present-day Vietnam might offer a clue to the answer. The Khmers are believed to have founded Funan and the Chams were the founders of Champa. The two kingdoms were soon to become maritime powers in the Gulf

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28. Wang Gungwu, “The Nanhai Trade”, p. 23; and Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 283.

29. *Bai Yue minzu shi lunji* 百越民族史論集 [A collection of essays on the history of the Yue people], comp. The Association of Research on the History of Yue People (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 1982), pp. 49–50.

of Siam and on the southeast coast of present-day Vietnam respectively. We can reasonably assume that the Funanese and the Chams had been skilful seamen capable of undertaking transfers even before the founding of their kingdoms. Probably, Indian vessels were chartered for the last stretch of the voyage from the west coast of the Isthmus to the Indian coast. As mentioned by G. Cœdès, around the beginning of the Christian era, early Indian settlements founded by Indian traders and immigrants increased in the region around the northern Malay Peninsula and the Gulf of Siam.<sup>30</sup> The text of the *Han shu* cited above tells about arrivals of Indian traders in China's southern port "to offer tribute" during the reign of Emperor Wu.

In the third century AD, during the reign of Sun Quan two envoys, Zhu Ying and Kang Tai, from the state of Wu were sent to reconnoiter the Nanhai countries including Funan. Kang Tai recorded that Funan was capable of building large vessels that could carry a hundred passengers.<sup>31</sup> By this time, Funan's power had extended to the Isthmian region and hence it controlled the luxury trade between China and India.<sup>32</sup> Another Chinese source records that, shortly before AD 484, the king of Funan, Jayavarman, sent a trading ship to Guangzhou. On the return voyage, an Indian monk, Nagasena, took passage on board the trading ship on his first leg of the long journey home.<sup>33</sup> This information offers another piece of evidence suggesting that Funan was a major player in maritime trade and shipping between the Gulf of Siam and South China. However, the attack on it by its northern neighbor, Zhenla, in the following century led to its decline and subsequent collapse.

The zenith of Funan as a regional sea power and its subsequent decline around the end of the fifth and sixth centuries coincided with the transition from what Paul Wheatley terms "the Isthmian Age",<sup>34</sup> to the rise of Java and Sumatra as trading, shipping and transshipment centers. Goods from the Indian Ocean for re-export to the China market would be shipped all the way by sea to the new transshipment centers via the Straits of Malacca. Simultaneously, the new era saw an increasing demand in the trade to China for commodities produced in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago.

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30. G. Cœdès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Susan Brown Cowing (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975), pp. 14–5.

31. Hsu Yun-ts'iao, *Nanyang shi*, Vol. 1, p. 85.

32. O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, p. 142.

33. Hsu Yun-ts'iao, *Nanyang shi*, Vol. 1, p. 142, citing *Nanqi shu* 南齐书 [Standard dynastic history of the South Qi], *juan* 58, section on Funan.

34. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, pp. 282–9.

Superb sailors, the coastal Malay-Indonesians became the major players in shipping and carrying trade not later than the fourth or fifth century. In AD 399, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Fa Xian, traveled to India by way of Central Asia. In AD 413–14 he returned from Ceylon by sea.<sup>35</sup> As recorded in his account, he sailed on board a large merchant-vessel carrying over 200 passengers. After just two days at sea, they ran into a severe gale that caused the vessel to spring a leak. The storm blew unabated for 13 days and nights and greatly terrified the passengers on board. Throughout the course of the voyage, they were also seldom able to cast aside the fear of encountering pirates who frequented the sea route. These sea bandits not only looted passengers' property but also did not hesitate to kill them. The ship at last arrived in Yepoti (Java) some 90 days later.<sup>36</sup> Fa Xian sojourned there for five months before he boarded another large merchant-vessel, also carrying over 200 passengers. The vessel set course for Guangzhou. Again, the vessel encountered a violent gale. Fa Xian and the other traveling merchants and traders felt totally helpless and could only pray for their safety.<sup>37</sup>

Again, the source does not tell about the ownership of the two vessels. It is quite probable that they were local ships hailing from India/Ceylon and Java respectively. O.W. Wolters suggests that the voyage across the South China Sea was first undertaken by merchant ships sometime between the third and the fifth centuries, although one still cannot be certain who the ship-owners were. Be that as it may, the traffic between Java and South China had apparently become regularly available by the early fifth century. Wolters provides evidence taken from Gunavarman's account that could be indicative of the regular shipping. Gunavarman was a prince from Kashmir and a highly respected pilgrim. He traveled from Java to China a few years after Fa Xian's return journey. Having heard about Gunavarman's impending visit, the Liu Song emperor Wendi (AD 424–53) "had ordered a ship to fetch the illustrious Buddhist, but before its arrival Gunavarman ... [had] boarded another merchant ship" from Java. Both the accounts of Fa Xian and Gunavarman indicate

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35. Although Fa Xian did not tell about the country of origin of the ship, the commentator of Fa Xian's account says it was a Ceylonese vessel. See *Fa Xian zhuan jiaozhu* 法顯傳校注 [Annotated travel account by Fa Xian], annotated by Zhang Xun 章巽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), p. 142; and Kuwabara Jitsuzo 桑原隲藏, *Pu Shougeng kao* 蒲壽庚考 [A study of Pu Shougeng], translator and annotator, Chen Songqing 陳松箐 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1954), p. 3.

36. For the place name, see Hsu Yun-ts'iao, *Nanyang shi*, Vol. 1, p. 166,

37. *Fa Xian zhuan jiaozhu*, pp. 142–6. The translation of the passage from Fa Xian's account can be found in Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, pp. 37–9.

“an unbroken voyage across the South China Sea”.<sup>38</sup> Still the sources do not allow one to say for sure who actually sailed them or where the ships originated from. Could the one sent from Guangzhou by Wendi have been a Chinese vessel? By this time, there is no doubt that the Straits of Malacca had replaced the Isthmus for voyages from India to Java. It was also in this period that Guangzhou overtook Xuwen and Hepu as the principal port for the long-haul voyages across the South China Sea.

Regarding ships and those who sailed them, one’s attention is drawn to two oft-used terms in Chinese sources, namely: “Kunlun” and “Kunlun *bo* [meaning ships]”. Wolters argues that Kunlun was a generic term used by the Chinese to designate the prominent maritime peoples of Southeast Asia, but “by the seventh century the term had settled on the Indonesians”. In the same century, Kunlun (Indonesian) merchants “were coming every year in their ships to Canton (Guangzhou)”.<sup>39</sup>

Turning to the term “Kunlun *bo*”, Pierre-Yves Manguin says it means Southeast Asian ships arriving in south China. The large ones were more than 50 meters in length and they carried about 600–700 passengers.<sup>40</sup> He also cites an eighth-century Chinese text that says, “The *bo* are sea-going ships.... They are fast and can transport more than 1,000 men, apart from cargo. Many of those who formed the crews and technicians of these ships are *Kunlun* [Southeast Asian] people.”<sup>41</sup>

Going by the sources, it could be concluded that the Southeast Asian navigators played the undisputed leading role in the Nanhai shipping during the time period discussed above. A Chinese professor from Xiamen University, the late Han Zhenhua, shared a similar view, stating that the ships plying in the Nanhai in the early seventh century all belonged to “*fan shang*” (foreign merchants).<sup>42</sup>

The importance of Malay-Indonesian shipping was boosted by the rise of Srivijaya, centered in Palembang, Sumatra, in the seventh century. Its control of many areas in the Malay Peninsula, Java and Sumatra,

38. O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, pp. 35–6.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 153. See also Kuwabara Jitsuzo, *Pu Shougen kao*, pp. 85–7; and Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 283.

40. Pierre-Yves Manguin, “Trading Ships of the South China Sea: Shipping Techniques and their Role in the History of the Development of Asian Trade Networks”, reprinted in *China and Southeast Asia*, ed. Geoff Wade (London: Routledge, 2009), Vol. 2, p. 419.

41. *Ibid.*; see also Wang Gungwu, “The Nanhai Trade”, p. 60.

42. Han Zhenhua 韓振華, “Tangdai nanhai maoyi zhi” 唐代南海貿易誌 [A record of the Nanhai trade during the Tang Dynasty], in *Hanghai jiaotong maoyi yanjiu* 航海交通貿易研究 [Studies on shipping and trade] (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2002), p. 340.



especially of the Straits of Malacca and the Isthmus in the northern Malay Peninsula, as well as its role as “a transshipment centre both for Southeast Asian products and those from the Middle East, India and China”<sup>43</sup> had propelled it to the foremost commercial and maritime power. The Malay navigational enterprise that had begun some three centuries earlier reached new heights during the Srivijaya era, when its ships frequented Guangzhou as well as the southeastern coast of India. As a center of Mahayanist scholarship, it attracted visits from Buddhist monks from China.

Another important piece of information is provided by the eminent Tang Dynasty monk, Yi Jing. In AD 671, Yi Jing arrived in Guangzhou to arrange with a Persian ship-owner for his seaborne journey to Srivijaya, where he remained for six months studying Sanskrit grammar. From there he boarded the Great King Maharaja’s ship to Moluoyu (Melayu/Jambi) and Jiecha (Gelu, present-day Kedah) in transit to India. Returning in AD 685, Yi Jing made a stopover in Jiecha to await the winter, awaiting the arrival of a Srivijayan ship to carry him to Moluoyu. He remained in Moluoyu for a few months until mid-summer, when the arrival of the southwest monsoon facilitated his journey northward to Guangzhou.<sup>44</sup>

During the early Tang Dynasty, several groups of West and South Asian merchants were active in the East Asian Seas. According to Han Zhenhua, who cites a contemporary source from the late seventh century, Persian ships from the “West Sea” (Xihai) used to sail to the Nanhai. They would also extend their voyage and arrive in Guangzhou in great numbers. Their presence allowed travelers the convenience of being able to schedule their voyages to the Nanhai with the Persian ship-owners in the port of Guangzhou.<sup>45</sup> Besides Persian ships, Arab and Indian vessels were among other foreign ships entering Guangzhou Harbor. Paul Wheatley mentions, “Arab trading ships first began to penetrate the seas of South-

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43. Nik Hassan Shuhaimi bin Nik Abdul Rahman, “The Kingdom of Srivijaya as Social-political and Cultural Entity”, in *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity: Rise and Demise*, ed. J. Kathirithamby-Wells and John Villiers (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), p. 71.

44. Yi Jing 義淨, *Da Tang Xiyu qifafa gaoseng zhuan jiaozhu* 大唐西域求法高僧傳 [Annotated memoirs of the eminent monks who made pilgrimages to the western region], annotated by Wang Bangwei 王邦維 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), pp. 152–4, 167; also Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, pp. 41–5. Moluoyu, Jiecha and Geluo are the transliterations of 末羅瑜, 羯荼 and 箇羅 in Chinese historical texts.

45. Han Zhenhua 韓振華, “Tangdai nanhai maoyi zhi”, pp. 330, 334, 340.

East Asia early in the seventh century.”<sup>46</sup> It would be quite natural for them to have continued their voyages to Guangzhou. The presence of Arab merchants in large numbers in that city by the ninth century offers strong support for the claim. Other evidence has been provided by the salvage of a well-preserved ninth-century sunken ship off the Indonesian island of Belitung that testifies to the presence of Arab shipping between the western Indian Ocean and China. Its cargo consisted almost entirely of Chinese ceramics.<sup>47</sup>

### ***The Asian Waters***

#### *Traders from the Indian Ocean in the Early Centuries*

The seasonal change in the direction of the trade winds facilitated travel between the sub-regions of maritime East Asia. There was also an eastward movement of Indian ships and travelers to Southeast Asia across the Bay of Bengal in the early centuries. One might reasonably assume that the cultural influence of the high-caste Indians in Southeast Asia enhanced the Indian trading position in the region. G. Coëdès says, “an international network of trading relationships had indeed existed since early times”, in which the Indians played a part.<sup>48</sup> Merchandise from India was shipped to the Isthmus from the Indian ports and unloaded on the west coast to be transported overland and then re-shipped to the ports of the Gulf of Siam, or farther to South China, as G. Coëdès adds.<sup>49</sup>

As mentioned earlier, one important development in the seventh and eighth centuries was the presence of the Persians and Arabs in the East Asian Seas.<sup>50</sup> They contributed to the building of direct trade links between the Indian Ocean and China.

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46. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese*, p. 211.

47. Michael Flecker, “A Ninth-century AD Arab or Indian Shipwreck in Indonesia: First Evidence for Direct Trade with China” (Singapore, 2001). The sunken ship later proved to be of Arab style.

48. G. Coëdès, *The Making of South East Asia* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 51.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

50. Wang Gungwu, “The Nanhai Trade”, p. 75. J.C. van Leur is of the view that “Arab and Persian shipping appears as a rule not to have made its way further than the ports of western and southern India. Arab and Persian traders, however, followed the trade route all the way to the Chinese ports. There seems to have been an Arab trading colony established in Canton (Guangzhou) as early as the fourth century. Settlements of Arabs were mentioned again in 618 and 626.” See J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Ltd., 1955), p. 111.

In Chinese historical texts, “Persian” cargoes had become known to the Chinese in the fourth century, but “no records of any direct contact by sea between Persia and China” have survived, as Wang Gungwu points out.<sup>51</sup> O.W. Wolters also believes that “the shippers of ‘Persian’ cargoes” were for the most part Indonesians. Moreover, “Persian cargoes” indicated a variety of commodities shipped or re-exported from different parts of West and South Asia as well as the Nanhai.<sup>52</sup> Even in the seventh century and later, “Persian” cargoes meant goods shipped to China by the Persians, rather than the Persian products. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that Persia under the rule of the Parthian Empire (247 BC–AD 224) and the succeeding Sassanid Empire (AD 224–651), that is before the rise of Islam, exercised firm control of the silk trade route between the Roman Empire and China. Moreover, the sea ports of the Persian Gulf that were under Persian rule should also have played an important role in maritime trade from the Mediterranean to the west coast of India prior to their arrival in southern China no later than the seventh century.

The founding of the Abbasid Caliphate in 750 and the removal of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad ushered in the Islamic Golden Age. By then the Arabs had become one of the most conspicuous foreign merchant groups in Guangzhou.

### *The Emporium of Malacca*

Exploiting the opportunities arising from Zheng Hê’s seven sea expeditions between 1403 and 1433, the newly founded kingdom of Malacca successfully withstood the Siamese threat from the north. Its acceptance of Islam allowed Malacca even more freedom to connect itself to the wealthy and influential Muslim traders from the Indian Ocean. Equally important was its strategic location in the Straits of Malacca on the long sea route from the Red Sea to the East Asian Seas. Therefore it played an intermediary role between *Insulindia* (maritime Southeast Asia), India and China. This unique position facilitated its rise as another maritime and commercial power founded by the Malay people after the collapse of Srivijaya.

Malacca soon developed into a prosperous emporium that was the meeting-point for the Muslim traders from India and West Asia, those from the Malay Archipelago as well as the sea merchants from China.

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51. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

52. O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce*, p. 153.

Tomé Pires gives a long list of places from where the traders originated as follows:

[There came] Moors from Cairo, Mecca, Aden, Abyssinians, men of Kilwa, Malindi, Ormuz, Parsees, *Rumes*, Turks, Turkomans, Christian Armenians, Gujaratees, men of Chaul, Dabhol, Goa, of the kingdom of Deccan, Malabars and Klings, merchants from Orissa, Ceylon, Bengal, Arakan, Pegu, Siamese, men of Kedah, Malays, men of Pahang, Pattani, Cambodia, *Champa*, Cochin China, Chinese, *Lequeos*, men of Brunei, *Lucoes*, men of *Tamjompura*, *Laue*, Banka, Linga (they have a thousand other islands), Moluccas, Banda, Bima, Timor, Madura, Java, Sunda, Palembang, Jambi, Tongkal, Indragiri, Kappatta, Menangkabau, Siak, *Argua* (*Arcat?*), Aru, *Bata*, country of the *Tomjano*, Pase, Pedir, Maldives.<sup>53</sup>

Myriads of goods were brought by them from the Mediterranean, West Asia and India. For example, four ships came every year from Gujarat, bringing 30 different kinds of cloths. On the return voyage, they shipped back merchandise that included cloves, mace, nutmeg, sandalwood, seed-pearls, porcelain, silk, tin, damask and so forth.<sup>54</sup>

The Gujaratis were among the prominent groups of merchants of the Indian Ocean in the fifteenth-century Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. They arrived with their own shipping and capital. Their wealth allowed them to enjoy great political influence in Malacca.<sup>55</sup> Hindu traders were another group from India who played a role as go-betweens in the trade to the Middle East, Southeast and Northeast Asia. Products from the Malabar Coast included black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, sandalwood, and cotton textiles. Imports of spices, aromatics and Chinese goods would also be re-exported to West Asia in exchange for incense, pearls, precious stones, ivory and other products.<sup>56</sup> In K.N. Chaudhuri's words, "the merchants of Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel and Bengal looked to the east, to the Indonesian archipelago, for direct voyages organized with their own shipping and capital".<sup>57</sup> The Armenians were probably the most ancient traders in the world and were also active in sixteenth-century Malacca. They continued to be much appreciated in the trading world in the following centuries. Their presence was seen in the Mediterranean,

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53. *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, p. 268.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

55. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*, pp. 100-1.

56. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-7.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

all the major textile-weaving towns of India, in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago and Guangzhou.<sup>58</sup>

Malacca probably had a population of between 120,000 and 200,000 as estimated by Luis Filipe F.R. Thomaz.<sup>59</sup> Thomaz describes the Malacca sultan as the chief merchant of his state who “benefited from the profits of commercial activity through levying customs duty”.<sup>60</sup> In Malacca there were four *Shahbandars*, harbor masters, who were appointed from among the merchants in town: one for the Gujaratis who were the most important group of all; one for the Bengalis, Pegus and Pase; one for the Javanese, Moluccans, Banda and Palembang; and one for the Chinese. They were empowered to receive the captains of the junks from their countries, present them to the *Bendahara*, the highest official in charge of all civil and criminal affairs, and allot to them warehouses and dispatch their merchandise.<sup>61</sup>

Although Tomé Pires’ arrival in Malacca coincided with the years immediately after the Portuguese occupation of the port city in 1511, his account of the last days of the Malacca kingdom testifies to a commercially active, prosperous sea port. It was not to last. The port soon lost its glory in the sixteenth century under the governance of the Portuguese. Its decline was the outcome of the Portuguese monopolistic approach to commerce and their hostility towards Muslim traders.

### *Chinese Outbound Shipping and Long-distance Trade*

About 2,000 years ago, seamen from China’s southeast coast had been among the participants in the coasting trade, which probably reached as far as the Gulf of Siam. From the seventh century and thereafter, Chinese participation in longer-haul voyages emerged slowly. Throughout the whole period, China had been the main consumer market for the goods imported or transshipped from the South Seas. Despite dynastic changes, from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries, in commercial terms the country continued to be a large and wealthy state. It had developed into “an area of economic high pressure, attracting to itself overland caravans, tributary missions from foreign princes, and large ocean-going vessels

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58. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

59. Luis Filipe F.R. Thomaz, “Melaka and Its Merchant Communities at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century”, in *Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea*, ed. Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 25.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

61. *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, pp. 28, 264–5.

engaged in a two-way traffic”, as K.N. Chaudhuri puts it.<sup>62</sup> The sea route from the Red Sea, passing by way of the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, Malabar, Ceylon, the Gulf of Bengal and the Straits of Malacca to the South China Sea and ending up in South China witnessed the busiest shipping and carrying trade in the world.

When did the Chinese begin to participate in the outbound long-distance shipping trade? Existing scholarship gives even a casual reader the impression that, despite all the hard work done by researchers, our current knowledge about this topic remains insubstantial and what information there is is somewhat contradictory. The following three illuminating observations, for example, testify to the dilemma. Although one of the authors is more certain about the presence of Chinese long-haul shipping, the other two differ to a certain extent. On the basis of an Arab source cited by another researcher, Ch'en Kuo-tung argues that Chinese ships were in firm control of the long-distance shipping stretching from Guangzhou to Kalah from the ninth century.<sup>63</sup> Kalah was located at the northern end of the Straits of Malacca and was a transfer station for ships sailing between India and the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. In support of his view, the author cites a late twelfth-century Song text that mentions visits to Koulam (Gulin) on the southwest coast of India by Tang trading junks (*Tang bo*). From there the junk traders transferred to smaller vessels bound for Dashi (Arabia). The text is silent about the home port of the smaller vessels sailing between Koulam and Dashi.<sup>64</sup> In fact, a much earlier contemporary eyewitness-account written around AD 851 by an Arab traveler unmistakably testifies to the arrival of Chinese ships in Koulam. For this reason, Ch'en's view can be placed on a firm basis.<sup>65</sup>

A different suggestion is made by Chang Pin-tsun, examining the rise of South Fujianese sea merchants in the Nanhai trade. Chang believes

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62. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*, p. 34.

63. Ch'en Kuo-tung, *Dongya haiyu yiqian nian*, p. 58. The phrase “主导” (leading) is used to depict the dominant Chinese position.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60, quoting Zhou Qufei 周去非, *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答 [Answering the queries from beyond the mountain range], annotated by Yang Wuquan 杨武泉 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), section on “Gulin guo” 故臨國 (State of Gulin), pp. 90–1.

65. See *Zhongguo Indu jianwen lu* 中國印度見聞錄 [An eye-witness account of China and India], translated and annotated by Mu Gen Lai 穆根来, Wen Jiang 汶江 and Huang Zhuohan 黄倬汉, from a French edition (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), Chapter 1, p. 8. Clearly, this Arab author was writing about China and India from his Arab perspective. It is unlikely he could have mistaken his countrymen for Chinese.

that Muslim traders, primarily Arabs and Persians, “controlled a trading network in the South Seas from 700 to 1200”. The South Fujianese benefited from the commercial knowledge and navigational expertise of the Arabs and Persians. By dint of long contact and collaboration with them, the Chinese gradually became acquainted with the maritime world. By the late tenth century, the Fujianese were to be found on board Muslim ships on their way to trade in the Nanhai. In other words, they were “essentially apprentices under their Muslim masters”. Only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, some Chinese “sailed their own junks”, asserts Chang.<sup>66</sup>

The third author sets the date of Chinese engagement in the long-distance shipping even later. Discussing the indigenization process of foreign merchants in China, Cheng Wing Sheung argues that “*fan bo*” (foreign ships) controlled and managed overseas trade in the Tang period and before. The “*fan shang*” (foreign merchants) continued to dominate the long-distance trade during Song times. Their position in China’s ocean-going trade still carried weight during the Yuan Dynasty, Cheng claims.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Cheng believes that the “*Tang bo*” and “*zhongguo bo shang*” (literally “the ship merchants of China”) mentioned in the Song text should be understood as “ships originating from Tang China” and “sea-going merchants from China”, rather than Chinese ships and Chinese sea merchants.<sup>68</sup>

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66. Chang Pin-tsun, “The Formation of a Maritime Convention in Minnan (Southern Fujian), c. 900–1200”, in *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea*, ed. Claude Guillot, et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), pp.147–9.
67. Cheng Wing Sheung, “Cong fanke dao tangren: zhongguo yuanyang waishang (618–1433) shenfen zhi zhuanhua” 從蕃客到唐人：中國遠洋外商 (618–1433) 身份之轉化 [From *fan ke* to *Tang ren*: the transforming identity of the ocean-going foreign merchants, 618–1433], in *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan shi lunwen ji dishi ji* 中國海洋發展史論文集，第十輯 [A Collection of papers on the development of maritime history of China, Vol. 10], ed. Shi-yeoung Tang (Taipei: Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Academia Sinica, 2008), pp. 155, 168; on indigenization, see also Kuwabara Jitsuzo, *Pu Shougeng kao*, p. 49. The author mentions intermarriage as a common phenomenon among the Arab sojourners in China; and Lo Hsiang-lin 羅香林, *Pu Sougeng yanjiu* 蒲壽庚研究 [A New Study of P’u Shou-keng and His Times] (Hong Kong: Institute of Chinese Culture, 1959). Lo’s work surveys the family history of an indigenized Arab descendant in Quanzhou during the Song-Yuan transition.
68. Cheng Wing Sheung, “Cong fanke dao tangren”, pp.161–2. For an earlier important study of Chinese merchant ships trading in the Persian Gulf, see Kuwabara Jitsuzo 桑原隲藏, *Tang-Song maoyi gang yanjiu* 唐宋貿易港研究 [A study of trading ports during Tang-Song times], trans. Yang Lian 楊鍊 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1963), pp. 17–46.

Indeed, the issues about when the Chinese began to participate in the outbound long-distance shipping trade and whether the “*Tang bo*” mentioned in Chinese texts were owned by the Chinese still remains a bit murky. The limited sources available have presented researchers with a puzzle. Often they have to make deductions from circumstantial evidence.

To tackle these questions, it is proposed to put the study into perspective by taking another look into the long development of East Asian long-distance shipping trade. First and foremost, it is undeniable that the Chinese involvement in maritime trade in one way or another was characterized by a continuous process that commenced over 2,000 years ago during which their sailors were among the earliest goods-carriers along China’s southeast coast and the northern stretch of the Vietnam coast.<sup>69</sup> By the third century, a mission sent to the Nanhai from the Kingdom of Wu reached as far as the Gulf of Siam and Chinese ship(s) could have been used for this purpose. Although no information exists about Chinese involvement in the regular long-haul shipping between Java and Guangzhou from the fifth century, the ship that the Liu Song Emperor intended to send to fetch Gunavarman from Java was probably a Chinese ship. Let us make a bold assumption that the ship was likely to have been sailed by both Chinese and Nanhai seamen. Even if this proposition is true, one has to concede that Chinese shipping in the Nanhai would have been a rare occurrence. At this point in time, however, it is good to recall that quite a number of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims in transit to India arrived in Java on board foreign ships. This seems a sure sign that undertaking a journey overseas from China had become less uncommon. Very likely Chinese traders and some migrants would have been among the travelers venturing abroad. During the Tang period, evidence shows that foreign vessels were numerous in the port of Guangzhou, making them the most convenient transport on which the Chinese could travel to the Nanhai or the Indian Ocean. There were also sizeable Persian and Arab merchant communities in the coastal cities during this time. Gradually a number of the sojourners chose to take up

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69. In publications in China, scholars generally believe that, right from the mission to India at the beginning of the Christian era, Chinese and their ships had been sailing along the “maritime silk road”. See for example, Feng Chengjun 冯承钧, *Zhongguo nanyang jiaotong shi* 中国南洋交通史 [A history of communications between China and the Nanyang] (Hong Kong: Taiping shuju, 1963), part 1; *Zhongguo haijiang tong shi* 中国海疆通史 [A general history of China’s maritime frontiers], ed. Zhang Wei 张炜 and Fang Kun 方堃 (Zhengzhou: Zhongguo guji chubanshe), pp. 73–7, 134–5; and *Zhongguo haiyangxue shi* 中国海洋学史 [History of Oceanography in China], ed. Xu Hongru 徐鸿儒 (Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004), Chapters 3–7.



permanent residence in the trade ports. Within a few generations, from the late Tang period the descendants of foreign merchants in general and Arabs in particular had undergone a process of indigenization and they became Chinese (*Tang ren*).<sup>70</sup> These foreign residents and their indigenized descendants were the best mentors the Chinese could have had in maritime affairs. Today there is still a temple located by the inner waterway to Guangzhou that has stood there since around AD 600. It is dedicated to the Sea God of the Nanhai (*Nanhai zhi shen*) and was a very popular place of worship for the seafaring people during Tang times. It might be a good indication of Chinese engagement in seafaring activities.

Shipbuilding is another factor that should be considered. Longer-haul shipping would have required seaworthy vessels. From early times China has had a long coastline and it improved its shipbuilding techniques in tandem with the increasing demand for vessels. At the very least, fishing had been undertaken and water transportation was used in the daily life of the littoral people for centuries. By around 2,500 years ago, the use of a water-borne force in wars by states such as Yue and Wu on the southeast coast was a frequent occurrence. By this time, large warships that could carry up to nearly a hundred men on board were being built.<sup>71</sup> In the late Tang era, Chinese-style junks built in China were widely preferred and used by resident Arab merchants in their long-distance voyages to the Indian Ocean.<sup>72</sup> In Song times, when Chinese shipyards were capable of building large, seaworthy junks for long-distance voyages, shipbuilding technology reached new heights.<sup>73</sup> The more advanced features of the ships included the use of watertight-compartment techniques and the compass.<sup>74</sup> That is to say, the Song people were without doubt technically capable of fitting out ships for longer-haul voyages when the commercial incentives made it worthwhile to do so.

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70. Citing Chinese texts, Kuwabara Jitsuzo says that China was known to foreigners (including Muslims) as *Tang* 唐 and Chinese as *Tangren* 唐人. Refer to *Pu Shougeng kao*, p. 103.
  71. Wang Guanzhuo 王冠倬, 《中国古船》 [Chinese ships during ancient times] (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1991), pp. 9–10.
  72. Kuwabara Jitsuzo, *Pu Shougeng kao*, pp. 51, 91–3, 95.
  73. Ch'en Hsin-hsiung 陳信雄, "Song-Yuan de yuanyang maoyi chuan: zhongguo haiwai fazhang dingsheng shiqi de jiaotong gongju" 宋元的遠洋貿易船: 中國海外發展鼎盛時期的交通工具 [Long-distance trading ships during the Song-Yuan periods: the vessels used during the peak period of China's overseas development], in *Zhongguo Haiyang fazhang shi lunwen ji*, 2 (Taipei: Sun Yat-sen Institute for Social Sciences and Philosophy, Academia Sinica, 1986), pp. 1–38.
  74. Kuwabara Jitsuzo, *Pu Shougeng kao*, p. 98.

In fact, the Fujianese sea merchants in Song times had established a great reputation for their shipping trade not only along the China coast, but also sailing to Korea, Japan and the Nanhai.<sup>75</sup> Finds by marine archeologists also support the existence of large-scale Chinese shipping activities at this time. One instance is the discovery of a sunken ship in Quanzhou Harbor in 1974. The junk probably foundered during the Mongol attack on the port city in the late thirteenth century. Trade goods found in the holds of the sunken ship consisted of large quantities of pepper and scented woods from the Nanhai. Another sunken junk was salvaged from Guangdong waters in 1987. The 800-ton vessel, that was given the project name Nanhai I, was fully loaded with export ceramics. On the basis of the kinds of merchandise they carried, the former was a homeward-bound vessel and the latter an outward-bound vessel. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that private shipping trade during the Song era was kept under strict state control and often it devolved into the hands of the powers-that-be.<sup>76</sup>

The dominant position of Chinese junks in the shipping trade between China and India in the early fourteenth century was recorded by the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta. He witnessed 13 Chinese junks at anchor in the port of Calicut awaiting the seasonal wind to set sail for China. They carried 3 to 12 sails. One large ship carried 1,000 men, 600 of whom were sailors, the rest men-at-arms. The vessel had four decks and the owner's supercargo on board was like a great *amir*. Ibn Battuta says that, "[t]here is no people in the world wealthier than the Chinese". He goes on to report that Chinese ships were the only mode of transport for voyages from there to China.<sup>77</sup> This raises the question of who was in control of the shipping trade during Yuan times. They would have included two major groups. One was the state-sponsored trade controlled by the Mongol nobility and merchants of Central Asian origin.<sup>78</sup> However,

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75. Shiba Yoshinobu 斯波義信, "Sōdai ni okeru Fukken shōnin to sono shakai Keizai teki haikai" 宋代における福建商人とその社会経済背景 [Fujian merchants in the Song and their socio-economic background], *Tōyōshi ronsō* 東洋史論叢 [Studies on Oriental history], *Wada hakase koki kinen* 和田博士古稀記念 [In honour of the 70th birthday of Dr Wada] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1960), p. 494.

76. Huang Chunyan 黄纯艳, *Songdai haiwai maoyi* 宋代海外贸易 [Overseas trade during the Song era] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2003), p. 100; and Guan Luquan 关履权, *Songdai Guangzhou de haiwai maoyi* 宋代广州的海外贸易 [Overseas trade in Guangzhou during the Song era] (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2013; orig. 1994), pp. 162-3.

77. *Ibn Battuta Travels in Asia and Africa*, pp. 234-6.

78. Yu Changsen 喻常森, *Yundai haiwai maoyi* 元代海外贸易 [Overseas trade during the Yuan era] (Xi'an: Xibei daxue, 1994), p. 90; Qu Jinliang 曲金良, *Zhongguo*

the period also saw the rise of a few very substantial class of Chinese maritime merchants who had the capacity to build large trading junks.<sup>79</sup>

By this period, Quanzhou was among the great ports of China. It had risen to become an important seaport in the eleventh century and had surpassed the position of Guangzhou by the fourteenth century.<sup>80</sup> Like Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta was also greatly impressed by the immensity of the port city Quanzhou, known as Zaytun, that he visited around 1343–44. He described it as “one of the largest in the world”. He saw “in it about a hundred large junks; as for the small junks, they could not be counted for multitude”.<sup>81</sup> More than 70 countries traded with Quanzhou during the Song-Yuan eras, including those from the Nanhai, the Persian Gulf, Arabia and from as far afield as Egypt, East Africa and the Mediterranean. Taking into account the myriads of commodities available in Quanzhou, Angela Schottenhammer rightly describes the port as the emporium of the world.<sup>82</sup>

Although Guangzhou was later surpassed by Quanzhou, it was still another important port in the foreign trade. During the reign of Emperor Wu, Indian merchants from Huangzhi came to trade in Guangzhou. In the eighth century, Arabs, Persians and Indians were among the many large foreign communities thronging the port city. Traders from more than 140 foreign countries and places were present there.<sup>83</sup> A contemporary Arab account cited earlier indicates that some 120,000 Arabs, Persians and members of many other foreign communities were massacred in the city in AD 879 by the invading rebel force led by Huang Chao,<sup>84</sup> indicating the presence of great numbers of foreign sojourners in the port. It must have recovered from the setback with the return of peace and it continued to enjoy prosperity in the following centuries. When Tomé Pires was in Malacca, he was informed that, “[t]he city of Quamtom [Guangzhou] is where the whole kingdom of China unloaded all its merchandise which were in great quantities. They were brought here from inland as well as

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*haiyang wenhua shi changbian* 中国海洋文化史长编 [A comprehensive history of China's maritime culture] (Qingdao: Zhongguo haiyang daxue chubanshe, 2013), pp. 147–8.

79. Chen Gaohua 陳高華, *Yuan shi yanjiu lungao* 元史研究論稿 [A collection of essays on the Yuan history] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), p. 103.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

81. *Ibn Battuta Travels in Asia and Africa*, pp. 287–8.

82. *The Emporium of the World: Maritime Quanzhou*, ed. Angela Schottenhammer (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

83. Chen Gaohua, *Yuan shi yanjiu lungao*, p. 105.

84. *Zhongguo Indu jianwen lu*, pp. 30, 96.

from the sea.”<sup>85</sup> By this time, the Chinese were active participants in the shipping trade. The country “has more than a thousand junks, and each of them trades where it sees fit”, Pires records.<sup>86</sup>

In sum, Chinese ships might have begun to sail into the Nanhai and the Indian Ocean much earlier than is generally believed. The rather obscure picture of Chinese shipping grows slightly less obscure in the late Tang period. Hence there are grounds for arguing more confidently that, while the Arab merchants resident in Chinese ports often owned and operated the Chinese ocean-going vessels, there was nothing to stop them from having native Chinese or indigenized Arab merchants as their business partners, joining them or taking charge of the voyages. Certainly this was the situation in the Song era. By then, unquestionably many people of Arab descent had become indigenous Chinese people. In the fifteenth century, the presence of Chinese shipping had become a common scene in the Nanhai region. Its principal destination was Malacca to acquire commodities from Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean region.<sup>87</sup> By this time, direct voyages farther west to Calicut no longer made commercial sense, since commodities from the Indian Ocean were now abundantly available in the new emporium Malacca. Besides Malacca, Chinese junks were also found in many other ports, even in the remote areas of maritime East Asia.<sup>88</sup>

## The Emergence of Multiple Port Polities during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

As Anthony Reid suggests, the period between 1400 and 1750 witnessed “the Age of Commerce” in Southeast Asia.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible to take a slightly different view and think of the fifteenth century as a transitional period in maritime East Asia. It was the final stage in the long preceding period that had lasted about 1,400 years, when it had been

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85. *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, pp. 120–1.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

87. For the development of Chinese maritime trade during the Ming, see Roderich Ptak, “Ming Maritime Trade to Southeast Asia, 1368–1567: Visions of a ‘System’”, in *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea*, ed. Claude Guillot, et al., pp.157–91.

88. *Liangzhong haidao zhen jing* 兩種海道針經 [Two editions of navigational guides], ed. Xiang Da 向達 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961). For the sea routes, see J.V. Mills, “Chinese Navigators in Insulinde about AD 1500”, in *China and Southeast Asia*, ed. Geoff Wade, Vol. 2, pp. 1–26.

89. Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 14650–1680* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), Chapter 1 of Vol. 2.

characterized by successive maritime and territorial powers from the times of Funan and Srivijaya to Malacca. Each of them was an undisputed leading power, controlling the strategic sea route in maritime trade between India and China. The early fifteenth century witnessed the Zheng He expeditions that re-established China-Southeast Asia relations and re-connected the China Sea to the Indian Ocean, contributing to the rise of the last indigenous maritime territorial power: Malacca. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought a change that saw the emergence of multiple harbor-states, featuring a major shift from the regional primacy enjoyed in former times to the parallel roles played by a number of port polities.<sup>90</sup> Each of them functioned autonomously and yet formed an integral part of the long-distance trade in Asian waters. It was in this period that Chinese seafarers emerged as the major players in the East Asian Seas. From the beginning of the sixteenth century, the new era also ushered in new players from Europe.

### ***Areas of Production and Trading Zones in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago***

How the long-distance trade in maritime East Asia functioned can be observed from the linkages in the regional trade at different transaction layers. In simplest terms, the different layers connected the areas of production to local harbors and from them to a regional port that might also serve as an emporium in interregional trade. Each of the layers had its respective role as “collecting centers, feeder points and entrepôts”.<sup>91</sup> The activity often involved a multitude of players from different ethnic groups. The transaction chain commenced with the household-to-household collection of local commodities directly from the small producers by peddlers. Different groups of dealers appeared at each level of the transactions. The upper layer of activities consisted of wholesalers who would buy in large quantities and sell the commodities to the long-distance traders from other regions.<sup>92</sup>

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90. J. Kathirithamby-Wells, “Banten: A West Indonesian Port and Polity during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, in *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity*, ed. J. Kathirithamby-Wells and John Villiers (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1990), pp. 107, 120.

91. The three terms are used in Leong Sou Heng, “Collecting Centres, Feeder Points and Entrepôts in the Malay Peninsula, c. 1000 BC–AD 1400”, in *The Southeast Asian Port and Polity*, ed. J. Kathirithamby-Wells and John Villiers, pp. 17–38.

92. For a discussion of multiple layers in long-distance trade, see *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, ed. Leila Fawaz and A. Bayly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 28–33.

At different times, there were various trading zones in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago,<sup>93</sup> serving the long-distance trade of maritime Asia. The following are some of them:

*“The Spice Islands”*:<sup>94</sup> For many centuries, the area of the Moluccas had earned itself a reputation as “the Spice Islands” on account of the production of the cloves, nutmeg and mace that had found their way into many households in the west and east. The small producers and local people from the areas of production often brought their products to the nearby market-places in small boats to be sold to traders who traveled from island to island to collect them. As well as other spices, during the Song-Yuan periods China had been one of the major end-markets for cloves from the Moluccas. They were brought to Guangzhou by the “tribute bearers” from Srivijaya and other Nanhai countries. By the late fourteenth century, foreign traders including Chinese, Arabs and Javanese, were among the collectors sailing to the Spice Islands from the northeast coast of Java from where they conducted inter-island trade. The fifteenth century saw the rise of Malacca as the major international center for the spice trade.<sup>95</sup> Although not widely known for their navigational skills, even the islanders from Banda would row their boats laden with spices to cover the long distance to Malacca in the final days of the sultanate, shortly before the Portuguese occupation.<sup>96</sup>

*Aceh*: Located in northwest Sumatra lay Aceh. It had successfully grasped the opportunity presented by a weakening Srivijaya to shake off its control in the late thirteenth century. As it strengthened it began to conduct direct trade with China. Benefiting from its geographical location, Aceh was able to establish trade relations with the Arabs and

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93. The term “trading zones”, rather than the oft-used “trading networks”, indicates a sub-unit of the long-distance trade. It might sometimes involve the trade in certain special products, or the active participation of a particular ethnic group. The term trading network implies a much more complex structure depicting an operational system. It involves horizontal and vertical human relationships and the organizational mechanisms that form in total an operational system. The discussion here does not cover the operating system as defined above.

94. More specifically, the Spice Islands include Banda Islands, Moluccas (Maluku), Ceram, Timor and some other neighboring islands.

95. Leonard Y. Andaya, *The World of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the Early Modern Period* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), pp. 1–2.

96. M.A.P. Meilink Roelofs, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), p. 96.

Persians, as well as such other Islam-influenced regions as Gujarat, Malabar and Coromandel.<sup>97</sup> An equally important presence were the Ottoman merchants from West Asia who were the middlemen in trade between the East Mediterranean and the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. The link between Islamic influence and the dominant trade position of Aceh in northwest Sumatra was obvious.<sup>98</sup>

After the occupation of Malacca by the Portuguese, the Gujaratis, who had a firm grasp on the pepper and spice trade, decided to withdraw from there and go to Aceh. The collaboration between the Acehnese and the Gujaratis worked to exclude the Portuguese from the lucrative pepper trade and gave rise to the emergence of Aceh as a trading power in the sub-region. In Tomé Pires' words, with little effort Aceh could assemble a fleet of 30 to 40 ships to intercept a competitor's vessels.<sup>99</sup> Its trade zone extended to the Red Sea and the port of Aden.<sup>100</sup> By the last 20 years of the sixteenth century, Aceh had firmly established itself as the international center for the pepper and spice trade as well as the meeting point for the Muslim trading ships that sailed from there to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Cinnamon produced in Ceylon was even first transshipped to Aceh before being shipped to the Mediterranean. Shipments of spices to China, Indochina and India (with the exception of Malabar) also increased tremendously.<sup>101</sup> The tarnishing of the glory of Portuguese Malacca in the international pepper and spice trade can be attributed to the brilliant maneuvering of the Acehnese. Although it reaped the benefit of trade with the Muslim traders from the Indian Ocean, Aceh stopped short of becoming another sea and territorial power in the maritime trade. Its failure to attain this can be attributed to a new multi-port trading environment, in which each of the port polities was able to capitalize on its strength in the trading structure.

*Bantam:* The port town of Bantam was founded by Javanese Muslims in the sixteenth century and lost no time in attracting Indian, Chinese and European company merchants in pursuit almost exclusively of one commodity, namely pepper. A part of the production from Java, Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula and Borneo was sent here for re-export

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97. Arun Das Gupta, "The Maritime Trade of Indonesia: 1500–1800", in *Southeast Asia: Colonial History*, ed. Paul H. Kratoska (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 95–9.

98. Ismail Hakki Goksoy, "Ottoman-Aceh Relations as Documented in Turkish Sources", in *Mapping the Acehnese Past*, ed. R. Michael Feener, et al. (Leiden: KITLV, 2011), pp. 65–6.

99. *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*, pp. 136–7.

100. Ismail Hakki Goksoy, "Ottoman-Aceh Relations", p. 66.

101. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, p. 568.

to international markets. Bantam maintained close trade relations with Ming China. However, as it gained power, a newcomer was hovering on the scene. In 1596, four Dutch ships from Amsterdam anchored in the port for the first time. J.C. van Leur cites accounts from the Dutch records and depicts a vivid picture of the intense trading atmosphere:

There came [on board] such a multitude of Javanese and other nations as Turks, Chinese, Bengali, Arabs, Persians, Gujarati, and others that one could hardly move.

... each nation took a spot on the ships where they displayed their goods, the same as if it were on a market.<sup>102</sup>

Until the Dutch capture of the port town in the late seventeenth century, the British East India Company was in the habit of obtaining Chinese commodities from here.

The amount of raw silk brought to Bantam on Chinese junks each year was 300–400 *piculs*. Homeward-bound, they shipped back pepper and other commodities.<sup>103</sup> Chinese merchants were an important group among the port communities. Although other foreign communities, such as Gujaratis, Coromandelese, Bengalis and Indonesians from other parts of the Archipelago, among them Buginese, Bandanese, Banjarese, people from Ternate, Makassar and eastern Java were lodged in the suburbs, the Chinese merchants lived in a quarter within the walls of the port city and “dwelt in stately houses, owned warehouses and ships, and held slaves”, Van Leur states.<sup>104</sup> Living cheek by jowl with the principal merchants or wholesale dealers were “the mass of traders carrying their valuable goods on board ship or selling the commissioners a few bags of rice, pepper, or spices on the market”. Even the Chinese buyers might venture “inland into the villages with their weights in hand”.<sup>105</sup> Despite the peddling nature of the business of the small traders, the total amount of the goods that changed hands was very substantial owing to the multitude of the participants.

Initially Bantam was Batavia’s rival entrepôt but it was gradually weakened by internal conflict and was consequently forced to accept VOC rule in 1682.

*Makassarese, Bugis and the Riau Trading Zones:* Prior to the sixteenth century, as Gene Ammarell citing Anthony Reid points out, the long-distance trade between Malacca, Java, Celebes (Sulawesi) and the Spice

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102. J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p. 3.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 138–9.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 139.



Islands “was carried out by Malay and Javanese seafarers”.<sup>106</sup> On voyages to and from the Spice Islands it had long been the practice that their ships made stopovers along the southern coast of Celebes to take on fresh water and supplies. These essential stopovers contributed to the rise of Makassar. After the fall of Malacca, in their search for a new trading hub large numbers of Malays and Javanese as well as Chinese, Arabs and Indians turned to the north coast of Java and the southwest coast of South Celebes for their supplies of spices. Not content with their minor role of supplying the foreign ships, the Makassarese began to build trading ships themselves.<sup>107</sup> In this same period, Muslim Malay traders from Johor, Pahang and Pattani appeared in Makassar in increasing numbers. An estimate of 1625 shows that these Malays who lived in Makassar numbered many thousands. They sent about 40 ships each year to the Spice Islands. Eventually, the availability of spices from the Spice Islands and goods from China and India in the port also attracted the Europeans to Makassar. Since the Dutch were locked in a struggle to obstruct the Portuguese from trading directly in the Moluccas, the latter also began to pour into Makassar in great numbers instead. Their visits intensified after the Dutch capture of Malacca in 1641, when some 3,000 Portuguese were recorded as living in Makassar.<sup>108</sup> Around this time, the port town truly became an international entrepôt with the arrival of all the major European trading nations, namely the Netherlands, Denmark, England and France, all now competing with Portugal.<sup>109</sup> As Gerrit Knaap and Heather Sutherland indicate, Makassar also traded with Mindanao (3 to 4 vessels), Sulu (3 to 4 vessels), Macao ( a few vessels), Manila (2 junks), Cebu (2 to 3 junks), Siam (a few ships), Cambodia (5 to 6 big vessels), Malacca and Aceh (4 to 5 vessels), Banjarmasin (6 to 8 vessels), Sukadana (2 to 3 vessels), Java (30 to 40 vessels) and the eastern Kalimantan ports of Pasir and Kutei (a few ships). Makassar remained active commercially even after it was crushed by a Dutch-Bugis alliance in the years 1666–69. The Amoy junks, for example, were still arriving in the port to trade in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>110</sup>

The Makassarese also had a rival much closer to home, their neighbors the Bugis, whose indigenous home was also in South Celebes.

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106. Gene Ammarell, *Bugis Navigation* (Yale Southeast Asia Studies, 1999), p. 11.

107. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 16–7.

108. Anthony Reid, *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), pp. 117–8.

109. Christian Pelras, *The Bugis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 5.

110. Gerrit Knaap and Heather Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders: Ships, Skippers and Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Makassar* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004), pp. 13, 18, 145.

Superb seafarers, the Bugis had built their reputation in the maritime world by the early sixteenth century, and by that time were increasingly challenging the dominant Malays and Javanese. Taking advantage of the Dutch occupation of Makassar, “the golden age of Bugis navigation began”.<sup>111</sup> Their ships were active in the Spice Islands, the Java Sea and later the Riau Islands, linking them to international trade in various harbors. The most important among their trading stations was the entrepôt in the Riau Islands that they had established in the early eighteenth century. Because of its strategic location as well as the Bugis’ wide trading network, Riau had attracted the arrival of Chinese, English, Siamese and Javanese traders, making it “the most important port linking the trade of the South China Sea and the Java Sea with that of the Indian Ocean”.<sup>112</sup> Arriving there, traders could conveniently exchange spices from the Moluccas for cloth imported by the British from Bengal, and thereby threatened the Dutch interest in imported cloth. Not surprisingly, the Dutch found it necessary to take over control of Riau in 1784.

*Java’s Northeast Coast (the Pasisir)*: The northern coast of Java, situated on one of the major trading routes in the Java Sea, had control of the inter-island trade and shipping in the Indonesian Archipelago by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Traders from there were able to fit out scores of ships of around 60 tons each to sail to the Spice Islands. They brought along scales and set up tents or stalls to collect spices from either local small producers or peddlers. They also visited such places as Timor to purchase sandalwood and other products. The bulk of the transactions was conducted by small-timers drawn from the ranks of the peasants and fishermen at the bottom of the social spectrum, who provided “the close links between trade and the rural economy”, as Luc Nagtegaal observes. He goes on to comment, “Javanese trade was far from insignificant, with hundreds of traders together responsible for transporting large quantities of goods over what could be very long distances.”<sup>113</sup> The Javanese also played a conspicuous role in inter-island trade, using small boats (*prahu*) to transport goods.

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111. Gene Ammarell, *Bugis Navigation*, p. 20.

112. Christian Pelras, *The Bugis*, pp. 305–6. For Bugis trade in Riau and a detailed account of the crushing of Riau, refer to Reinout Vos, *Gentle Janus, Merchant Prince: The VOC and the Tightrope of Diplomacy in the Malay World, 1740–1800*, trans. Beverley Jackson (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1993). I thank Koh Keng We for drawing my attention to the work.

113. Luc Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger: The Dutch East Indies Company and the Northeast Coast of Java, 1680–1743* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1996), p.107.

Nevertheless, wholesalers were not entirely absent from the transaction chains. For example, the goods collected would be sold to Chinese merchants in Gresik to be re-exported to China, and, through the Gujarati merchants, other spices would eventually reach the markets in the Mediterranean.<sup>114</sup>

After the Dutch had established a foothold in Batavia, they depended on Chinese merchants in Bantam for surrogate participation in the commercial activities on the Pasisir. Chinese merchants had been able to penetrate into the indigenous trading world not only by purchasing local products directly from the farmers, but also by giving local farmers credit against the produce of their next harvest. They went into the interior, rented land from indigenous rulers and supervised local farmers in the production of the required amount of goods. These Chinese merchants often owned the ships on which they transported the produce to the trading ports in Southeast Asia or south China. Furthermore, the Dutch authorities in Batavia or Malacca acquired essential foodstuffs from them.

By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Chinese trading community had gained increasing prominence on the Pasisir. Kwee Hui Kian indicates, “[T]he symbiotic relationship between the indigenous rulers and Chinese migrants enabled the former to intensify their state formation process and the later to expand their commercial activities.”<sup>115</sup> The Pasisir also established close trading connections with the Chinese merchants in Bantam.

### ***Upsurge in the Shipping Trade from the North*** ***The Predominance of Chinese Overseas Trading Networks***

Chinese communities were found in such ports on the northeast coast of Java as Tuban and Gresik not later than the early fifteenth century. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Fujian junks had become the major force in the long-distance trade with Southeast Asia and large number of migrants from Fujian and Guangdong provinces were arriving in the Philippines, the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, Siam and other places in Southeast Asia. By the early seventeenth century, Chinese communities were also a force to reckon with in Hirado and Nagasaki in

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114. Arun Das Gupta, “The Maritime Trade of Indonesia: 1500–1800”, in *Southeast Asia: Colonial History*, ed. Paul H. Kratoska, pp. 94–5. Detailed studies on the Pasisir can be found in Luc Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger*; and Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy of Java’s Northeast Coast, c. 1740–1800: Elite Synergy* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

115. Kwee Hui Kian, *The Political Economy of Java’s Northeast Coast*, p. 14.

Japan, and Hoi An (Faifo), Ayudhya, Pattani, Manila, Bantam and Batavia in Southeast Asia.<sup>116</sup> They formed the largest trading communities among the foreigners. Nor was their dominance confined to the urban centers; they also penetrated into the interior. They performed all sorts of roles, among them commercial agents of the indigenous rulers, tax farmers, brokers, administrators managing their own countrymen, miners and cultivators. In the Indonesian Archipelago, the Dutch paradoxically saw them as both competitors and collaborators in business. In short, by the beginning of the eighteenth century the Chinese were in a formidable position in many businesses on account of their well-developed networks in local societies.

### *Chinese Overseas Trade during the Late-Ming Period*

Even though there were signs of private Chinese overseas shipping trade emerging during the Song-Yuan periods, this business was still generally carried on in the shadow of state supremacy. The situation began to change in the early Ming era. Explaining the status of Chinese overseas shipping, John King Fairbank firmly states, “tribute from Southeast Asia declined after the time of Cheng Ho [Zheng He], although trade did not.... [I]t was no longer they [the foreigners] who came to China but the Chinese who went to them.”<sup>117</sup> The development of Yuegang in Zhangzhou in South Fujian sometime in the fifteenth century seems to support Fairbank’s theory. At this time, Yuegang rose to become a bustling, prosperous sea port involved in what the Ming government perceived as illicit trade or smuggling. However, a conspicuous change, that Fairbank describes, occurred only a century later after the rigid policy of the maritime prohibition promulgated by the Ming state to suppress private shipping and trade had proved totally ineffectual. The authorities finally realized the limitations of their power to rein in the anarchical situation and in 1567 decided to rescind the prohibition law. Yuegang, now renamed Haicheng district, was opened to overseas private commerce under

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116. Cheng Wing-Sheung 鄭永常, “Gangshi yu huaren: Wan-Ming dongya maoyi shangbu xingcheng zhi huaren yuansu” 港市与华人：晚明东亚貿易商埠形成之華人元素 [Port cities and the Chinese: the Chinese Element in the formation of port cities in East Asia], in *Kuayue haiyang de jiaohuan* 跨越海洋的交換 [The Transoceanic Exchange], ed. Te-Lan Chu (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2013), pp. 87–136; and Carl A. Trocki, “Chinese Pioneering in Eighteenth-Century Southeast Asia”, in *China and Southeast Asia*, ed. Geoff Wade, Vol. 3, pp. 217–8.

117. See John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports 1842–1854* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 35.

a system of managed trade. In 1589, a quota of 88 sailing permits was issued. The number was later increased to 110, to allow junks to trade in the Eastern Ocean (eastern sector of the Nanhai covering the Philippines and the surrounding region) and the Western Ocean (western sector of the Nanhai consisting of mainland Southeast Asia and the western part of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago).<sup>118</sup> Maritime trade subsequently prospered. The tax list records 49, 89 and 115 items of commodities in 1572, 1589 and 1615, including ivory, pepper, sappanwood, sandalwood, Borneo camphor, bird's nests, rhinoceros horn, tortoise-shell, buffalo hide, black lead, betel nut, opium, rattan mats, for example, listed by Chang Pin-tsun.<sup>119</sup> Most of the items came from the Nanhai region.

The opening of Haicheng to outward-bound private trade came at an opportune moment as shortly afterwards Manila was occupied by the Spanish in 1571 and desired trade with China. Trading junks flocked to the colonial port, some 30 to 40 on average per year with a tonnage of 100 to 300 each. The first hundred years represented the heyday in the junk trade between the two ports.<sup>120</sup> Another important opportunity for junk trade arose not long after the Dutch had found a foothold in Batavia that thereafter welcomed the arrival of Chinese junks. As a 1625 Dutch record shows, a Chinese fleet of five junks of 600 or 800 tons each, traded with Batavia. Each junk carried 100 to 500 migrants on board in addition to her cargo. According to Van Leur's estimate, the total tonnage of the junks was "as large as or larger than that of the whole return fleet of the Dutch Company".<sup>121</sup> He also records that other large trading junks continued to arrive not only in Batavia but also in other Southeast Asian ports. In 1626, for example, five arrive in Batavia from Fujian, as well as "four to Cambodia, four to Cochin China, three to Siam, one to Pattani, one to Jambi, one to Jaratan (Grise), three to Siam and around 100 smaller junks on a shorter route to Manila."<sup>122</sup>

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118. Zhang Xie 張燮, *Dong Xi Yang kao* 東西洋考 [An investigation into the affairs of the Eastern and Western Oceans] (Taipei: Zheng-zhong shuju, 1962), 7: 1b-2b; Chang Pin-tsun, "Chinese Maritime Trade: The Case of Seventeenth-Century Fuchien (Fukien)", PhD thesis, Princeton University, 1983, pp. 250-90; and Anthony Reid, "The Unthreatening Alternative: Chinese Shipping in Southeast Asia, 1567-1842", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs (RIMA)*, no. 27 (1993): 13-32.

119. Chang Pin-tsun, "Chinese Maritime Trade", pp. 272, 365-70.

120. Serafin D. Quiason, "The Sampan Trade, 1570-1770", in *The Chinese in the Philippines, 1570-1770*, Vol. 1, ed. Alfonso Felix, Jr. (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1966), pp. 161, 165.

121. J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p. 198.

122. *Ibid.*

Information about the junk-trade investors given by Van Leur reveals that the trade involved both Indonesians and local Chinese settlers who went to trade in China with the returning junks. In the case of Jambi in 1636, for example, the majority of those going to trade in China were traders with a small amount of money varying from 22 to 44 *reals*. Similar patterns can also be seen in junks departing from China with hundreds of such small traders on board. Van Leur calls them “peddlers”,<sup>123</sup> or small investors, but Han Zhenhua uses another term, “*san shan*” or “small-timers”, to designate this group of people. The latter says, “There could be as many as hundreds of *san shang* ... on board each junk, occupying cargo compartments ..., with a very small amount of capital.”<sup>124</sup> However, Van Leur reminds us that, besides the peddlers, also traveling on board each ship were substantial investors, called “merchant gentlemen”. Taking the five junks that arrived at Batavia in 1625 as an example, their total investment reached 300,000 *reals*, not overlooking the fact that the largest investment in the Dutch East India Company in 1602 amounted only to between 26,000 and 44,000 *reals*.<sup>125</sup> Similar investment patterns continue to be seen in a later record on Makassar in 1755, detailing a complete list of cargo of 59 incoming items against ten outward-bound on board a junk. The former included “4 types of umbrellas, 5 types of paper, 6 different sorts of bowls, 11 of plates and 7 trepang”, among the bowls and plates were 63,000 and 42,000 pieces respectively. Besides these bulk cargoes, there were still high-value cargoes such as Chinese tobacco, silk-yarn or raw silk and 200 chests of gold thread. Tobacco alone was worth more than 40 per cent of the total incoming value. Among the export items, trepang alone represents 90 per cent of the export value. As for the investment, “(a) share of 16% was imported by the *kongsi* or ‘partnership’, probably of the investors who equipped the junk. Another 9% was in the hands of the skipper, the clerk and the first mate. The remaining 75% was owned by 13 to 14 individual merchants, averaging a little over 19 *pikul* each.”<sup>126</sup>

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123. Ibid., pp. 198–9.

124. Han Zhenhua 韓振華, “Shiliu zhi shijiu shiji qianqi zhongguo haiwai maoyi hangyun ye de xingzhi he haiwai maoyi shangren de xingzhi” 十六至十九世紀前期中國海外貿易航運業的性質和海外貿易商人的性質 [The characteristic features of Chinese overseas shipping trade and merchants during the sixteenth to the first half of nineteenth centuries], in *Hanghai jiaotong maoyi yanjiu*, p. 518.

125. J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p. 201.

126. Knaap and Sutherland, *Monsoon Traders*, p. 146.

*The Ryukyus:* The sea-going prohibition law of the Ming that disrupted Japan's direct contact and trade with China opened the way for the Ryukyans to take up an intermediary role between Japan, China and the Nanhai. The active participation of the Ryukyus in seafaring activities was greatly boosted by the Chinese migrants from Fujian. The early Ming government even sent Fujianese seamen there to help the local people develop navigational skills.<sup>127</sup> It is one of the many examples illustrating the integrative power of the East Asian maritime civilization.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this small island kingdom not only maintained close friendly relations with Ming China, but also actively participated in trade with the Nanhai, successfully building a triangular trading zone between the three sectors. Takeshi Hamashita states that the Ryukyus established a trading network with Japan, Korea and China in Northeast Asia and Siam, Sumatra, Java, Malacca, Annam, Sunda, Pattani and other places in Southeast Asia.<sup>128</sup> The Ryukyans "served as active agents for maritime trade between China and many overseas countries in the fifteenth century" and their ships frequented "Japanese ports such as Hyogo, Sakai, and Hakata, to collect Japanese goods for the tribute-trade with China."<sup>129</sup> The Ryukyans came to Malacca sometimes in the company of the Chinese; sometimes on their own with one to three junks every year. The goods brought to Malacca included swords, gold, copper, arms of all kinds, coffee, boxes veneered with gold leaf, fans, wheat, a great store of paper and silk in all sorts of colors, musk, porcelain, damask, onions and many vegetables. They shipped back the same merchandise as the Chinese did, including large quantities of Bengal cloths and Malacca wine, some of it to be sold in China and Japan. From Japan, in exchange for their merchandise they obtained gold and copper.<sup>130</sup> Citing the Ryukyuan archival records, *Lidai Baoan* (Precious Documents of Successive Reigns), both Xu Yihu and

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127. Xie Bizhen 谢必震, *Zhongguo yu Liuqiu* 中国与琉球 [China and the Liuqiu] (Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1996), pp. 31–47.

128. Takeshi Hamashita, "Haiyu Yazhou yu gangkou wangluo", p. 2; Takeshi Hamashita, "Relations among Malacca, Ryukyu and South China during the 15th–18th Centuries through *Lidai Baoan* of Ryukyu Kingdom", in *Haiyang shi yanjiu*, 1 海洋史研究 (第一辑) [Studies of Maritime History, Vol. 1] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010), pp. 18–31. Sydney Crawcour points out that, from the Ryukyu trade, "we might get some important clues to the network of Asian trade before the entry of Europeans". See Sydney Crawcour, "Notes on Shipping and Trade in Japan and the Ryukyus", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 23, 3 (May 1964): 377.

129. Chang Pin-tsun, "Chinese Maritime Trade", pp. 175–8.

130. *Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires*, Vol. 1, pp. 128–31.

Takeshi Hamashita points to pepper and sappanwood as two important items bought in Malacca to be sent to China as “tribute”<sup>131</sup> in exchange for silks, porcelain and the like for other places in the triangular trade. From the Ryukyuan records, Takeshi Hamashita cites a letter from the Ryukyu king containing a detailed list of the cargo shipped to Annam as below:

Ten thousand *chin* of sulphur, 1 iron helmet with gilded copper plates and green leather pieces woven together with thread, 2 short swords in black lacquered scabbards with embossed golden dragons, 6 short swords ornamented with gold and gilded material, 2 long swords in red lacquered scabbards plated with gold and inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 2 black lacquered spears in sheaths plated with gold and inlaid with mother-of-pearl, 4 bows of mulberry wood, 120 hawk-feather arrows plated with gold, 100 bolts of soft local linen in different colors, and 2,000 *chin* of raw iron; all of these are to be presented to Your Majesty the King of the Country of An-nam [Annam] in token of our appreciation.<sup>132</sup>

The bulk of the goods shipped to Siam, Palembang, Sumatra (Aceh) and Java consisted of silk textiles, swords and ceramics.<sup>133</sup> One other aspect relating to the Ryukyu trade as suggested by Sydney Crawcour is that: “Ryukyuan vessels came into contact with the traders of the Arab world and ... some of the Ryukyuan ships were under the command of people with Arab-sounding names.”<sup>134</sup>

A total of 256 ships was dispatched from Ryukyu to Fujian between 1425 and 1564, and 104 to Southeast Asia from 1425 to 1570.<sup>135</sup> The gifts bestowed by the Ming court, including silk fabrics, were taken to Siam and Japan in exchange for local products. However, the transshipment business declined from the sixteenth century, probably because of the Portuguese entry into the trans-regional trade, the surge of Chinese junk trade and the development of direct trade by Japanese with Siam and Annam. After the imposition of the ban on seafaring activities (known

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131. Xu Yihu 徐玉虎, “Mingdai Liuqiu wangguo duiwai guanxi zhi yanjiu” 明代琉球王國對外關係之研究 [The foreign relations of the Ryukyu Kingdom during the Ming Dynasty] (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1982), pp. 113–236; and Takeshi Hamashita, “Haiyu Yazhou yu gangkou wangluo”, p. 2.
132. Document in *Lidai Baoan*, see Takeshi Hamashita, “Relations among Malacca, Ryukyu and South China”, pp. 19–20.
133. Xu Yihu, “Mingdai Liuqiu wangguo duiwai guanxi”.
134. Sydney Crawcour, “Notes on Shipping and Trade in Japan and the Ryukyus”, p. 378.
135. Chang Pin-tsun, “Chinese Maritime Trade”, pp. 353–7; and Xie Bizhen, *Zhongguo yu Liuqiu*, pp. 216–43.



as “*sakoku*”, or close-the-country policy) by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the seventeenth century, Japan had to rely heavily on the Chinese and Dutch shipping for external trade, and the Satsuma-Ryukyu trade played a much smaller role in it. During the period 1612–34, for example, there were only 20 Ryukuan ships sailing to China, only one-thirtieth of the total number of Chinese junks.<sup>136</sup>

*The “Tosen” Trade to Nagasaki:* The number of Japanese ships that traded with China under the guise of official missions greatly increased in Song times and continued until the Ming period when the court imposed the strict sea-going prohibition. As might have been expected, the restriction only encouraged the expansion of illicit trade. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, Japanese overseas shipping was surging. Since both the Ming merchants and the Tokugawa Shogunate, founded in 1603, were desirous of trading with each other, ships of both sides found a way to evade the Ming law by establishing contacts to exchange trade goods in such Southeast Asian ports as Manila and Annam. Japanese ships from Nagasaki and Hirado also ventured farther to Ligor (Nakorn) and Pattani in southern Siam. During the period 1604–35, a total of 355 Japanese *shu-in*, or government-licensed ships appeared in the Nanhai, of which 71 went to Cochin-China, 55 to Ayudhya and 7 to Pattani.<sup>137</sup> Many Japanese sojourners also formed their own communities in major Southeast Asian cities. Their settlement in Ayudhya numbered around 1,500 in the early seventeenth century.<sup>138</sup> Chinese junks from the Min-Zhe (Fujian and Zhejiang) region on the southeast coast also increasingly frequented Japanese ports. In about 30 years from 1612, some 600 of them departed to Japan to trade.<sup>139</sup> The growth in shipping clearly indicates that maritime trade had not been deterred by the chaotic political situation in late Ming China. Obviously, in times of adversity merchants were skilled in finding ways to get around problems and make an even greater profit.

European ships had been trading in Japan from the sixteenth century. In 1616 they were allowed by the Edo government to dock in Hirado until

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136. Chang Pin-tsun, “Chinese Maritime Trade”, pp. 353–7; Xie Bizhen, *Zhongguo yu Liuqiu*, pp. 216–43; and Sydney Crawcour, “Notes on Shipping and Trade in Japan and the Ryukyus”, p. 378.

137. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1625–1853* (Cambridge, MA: Council of East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977), p. 15.

138. *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia: Translations from the Tosen Fusetsu-gaki*, ed. Yoneo Ishii (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies and Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), p. 1.

139. Sydney Crawcour, “Notes on Shipping and Trade in Japan and the Ryukyus”, p. 378.

1641 and after that in Nagasaki. When the ruling Tokugawa Shogunate decided to close its doors to foreigners, the Portuguese were expelled from trading with Japan and the Dutch were severely restricted in their movements and later ordered to move from their base at Hirado to the off-shore, artificial island of Deshima in Nagasaki Harbor. When the local authorities banned the export of silver in 1668, the Dutch bought copper, silks, ceramics and lacquered wares from Japan instead, exchanging them for Indian textiles and raw silk from Bengal.

After the imposition of the seclusion policy, the Japanese direct trade with Siam and Annam stopped, but the demand for foreign goods in Japan did not disappear and the Dutch Company and Chinese traders immediately filled the vacuum by shipping the desired merchandise to Nagasaki, the only port open to external trade. The incessant war ravaging coastal China and the sea-going prohibition imposed by the early Qing government during the Ming-Qing transition yielded extremely high profits from supplying raw silk to Japan. The traders chose to bypass the China coast and established direct contact between Nagasaki and the new source of supply in Annam. Earlier, prior to their expulsion from Japan, it had been the Portuguese who were in control of the silk trade between Tonkin and Japan, but now the Dutch took over from the Portuguese and founded a trading post in Tonkin to purchase silk. Chinese traders also flocked to Tonkin for the same purpose. Many Chinese ships moved their bases from the China coast to Southeast Asia in order to take advantage of the trade with Nagasaki. During the years from the 1640s to 1660s, for example, “about a third of the Chinese ships trading at Nagasaki departed from Southeast Asia, and in the following two decades only about a quarter of these Chinese ships were from mainland China itself”.<sup>140</sup>

In shipping raw silk to Nagasaki from Tonkin, the Dutch Company had to face the challenge of Chinese rivals, including private traders and other merchant groups supported by the resistance force led by the Zheng family in Fujian and Taiwan. Using the tactic of a higher bidding price, Chinese traders were able to squeeze their Dutch competitors out of the silk market in Tonkin. Chinese networks in Southeast Asia also allowed them to work flexibly. For example, they maximized their trading profit by espousing a multi-port operation, making inter-port voyages to Batavia, Tonkin, the China coasts and Nagasaki.<sup>141</sup> After the Qing court had lifted the maritime ban in 1684 and unsanctioned overseas trade, Ningbo resumed its trade with Nagasaki and replaced Tonkin as the main

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140. Ibid.

141. As shown in the shipping documents collected in *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia*, ed. Yoneo Ishii.

exporter of raw silk.<sup>142</sup> Until the ban on silver export from Japan, silver and copper from Nagasaki had been the main exports of the Chinese merchants. By around 1730, Japan itself had achieved self-sufficiency in silk production.

The port authorities in Nagasaki classified incoming Chinese junks into three categories, namely: the short-distance (*kuchi-bune*) ships from Zhejiang and the coast to its north; mid-distance (*naka-okubune*) ships from the southeast coast including Fujian, Taiwan and Guangdong; and long-distance (*okubune*) ships from the countries of Southeast Asia. Ships from Southeast Asia, including those commissioned by the Siamese court and Cambodian kings, were treated as *tosen* or “Chinese junks”, because they were almost all manned by Chinese seamen or operated by Chinese merchants.<sup>143</sup>

Ships visiting Nagasaki during the period 1674–1728 included 14 from Shandong, 500 from Nanjing of Jiangsu, 595 from Zhejiang, 652 from Fujian and Taiwan, 192 from Guangdong and 312 from Southeast Asia.<sup>144</sup> Their carrying capacity varied. Taking those departing from Southeast Asia as examples, the Batavian junks had a tonnage from 120 to 200 each. The largest junks of 600 to 1,200 tons each were from Siam, while those from the Min-Yue (Fujian and Guangdong) carried 59 to 360 tons of cargo. These ships took on different types of cargo, depending on where they commenced their voyages. A 1658 record shows, for example, that a Siamese junk that arrived in Nagasaki carried 96 tons of sappanwood, 16 tons of pepper, 2,670 deer hides and 3,400 shark fins. Another junk arriving from Cambodia carried 270 tons of Tonkin silk, 180 tons of

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142. For Tonkin-Nagasaki trade, see Iioka Naoko, “The Rise and Fall of the Tonkin-Nagasaki Silk Trade during the Seventeenth Century”, in *Large and Broad: The Dutch Impact on Early Modern Asia, Essays in Honor of Leonard Blussé*, ed. Nagazumi Yoko (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 2010), pp. 46–61.

143. *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia*, ed. Yoneo Ishii, pp. 2–3.

144. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9; Sun Wen 孫文, *Tang chuan feng shuo: wenxian yu lishi — Hua Yi Biantai chutan* 唐船風說：文獻與歷史—《華夷變態》初探 [Interview statements of Chinese junks: Documents and history—A preliminary study of *Kai-Hentai*] (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2011), Appendix; Louis Jacques Willem Berger IV, “The Overseas Chinese in Seventeenth Century Nagasaki”, PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2003, p. 15; and Shiu-h-Feng Liu 劉序楓, “You Hua yi biantai kan qing chu donya haiyu de haishang jiaotong qingkuang—yi chuanzhi de wanglai he renyuan de yidong wei zhongxin (1674–1728)” 由《華夷變態》看清初東亞海域的海上交通情況—以船隻的往來和人員的移動為中心 (1674–1728) [Maritime communications in the East Asian seas during the early Qing period, as seen from the records of *Ka-i hentai*: Focusing on shipping and movement of people, 1674–1728], in *Haiyang shi yanjiu*, 1, pp. 40–3. The figures provided in the above works vary slightly from one another.

aloes wood, 7 tons of sugar and 1.2 tons of natural medicines. The ships from Malacca carried tin and pepper to China to exchange for silk to be shipped to Nagasaki.<sup>145</sup> The prosperity of Nagasaki that can be ascribed to the *tosen* trade began to decline after its port authorities restricted the number of incoming Chinese junks at the end of the seventeenth century. One reason for the restriction was the fear of a surge in Chinese migrants that might threaten to become unmanageable.

The port from which a Chinese junk set sail on its voyage does not necessarily indicate its home port. For instance, most of the ships departing from Shandong originated from Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong. The purpose of their coming to Shandong was to procure herbal medicines that were a local specialty. Most of the “Nanjing junks” departed from Shanghai and other ports in Jiangsu. The highest number was the vessels leaving here for Nagasaki. The reason is not far to find: the region of Yangzi delta produced a great amount of commodities, raw silk and silk fabrics in particular, that were in great demand in Japan. Ningbo, which also played an important role in trade with Japan, was equally renowned for its silk market. Besides local ships, other vessels came from Jiangsu and Fujian. A certain number of ships opted for Putuoshan off the Zhejiang coast as their port of departure, because there they could conveniently procure merchandise intended for Japan.<sup>146</sup> The same holds true of the junks departing from ports in Southeast Asia. A 1680 *tosen* document records seven vessels that had arrived in Nagasaki from Siam under the category of “ships from Ayudhya”. In fact, only three of them, among them two commissioned by the Siamese king, had their home port in Siam. The other four originated from Amoy and had come to trade in Ayudhya. After news that Amoy was soon to be the main base of the Qing naval force in the imminent war against the Zheng regime in Taiwan, these Amoy junks wanted to avoid sailing into the war zone and prudently decided to sail directly from Ayudhya to Nagasaki instead.<sup>147</sup>

Chinese junks heading for Nagasaki from Ayudhya, Pattani, Ligor, Songkla, Cambodia, Batavia, Bantam and other Southeast Asian ports carried native products or goods from other places acquired via transshipment. Taking Siam as an example, its most important export in the *tosen* included deer-skins, ray-skins, cowhides and sappanwood. Other commodities that were also in demand were black lac, eaglewood, tin,

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145. *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia*, ed. Yoneo Ishii, pp. 4–5.

146. Sun Wen, *Tang chuan feng shuo*, Chapter 4.

147. Document 1-1, Ship No. 14, in *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia*, ed. Yoneo Ishii, pp. 22–3.

elephant tusks, wax, buffalo horns, sugar and some other miscellaneous goods.<sup>148</sup>

Whenever circumstances allowed, the trading junks would make a transit stop at a Chinese port, Amoy, Guangzhou, Wenzhou, Ningbo or Putuoshan being among the most favored, to sell some of their Southeast Asian products. This stop was also a good opportunity to procure such merchandise as raw silk and silk fabrics or to collect goods for which they had placed an advanced order. Replenishment of stocks of water and food was almost routine. Given the prevailing weather conditions, many junks would have probably required repairs to damaged fittings after a stormy voyage.

Such were the storms, there were occasions on which the ship's captain found it necessary to charter or purchase another ship to continue the voyage if his original vessel was damaged beyond repair. Even the actual sale of a ship was not unlikely if a junk owner suffered heavy business losses during the voyage. His last resort would have been to sell his vessel to another junk trader at the port of call. Sometimes there was a crew change at the transit port. Furthermore, as junks were trading ships, they also functioned as passenger ships, picking up or dropping off passengers at each port of call during the voyage. Offering a passenger service was an opportunity to recoup some of the expenses of the voyage or even cover business losses.<sup>149</sup>

All these situations indicate the existence of a mature, astonishing triangular *tosen* trading network between Southeast Asia, coastal China and Nagasaki. The foremost goal of the junk traders at all times was to maximize profit through a flexible mode of operation.

## **The “Chinese Century” and the Ascendancy of the Europeans by the Early Decades of the Nineteenth Century**

Two parallel developments in maritime trade began to take place in maritime East Asia in the sixteenth century. One was the emerging Chinese predominance in the seaborne trade. The eighteenth century

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148. Shimada Ryuto, “Siamese Products in the Japanese Market during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, in *Large and Broad: The Dutch Impact on Early Modern Asia*, ed. Nagazumi Yoko, pp. 147, 149.

149. For information, see documents in *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia*, ed. Yoneo Ishii.

in particular is described by Leonard Blussé as the “Chinese Century” in the South China Sea region.<sup>150</sup> Running parallel to this was the entry of European players, resulting in direct trade between the region and Western Europe. However, in the first 250 years, the Europeans only managed to hold on to their gains as one of the many players in the local trading networks.

### ***The Peaking of the Chinese Junk Trade***

#### *The Economic Propellant for the Chinese Junk Trade*

The upsurge in the Chinese junk trade from the sixteenth century was propelled by the immense development of regional markets, cash crops and the handicraft industry in China. In turn these factors ushered in what was seen as “the Second Commercial Revolution”,<sup>151</sup> or what the mainland Chinese scholars in the 1950s and the 1960s called “the budding of capitalism”. As a matter of course, these developments contributed to the stimulation of the commodity economy.<sup>152</sup> The commercialized economy reached its height at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>153</sup> William T. Rowe cites the China scholar, Wu Chengming, saying that, “as of about 1800 roughly 10.5 per cent of the empire’s total grain production was marketed each year, along with some 26.3 per cent of raw cotton output, 52.8 per cent of cotton cloth production (over three billion bolts per year), 92.2 per cent of raw silk production, and nearly all of the very large tea and salt output”. Rowe comments, “... what Wu described is a domestic market of enormous scale, and a strikingly high degree of commercialization of the Qing economy, prior to its enforced ‘opening’ by Western commercial entrepreneurs”.<sup>154</sup>

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150. Leonard Blussé, “Chinese Century: The Eighteenth Century in the China Sea Region”, *Archipel* 58 (1999): 107–29.

151. The first “commercial revolution” occurred during Song times between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries that saw “the first qualitative transformation of the Chinese economy”. See William T. Rowe, “Domestic Interregional Trade in Eighteenth-century China”, in *On the Eighteenth Century as a Category of Asian History*, ed. Leonard Blussé and Femme Gastra, p. 175.

152. Wang The-chien 王業鍵, “Ming-Qing jingji fazhan bing lun zibenzhuji mengya wenti”, 明清經濟發展並論資本主義萌芽問題 [The economic development during the Ming-Qing periods and the question of the budding of capitalism], in *Qingdai jingji shi lunwen ji, 1* 清代經濟史論文集（一） [A collection of papers on economic history, Vol. 1] (Taipei: Dao Xiang chubanshe, 2003), p. 17.

153. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

154. William T. Rowe, “Domestic Interregional Trade in Eighteenth-century China”, p. 179.

Other observations that vividly depict the flourishing condition of the Chinese economy have been made by Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez who highlight the inflow of silver. As Flynn and Giraldez indicate, China was the most significant end-market customer for the silver output of Peru and Mexico in Latin America that began in the 1570s, initiating a trade on the global level. Another supplier in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries was Japan. This should come as no surprise since in the Ming period China contained over a quarter of the world's population and it was "the center of the largest tribute/trade system in the world",<sup>155</sup> continue Flynn and Giraldez. Andre Gunder Frank has also provided a very detailed discussion of the silver inflow into Asia in general and China and India in particular.<sup>156</sup>

### *Chinese Shipping Trade Achieving Supremacy in the "Long" Eighteenth Century*

Expanding their earlier achievements, after maritime trade was legally sanctioned again by the Qing court, the South Fujianese (*minnan*) people assiduously consolidated their strength on two fronts. Along the China coast, the South Fujianese were unquestionably the leading group in the long-distance trade. Their junks traded southward from Amoy to Canton and northward to Ningbo, Soochow, Kiaochoy, Tianjin and Jinzhou. Crossing the Taiwan Straits, their junks enjoyed an unchallenged position in the shipping between coastal China and Taiwan. In the Nanhai region, for centuries the South Fujianese had been the leading contenders in the field of sea trade. When the Yue (Teochiu) people from Changlim in east Guangdong joined them in the seafaring business in the Nanhai in the later decades of the eighteenth century, the Min-Yue junk trade was an unquestionable shipping force in the region. They were omnipresent in the Nanhai, not only visiting the main ports of Bangkok, Batavia and Singapore, after it had been established as a British trading station in 1819, but also penetrating into many remote and feeder ports of the region. Very soon, the Teochiu junks managed to assume the leading role in the Siamese-Sino junk trade. As the eyewitness John Crawford confirms in his book published in 1820, during this time Chinese trading junks

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155. Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, "Arbitrage, China, and World Trade in the Early Modern Period", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38, 4 (Nov. 1995): 429–30.

156. Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 143–9.

enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the shipping business between Southeast Asia and China.<sup>157</sup>

### *The Extensive Hinterland Networks*

China had always been the largest market for commodities imported from the Nanhai and the Indian Ocean regions. Its appetite for the foreign goods imported by its trading junks had swelled enormously since the sixteenth century. China's trade expansion was greatly facilitated by linkages between ports and their hinterlands.

The extensive trading networks connecting ports and hinterlands are one area of study waiting to be explored in more depth. To illustrate the picture, one can cite as an example an eyewitness account by an anonymous author, probably an Englishman residing in Guangzhou, which was a major trading port for many trading junks and foreign ships. He offers some rare and illuminating glimpses of these domestic networks in the 1830s. According to his description, the port city of Guangzhou was the hub of the commercial networks. He mentions the flow of trade goods to the city from the regions that bordered on Tonkin and from all parts of the empire, including provinces near and far, among them Guangxi, Yunnan, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Anhui, Jiangxi, Honan, Hebei, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Gansu, Shandong and Zhili. Each would bring in their local special products in exchange for both the domestic products of Guangzhou and imported foreign merchandise. Attracted by the opportunities it offered, financiers and investors from these locations, particularly Shanxi and Ningbo of Zhejiang, were drawn there and invested in the various branches of commerce. Frequently, merchants from the provinces took up residence in Guangzhou. For instance, a very wealthy group of Ningbo merchants resided in the city and played an influential role in local businesses.<sup>158</sup>

### *The Europeans and Global Trade* *Goa-Macao-Nagasaki*

The Portuguese arrived in the Indian Ocean at the end of the fifteenth century. Their main goal was to seize control of the highly profitable spice

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157. John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago* (Orig., 1820; reprint, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 186.

158. Anonymous, "A Dissertation upon the Commerce of China", in *Nineteenth Century China: Five Imperialist Perspectives* (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, no. 13, 1972), pp. 25–44.



trade, by taking pepper and spices to Lisbon and selling them on to other European markets through Antwerp. Besides their virtual monopoly on spices, the chain of trading-stations that they established in the Indian Ocean, extending to Malacca, Macao and Nagasaki, worked extremely well for several decades from the mid-sixteenth century. The viceroyalty of Goa actively participated in the highly profitable triangular trade between Goa, Macao and Nagasaki. During the days of the triangular trade, the Portuguese “Great Ship” exported silver from Japan to China and India via Macao and raw silk and silk fabrics to Japan from Macao.<sup>159</sup> In the early decades of the seventeenth century, the official annual Portuguese investments at Guangzhou were estimated at 1.5 million taels.<sup>160</sup>

However, by the end of the sixteenth century they were losing their edge in the competition in the pepper and spice trade from the Javanese and other Asian traders.<sup>161</sup> The triangular trade also ended when they were expelled from Japan in the 1630s. When Macao was cut off from Goa after the Dutch capture of Malacca in 1641 and from the profitable trade with Manila after Portugal’s revolt from Spain, it suffered from irreparable damage to its trade position.<sup>162</sup>

### *Haicheng-Manila-Acapulco*

Chinese trading junks from Haicheng began to call at Manila following the Spanish occupation of the port in 1571. The new colonial regime immediately opened direct trading connections with China. “Some half-dozen junks came to Manila in 1574 and twelve or fifteen the next year. By 1576 the trade was already firmly established,” William Lytle Schurz states.<sup>163</sup> The Chinese junk traders brought raw silk, silk textiles, porcelains and hempen fabrics. On the return voyages, they shipped back Mexican silver. Part of it was allocated to the advance order of Chinese merchandise in the following shipment to Manila.<sup>164</sup> In 1573, two Spanish galleons departing from Manila “carried to Acapulco,

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159. K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean*, pp. 65, 76.

160. C.R. Boxer, *The Great Ship from Amacon: Annals of Macao and the Old Trade, 1555–1640* (Lisbon: Centro de Estudos Historicos Ultramarinos, 1959), p. 6.

161. Luc Nagtegaal, *Riding the Dutch Tiger*, p. 17.

162. C.R. Boxer, *The Great Ship from Amacon*, p. 18.

163. William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1939), p. 27.

164. See Chuan Han-sheng 全漢昇, “Ming ji Zhongguo yu feilubin de maoyi” 明季中國與菲律賓的貿易 [Sino-Philippine trade during the late Ming], pp. 417–33, and “Ming Qing jian meizhou baiyin de shuru Zhongguo” 明清間美洲白銀的輸入中國 [Imports of American silver to China during the Ming–Qing transition], pp. 435–50; both in *Zhongguo jingji shi luncong, diyi ce* 中國經濟史

among other goods, 712 pieces of Chinese silk and 22,300 pieces of fine gilt china and other porcelain ware".<sup>165</sup> Beside Chinese silks, another highly valued staple was spices from the south. Most of these two categories of merchandise were thereafter forwarded to Europe.

Through the long-distance trade, both the Spanish and the Portuguese contributed to large flows of silver from Mexico, Peru and Japan into China and other Asian regions. As Schurz highlights, the Spanish and the Portuguese had set up a vast semi-circumference from Japan, China, India and the Moluccas whose radii met in Manila.<sup>166</sup> Their coins also achieved the status of international currency during the time.

### *Batavia-Ayudhya-Nagasaki*

Dutch and English ships appeared in Asian waters in the last decade of the sixteenth century. Shortly afterwards, both nations founded a chartered company known as the East India Company that allowed them to compete more successfully in trade with their Portuguese rival during the following 200 years. Large quantities of commodities were shipped back to European markets from Asia. These included cotton textiles from Coromandel on the east coast of India and silk textiles, raw silk, indigo and tea from China. Both the Dutch and English also involved themselves in the interregional trade of the Indian Ocean and maritime East Asia. Indian textiles were shipped to the Indonesian Archipelago to be exchanged for pepper and spices. Precious metals from East Africa and Japan became the major form of trading currency. An intra-Asia trade from the Red Sea to the China Sea was greatly enhanced by the burgeoning of Amsterdam and London as international trading centers in the Western world.

The Dutch opened up the triangular trade between India, Siam and Japan. They founded a trading-station in Ayudhya as a transshipment center in 1608. Within the triangular networks, large quantities of silver, gold and copper from Japan were carried to India where they were exchanged for cotton textiles from Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal that were subsequently taken to Ayudhya. In return, from Siam they procured forest and fishery products suitable for the Japanese market. Profit from the triangular trade in the form of silver and cotton textiles was reinvested in the Indonesian Archipelago where they were exchanged for pepper

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論叢，第一冊 [Collected papers on Chinese economic history, Vol. 1] (The Asia Institute of Hong Kong University, 1972).

165. William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, p. 27.

166. *Ibid.*

and spices. With no choice but to acquiesce in the Japanese restriction on the number of Dutch ships permitted to trade in the country, the Dutch East India Company was forced to abandon the direct trade between Ayudhya and Nagasaki in 1715.<sup>167</sup>

Although the Dutch built fortresses in the Java Sea region and had no qualms about using force to achieve full control or a monopoly, they were constrained by the fact that they were primarily a trading company. This required them to have second thoughts about using force if the costs outweighed the benefits to be gained.<sup>168</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century, they were just one of the many players in the existing indigenous trade network that showed no signs of losing its effectiveness. In 1660s, for instance, the aggressive Dutch policies against the Chinese junks that were trading between Tonkin and Nagasaki, failed badly simply because the vested interests of both the Japanese officials and the Trinh government of Tonkin provided them with protection against the unwelcome Dutch interlopers.<sup>169</sup> In Batavia or on Java's northeast coast, the Dutch knew perfectly well that they would need to collaborate with the Fujianese junk traders, local Chinese merchants and the indigenous rulers for own commercial survival.<sup>170</sup>

The Dutch gained a commanding position in 1743 after obtaining contractual suzerainty over the most important regencies in Java. Despite their consolidation of power in the island, the Dutch Company was fully aware that a burgeoning trade "demanded cooperation with local partners" and the Company continued to depend on the Chinese merchants, "whether to secure the products desired or sell imported commodities".<sup>171</sup> During the century, the Company was able to extract great profits from the trade in Moluccan spices, Indian textiles, Ceylonese cinnamon and Chinese tea, until they were sidelined by the British advance in Asian trade in the later decades of the century.<sup>172</sup>

### *India–Singapore–China*

By the late seventeenth century, the English East India Company had established itself in Surat, Madras, Bombay and Calcutta and was casting a speculative eye on the lucrative China trade. In 1712, the EIC obtained

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167. See Shimada Ryuto, "Siamese Products in the Japanese Market", p. 149.

168. Luc Nagtegaal, *Riding on the Dutch Tiger*, p. 16.

169. Iioka Naoko, "The Rise and Fall of the Tonkin-Nagasaki Silk Trade", pp. 51–2.

170. Arun Das Gupta, "The Maritime Trade of Indonesia: 1500–1800", in *Southeast Asia: Colonial History*, ed. Paul H. Kratoska, p. 122.

171. Cited in Kwee Hui Kin, *The Political Economy of Java's Northeast Coast*, pp. 6, 14.

172. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–6.

the permission of the Qing court to purchase tea, raw silk and porcelain in Guangzhou. Very soon it gained ascendancy over other European traders to become the major tea exporter from China to Europe. Gaining control of two important commodities, namely Indian textiles and opium, in the second half of the eighteenth century firmly established the dominant position of the British in the China trade.

The rise of Bangkok and British Singapore in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries signaled the eclipse of Manila and Batavia. These new commercial hubs took over as the two new emporia in maritime East Asia, becoming centers of the Chinese junk trade. Thanks to its geographical location at the heart of Southeast Asia, Singapore was especially successful in attracting traders from the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and China. It was a true trade emporium and regional hub right from its inception. In his work on the first 50 years of Singapore trade, Wong Lin Ken sums up its situation in the following words:

(It) consisted largely of the transshipment of European manufactures, Indian Opium, and Straits produce to China, and of the transshipment of Chinese manufactures and produce to Europe and America.<sup>173</sup>

Wong highlights two of the main trading groups which contributed to Singapore's rise to pre-eminence. One was made up of the free traders who had created a demand in Europe for such articles as sugar, while pushing the sale of such European goods as cotton piece goods, cotton yarn, fire-arms and glassware, amongst other items, in the Archipelago.<sup>174</sup> The other group was composed of Chinese junk traders, the majority from Amoy. In 1835, for example, almost one half of Singapore's total trade with China was undertaken by Chinese junks. Chinese junk traders brought along "Chinese goods demanded by the Chinese settlers", that "consisted of earthenware of different sizes and patterns, flooring tiles, coping stones, paper umbrellas, Chinese confectionary, dried and salted fruits, dried vegetables such as mushrooms, Chinese medicine, silk shoes and silk, Chinese cloth, straw, joss-sticks, tobacco specially cured to suit the palates of the Chinese residents, nankeen cloth, and gold lace. The value of these goods was extremely high."<sup>175</sup> For their return voyages, they purchased "raw cotton, cotton yarn, cotton piece goods, opium, arms and ammunition, and Straits produce from the Chinese dealers in

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173. Ibid., p. 106.

174. Wong Lin Ken, "The Trade of Singapore, 1819-69", *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 33, 4 (Dec. 1960): 199.

175. Ibid., p. 111.

the bazaar”.<sup>176</sup> The term “Straits produce” “embraced a bewildering variety of products”. They covered “practically all the produce, both vegetable and mineral” found throughout the Malay-Indonesia Archipelago, including “pepper and other spices, gambier, tin, camphor, beeswax, coffee, ebony, and antimony, tortoise-shell, *bêche-de-mer*, bird’s nests, rattans, gold-dust, pearls, sandalwood, shark fins, *agar-agar* (seaweeds), dragon’s blood (a kind of resinous gum), amber[gris] and dammar to name a few”.<sup>177</sup>

While European traders continued to expand their share in the external trade, the carrying trade conducted by Chinese junks was experiencing a different fate. Although the number of trading junks arriving in Singapore rapidly increased even during the First Sino-British War (Opium War) in 1839–42, it reached the peak in 1856–57, when “the number of their arrival was as high as 143”.<sup>178</sup> However, this marked the last spurt of Chinese junks from coastal China because their arrivals declined after that and “by 1863 junks were rapidly disappearing from the coasting trade of China”.<sup>179</sup> European square-rigged vessels and, subsequently, steamers finally achieved an unchallenged position in the long-distance carrying trade in Asian waters.

## Conclusion: Historiographical Remarks

When studying the sea or maritime regions, a contemporary author inevitably draws upon Fernand Braudel for ideas and vision. In his study of the Mediterranean, Braudel was able to perceive the unity of the region despite its great diversity. In a similar fashion, from the perspective of their maritime history the East Asian Seas can be taken as a geographical entity. The region was characterized by the vitality and sustainability of the regional circulation of goods between the producing-areas and the markets of the countries surrounding the East Asian Seas. Equally helpful has been K.N. Chaudhuri’s discussion of the Indian Ocean, in which he applies Braudel’s many concepts. One example is the idea of connections in long-distance trade. Chaudhuri presents a grand picture of long-distance trade, stretching beyond the geographical limits of the Indian Ocean to cover a long stretch of trade routes from the Red Sea at its western end to the China Seas in the east.

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176. Ibid.

177. Ibid., pp. 108–9.

178. Ibid., p. 122.

179. Ibid., p. 124.

### ***The Idea of an “Asian Mediterranean”***

Inspired by Braudel, the metaphor of an Asian Mediterranean has proved appealing to historians of Southeast or East Asia. One prevalent theme in this scholarship is to compare the South China Sea to Braudel's Mediterranean. Denys Lombard was certainly an enthusiastic promoter who envisaged the South China Sea as a second Mediterranean, shown by his organization of an international symposium in 1997 called “The Asian Mediterranean”.<sup>180</sup>

In different writings, the boundaries of “the Asian Mediterranean” vary. In his work, first published in 1944 and revised in 1964, Georges Cœdès suggests that, “there is a veritable Mediterranean formed by the China Sea, the Gulf of Siam, and the Java Sea”,<sup>181</sup> generally known as the Nanhai in Chinese texts. However, Lombard prefers a broader boundary, one that incorporates into it the southeastern coast of China, Hainan and Taiwan,<sup>182</sup> probably because the long development of maritime trade in the South China Sea cannot be properly comprehended without the inclusion of the China factor. In a recent publication, Francois Gipouloux refers to “[the] corridor linking the basins of the Sea of Japan, the Yellow Sea, the South China Sea, the Sulu Sea and the Celebes Sea” as the “Asian Mediterranean”, in his attempt “to uncover the hidden links between economics, geography, and international relations”.<sup>183</sup>

Although terms such as “the Second Mediterranean” or “the Asian Mediterranean” highlight the comparative aspects of the two maritime civilizations, they might have also inadvertently set limits to a better understanding of maritime East Asia and a proper appreciation of its uniqueness. The fact that the people were producers of widely sought-after commodities with the availability of large markets within the region, combined with the mass participation of those seeking their fortune from around the East Asian Seas, explains the long sustainability of the East Asian shipping trade and its great impact on the economic life of its population. In fact, as early as 1937, J.C. van Leur cautioned against using the Mediterranean analogy in the Asian context. He argued that the comparison obscured “a complete historical autonomy” of maritime Asia

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180. *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea: Miscellaneous Notes*, ed. Claude Guillot, et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), pp. vii–viii.

181. G. Cœdès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, p. 3.

182. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Notes on Circulation and Asymmetry in Two Mediterraneans, c. 1400–1800”, in *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea*, ed. Claude Guillot, et al., p. 35.

183. Francois Gipouloux, *The Asian Mediterranean*, pp. 1–2.

“that makes it practically impossible to carry through any comparison of phenomena”.<sup>184</sup>

Nevertheless, there is no denying that Braudel’s works remain a source of inspiration to those studying a maritime civilization named after a particular sea. Even Heather Sutherland, a critic of Braudel’s book, concedes that the “great themes” tackled by Braudel are the attraction of his works. Braudel frees a scholar from the confines of political borders, allowing him or her to “explore connections and borrowings, while also reconciling continuity and change”.<sup>185</sup> Without a doubt, any study of a maritime region will greatly benefit from Braudel’s intellectual imagination and rich conceptual vocabulary.

### ***Two Maritime Spaces***

Long-distance trade offers one opportunity by which to understand the geographical unity of maritime East Asia and to appreciate the linkages between the northern and southern sectors of the East Asian Seas more thoroughly. What have blurred the picture of the unity of the two maritime regions have been the two different historiographical approaches. One places a heavy reliance on the Chinese sources in research work and this has given rise to what is known as the “Nanhai” or “Nanyang” perspective. Terms such as “tribute relations” and “the Nanhai trade” in academic works reflect a southward-looking perspective. In contrast, John Smail’s appeal in 1961 for an “autonomous history” of Southeast Asia<sup>186</sup> has created an opposite Southeast Asia-centered approach. Although Smail’s main concern is the modern history of Southeast Asia and his hypothesis is to contend with “Euro-centric” historiography, his emphasis might inadvertently block the view of a connected maritime East Asia. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, for example, is critical of John Smail’s argument, claiming that it has the effect of delinking “Southeast Asian history from that of China and India”. He deems such an approach hardly desirable and intellectually infeasible.<sup>187</sup> Roderick Ptak, on the other

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184. J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p. 147. Refer also to Heather Sutherland, “Southeast Asian History and the Mediterranean Analogy”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, 1 (Feb. 2002): 1–20, for a critical review of the Mediterranean parallels; and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Notes on Circulation and Asymmetry”, pp. 21–43, for his reservations about the comparison.

185. Heather Sutherland, “Southeast Asian History and the Mediterranean Analogy”, pp. 1, 17.

186. John Smail, “On the Possibility of an Autonomous History of Modern Southeast Asia”, *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2 (July 1961): 72–102, that examines the “Europe-centric” and “Asia-centric” schools of Indonesian historiography.

187. *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 33.

hand, has proposed another way to rectify the dominant northern bias in discussing the historical interactions between China and Southeast Asia. He hints at a possible reversal in the treatment of the subject “to put more historians on a ‘southern track’” and grow used to looking at the “north” from the “south”, moving away from the “Nanyang concept”.<sup>188</sup> However, this shift in position does not seem to resolve the problem of dealing with the two historiographical biases. Only when the two maritime spaces of north and south are connected is it possible to comprehend the long history of maritime East Asia.

### ***Positioning Southeast Asia in the Long-Distance Trade***

To reconcile the Northeast and Southeast Asia biases, the role of Southeast Asia in the long-distance trade is of essential importance. Sanjay Subrahmanyam rightly highlights “the India factor” and “the China factor”. One might want to modify the two factors as “the Indian Ocean factor” and “the Northeast Asia factor” to cover regions rather than individual states. In the long stretch of the sea-routes from the Indian Ocean to Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia did not merely play a passive intermediary role as the bridge between the two regions, it was itself an engine propelling and sustaining the long-distance trade with its unique commodities widely sought after by regions in the northeast and to its west. Together the three maritime spaces were organically connected and created a miracle in maritime trade in human history.

### ***Final Remarks***

Efforts to put an emphasis on the geographical unity of maritime East Asia and the complementary roles of Northeast and Southeast Asia in long-distance trade are indeed long overdue. One hopes for a new historiography on maritime East Asia. Our knowledge of maritime Asia in general and the East Asian Seas in particular remains sketchy with gaps to be filled, puzzles to be solved and conflicting views to be reconciled. Although quality works have been produced in the past 20 years, especially on seaports and port-to-port connections, linkages between ports and hinterlands are still understudied. Only when the inland rural producers and the hinterland consumers are connected to the structure of maritime long-distance trade can one claim to have gained a proper appreciation of a fuller picture of the trade.

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188. Roderich Ptak, “International Symposium: China and Southeast Asia: Historical Interactions”, Hong Kong, 10–21 July 2001, *Archipel* 62 (2001): 3–4.





## PART TWO

### Between “Us” and “Them”

*Five chapters exploring the perceived boundaries demarcated between “us” and “them” are included in this part.*

*Chapter 2 is about the strong Chinese sense of boundaries with regard to their maritime frontier in late imperial times. They put themselves on the defensive as is clearly revealed in the term used at the time, “haifang”, meaning maritime (coastal) defense. This concept set self-imposed limits on their activities beyond the coastlines and kept away those whom they perceived to be intruders from outside of the boundary.*

*Chapter 3 presents a clear case to explain the Chinese “haifang” concept as shown in their perception of the Portuguese presence on the coast. While the imperial government was determined to enforce the sea prohibition laws against these intruders, the Chinese coastal communities nurtured a strong desire to engage in trade with the newcomers. This contradiction gave rise to a deadly struggle between the law-and-order defenders and those who had a stake in maritime activities.*

*Chapter 4 follows the events that occurred within the city walls of Fuzhou, the provincial capital of Fujian, after the arrival of two English missionaries in the post-treaty era. An incident in 1850 pitted the missionaries against the local officials and scholars. It also enraged the young emperor who had recently ascended the throne and caused a diplomatic imbroglio between China and Britain.*

*Chapter 5 zooms in on a Fuzhou scholar who was embittered by the missionary presence and the large inflow of opium shipped in by English merchants. In his perception, it was the English government that condoned the import of this drug. His furious anger is reflected in*

*the title of his study the “Pavilion of Eagle Shooting”, an allusion to his hatred of the intruders.*

*Chapter 6 examines causes of Qing China’s perceptions and knowledge of the maritime world at its peak of power in the eighteenth century. During this era, the Chinese divided the broad maritime space into two sectors, namely the Nanyang and the Great Western Ocean. The former was perceived as less threatening but the latter had a less friendly image attributable to growing British and Dutch power in the region. However, the self-confidence of the Qing had led it to underestimate the threat from the Great Western Ocean. Intelligence-gathering and knowledge-generating were not yet part of the political culture of Qing China, unknowingly facing a rapidly changing maritime world.*

## CHAPTER 2

# Maritime Frontiers, Territorial Expansion and *Haifang* (Coastal Defense) during the Late Ming and High Qing

### Introduction

China's perceptions of its maritime frontier during imperial times are often dismissed as passive and monotonous. The story that the imperial governments imposed restrictions and prohibitions to prevent their own people from putting out to sea and outsiders from coming at will to visit the China coast is uncritically repeated without any further reflection. Furthermore, although for centuries China had been concerned with military threats from the northern and Inner Asian steppes, it was only in the nineteenth century that China finally faced a major challenge from the sea mounted by the Western powers. Prior to this change, there were indeed maritime disturbances such as those caused by the arrivals of the Japanese and Western intruders in the sixteenth century, but the coastal boundary was considered relatively secure and did not require urgent attention or projections of state might. Consequently, imperial China failed to develop active policies toward its maritime frontier and instead was caught up in illusions, unable to rationalize beyond a certain point. Hence it became an empire without empire builders.<sup>1</sup>

The story is not so simple. The apparent inertia in China's long maritime history is deceptive. For more than two thousand years, imperial governments had in fact been responding to coastal conditions in rational and pragmatic ways. During the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BC) and the early stage of the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220), a unified China expanded to establish a natural coastal boundary from the Liaodong

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1. John E. Wills, Jr., *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666–1687* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 188; and James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar, Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 15.

Peninsula in the northeast to the Guangdong coast and Hainan in the south through a series of conquests and re-conquests. The following centuries, until the Tang Dynasty (618–907), were a time of consolidation. The same period also witnessed more frequent contact between China and the maritime world especially of the South Seas region, a development that gained momentum after the fifth century. The ties were built upon a mutually beneficial and flexible framework of “tribute and trade” that allowed participants from either side to interpret the nature of their relations in different ways to suit their own purposes.<sup>2</sup> During the long period of Tang, Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1260–1368) rule, China was linked to the maritime world through prosperous trade. Founded in the ninth century, by Yuan times the port city of Quanzhou had risen to become one of the world’s largest seaports. In the tenth century, a specialized bureau—the Supervisorates of Maritime Trade and Shipping (*shibo si*)—was established to govern maritime relations and trade. Until the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), such offices operated almost without interruption in Guangzhou, Ningbo and Quanzhou (Fuzhou in the mid-Ming). Breaking with the traditional approach, Khubilai Khan (r. 1260–94) and the Ming Yongle Emperor (r. 1403–24) briefly followed an active forward policy by sending expeditions overseas. In a nutshell, this long process of Chinese maritime history was certainly eventful, although existing scholarship has barely begun to scratch the surface of its progress and innovations. Unquestionably the imperial governments were aware of the maritime world and they in fact played a major role in it.

Imperial China’s seaboard remained relatively unthreatened by domestic and foreign forces up to the mid-Ming. The long period of tranquility gave the Chinese state ample time to consolidate and digest its hold of its maritime frontier-lands and saw the rise of seaports as transit points for the supply of such precious goods as rhinoceros horns, elephant tusks, tortoise-shells and pearls from foreign countries. More commodities, including aromatics, pepper and medicinal ingredients were added to the list in later periods. Through trade the coastal region became well integrated into other parts of the empire, politically and economically. By the late Ming, the southeast coast could no longer be considered a peripheral zone that the state could afford to ignore.

It was during the decades after the 1520s that a state of such maritime disorder prevailed along the southeast coast. It gave rise to the security

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2. A more recent review of the literature on the “tribute system” and its dualism is provided in James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, pp. 9–15.

issue of coastal defense (*haifang*)<sup>3</sup> that subsequently became a major policy concern for both the Ming and the Qing (1644–1912) governments.

This chapter revolves around these observations. It begins with a long view of the pre-Ming period that illustrates the formation of maritime frontiers up to the Han and the subsequent consolidation from Han times to the mid-Ming. The late Ming and the Qing prior to the Opium War (1839–42) will form the backbone of the present investigation. Through the lenses of scholars of statecraft during the period in question, the discussion hopes to reveal what were the actual approaches to the *haifang* issue and the rationale behind them, instead of what should have happened.

## Boundaries, Frontiers and Lands Beyond

During imperial times, the Chinese rulers maintained a strong sense of the empire's boundaries. In his letter to King George III of England, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95), explained that “the borders of the heavenly empire are peremptorily drawn and their crossing by the people from outside the boundaries is strictly prohibited.... Every length of the land within the empire is covered by the register of population. The boundaries are precisely drawn. Even the islets and shoals have also been divided and demarcated. Each is under a particular jurisdiction.”<sup>4</sup> He was not exaggerating the situation. As Owen Lattimore observes, there was an inherent bias in the Chinese historical processes toward the evolution of “rigid frontiers”.<sup>5</sup>

This territorial concept contributed to the long tradition of compiling and publishing numerous geographical writings to define the borders. Maritime frontiers were no exception. The *Yugong* has often been cited as an early work that describes what were known as the “nine [geographical] divisions” (*jiuzhou zhidi*) under Yu the Great (according to tradition, approximately the twenty-first century BC). Some of the divisions extended eastward to the sea from modern Shandong to northern Fujian. During the Xia and Shang dynasties (c. 2100–1028 BC), the eastern region where the Yi people resided was considered “a land

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3. A literal translation of the term is “sea defense”, but more precisely it meant “coastal defense”.

4. *Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖誌 [Illustrated gazetteer of the maritime nations], comp. Wei Yuan 魏源撰 (1847 ed.; hereafter *HGTZ*), 48: 17b–18a.

5. See Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1962), p. 98.

within the reach" (*yaofu*) of the state and therefore under Chinese (Huaxia) influence. The south, including modern Guangdong, was the land of the Man people. It was not under Xia and Shang influence and was classified as a land far from the capital or "a land beyond reach" (*huangfu*). The Man people were perceived to be more obstinate than the Yi. This was a not unwarranted designation as they actually did begin to cause border disturbances during Xia and Shang times. Between 401–381 BC, the renowned military strategist Wu Qi had helped the Kingdom of Chu to annex the region around Lake Dongting and Changwu.<sup>6</sup> Thereafter, Chinese influence slowly penetrated the region south of the Yangzi River and the description *yaofu* was then extended to it. In other words, the two terms *yaofu* and *huangfu* did not indicate the geographical distances of those lands from the Chinese capital, as traditional Chinese texts would tend to imply; their actual usage pointed more to whether they fell within the perimeter of regular contacts, ritualized by tribute relations. The lands of the Rong and Di people in the west and north respectively, for example, were considered faraway and inaccessible. Another interesting example was Sulu in the South Seas. As a Qing source puts it, "it had long been an area beyond [our] reach (*huangfu zhidi*).... During the 15th year of the Ming Yongle Reign, ... [the three kings of the country together with their consorts] came to pay tribute."<sup>7</sup> From then on, Sulu was placed within the orbit of *yaofu*.

During Qin-Han times, China's eastern and southeastern borders were extended to the sea; the former Yi and Man regions became parts of China proper. In the south, the Qin formed three new prefectures, namely: Nanhai, Gueilin and Xiangjun, roughly corresponding to modern Guangdong, Guangxi and northern Vietnam. The region around present-day Guangdong, once categorized as an inaccessible land, now became an integral part of the imperial domain.<sup>8</sup> With the exception of the border between China and modern Vietnam, that remained an unstable and shifting entity, the sea now became a natural and stable boundary and the coastline formed, using Owen Lattimore's phrase again, part of China's new "rigid frontiers". This factor had the effect of constricting any further expansion on the part of China.

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6. Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–82), *Tianxia junguo libing shu* 天下郡國平利病書 [Problems and challenges in the various regions of China] (hereafter *TXJGLBS*), 29: 1a; *Tongdian* 通典 [General institutional records of the previous dynasties], comp. Du You (735–812) 杜佑編撰, 188: 1a.

7. *Da Qing yitong zhi* 大清一統志 [The unitary gazetteer of the Great Qing] (hereafter *DQYTZ*) (1764 ed.), 423: 1a.

8. Du You, *Tongdian*, 188: 1a.

Terms such as *yaofu*, *huangfu*, Yi, Man or Fan remained in use, but now indicated lands and peoples farther away, beyond the new Chinese boundaries. Within China proper, the terms *bantu* (household register and territorial map) and *banji* (household register) came into use as alternate terms to indicate the imperial domain or territories in which the *junxian* (prefecture-district) administrations were formed. The *junxian* administrative units served to enhance the awareness of territorial boundaries since each unit was meticulously demarcated for tax collection and other responsibilities. This institution subsequently became the essential mechanism in establishing territorial control. For example, from the early Ming Dynasty, the establishment of *xian* administrations was used as an effective way to tackle the problem of local disturbances caused by banditry or rebellious forces. When a territory was placed under the jurisdiction of a local official, education and sacrifices would be encouraged and the people would be led to observe the proprieties and become governable.<sup>9</sup> Chinese civilization was thereby enabled to embrace the new territories, and that in turn helped to strengthen the governance.

Following the Qin conquest, the Chinese control of the south had still not been firmly established, and this explains why military officers were appointed to head the regional administrations. In the words of Gu Yanwu (1613–82), when the refined influence of culture and virtue was insufficient, then force would be needed (*wende buzhu er hou you wugong*). Territories falling into this category were the faraway lands of Guangdong and Guangxi in the south, that were conquered by the Qin and named Nanhai and Gueilin prefectures, and that required military rule under a “commandery defender” (*junwei*). Unfortunately the high-ranking regional officials were often grasping and their exactions led to numerous rebellions by lower officers (*li*) and the common people. Insurgencies among the minority peoples were also a frequent occurrence. A civil official with the rank of prefect was first appointed only after the early Han re-conquest of the region.<sup>10</sup>

In traditional Chinese historiography, conquests were not often advocated. This assertion can be best illustrated in the following passage taken from the *Bei shi* (Standard history of the Northern Dynasties):

Since early times, it was because the rulers were ambitious and the ministers were fond of meddling that the country reached the faraway people and extended itself to the distant lands.... Once the ruler is eager to advance the distant people, he will have the

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9. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 24a

10. *Ibid.*, 27: 1a–2a, 3a, 4a–b.



service of ministers who follow the virtue that regards life lightly... The wise kings in ancient times governed a land of fifty thousand *li*. They saw it their duty to pacify the many states among the Xia (Chinese) people and did not pay attention to the matters in the frontier lands and the distant lands. It was not because they could not subdue or influence them by virtue. It was because they did not want China (*Zhongguo*) to be wearied by the foreign people from all directions (*si yi*) and waste the useful resources on useless things.

Its compiler was especially critical of the expansionist policy during the times of the First Emperor of the Qin (r. 221–210 BC) and Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 140–87 BC), who were seen to have paid a high cost for their conquest and to have caused their people suffering by such endeavours.<sup>11</sup> Another compiler of a Song text also commented, “China’s relations with the Yi and Di were based on a continuous loose rein (*jimi*) only. When it is necessary to manifest power and send conquering troops, it is to subdue the ungrateful, stop humiliation, express majestic spirit and rid the people of calamity, but all these are the last resort.”<sup>12</sup> The model of the Zhou Dynasty was upheld because “the Zhou had adopted the best approach.... Since the ruler’s name and influence could not reach the distant land, he did not want to send an expeditionary force to attack it when it rebelled; nor did he lower his guard when it had surrendered.”<sup>13</sup> Although there were exceptions, on the whole China learned the lesson that long wars damaged an agrarian economy and the gains were short-lived because its troops were often forced to retreat when their position weakened.<sup>14</sup>

Although imperial China gradually expanded its domain over the course of two millennia beginning in the Qin-Han periods, it took even longer to consolidate China’s boundaries. There were conquests, losses, re-conquests and voluntary abandonment of territory. Despite the Chinese rhetoric that “all lands under the heaven belong to the imperial domain” and the literary expression that China’s territory extended to the “four

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11. The above quotation is cited from *Bei shi* 北史 [Standard dynastic history of the Northern Dynasties], 97: 38b–39a. The same passage is repeated in *Sui shu* 隋書 [Standard dynastic history of the Sui], 83: 212b–23b.
  12. *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 [Encyclopedia concerning matters of governance kept for reference in the imperial library], comp. in the early eleventh century by Wang Qinruo et al. 王欽若 (962–1025) 等撰, 982: 1a.
  13. *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 [New standard dynastic history of the Tang], 215: 1a.
  14. Morris Rossabi (ed.), *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 2.

seas" (*guojia fuyou sihai*),<sup>15</sup> the territory extended only up to the sea-coast in the east. As the author of the *Haiguo tuzhi*, Wei Yuan (1794–1857), observed, even when China was ruled by the great emperors, who were "diligent in conquering new territories" (*hao qin yuanlue zhi jun*), it did not reach the ends of the land mass except on the eastern coastline. An unprecedented expansion [beyond the coastline] into the South Seas took place during the times of the Great Khan Khubilai, but the Yuan forces only temporarily occupied Champa and Java.<sup>16</sup>

Conversely, domains were lost from time to time. One example is the 16 districts ceded by Shi Jingtang of the Later Jin during the Five Dynasties period (907–60). Shi, who was aided by the Liao in his founding of the Later Jin, ceded 16 districts in the northern part of modern Hobei and Shansi provinces to the Qidan (Khitans). Nevertheless, Yue Shi, a Song Dynasty compiler, continued to include these places as part of the Song territories. However, an introduction to his work prepared by the chief compilers of the *Siku quan shu* (The complete library of the four treasures) during the Qianlong reign point out that these districts had not in fact formed part of the Song domain; their inclusion in Yue Shi's works probably indicated that the early Song government was determined to recover the lost territories.<sup>17</sup> Apparently, in the minds of the chief compilers during the Qing, the term domain (*bantu*) implied only the territory under effective administration with demarcated boundaries, within which the registered households (*hukou*) and the land tax (*tianfu*) subsequently paid formed two foundations of the administration.

Although the Song government was not responsible for the loss of the 16 districts, it perceived their cession as a humiliation and therefore it had a moral obligation as a successor dynasty to recover them. There were also rare occasions on which territorial losses were accepted matter-of-factly. The Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–35), for example, showed flexibility and generosity in conceding a loss of territory to Annam in 1725, when the Yun-Guei Governor-General, Gao Qizhuo, reported the encroachment on China's borders by Annam. The emperor replied that, in a choice between boundary demarcations and neighborly spirit, between the use of force and inducing willing submission, he would prefer the latter in each case. He said:

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15. *HGTZ*, 49: 11b.

16. *Ibid.*, 2: 24a.

17. "Introduction" to *Taiping huanyu zhi* 太平寰宇记 [A geographical encyclopedia compiled during the Taiping Xingguo years (976–984)] [(hereafter *TPHYZ*), comp. Yue Shi (930–1007) 樂史撰, 1a–b, in *Siku quan shu* 四庫全書 [The complete library of the four treasures] (hereafter *SKQS*), "History Section"; also "Zongmu" 總目 [main table of contents], *SKQS*, 68: 6b.

Regarding Dulong, Nandan and other places, Annam occupied them during the closing years of the Ming dynasty, not during the times of our dynasty. As Annam has been complaisant for several generations since the founding of this dynasty, their attitude is commendable and merits rewards. How can we contest against them for every inch of the land? ... Even the land has its usefulness, how can the heavenly country contest the claim of a small country to it? If the land has no use at all, why should we contest it with them?

However, when Annam tried to acquire more land, its efforts were promptly rejected and it was reproached for being ungrateful.<sup>18</sup>

After a long period of a thousand years up to the Song, with the exception of Annam, the southern frontier along the coastline had been greatly consolidated. The latter was first annexed into the imperial domain under the First Emperor of Qin and named Xiangjun. It was divided into three administrative units in the early Han, namely: Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen and Rinan. The term Jiaozhou also came into use as the designation for a regional administrative unit that covered the nine sub-units in present-day Guangdong, Guangxi and northern Vietnam. The southernmost boundaries were drawn after the re-conquest by General Ma Yuan (14 BC–AD 49) of the Eastern Han Dynasty. In AD 43 he erected two “bronze pillars” (*tongzhu*) in the southern parts of Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen and Rinan prefectures to demarcate the imperial border from that of Champa. In the third century, Jiao was restricted to being a territorial designation applied exclusively to Jiaozhi. In the seventh century (early Tang), Jiaozhou, that encompassed the previous units, was added to Guang to form one of the country’s ten circuits, but it was not long before the name Annam was adopted to replace Jiao to refer to the administrative unit embracing what is now northern Vietnam.<sup>19</sup>

Under the Song, Annam was recognized as an independent state. As Gu Yanwu commented, “Jiaozhi had been integrated into the Chinese territory since the Qin-Han.... It was not until the early Song that its [leader] was granted the overlordship [by China].... However, he continued to act in the same way as a Chinese minister (*neidi zhi chen*) and did not declare statehood (*guo*). Even when he had the title of Prince of Nanping conferred on him, he referred to his territory as the circuit of An-nan in memorials

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18. For the citation and the later event, see “*Shizhong xianhuangdi shengxun*” 世宗先皇帝聖訓, 35: 13b–14a, 17a–19a, in *SKQS*, “History Section”.

19. Zhou Qufei 周去非 (South Song), *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答 [Answering questions concerning matters beyond the Lingnan mountains] (hereafter *LWDD*) (completed in 1178), 1: 1a–b, 10: 7b–8a; *TXJGLBS*, 28: 36a–37a.

[to China].”<sup>20</sup> In 1164, the South Song government granted the title of kingship to Jiaozhi. This action indicated Song recognition of Annam’s statehood and the state of Annam (An-nan guo) was also mentioned in Chinese writings for the first time.<sup>21</sup> Thereafter, as Gu Yanwu lamented, “this country (China) therefore saw it as the like of Korea and Zhenla (Cambodia) and no longer knew that it used to be an integral part of China.”<sup>22</sup> The Song author Zhou Qufei was aware of Annam’s independent status and its adoption of the name Dayue Guo (the Kingdom of Great Viet) and in fact listed it in the chapter of “foreign states” (*waiguo*), calling it the “State of Annam”. However, he refused to acknowledge its legitimacy and labeled it an illegitimate (*wei*) political institution.<sup>23</sup> Another Song text also comments, “Annam ... had been under China’s prefecture-district administration right up until our own times when it has no longer been included in the domain (*bantu*) for the first time.”<sup>24</sup> Ouyang Min, another Song author, designated Annam a “prefecture beyond the pale” (*huawai zhou*),<sup>25</sup> a disguised acknowledgement of Annam’s independent status. One indication of the contraction of the frontier bordering Annam during the Song can be seen in the erection of two pavilions called Tianyai ting (Pavilion at the Uttermost Ends of the Earth) and Haijiao ting (Pavilion at the Edge of the Sea) respectively in Qinzhou and Lianzhou in Guangdong.<sup>26</sup> Today, the combined term “Tianyai Haijiao” refers to the southernmost point of Hainan. The shifting borders were also indicated by the erection of “bronze pillars” on the Chinese side of the modern border on several occasions after Han times.<sup>27</sup>

In 1400, the Tran monarch in Annam was deposed by Le Qui Li and partisans of the Tran Dynasty decided to request Chinese aid to redress the situation. Their action provided the Yongle Emperor with the pretext to send an expedition to Tonkin in 1407, where it occupied Hanoi and

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20. *TXJGLBS*, 32: 125a.

21. Hong Liangji 洪亮吉 (1746–1809), *Qianlong fu ting zhou xian tuzhi* 乾隆府廳州縣圖誌 [Illustrated gazetteer of prefectures, subprefectures, departments and districts during the Qianlong Reign] (hereafter *QLFTZXTZ*), 50: 6a.

22. *TXJGLBS*, 32: 125a.

23. *LWDD*, 2: 1a, 2b, 3a–b.

24. Cited in Zheng Ruozeng 鄭若曾 (1503–70), *Zheng Kaiyang zazhu* 鄭開陽雜著 [A collection of writings (about coastal and inner-waters defense, Japan, and others)] (hereafter *ZKYZZ*), 6: 41a.

25. Ouyang Min, *Yudi guangji* 輿地廣記 [A geographical encyclopedia], comp. Ouyang Min 歐陽忞撰 (completed around 1111–17), in *SKQS*, “History Section”, 38: 1a.

26. *LWDD*, 1: 16a–b.

27. *Ibid.*, 10: 7b–8a; *TXJGLBS*, 28, 36a–37a.

seized the usurper. However, two decades later a Thanh-hoa chieftain named Le Lo'i scored a victory over the Ming force in 1428. Commenting in the early Qing Dynasty on the failure to recover Annam, a seventeenth-century text included in Gu Yanwu's geographical work had this to say:

Alas, since the Qin annexation of hundreds of prefectures, Jiaozhi together with Nanhai and Gueilin had become an integral part of China.... But, after the rule of the Five Dynasties, why was the place occupied by local rogues, so that even the rising Song failed to reconquer it? [This former domain] therefore became a Yi Di area.... Despite one successful campaign in the Song that led to the expulsion of its king and later the entry into its capital of the Yuan dynastic forces, China still failed to re-possess it.... Today's boundaries surpass [those of] the Song, and are comparable to those of the Tang, but smaller than those of the Han; [this] is because of the loss of the three prefectures [namely: Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen and Rinan]. [China] had been fortunate to gain them, but lost them later. What a pity!<sup>28</sup>

The phrase "our dependency (*shuguo*) An-nan" appears in a Qing source cited by Wei Yuan.<sup>29</sup> It is possible that this perception was based on the Chinese version of the events. As shown in the Chinese records, in 1659 Annam paid tribute to the rising Qing Dynasty after the latter's pacification of Yunnan. This friendly exchange led to the award of kingship to Annam in 1666. When King Chieu Thong of the Le Dynasty fled the capital then under attack by the Tay Son troops led by Nguyen Hue in 1787, he sought help from the Qing government. Shortly afterwards, after scoring initial successes and briefly restoring King Chieu to the throne in late 1788, the Qing army was routed by Nguyen Hue. However, the victor decided to make a reconciliation with the Qing. The Qing record claims that Nguyen Hue "came and surrendered himself" (*lai xiang*) and, in return, was proclaimed "King of An-nan" by the Qing. After a new Dynasty, the Nguyen, was founded by Gia Long in 1802, the Qing proclaimed him the "King of Yuenan (Vietnam)". The name Vietnam was adopted at the request of Gia Long during a tribute mission, according to the Chinese record.<sup>30</sup>

At the time of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589), imperial China perceived the islands in the vast sea in the south as tributary states. It called them "the various states in the Nanhai (South Seas) located beyond the frontiers (*jiaowai*) of Rinan. They have all sent

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28. *TXJGLBS*, 32: 125b–126a.

29. *HGTZ*, 3: 9b.

30. For the events cited above, see *ibid.*, 3: 13b–14a, 5: 12b.

tribute to China since the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han.”<sup>31</sup> Yue Shi of the Song Dynasty also mentions the Nanhai states, describing them as “countries beyond the frontiers” (*jiaowai zhuguo*). They numbered more than 30.<sup>32</sup>

During the early Ming, the founding emperor, Taizu (Hongwu, r. 1368–98), designated the countries in the east and the Nanhai, including Korea, Japan, Liuqiu (Ryukyu), Xiao Liuqiu (Lesser Ryukyu), Annam, Champa, Cambodia, Siam, Sumatra, Java, Pahang and Borneo, as countries “not to be invaded” because they were separated by mountains and seas and located faraway, “hidden in a corner”. As long as they continued to act peacefully toward China, they should be left alone.<sup>33</sup> Despite the fact that they were designated “tributary countries”, this imperial injunction was the clearest declaration that they were considered independent states.<sup>34</sup>

The incompatibility between the imperial rhetoric and reality can also be deduced from the term *waiguo* (foreign countries), used interchangeably with “tributary countries”. It appears in two standard dynastic histories, the *Jiu wudai shi* (Former standard history of the Five Dynasties) and the *Song shi* (Standard dynastic history of the Song). The latter was compiled under the Yuan and completed in 1345. Among the countries to the east and south mentioned in it are Korea, Jiaozhi (Annam), Champa, Zhenla (Cambodia), Pagan (in Burma), Srivijaya, Java, Borneo, Liuqiu and Japan.

By Qing times, the Chinese perception of the maritime frontiers had become a mix of rhetoric and reality. Gu Yanwu, for example, states that the China coast began where Guangdong bordered Annam and ended at the Yalu River bordering Korea.<sup>35</sup> Another Qing text published in the early eighteenth century gives a detailed description of the maritime boundaries that covered seven provinces from Liaodong to Guangdong. Among the three most strategic maritime provinces, namely: Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang, it said that Fujian held the key to the maritime frontier. The most strategic offshore islands included Nan’ao (between Guangdong and Fujian), Jinmen, Amoy, Haitan and Zhoushan. Hainan, the Penghu Islands (Pescadores) and Taiwan were considered territories located in the Outer Sea (*waihai*). Aomen (Macao) is listed among the “foreign countries”. As the text explains, Aomen was “where the people

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31. *Ibid.*, 3: 13b–14a, 5: 12b.

32. *TPHYZ*, 176: la–2a.

33. For the quotes, see *Ming hui dian* 明會典 [Collected administrative statutes of the Ming Dynasty] (1509), 96: 9a–10b.

34. *Ibid.*, 96: 3b–4a; and *DQY TZ* (1764), juan 421–424.

35. *TJGLBS*, 26: la, 3a.

from the Western Ocean (*Xiyang ren*) rented their lodgings". Other "foreign countries" included Luzon, Borneo, Ka-la-pa (Dutch Batavia), Siam, Annam, Cambodia and Japan on the one hand, and Portugal, Spain, France, and England on the other. The countries in the latter group were located at a distance of "two years' voyage" and hence had never been visited by Chinese junks.<sup>36</sup>

In the meantime, the imperial rhetoric continued. Liuqiu is a case in point. It had been considered a most loyal and respectful tributary state by both the Ming and Qing governments. Soon after the founding of the Ming, Liuqiu responded to a Ming mission to the kingdom in 1372 by sending a tribute mission to China for the first time. In 1392 during the Hongwu Reign, the King of Zhongshan in Liuqiu sent students to study in the imperial capital.<sup>37</sup> The Chinese were impressed by Liuqiu's compliance with the Chinese lunar calendar, which was considered in the Chinese political concept a symbol of submission. Since the Chenghua reign (1465–87), it had been a practice of Liuqiu to send high-ranking officials to inform China of the accession of new kings and request the conferment of titles.<sup>38</sup> A Chinese imperial proclamation sent in 1532 observed that, despite Liuqiu's location in a distant part of the seas, it had long been influenced by Chinese culture (*shengjiao*). Following compliance with the emperor's duty of benevolence, the Ming Jiajing emperor (r. 1522–66) sent Censor Chen Kan as envoy to confer on the new king of Liuqiu, Shangqing, the title "King of Zhongshan of the Liuqiu State". The king was instructed to perform the duty of a minister and perpetuate peace and tranquility.<sup>39</sup> In 1600, Shangning, then the king of Zhongshan, sent a memorial to request the conferment of kingship. This was 12 years after he had acceded to the throne. The delay had been occasioned by Japanese incursions. Censor Xia Ziyang was appointed envoy for the conferment mission. The delegation left the capital for Fujian in 1603. The conferment vessel was specially built in Fujian and took three years to complete. The envoy left Fujian for Liuqiu in 1606. The presence of Japanese troops in Liuqiu during this time might have involved the envoy in a confrontation, a prospect that aroused great anxiety among high-ranking officials in Fujian.<sup>40</sup> Both the touring censorial inspector, Fang Yuanyan, and the

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36. *Qingchu haijiang tushuo* 清初海疆圖說 [Illustrated descriptions of the boundaries during the early Qing Dynasty] (hereafter *QCHJTS*), in *Taiwan wenxan congkan* 台灣文獻叢刊 (hereafter *TWWXCK*), no. 155, pp. 5, 7–9, 11, 59.

37. Wang Shizhen 王世禎 (1635–1711), "Liuqiu ru taixue shimo" 琉球入太學始末, in *TWWXCK*, no. 292, p. 17.

38. Chen Kan 陳侃, "Shi Liuqiu lu" 使琉球錄, in *TWWXCK*, no. 287, preface, p. 1.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

40. Xia Ziyang 夏子陽, "Shi Liuqiu lu" 使琉球錄, in *TWWXCK*, no. 287, p. 171.

governor, Xu Xueju, memorialized the throne that “the turbulent state of the seas cautions us to safeguard the dignity of our country. We appeal to the throne to reconsider the dispatch of the conferment envoy.” They feared that the country’s dignity would be jeopardized were the two envoys to be confronted by the Japanese. Their concern also extended to the few hundred lives on board the ship.<sup>41</sup> In the end, their anxiety proved unwarranted. The Japanese soldiers chose to play the role of observers at the ceremony and did not cause any trouble. Envoy Xia clearly sensed the precarious position of Liuqiu, and he said in his record of the mission that, “Liuqiu is so close to Japan that, once Korea is lost to the latter, it would not be able to survive.”<sup>42</sup> By then, the Chinese were under no illusions about the threat of an expansionist Japan on the maritime frontier.

The practice of sending an imperial conferment mission upon request continued under the Qing. During the reign of Kangxi (r. 1662–1722), a scholar-official named Wang Shizhen comments that, “among the various countries, Liuqiu was the most keen on Chinese culture. China also treated it most favorably.”<sup>43</sup> Another scholar, Jiang Dengyun, thought Liuqiu was no different from a Chinese domain because it had observed the duty of ministers for generations. “Their cap and robes (*yiguan*) and culture (*wenwu*) manifest Chinese influence. Other countries cannot compare with them [in this regard].”<sup>44</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, reform-minded scholars equated tributary states with “dependencies” in the modern meaning of the term. For example, the well-known expert on the management of foreign trade and maritime defense, Liang Tingnan (1796–1861), lists Liuqiu as a “*shuguo*” (dependency).<sup>45</sup> The late-Qing author Wang Tao (1828–97) also perceived that, following the first sending of a tribute mission in the early Ming, “[Liuqiu] became a Chinese dependency for successive generations (*shi wei shuguo*).”<sup>46</sup> Wang was aware of Japanese records indicating that Satsuma had once occupied Liuqiu, in 1609, and that from 1670 to 1842 Japan had received ten tribute missions from Liuqiu. Nevertheless, Wang Tao argues that, while Liuqiu was sending tribute missions to Japan, it remained a Chinese vassal because “when it paid tribute to Japan, it had long submitted itself

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41. See *TWWXCK*, no. 289, p. 196.

42. Xia Ziyang, “Shi Liuqiu lu”, p. 171

43. Wang Shizhen, “Liuqiu ju taixue shimo”, p. 18.

44. In *Xiaofanghu zhai yudi congchao* 小方壺齋輿地叢鈔 [Collected texts on geography from the *Xiaofanghu* studio] (hereafter *XFHZYDCC*), comp. Wang Xiqi 王錫祺 (1855–1913) 編撰, 10: la.

45. Liang Tingnan 梁廷柎 (1796–1861), *Haiguo si shuo* 海國四說 [Four essays on maritime countries] (reprint; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), p. 164.

46. Wang Tao, “Liuqiu xiangguei riben bian”, in *TWWXCK*, no. 292, p. 275.



to China".<sup>47</sup> Unlike his traditional predecessors, Wang Tao lived at a time when China had commenced efforts to modernize. Not surprisingly, his view was imbued with nationalistic flavor.

Another country that was seen by the Chinese as a model tributary state was Korea. Again, Jiang Dengyun, probably writing during the Kangxi reign, said that Jizi (Kija) was granted the feudality of Choson (Korea) under the Zhou Dynasty. Korea was beyond the frontiers of Liaodong in Qin times, but Emperor Wu of the Han conquered it and formed four prefectures. Chinese power in the area deteriorated after the Han. From the Tang Dynasty, Korea again sent tribute to China and was restored as a Chinese domain during Khubilai's times. After the founding of the Ming, King Kongmin sent a congratulatory mission to the new dynasty and had the title of King of Korea (Koryo) conferred on him. After four generations, Yi Song-gye usurped the throne and asked the Ming's permission to restore the name Choson for his kingdom. The Yi Dynasty continued sending tribute to the Qing and also adopted the Chinese prefecture-district system.<sup>48</sup>

## Coastal Defenses

Despite its possession of a lengthy sea-coast ever since its eastward and southward expansion, coastal defense, *haifang*, only really became a concern of officials and defense strategists from the Ming period when the country faced a serious threat to law and order from the sea. From the Jiajing reign, *haifang* became one of the main policy concerns of the government.<sup>49</sup> The sea-prohibition policy enacted by the founding emperor, Hongwu, was now being strictly enforced in an effort to cope with the new situation. Among its many targets was the menace caused by the Wo (or Wokou, meaning "Japanese" pirates, real or disguised). During the period from the sixteenth century to the Opium War, writers on statecraft deliberated over the issue of coastal defense and contributed to a large volume of literature on the matter.

The Ming government established garrisons (*wei*) and military stations (*so*) to guard the land; marine palisades (*shuizhai*) were also constructed to protect coastal waters.<sup>50</sup> The *so* were subdivisions of the *wei* and formed units of either battalions (*qianhu so*) or companies

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47. Ibid., p. 276.

48. In *HFHZYDCC*, 10: 1a.

49. Ibid., 9: 12a.

50. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 17b.

(*baihu so*) that were actively involved in coastal defense. In 1369, a Ming expedition was sent by the founding emperor to capture Guangdong from a contesting force. After the pacification of the region, the *weiso* defense system was established along the coast. For this purpose the Guangdong coast was divided into three sectors. In the western sector bordering Annam, 3 *wei* and 11 *so* were built; the central sector consisted of 3 *wei* and 6 *so*; and the eastern sector had 2 *wei* and 8 *so*. Qiongzhou (Hainan) was considered to be located in isolation “beyond the seas” (*haiwai*) and therefore it formed a separate brigade. Under the *weiso* system, farm lands were given to military colonists to make them self-supporting. Beacon-mounds were constructed in order to send warning signals from one to the other along the coast.<sup>51</sup>

To prepare for Wo attacks in the Fujian seas (Minhai), in 1387 Dukes Tang He and Zhou Dexing were sent by the court to investigate maritime conditions. Subsequently the unstable condition led to the establishment of 5 garrisons and 12 military stations along the Fujian coast, at the suggestion of Zhou Dexing. Itinerant inspectors (*xunsi*) were appointed to patrol the areas not covered by the *weiso* units and war junks were stationed at the three marine palisades of Fenghuo (in Funing), Nanri (in Putian) and Wuyu (in Tong’an). During the Jingtai Reign (1450–56), 2 additional marine palisades, each guarded by 40 patrol boats, were constructed at Xiao Cheng in Lianjiang and Tongshan in Zhangpu. However, by 1500, a long period of peace and the absence of any Wo troubles for some time led to the abolition of such military installations. Sixty years later, in 1563, when a recurring outbreak of Wo attacks was at its peak, Governor Tan Lun recommended the appointment of a brigade-general and three lieutenant-colonels to strengthen the coastal defenses.<sup>52</sup> By the late Ming, there were 11 garrisons, 14 military stations and 15 patrol inspectorships in Fujian.<sup>53</sup> The density of the concentration gives a good indication of Fujian’s strategic position in the coastal defense against the Wo and later the Dutch.<sup>54</sup> Quanzhou prefecture alone had a coastline of 300 *li* and, as a center of maritime trade, it was vulnerable to attacks by foreign mariners. Stretched along its coast, the most strategic locations were Chongwu to the east of Hui’an, Liaole to its south and

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51. Du Zhen 杜臻 (1633–1703), *Yue-Min xunshi jilue* 粵閩巡視記略 [A brief account of inspecting Guangdong and Fujian] (hereafter *YMXSJL*), 1: 10b–12a.

52. *Ibid.*, 4: 1b–2a; also *TXJGLBS*, 26: 129b–130a.

53. Dong Yingjü 董應舉, *Chongxiang ji xuanlu* 崇相集選錄 (hereafter *CXJXL*), in *TWWXCK*, no. 237, pp. 135, 137.

54. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, pp. 11–2.

Wuyu in the east of Tong'an. Jinjiang, Nan'an and Tong'an districts were also dotted with fortresses and beacon installations.<sup>55</sup>

In the mid-sixteenth century, Zheng Ruozeng, who served as Hu Zongxian's advisor during the anti-Wo campaigns in the 1550s, showed a revived interest in seaborne transport, seeing it as a means to enhance naval strength. Zheng was a keen maritime observer and produced perhaps the most original and best drawn maps of coastal defenses during Ming times. He strongly recommended the use of sea-going vessels as a means of transporting goods. The idea, as he pointed out, was not new. It had been adopted under the Qin, and the Yuan governments also began to encourage sea transport in 1282. However, the practice was stopped in 1412, somewhat ironically during the Yongle Reign that saw the unprecedented sea expeditions under the command of Zheng He. In an essay on sea transport, Zheng Ruozeng explained that, "[such a plan] will prepare the country for naval battles".<sup>56</sup>

Since Zheng Ruozeng was very much involved in the suppression of piracy, his failure to mention Japan as a primary threat at the time is puzzling. An anti-Wo general, Wang Yu, describes the maritime condition in a memorial as follows:

I heard that the Wo bandits in the southeast are like the Xiongnu in the northwest. They are crafty and valiant. They are so powerful it is difficult to resist them. They come swiftly on favorable winds and are unpredictable. Therefore, our defenses against the Wo run from Shandong in the north to Fujian and Guangdong in the south. The strategic planning is no less than that in the northwest. Moreover, contacting the barbarian lands and putting to sea had been strictly prohibited; the restriction to ten-year intervals for the arrival of the tribute missions has also been implemented. [Both are for the purpose of enhancing the defense.]<sup>57</sup>

Not all scholars were impressed by the Ming efforts. An early Qing author attributed the Ming's weaknesses in coastal defense to its failure to maintain a regular water-borne or naval force. A battle-ready navy came into existence only to deal with exigencies. At other times, patrol

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55. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 78b-79b.

56. *ZKYZZ*, 2: 71a.

57. In Wang Yu 王忬, "Wo yi rongliu panni jiujiu rukou shu" 倭夷容留叛逆糾結入寇疏 [A memorial about the joint invasion of the Japanese and Chinese rebels], in *TWXXCK*, no. 289, p. 67; see also *Ming jingshi wenbian* 明經世文編 [Collected essays on statecraft from the Ming Dynasty] (hereafter *MJSWB*), comp. Chen Zilong, Xu Fuyuan, et al. 陳子龍 (1608-47)、徐孚远 (1599-1665) 等選輯 (comp. 1638) (reprint; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 283: 30a-32a.

boats, vessels of small size and unfit for war, were only thinly deployed.<sup>58</sup> This description of the Ming waterborne-force might have been true in peacetime. Nevertheless, in emergencies, the Ming authorities were able to assemble war junks that were large and solid. They were also effective in attacking their targets in the outer coastal waters (*waiyang*), thereby preventing the hostile vessels from entering harbors. Later, tactics changed and government vessels attacked an advancing force only after it had entered a harbor. This was recipe for disaster as the large war junks lost their maneuverability in the shallow waters and the smaller pirate vessels had no difficulty in avoiding a head-on clash with them.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the sailors who served in the naval force also suffered from low morale and were often afraid of going to sea, offering an explanation of the reason the Wo could come ashore at will. Although a decisive victory over the intruders was eventually won on land in Xinghua by the prominent Ming general Qi Jiguang (1527–87), his success owed much to an effective blockade by war junks under the command of Yu Dayou (1503–80) in Nanri that cut off the route of the enemy's retreat.<sup>60</sup> During the late Ming, there was no consensus about where intruders should be confronted. Some officials argued that the best way to deal with pirates was to stop them at sea. Others believed that pirates could be more effectively dealt with after they had landed because the ocean was too vast to discover and crush them. The pirates would change course once they had spotted the war junks. Even if a few pirate vessels were destroyed, the pirate band could still afford the loss. As far as they were concerned, the sinking of a few boats was not much different from losing them to shipwreck in a storm, a disaster that occurred from time to time. The lack of success at sea might explain why defense strategists thought that the bandits could best be rounded up and annihilated in a decisive land battle.<sup>61</sup>

The defensive approach employed in the past led Wei Yuan, in his investigation of maritime affairs in the wake of the Opium War, to observe that, “there was a (coastal defense [system] but no sea battles” (*you haifang er wu haizhan*). As he saw it, ships had been employed as troop convoys but battles were fought on land. Zheng He and Zheng Chenggong (Coxinga) were two partial exceptions. The former led a

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58. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 11.

59. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 18a.

60. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 11.

61. *Guangdong haifang huilan* 廣東海防彙覽 [A comprehensive compilation of source materials relating to the coastal defense of Guangdong] (hereafter *GDHFHL*), comp. Lu Kun, et al. 盧坤 (1772–1835) 等編撰 (printed in 1838), 12: 4b–5a.

fleet to explore the Western Ocean in the early fifteenth century and the latter confronted the Dutch fleet and seized Taiwan from them during the Ming-Qing transition.<sup>62</sup> Wei Yuan also went on to compare the Ming and Qing resistance to the Wo with the reaction to the British invasions. His opinion was that the Wo could fight better on land than at sea because, by and large, they were poor and could not afford to equip themselves with big ships and cannon. They were desperados of great courage. Once they had landed, they became invincible. Had they been confronted at sea by the superior Fujian and Guangdong junks armed with cannon and firearms, the naval force could have crushed them like “a stone roller husking rice” (*ru shi nianmi*). However, even such prominent anti-Wo generals as Qi Jiguang, resorted to land battles. They won some decisive victories, but paid a high price in the loss of life and property. During the anti-Wo campaigns in the mid-sixteenth century, only Tang Shunzhi and Yu Dayou advocated defeating the pirates at sea. They said, “It was better to crush an incoming rather than a homeward-bound fleet.” Wei praised the two for their good grasp of the art of how to suppress the Wo. General Yu was cited as saying that, “there was no other way to defeat the Wo than to use [our] large vessels to crush [their] small boats and outnumber them.” His reason was that the Wo were skilled swordsmen; once they had landed, who could then stop them? Finally, Wei lamented that, “the Ming defenders who opposed the Wo were not aware of the necessity of fighting them at sea, and those who resisted the British did not opt for setting traps in the interior.”<sup>63</sup> Wei himself proposed defensive tactics that involved confronting the British on land, arguing that the British naval force was superior to that of the Qing.

Despite all the shortcomings of the Ming maritime defense force, given time and experienced commanders, it did develop the capacity to suppress intruders, although it could be argued that this success came at a high price. In the early decades of the seventeenth century, the greatest threat to the China coast was posed by the Dutch and by native Chinese piracy. It has to be said that, for the most part, the Ming authorities managed to deal with this challenge. Often, the Ming naval force utilized favorable winds to send fire-ships to burn the better-armed foreign sailing ships. This was precisely the strategy employed by Zheng Zhilong (Nicholas Iquan) in his confrontation with the VOC naval force. When his son, Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga), was confronted by more than a dozen Dutch sailing ships (East Indiamen) in his attempt to capture Taiwan in

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62. Ding Yuejian 丁曰健, *Zhi tai bigao lu* 治臺必告錄, in *TWWXCK*, no. 17, p. 71.

63. For the quotes in this paragraph, see *HGTZ*, 1: 13a–14a; and Dong Yingju, *CXJXL*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 237, p 17.

1661, he also applied the same tactics by setting the Dutch vessels on fire. In contrast to the unknown quantity of the Dutch, some Chinese pirate chiefs, among them Liu Xiang, were not initially seen as serious security risks. However, when the situation deteriorated in the wake of more frequent attacks by pirates along a long stretch of the Guangdong and Fujian coast, the Ming authorities decided to set a thief to catch a thief and called upon Zheng Zhilong, a pirate chief who had surrendered, to suppress them.<sup>64</sup>

At the outset, the Qing Dynasty faced almost 40 years of intransigent resistance on the southeast coast led by Zheng Chenggong and his descendants. This obdurate problem forced it to realize the importance of building a strong naval force in order to launch an attack across the Taiwan Strait. Its naval capability was greatly strengthened by the surrender of Admiral Shi Lang who deserted from the Zheng camp, a betrayal that eventually led to the defeat of the Zheng regime in 1683. After the pacification of Taiwan, the Qing made an effort to consolidate control of the newly-gained island. The regional command of Taiwan under a brigade-general was garrisoned by the largest force in the country,<sup>65</sup> numbering three thousand troops. Over two thousand soldiers, stationed in the northern and southern parts of the island respectively, were under the command of two lieutenant-generals. A naval force of three thousand men was deployed at Anping, and another two thousand were stationed in the Penghu Islands.<sup>66</sup> By the early nineteenth century, more than two thousand troops had been added.<sup>67</sup>

Earlier, the Qing authorities had consolidated their control of the southeast coast by building up land forces to guard the coastline. In Guangdong, a tartar general was appointed to the provincial capital. Brigade-generals were assigned to Chaozhou, Jieshi and Gaozhou, while deputy-brigade-generals were put in charge of the military affairs in Huizhou and Leizhou. A lieutenant-colonel was assigned to Lianzhou. Mobile corps (*youbing*) under officers holding the rank of colonel were in the process of replacing the former *weiso* deployments. The coastal defense posts were temporarily abandoned as the Chinese population was ordered to move inland during the war against the Zheng resistance force, but beacon-mounds and garrison posts were established at a

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64. Dong Yingju, *CXJXL*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 237, pp. 12, 98.

65. Yao Ying 姚瑩 (1785–1853), *Dongming zhougao* 東溟奏稿, in *TWWXCK*, no. 49, p. 1.

66. Yu Yonghe 郁永河, *Pihai jiyou* 裨海紀遊, in *TWWXCK*, no. 44, pp. 30–1. Yue visited Taiwan in 1697.

67. Yao Ying, *Dongming zhougao*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 49, p. 36.

distance of five and ten *li* respectively in 1662. When the situation improved, a decision was made to re-extend the boundaries back to the sea-coast and the coastal defense system based on land forces was gradually reinstated.<sup>68</sup>

Following the Ming model, coastal defenses along the Guangdong coast were divided into three sectors, namely: Chaozhou and Huizhou on the eastern flank; Gaozhou, Lianzhou and Leizhou on the western flank; and the provincial capital Guangzhou in the center. Patrol posts and forts that were equipped with cannon were dotted everywhere along the coast. A total of 41 fortresses with 312 cannon and 618 military camps were set up following a recommendation by Governor-General Yang Lin in the early eighteenth century.<sup>69</sup>

After the pacification of Taiwan, unlike its predecessor, the Qing government maintained regular fleets to patrol the “outer coastal waters”, instead of just the “inner coastal waters” (*neiyang*). These naval forces were concentrated in Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang. In Guangdong, the strength of the naval force consisted of 167 junks of various sizes. Large war junks patrolled the outer coastal waters, but because of their deeper draughts these vessels found it difficult to come close to shore at low tide, a predicament that enabled small boats owned by the local people along the coast to engage in smuggling activities. To remedy this situation, in 1730 it was decided that, in addition to the large war junks, small patrol boats would be used in the inner coastal waters.<sup>70</sup> The two sectors of the sea, covering some 3,000 *li* of the Guangdong coast from Chaoyang on the eastern flank to Qiong (Hainan) on the western flank, would be patrolled by 38 separate units under the command of an admiral (*shuishitidu*). Islets, harbors, shoals and half-submerged rocks were meticulously demarcated so that they could be placed under the different jurisdictions of the respective prefectures, sub-prefectures, departments or districts. The duty of patrols in the outer coastal waters was “to defend the frontier” (*han bianchui*), whereas the patrols in the inner coastal waters “strengthened the foundation” (*cun genben*). Other land units, such as those in Chao, Hui, Gao, Lian and Lei that were close to seaports, and units under the Qiong brigade stationed in a vast watery waste, were also responsible for helping to defend the maritime frontier.<sup>71</sup>

In Fujian, Governor-General Manbao set up a naval force of 20 brigades (*ying*) consisting 152 officers and 19,312 soldiers in the early

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68. *YMXSJL*, 1: 12a–13a.

69. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, pp. 59, 62.

70. *GDHFHL*, 12: 25a, 27b.

71. *Ibid.*, introduction, 2b, 3b and 5: 38b.

eighteenth century. Seventy-seven fortresses equipped with 718 cannon, 312 war junks and 26 naval stations, commencing from Shacheng in the north to Nan'ao in the south, with Jinmen, Amoy and others in between, were built. When the wind was favorable, a day's voyage could cover five to seven stations, an indication of the density of the deployment.<sup>72</sup> By the time of the Opium War, under the defense plan theoretically the strength of the naval force should have reached some 30,000 in Guangdong and Fujian, and another 20,000 each in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, were it not for the fact that the quotas were not actually filled, the stumbling block being the corrupt practices of the naval officials during the long peace of the past century.<sup>73</sup>

Nor was the intensive defense deployment covering the whole stretch of the coast without flaws. As the late Qing commentator Hua Shifang points out, the defense force was stretched too thinly and therefore could not function effectively. Another commentary, written shortly after the Opium War by Zhu Fengjia, criticizes the past maritime defense for being outdated. It had been devised to counter piracy and therefore failed when confronted by more deadly enemies.<sup>74</sup> Clearly, this critic based his wisdom on hindsight. The plan in existence before the Opium War had indeed been shaped by the coastal conditions of the past, when the most serious threat to security came from Chinese or foreign piracy, as the commentator himself admits.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, perspectives on coastal defense among writers on statecraft moved in the direction of some degree of sophistication. Cogently, the use of modern arms was paid more attention, even though firearms and cannon had been employed by the Chinese forces since the early sixteenth century. Among other critics, a Fujianese scholar and maritime expert Lan Dingyuan (1680–1733) strongly recommended the adoption of modern arms by the naval force. He pointed out that bows and arrows were useless at sea as the vessels might be far apart, but guns and cannon were deadly. The patrol boats should be exclusively equipped with fowling-pieces, guns and cannon and other types of firearms, supplemented by swords, long spears, rattan shields and shrapnel.<sup>75</sup> A similar preoccupation with maritime affairs can also be seen in a work compiled in Guangdong during

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72. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 37.

73. *HGTZ*, 1: 30b.

74. *HFHZYDCC*, 9: 19a, 20b. Zhu mentioned especially a chapter on "Coastal Conditions of the Country" in the work by Chen Lunjong 陳倫炯 in the early eighteenth century.

75. Lan Dingyuan 藍鼎元 (1680–1733), *Pingtai jilue* 平臺記略, in *TWWXCK*, no. 14, p. 41.



1832–34. It covers a wide range of maritime issues such as personnel, revenue and expenses, strategies (including entries onto sea routes, tides, shipbuilding administration, firearms and arsenals for weaponry), extermination versus pacification, preventing intruders from gaining access to local supply lines, espionage, training exercises, patrolling and seizing, the military administration, an overview of military developments beginning with the *weiso* system of the Ming, the construction of beaconmounds, forts and the recent multiplication of such installations, the tithing system for law and order in ports and harbors, management of foreigners, considerate treatment of foreigners using the tributary trade to win their hearts (*huaiyou*) and prevent trouble and, lastly, a review of the military affairs of the Ming to Qing as a mirror of the past.<sup>76</sup> There is no question that coastal defense formed one of the key issues in the writings on statecraft during the Ming-Qing periods.

## The Offshore Islands: Expansion and Evolution of the *Haifang* Concept

Closely linked to the concern about coastal defense was the integration of the offshore islands into the defense networks. The imperial governments paid great attention to the role of the strategic islands in security matters. The following discussion highlights the importance of these locations.

*Nan'ao*. No discussion of coastal defenses on the southeast coast during late imperial times could possibly overlook Nan'ao. This strategically important island is situated just off the Fujian-Guangdong border. It had been a notorious bandit refuge since the early Ming. Around 1561, the pirate chiefs Xu Chaoguang, Zeng Yiben, Lin Daoqian and Wu Ping launched their attacks on the Fujian-Guangdong coast from their bases on the island. It required the joint efforts of the two provincial authorities to suppress the pirate gangs.<sup>77</sup> This turbulent background explains the peculiar and rare administrative status of the island that was placed under a joint provincial jurisdiction. In 1576, at the proposal of Governor Liu Yaohui, the Xuanzhong patrol unit (*you*) was moved to Nan'ao, some 30 *li* away, putting it under the jurisdiction of a commandant accorded the additional title of inspector (*xing duzhihui*) to bolster his authority. His immediate superior was the deputy-brigade-general of Zhangzhou

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76. *GDHFHL*, introduction, la–6a.

77. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 132a.

(in Fujian) and Chaozhou (in Guangdong) prefectures. The southeastern segment of the island was under the control of the patrol unit; its northwestern segment fell under the charge of the Zhelin marine palisade in Guangdong.<sup>78</sup> As an island detached from the mainland, Nan'ao's isolated position caused the authorities concern because the defense force could not move in by land should a military emergency arise.

In earlier times, before coastal defenses were on the agenda, this island did not attract much attention from the authorities. Speaking in retrospect, one late-Ming author describes Nan'ao before the Ming Dynasty as "a land beyond reach",<sup>79</sup> although it was inhabited by Chinese. In 1393, Duke Tang He reported that Nan'ao was a Wo sanctuary and, on these grounds, proposed shifting the population inland.<sup>80</sup> Given its convenient location, Nan'ao continued to be a haven for pirates. In 1576, following a proposal by the maritime defense sub-prefect Luo Gongchen, a lieutenant-colonel was assigned to Nan'ao. Three walled defense installations were also built.<sup>81</sup> This move signified that this island had been officially included in the imperial domain (*bantu*), playing a strategic role described as the gate (*menhu*) to Zhang and Chao prefectures. Four harbors were situated around the island, namely: Shen, Yun, Long and Qing, with two each under the separate jurisdictions of Fujian and Guangdong respectively.<sup>82</sup> A deputy-brigade-general of Zhang-Chao was assigned to cover the defense of Nan'ao, with 13 war junks and more than 600 soldiers under his command. Zhelin in Guangdong and Xuanzhong in Fujian were also placed under his command.<sup>83</sup> The high-ranking authorities considered that both Nan'ao and Zhelin occupied a frontline position in the coastal defenses and that the loss of these places would presage the destruction of Chaozhou prefecture.<sup>84</sup>

Clearly, the late Ming government was determined to develop Nan'ao into a bastion against piracy. Other measures were also taken to integrate the island into the imperial domain. The most important of these was the development of some 50,000 *mu* of farmlands that was allotted to military and civilian colonists. An additional gesture was to

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78. *Ibid.*, 26: 130a.

79. *GDHFHL*, 1: 50b.

80. *YMXSJL*, 3: 27a.

81. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 132b.

82. *GDHFHL*, 1: 50b.

83. *YMXSJL*, 3: 30b.

84. *GDHFHL*, 2: 11b, citing *Chouhai tubian* 籌海圖編 [Sea strategy illustrated: A work on coastal defense], comp. Hu Zongxian (1510–65), Zheng Ruozeng (1503–70), et al. 胡宗憲、鄭若曾 等撰 (1624 ed.; 1st printing: 1562).

supply the settlers with oxen. These measures did help to strengthen the island's defenses against piracy and in one swoop made the military installations self-reliant.<sup>85</sup> Thereafter the island developed into an important maritime garrison composed of both soldiers and farmers. It was claimed that piracy was therefore under control and both the Zhang and Chao prefectures enjoyed peace.<sup>86</sup> Later, it was recommended that Nan'ao be made the headquarters of a deputy-brigade-general who would be put in charge of cross-border affairs.<sup>87</sup>

Nan'ao's strategic position continued to be highly valued in the Qing. A military officer of higher rank, a brigade-general, was assigned there to command the Min-Yue (Fujian-Guangdong) brigade.<sup>88</sup> The cross-border military administration provides a fine example of the preoccupation with coastal defense and the imperial motivation for colonization and territorial expansion.

*Zhoushan.* Because of its location, Zhoushan (Chusan) was perceived to be the key to the security of eastern Zhejiang.<sup>89</sup> In the early Ming, a garrison was established on the island, but in his pacification campaign along the coast Duke Tang He decided to shift the population inland. He was concerned about the island's isolated location that made surveillance difficult. Tang's move was criticized by a late Ming scholar named Zhou Hongzu for being shortsighted and ignoring Zhoushan's strategic importance in coastal defense.<sup>90</sup> However, in his work *Haiguo tuzhi* Wei Yuan comes to Duke Tang's defense. Wei argues that Zhoushan was only one of the numerous islands off the Zhejiang coast. From the point of view of coastal defense, its location was not strategic, nor was the land particularly fertile; consequently Tang He had not included it within the empire's domain. Although in the early Shunzhi reign (r. 1644–61) advancing Manchu troops briefly occupied it in 1651, the Qing force decided that it was not worth retaining.<sup>91</sup> At that point in time the overall strategy of the Qing was to evacuate the coastal lands to prevent the Zheng resistance from obtaining supplies on the mainland.<sup>92</sup> It was not until the early Kangxi reign that the court decided to restore Zhoushan and move the Dinghai district seat from the mainland to the island. The

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85. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 132a–b.

86. *Ibid.*, 26: 29b.

87. *Ibid.*, 26: 132b.

88. *QCHJTS*, 155: 60.

89. *Ibid.*, 155: 10.

90. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 4b.

91. *HGTZ*, 1: 5a–6b.

92. Ding Yuejian, *Zhi tai bigao* lu, in *TWWXCK*, no. 17, p. 71.

former area of Dinghai on the Zhejiang coast was then renamed Zhenhai. Considering it from a defensive perspective, Wei Yuan argued that Zhoushan's strategic position was certainly not comparable to that of Chongmin on the Yangzi estuary. Although Chongmin was small in size, it was surrounded by a sandbank. To gain access to its two harbors, boats had to wind a passage through tens of *li* of waterways, navigable only by small craft. During the Opium War, this isolated location was heavily and successfully guarded. Zhoushan, on the other hand, was quickly occupied by the British who held it to ransom. Wei Yuan proposed it be abandoned in an effort to defend such mainland coastal positions as Ningbo. Hong Kong in Guangdong was also difficult to defend on account of its isolated position in the sea. In economic terms, it would become useless without its trade with Guangzhou.<sup>93</sup> Implicitly, the abandonment of Hong Kong was therefore justified by Wei Yuan as a tactical retreat. Despite the broad world view shown in his works on maritime countries, as a strategist Wei Yuan followed the traditional realist approach when it came to matters of coastal defenses.<sup>94</sup>

*Penghu.* Penghu consisted of a group of 36 named islands. Chinese records claim that the island group of Penghu was visited by General Chen Leng during the Sui Dynasty (581–618). He found the islands occupied by the Fan (barbarian or foreign) people. Just over six hundred years later, the Yuan government established a patrol post here,<sup>95</sup> but Penghu was abandoned and residents were moved to the mainland about a century later in 1372 because of their defiance of the newly-established Ming regime. In 1597, a patrol post under the charge of a squadron commandant (*bazong*) was formed in Penghu to counter the imminent recurrence of Wo attacks after Japan invaded Korea.<sup>96</sup> Although patrols were sent to the area in spring and winter, the late Ming government was reluctant to allow settlers to remain there permanently, fearing it might lose control over them. The regular deployment of a garrison was also ruled out because of logistic constraints. Unlike Nan'ao, that was located close to the coast, Penghu was considered to lie a great distance from the mainland.<sup>97</sup> In terms of Ming naval capability, this island group was therefore beyond its defense perimeter.

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93. *HGTZ*, I: 5a–6a.

94. Jane Kate Leonard has made a well-thought comment on this aspect in *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asia Studies, Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 204–5.

95. *QCHTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 118.

96. *YMXSJL*, 6: 2a.

97. Dong Yingju, *CXJXL*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 237, pp. 136, 140.

In 1622, the Dutch retreated from Amoy and occupied Penghu but Brigade-General Yu Zigao managed to lure the Dutch away to Taiwan, thereby restoring Penghu to Ming control. After the expulsion of the Dutch from the islands, a writer named Shen Tie observed that, despite their isolated location, these islands were the gateway to the Quan-Zhang prefectures. For this reason, he proposed a permanent military deployment of two thousand troops equipped with large vessels, guns and cannon and under the command of a major. He even argued that Penghu was ten times more important than Nan'ao as a strategic location, and the model of Nan'ao should be the blueprint to be followed to develop Penghu into an important garrison location.<sup>98</sup> Yu and Shen both thought that maritime colonization and expansion should be determined by the factors of strategic requirements and naval capability. Indeed, the defense perimeters were extended to Penghu as a result of the alarming situation in offshore waters. Confronted by Dutch naval prowess, the Chinese found it expedient to keep them as far away as their own naval capability allowed. This point was the farthest to which the late Ming authorities expanded their maritime defense perimeters. They had not cast their sights as far as Taiwan and this vision explains their tolerance of the Dutch presence there, but not in the Penghu Archipelago.

After the pacification of Taiwan, the Qing continued to value Penghu's strategic position, as the islands would be needed as a stepping-stone should it become necessary to direct offensives against Taiwan.<sup>99</sup>

*Hainan.* Dan'er and Zhuyai prefectures were established in Hainan in 110 BC, during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han, but abandoned in 46 BC when the sea routes were severed.<sup>100</sup> Around AD 43, when General Ma Yuan reconquered Jiaozhi, Zhuyai prefecture was reinstated. The Sui-Tang eras witnessed expansion and consolidation around the coastal belt of the island.<sup>101</sup> During the Sui, Yai prefecture consisted of ten districts. By the early seventh century, four prefectures, namely, Qiongzhou, Danzhou, Wan'anzhou and Zhenzhou (later changed to Yaizhou), were formed on the four shores of the island, encircling the central part inhabited by the Li people.<sup>102</sup> In the early Qing, Qiongzhou prefecture consisted of 13 departments and districts.

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98. *Penghu tingzhi* 澎湖廳志, comp. Lin Hao 林豪 編撰, in *TWWXCK*, no. 164, pp. 407–8.

99. Yu Yonghe, *Pihai jiyou*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 44, p. 32.

100. *LWDD*, 1: 18a.

101. *YMXSJL*, 3: 35a–36a.

102. *LWDD*, 1: 18a.

During the Song, while Guangxi was perceived to be a faraway land located “outside the mountain range” (*lingwai*) by the borders and consequently “beyond the influence of civilization” (*huawai*), Hainan was considered even farther away. So far distant was it that the Qiong administration was given special powers to command both the military and civil officials of the four prefectures on the island, allowing it to meet any local exigencies before consulting the court.<sup>103</sup>

The Li people lived in the mountainous region surrounding Mount Limu that was located in the center of the island. Although the “raw” (uncivilized) Li (*sheng* Li), who resided deep in the interior, were not under the rule of the Chinese authorities, the “civilized” Li (*shu* Li), who resided on the outskirts of the coastal Han settlements, farmed, paid taxes and performed labor service. They were placed under the rule of a nearby prefectural administration.<sup>104</sup> The *shu*-Li settlements, *dong*, were governed by their own chiefs.

In the Yuan period, General Zhu Bin penetrated deeper into the Li territory and captured 600 Li settlements.<sup>105</sup> During the long period lasting from then until the early Ming, attacks on the coastal Han Chinese settlements by the minority people on the periphery of the coastal districts occurred sporadically. Such disturbances were often recorded as Li disturbances (*Li luan*).

During the Ming Hongwu reign, the raw Li frequently attacked and plundered the *shu* Li and Han settlers. Their actions prompted the early Ming authorities to adopt an active policy to secure the submission of the raw Li. In 1396, the local Ming authorities selected the more capable village chiefs of the civilized Li and appointed them sub-district deputy magistrates (*xunjian si*). Their task was to pacify the raw Li. This stratagem led to the surrender of numerous Li people. In 1406, for example, more than ten thousand raw Li accepted Ming rule. At that time, the civilized Li were required to pay a tax based on their property, but were exempted from labor service. The newly-submitted Li were exempted from performing labor service for three years.<sup>106</sup> Despite such benevolent measures, the Li disturbances persisted throughout the Ming and the government launched military campaigns to suppress them. In 1544, a war between the Ming forces and the Li people led to heavy casualties on the Ming side, although the Li also suffered a loss of 270 settlements and

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103. *Ibid.*, 1: 2a, 18a–b.

104. *Ibid.*, 2: 7b.

105. *YMXSJL*, 3: 35a–36a

106. *TXJGLBS*, 29: 76a, 77a.

a death toll of 5,500 men. Another clash between the two sides occurred in 1599, and led to 1,800 deaths among the Li.<sup>107</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that Gu Yanwu claimed guarding against the southern barbarian tribes was more difficult than dealing with the northern barbarians in the desert. The former were right on the doorstep and they could cause trouble any time they liked: "Their sporadic advances and retreats are unpredictable." He proposed that, "light levies would serve to reward their compliance and show them parental love. Eventually they would enter into the embrace of our cultural practices."<sup>108</sup> By the early Qing, Hainan was considered the most secure island among those along the Guangdong coast, since few people except for the most desperate bandits wanted to visit the island,<sup>109</sup> but the separation between the Han Chinese and the Li settlements, and conflict between the two sides, still continued. Lan Dingyuan, for instance, derided the absence of integration between the coastal administrative units and the central part of the island where the raw aborigines lived. He did not consider this gulf to be appropriate to the dignity of a state. He was convinced that the state should legitimately claim the whole island and revive a past plan to build roads across the central region of the island and gradually acculturate the aboriginal people.<sup>110</sup> Lan's expansionist approach was affected not so much by the need to strengthen the *haifang*; it was more of a proposal to encroach on an inland region to ensure law and order. However, past difficulties in dealing with the raw Li caused the Qing to move cautiously, and also contributed to the formulation of a similar separation policy in Taiwan.

*Taiwan.* Taiwan fell into the category of "a land beyond reach" before the Ming era when it was known as Dongfan.<sup>111</sup> In 1563, Military-Governor Yu Dayou pursued the sea-bandit Lin Daoqian as far as Penghu. Unfamiliar with the Taiwan coast, General Yu only garrisoned Penghu with a detachment and sent occasional patrols to the waters outside Lu'ermen on the west coast of Taiwan to keep an eye on Lin's movements. At that point in time the island had no Han Chinese settlers. Lin eventually abandoned the island after looting aboriginal villages and moved to Champa. The detachment at Penghu was then withdrawn.<sup>112</sup>

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107. *YMXSJL*, 3: 40b–41a.

108. For both citations, see *TXJGLBS*, 28: 52a–55b.

109. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 59.

110. *XFHZYDCC*, 9: 337a–b.

111. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 118; also *QLHTZXTZ*, 40: 7a.

112. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 97.

In 1602, the Japanese established a base in Taiwan and began plundering the China coast. Ming China responded by creating an expeditionary force of 21 vessels led by Shen Yourong, squadron commander of Wuyu.<sup>113</sup> Although the Ming force scored a decisive victory and destroyed a Wo fleet,<sup>114</sup> the Chinese troops withdrew within a month of the victory. Some quarters in Chinese society were rather critical of Shen's venture, saying that he should not have ventured this far since Dongfan was not a Chinese domain.<sup>115</sup> They obviously objected to Yu's unconventional forward strategy that failed to conform to the prevalent defensive principle. Nevertheless, after Shen's campaign, the population along the China coast became more familiar with the island. They could now name several harbors on its west coast and had detailed information about these places and their native settlers. Traders and fishermen from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou began to frequent it.

In the wake of earlier clashes, a late Ming observer perceived that, after the successive Japanese invasions of Korea, Liuqiu and Jilong that began in the final decade of the sixteenth century, Taiwan was the next logical target. The island could also be used by an enemy as a stepping-stone from which to invade the Fujian and Zhejiang coast.<sup>116</sup> These developments stirred up a sense of crisis among officials and scholars; one that differed from their reaction to the devastating Wo incursions in the mid-sixteenth century. The earlier episode was treated as an issue of law and order; even the term *haifang* then meant measures against "sea bandits" on the maritime frontier. Now, the term gained a new meaning that implicitly became a security issue relating to a greater threat to China's political domain. By the early 1620s, the situation of the island had been complicated even more by the presence of various contending parties, including both Chinese pirates and traders, the Japanese and the Dutch.

After Zheng Chenggong's defeat in the Yangzi region in 1659, Zheng's forces evicted the Dutch and made Taiwan the base of their resistance. Under Zheng Chenggong's son, Zheng Jing, market places were set up, temples were built and vagrants were lured to settle there. By this time, China's cultural influence was firmly established on the western coast of the island.<sup>117</sup> Meanwhile, Zheng Jing continued to threaten the coastal

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113. See Shen Yurong 沈有容 (1557-1627), *Minhai zengyan* 閩海贈言, in *TWWXCK*, no. 56, p. 21, for Shen's title.

114. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 31; also *YMXSJL*, 6: 6b.

115. Shen Yourong, *Minhai zengyan*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 56, p. 29.

116. *CXJXL*, pp. 11, 18.

117. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 98.



prefectures on the mainland and became involved in attacks on Zhang-Quan during the Three Feudatories Rebellion. These events led to the Kangxi emperor's decision to resolve the problem once and for all. The emperor decreed that the maritime territories would never achieve a state of peace and tranquility until the rebels in the island had been pacified. While court officials hesitated, uncertain about the feasibility of launching an attack by sea as they were anxious about the island's distant location and the natural threat posed by winds and storms, the Kangxi Emperor accepted the recommendation for prompt action.<sup>118</sup>

The military campaign was a success and Taiwan was captured in 1683. The Qing government established its prefecture-district administration in the conquered territory, an arrangement that was facilitated by the presence of Chinese settlements on the west coast that had been there for some time and the earlier activities of the Zheng regime. An official during the later Qianlong Reign (r. 1736–95) viewed the administration of a remote island as unprecedented.<sup>119</sup> In fact, the Kangxi emperor was initially uncertain about the merits of retaining what he perceived as an island "beyond the seas". He once commented,

Taiwan is located overseas and is unimportant to the country [of China].... It was only because it caused great disruption and hence the coastal people had not been able to enjoy peace that the court decided to send an expeditionary force to suppress it. Even if Taiwan had not submitted itself, it would not have been detrimental to the governance of the country.<sup>120</sup>

The emperor's hesitant attitude toward the future of Taiwan elicited a lengthy comment from Admiral Shi Lang, who was responsible for the conquest of the island. He submitted a memorial in which he strongly urged retention of the island. He said:

For more than sixty years, the place has aroused enormous imperial attention and concern.... I have personally inspected the place.... It is indeed a fertile and strategic land.... It is Heaven that grants this unexplored land to this country for the protection of Your Majesty's southeast coast and as a result it will permanently terminate the trouble on the maritime frontier.

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118. *Qingdai guanshu ji ming taiwan zheng shi wang shi* 清代官書記明台灣鄭氏亡事, in *TWWXCK*, no. 174, pp. 34–5.

119. Zhu Jingying 朱景英, *Haidong zhaji* 海東札記, in *TWWXCK*, no. 19, p. 1. Zhu was appointed Taiwan maritime subprefecture in 1769.

120. *Qing Shilu: Shengzu/Kangxi chao* 清實錄: 聖祖朝 [Veritable records of the Qing Dynasty: Shengzu/Kangxi Reign], *juan* 112, in *TWWXCK*, no. 165, p. 130.

Shi Lang went on to explain that, if the land were abandoned, people who earned their living there would lose their livelihood. The court had a moral responsibility to care for these people. Moreover, the Dutch had previously been there and they had long been casting covetous eyes on the island. Their sailing ships were superior. If they occupied this fertile and extensive land, the coastal provinces would not have peace. He argued convincingly that, "the land of Taiwan extends several thousand *li* and the population numbers a hundred thousand. If abandoned, foreign countries will certainly occupy it. Who knows if evil people might see it as their sanctuary."<sup>121</sup> His arguments moved the Kangxi emperor to abandon his earlier non-committal stance. The emperor agreed that, "it is a matter of great consequences whether Taiwan is to be retained or abandoned."<sup>122</sup> This discourse carried the concept of *haifang* a step farther. Now territorial expansion was justified not only by a need for law and order, but also as a pre-emptive move to ensure national security. However, the most interesting point to emerge was that, for the first time, the economic potential of an offshore island was made a justification for overseas territorial expansion.

Debates on the wisdom of keeping the island lingered on. Lan Dingyuan also saw Taiwan as a strategic location that should be retained and defended because it was an intrinsic part of coastal security.<sup>123</sup> To govern the extensive northern region of the island more efficiently, he recommended the division of the Zhuluo district into two. He also emphasized the need to implement equalized taxes, resolve litigation, build charity schools, promote culture, reward model sons who were dutiful at home and industrious in the fields, implement a tithing system and form militia, allow the people to explore new lands and construct city walls for defense:

In this way, the people could be pacified within one year, the frontier could be consolidated in two years and a feeling of decorum and courtesy among the people could be cultivated in three years. The still uncivilized aborigines would also be transformed into civilized aborigines and the civilized aborigines into our people.

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121. For Shi Lang's recommendations cited above, see Shi Lang 施琅 (1621-96), "Gongcheng Taiwan qiliu shu" 恭陳台灣棄留疏 [On the retention of Taiwan], in *Jinghai jishi* 靖海紀事 [Matters on maritime pacification] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1983), pp. 120-4; also in "Chen Tai-wan qiliu lihai shu" 陳台灣去留利害書, in *TWWXCK*, no. 105, pp. 609-12.

122. *Qing Shengzu shilu*, *juan* 114, in *TWWXCK*, no. 165, p. 131.

123. *Chongxiu Taiwan fuzhi* 重修台灣府志 [Revised edition of the gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture], in *TWWXCK*, no. 105, p. 643.

He further stressed that, “once the territory is brought into the fold, instead of dwindling it will be enlarged daily”. Taiwan was so fertile that it naturally attracted people to come and explore the land. To abandon it would only invite invasions by the Japanese and the Dutch, he concluded.<sup>124</sup>

The eastern sector of the island beyond the mountains (*hou shan*) was settled by the aboriginal tribes. The civilized aborigines were perceived to be Chinese subjects (*min*)<sup>125</sup> in contrast to the “raw” aborigines beyond the Chinese cultural boundary.<sup>126</sup> During the Qianlong reign Chao Yi wrote: “The eastern part of the island is mountainous [and] settled by the raw Fan. They are deer hunters and not included in the population registers (*banji*).”<sup>127</sup> In the late Qing, Wang Tao commented that the raw aborigines (*ye fan*), though residing within Chinese territory, were not considered Chinese people (*Zhongguo zhi minren*).<sup>128</sup> Fearing possible clashes between the colonists and the aboriginal peoples, the authorities did make some efforts to avoid agitating the raw aborigines. One of their steps was to ensure that farmlands pioneered by the Chinese settlers had well-defined boundaries separating them from the hunting-grounds of the indigenous people. Those who encroached upon aboriginal lands were usually evicted by the authorities before any incidents could occur.

Despite such enlightened ideas, the Qing government was seized by a mounting sense of helplessness because of “Taiwan’s isolated location beyond the seas” (*guxuan haiwai*) and, beset by bureaucratic idleness in general, it tended to ignore the signs of instability revealed in the incessant outbreak of uprisings. Being a remote frontier land, it was governed by expediency. One example of this bureaucratic shilly-shallying was the century-long debate about whether the government should allow mainland migrants to settle on the island. This was a knotty problem in traditional China, in which maintaining any extant policy was always treated as a sacred cow. The Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–35) had set out the time-honored principle that “unless the benefits are ten-fold, no changes in the laws will be necessary; unless the damage is ten-fold,

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124. For Lan’s arguments cited here, see Lan Dingyuan 藍鼎元, *Pintai jilue* 平台記略 [A brief account of Taiwan pacification], in *TWWXCK*, no. 14, pp. 29–32.

125. *QCHJTS*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 155, p. 117.

126. *HGTC*, 1: 30a.

127. In *XFHCYDCC*, 9: 133a.

128. Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–97), “Liuqiu chaogong kao” 琉球朝貢考, in *TWWHTK*, no. 292, p. 276.

no changes in regulations should be considered".<sup>129</sup> John Robert Shepherd also points out: "In its frontier administration, the Chinese state had two overwhelming concerns: control and revenue.... By preventing Chinese migration and permanent settlement, the state hoped to reduce ... its control costs on strategically important peripheries."<sup>130</sup> The restriction was also a measure to prevent disturbances on the frontier.<sup>131</sup>

## Beneficial Frontiers: The Economics of the Maritime World

The anti-opium champion Lin Zexu (1785–1850) once said,

The reason for allowing foreign trade (*hushi*) in Guangdong during the past two hundred years was to extend favors to foreign lands and show universally the kind treatment [of this empire] to warm their hearts. It has not been acquiescing in the reliance of this land on trade as a source of its livelihood. It is even less so for the benefit of customs duties.<sup>132</sup>

This claim was mere empty rhetoric. The relations between imperial China and the maritime world beyond its frontiers had always been colored by a strong economic element. Since Han times, references to local products had dotted the passages on the Nanhai states in both official and private writings, underlining that the Nanhai region had always been a source of rare and sought-after commodities.

Discourses about the economics of maritime endeavors can be found, for example, in a well-known mid-sixteenth-century work by a Ming scholar of statecraft, Tang Shu. The author stated explicitly that,

China and the barbarian countries have their respective unique products; therefore trade between them would be difficult to terminate. Where there is profit, people will certainly pursue it.<sup>133</sup>

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129. *Qing shilu: Shizong/Yongzheng chao* 清實錄：世宗朝 [Veritable records of the Shizong/Yongzheng Reign] (hereafter *QSL: SZ*), *juan* 61, in *TWWXCK*, no. 167, p. 20.

130. John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 408, 409.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

132. A memorial cited in *HGTZ*, 49: 15a–b.

133. Tang Shu 唐樞 (1497–1574), "Fu Hu Meilin lun chu Wang Zhi" 復胡梅林論處王直 [On how to handle Wang Zhi's case—a reply to Your Excellency Hu Meilin (Hu Zongxian)], in *TWWXCK*, no. 289, p. 48; see also *MJSWB*, 270: 3a–9b.

He made no bones about linking the maritime disturbances to this fundamental economic factor. He said that, although his government permitted tribute not trade, the tribute missions certainly brought along commodities and engaged in trade. The prohibition of overseas ventures was to restrain China's own people and could have dire consequences. While the sea prohibition was strictly observed in the 1520s, merchants lost their income and resorted to piracy. The more strictly the law was enforced, the more serious did the piracy become. The majority of the participants in the 1552 turmoil were such ruined maritime merchants but people from other professions also joined in the 1553 incident. In 1554, both the dispossessed people and formerly law-abiding households became involved and, in 1555, foreign elements were again present.<sup>134</sup>

The voices opposing restrictions on maritime trade lingered on. In the early seventeenth century, Governor Xu Fuyuan of Fujian appealed to the court for the lifting of the newly-imposed prohibition. He said that for more than two decades since the lifting of the former prohibition, revenue from the maritime customs had amounted to more than 20 thousand *taels*. This sum made an enormous contribution to military expenditure for the coastal defense of Zhangzhou that stood at around 58,000 *taels*. Were this to disappear, more levies would have to be imposed. At that time the people enjoyed a state of peace. However, recently, in the wake of the Japanese invasion of Korea, the sea prohibition had been reinstated. It had affected more than a hundred vessels licensed to trade overseas. Commodities worth millions of *taels* lay in warehouses, merchants went bankrupt and workers lost their livelihood. Certainly it was wise to be wary of the consequences of giving merchants a vested interest in trade and of allowing people to travel to and from China and the foreign lands as such freedom might make them difficult to control in the future. Nevertheless, if properly managed, there should be no reason to worry about the barbarians, not to mention China's own people.<sup>135</sup>

The high-ranking official Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), who was known for his close relations and collaboration with the Jesuits in introducing Western science to Ming China, was aware of the connection between trade and the Wo problem along the coast since the early sixteenth century. He argued, "Japan relies on our country for the supply of merchandise. It is impossible to call at halt to it." As Japan developed, it required more supplies. The restrictions imposed on the coming of

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134. *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

135. Xu Fuyuan 許孚遠 (1535–1604), "Shutong haijin shu" 疏通海禁疏 [On lifting the Sea Prohibition], in *TWWXCK*, no. 289, pp. 176–80; see also *MJSWB*, 400: 1a–6b.

its tribute missions had resulted in shortages. It had no choice but to try to send more missions with more ships and men. When this was forbidden, inevitably this prohibition opened the doors to illegal trade. Whenever official trade was prohibited, private trade and smuggling filled the gap. When this was suppressed, the merchants turned to piracy. Only then could they obtain goods and be once again transformed into merchants. Had they been far-sighted, able officials could allow flexibility, understand the conditions on both sides, enact laws that could be upheld, exterminate bandits but not merchants, ban smuggling but not officially-sanctioned intercourse; the government would not have had to expend even the smallest outlay or suffer a single casualty, and the sea would have been tamed. Xu Guangqi was critical of Zhu Wan, who was known for his law-enforcing approach to the sea prohibition issue in the late 1540s. He agreed that Zhu Wan was an upright and resolute man and thought his impeachment that led to his suicide was unjust. Nevertheless, Xu also believed that Zhu Wan “was certainly out of step with the times”. Xu likened the problem to curing an ulcer. Initially it should be prevented from growing and be reduced gradually. It should not simply be excised. The feudal lords in Japan depended on the revenue and income from international trade. He also saw the Japanese incursions into Korea as being related to the need for trade.<sup>136</sup>

Another often-cited argument was presented in 1639 by Censor Fu Yuanchu, himself a Fujianese. Fu Yuanchu cited a traditional saying that, “the sea is the paddy-fields of the Fujianese”. Deprived of their livelihood, the poor joined the sea bandits in large numbers. Stricter maritime bans only pushed them to plunder coastal settlements. Censor Fu continued, the overseas barbarians belonged to two categories: those in the Great Western Ocean (Da Xiyang) and those in the Eastern Ocean (Dong Yang). The former region included Siam and states in Cambodia. They produced sappanwood, pepper, rhinoceros horn, ivory and other commodities (*huo*), all of which were in great demand in China. The latter area was called Luzon and the “barbarians” there were known as Folangji (here it means the Spanish). When the Chinese traded in the Great Western Ocean, they bartered for the produce, but in Luzon the Chinese traders shipped back only silver coins. The best Chinese silk was in great demand among the barbarians in these two regions. Raw silk from Huzhou that was worth a hundred *taels* could be sold for twice that price. Porcelain from Jiangxi and preserved fruits from Fujian were also popular among them.

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136. For Xu Guangqi's arguments cited here, see Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633), “Haifang yushuo” 海防迂說 [A humble opinion about coastal defense], in *TWXXCK*, no. 289, pp. 211–4; see also *MJSWB*, 491: 29b–47a.

In Luzon, skilled labor was in great demand, and the place attracted many Chinese migrants who could easily earn a living there with the skills they had acquired at home. As for the “Red-haired barbarians” (Hongmao Fan or the Dutch), they were known as the Jiaoliuba (Ka-la-pa) barbarians. They contested with the Folangji (the Spanish) for commercial profit but without success. In China, they had been decisively defeated by the Fujian authorities, but they did not harbor any resentment and still persisted in their efforts to open up trade with China. Now they had based themselves in Taiwan. Since trade with them was officially prohibited, “evil people” (*jianmin*) monopolized the profit and the government lost a revenue of more than 20 thousand *taels*. Moreover, both military and civil officers stationed along the coast likened the situation to “a rare commodity” in their hands. What should be banned were weapons, sulfur, saltpeter and the like but not other trade goods. The Fujianese people should be allowed to trade their produce, and the silk and porcelain merchants from Zhejiang and Jiangxi would follow in great numbers. Such a measure would recover the amount of revenue obtained during the early Wanli reign. Some even estimated a much higher amount of 50 or 60 thousand. Once revenues were restored, military expenditures at present allocated to Fujian could be sent to the treasury for frontier defense in the north. The poor could earn their livelihood and not have to turn to banditry. The officers along the coast would be prevented from engaging in smuggling and corrupt practices that often caused disturbances.<sup>137</sup>

The sea prohibition imposed during the decade 1717–27 was the last of its sort. It finally led the Fujian governor-general, Gao Qizhuo, clearly under the influence of Lan Dingyuan who had penned an essay raising identical points, to lodge an appeal to the court. In the memorial, the governor-general said,

The arable land in Fu, Xing, Zhang, Quan and Ding (prefectures) of Fukien province is limited, but the population is large. Since the pacification of Taiwan, the population has increased daily. What is produced locally is no longer sufficient to feed the people. The only way to resolve the problem is to open the ocean (*kaiyang*) so that surpluses from trade can supplement the insufficiency in farming, and both the rich and the poor will benefit from it.... The benefit will be even greater by instructing seagoing junks to carry certain amounts of rice on their return journey to Fujian.<sup>138</sup>

137. Fu Yuanchu 傅元初, “Qing kai yangjin shu” 請開洋禁疏, in *TXJGLBS*, 26: 33a–34a.

138. *QSL*: SZ, 54: 18.

Lan Dingyuan was the most convincing and far-sighted of the writers who appealed for the lifting of the 1717–27 ban. He said,

The Nanyang barbarians are unlikely to harm China. It is proper to lift the ban and let our people trade with them. This will serve to remedy the shortages in the interior by benefiting from the overseas surpluses.

He was critical of those high-ranking officials who petitioned for the ban, saying they lacked maritime experience and were ignorant of local conditions. He elaborated his thesis by presenting an overview of the maritime situation beginning with Korea in the north, a country he praised for observing the rules of propriety. Japan was considered the strongest power in the east. Farther south was Liuqiu. To the east of these places there were no other barbarian countries. Barbarian countries were most numerous in the Nanyang. Among them Luzon (the Spanish Philippines) and Ka-la-pa (Dutch Batavia) were the strongest. There were many others, including Borneo, Sulu, Malacca, Indragiri, Aceh, Johore, Banjarmasin and Karimon, but these were very tiny and would not dare to nurture any ulterior motives. Annam and Champa bordered Guangdong and Guangxi. Adjacent to them were such countries as Cambodia, Ligor, Chaiya and Pattani. Siam was located in the south-easternmost area. To the west were the Red-haired barbarians and countries in the Western Ocean such as England, Spain, Portugal, France and Holland. The island barbarian countries in the south had never caused trouble along the Chinese borders. All they did was exchange merchandise with China. They were submissive and weak. They benefited China and did no harm. In Fujian and Guangdong, the population was dense and land was scarce. Five or six out of every ten residents sought their livelihood at sea. Products from the interior of China that had not been worth much became valuable once they were shipped to these countries. Small items of handicraft were also sold overseas. All of this earned China more than a million silver dollars annually.<sup>139</sup>

By this time, the Qing court had learned to value trade with the non-threatening Nanyang states. The Qing emperors were highly appreciative of Siamese exports of several hundred thousand *dan* (piculs) of low-priced rice to China annually from the Kangxi reign onwards. These shipments greatly relieved the endemic food shortages in Fujian and Guangdong. As a gesture of appreciation, Chinese importers and Siamese

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139. Lan Dingyuan's remarks cited in this paragraph can be found in Lan Dingyuan 藍鼎元, "Nanyang shiyi lun" 南洋事宜論 [Commenting on the Nanyang affairs], in *XFHZYDCC*, 10: 502a–b.



tribute missions were not only granted tax exemptions, but were also accorded other privileged treatment. Siam was definitely perceived to be more useful to China than Korea, Liuqiu and the Western barbarians. Korea and Liuqiu were considered merely submissive, but they offered few benefits to China. The Western countries were later thought to be ungrateful because they repaid the benefits from China's tea, rhubarb, porcelain and silk, with the opium poison, as one commentator summed up.<sup>140</sup>

### **Persistent Anxieties about Maritime Crisis and Lost Opportunities**

Despite the non-threatening image of the Nanhai states, the Chinese remained sensitive to threats that might come from the sea. The maritime prohibition of the Ming government in the sixteenth century targeted the incursions by the Wo and the Portuguese as well as the perceived threat that might be caused by Chinese seafarers. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, Japan and the Dutch were perceived as the two major threats.

The incursion of the Wo in the sixteenth century is a familiar case and does not require another mention. However, the stereotypical image of late imperial China as being totally ignorant of current international conditions might not always be correct. The high-ranking court official Xu Guangqi is a case in point. His image of a threatening Japan is worth citing at length. Xu gave a detailed description of the events leading to the rise of the three successive military leaders—Oda Nobunaga (1534–82), Hideyoshi (1536–98) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616). He even accurately describes Hideyoshi's humble origins and Nobunaga's murder by a treacherous vassal. He saw Nobunaga as ten times more ambitious, cleverer in strategies and more unpredictable than Hideyoshi. Given a longer time, he would have become a cause of calamity, and Xu was certain he had intended to invade China. The events of Hideyoshi's campaign in Korea (1592), the Ming government coming to the aid of their tributary state, his death (1598) and the withdrawal of the Japanese armies after a second invasion in force in 1597 are described accurately and in detail. Xu also mentioned the rise to power of the Tokugawa family. The founder of the dynasty, Ieyasu, was seen as equally keen as his predecessors to expand trade. Xu predicted that the Tokugawa leaders would continue to covet Jilong and Danshui in Taiwan in the south and

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140. *HGTZ*, 5: 13b.

Korea in the north. Sandwiched in between two powers, Xu believed Korea would naturally incline toward the stronger power:

Some day in the future, Japan might use Korea as a free passage to ask for trade with China, or simply send an invading force across the borders. This would seem to be inevitable sooner or later.

From Dong Fan (Taiwan) the Japanese “will threaten Penghu. By then there will be Wo all over the sea in front of our courtyard.” He did not favor the termination of trade with Japan. On the contrary, he believed trade could be a means of manipulation. Trade benefited both sides. The government could impose customs duties on merchandise and ban illicit items, and this was one way to achieve and maintain tranquility. It was fortunate for China that Nobunaga and Hideyoshi died prematurely; given more time for them to consolidate their positions, China would have been in trouble. He concluded:

Only through trade can the Wo be pacified. Only through trade can we obtain full knowledge of the Wo. Only through trade can we have designs on the Wo.

He even suggested that, without alarming the Japanese, China could import the superior weapons used by the latter, swords, armor and cannon, by means of trade. Then China would be on par with them in the technology of war. Xu came to this conclusion by observing the defeat of China in Korea during the years 1592 to 1598, when the long swords, spears and guns of the Japanese infantry proved too much for the Chinese soldiers. He said there were occasions when China could have attacked Japan from its rear. At the time of Hideyoshi’s campaign in Korea, a Fujianese named Xu Yihou, who was an aide to the daimyo of Satsuma, hinted to the Fujian governor, Jin Xuezheng, that the Ming government might want to take advantage of the situation in Japan by sending an expeditionary force there. Satsuma could raise some 40 thousand troops and, if reinforced by 20 to 30 thousand soldiers and as many ships as possible from China, they could have Hideyoshi’s head. As Xu said, “the court debated whether it should send a fleet from the southern provinces to attack Japan”. However, the high-ranking officials at court were just too nervous to consider such a scheme. Xu was aware that attacking Japan from the south involved crossing the sea for a distance of thousands of *li*, but with a base in Satsuma and with Satsuma actually bearing the burden of the attack, there should be little danger or difficulty.<sup>141</sup> Xu Guangqi’s

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141. For Xu Guangqi’s comments cited above, see Xu Guangqi, “Haifang yushuo”, in *TWXXCK*, no. 289, pp. 211–23; also *MJSWB*, 491: 29b–47a.

grasp of the reliable information and the bold and unconventional remarks he made are truly surprising.

Xu Guangqi was not the only keen observer. After the appearance of the Dutch on the China coast at the beginning of the seventeenth century, they once again raised Chinese awareness of the power of firearms. The Dutch first requested the opening of trade in 1604. An observer named Chen Xueyi, writing in that year, gives a description of the visitors as follows:

I heard the Red-haired barbarians were formerly under the rule of Folangji (here it meant Spain). Their country is known as Holland. When it gained strength and wealth, it became independent.... They are keen on buying our silk from Huzhou for profit. They trade to Pattani by sea.

He also described the Dutch ships as huge. The sides of the ships were thick and shoed with tin plates inside:

There are more than thirty big guns on each side. Each cannon is installed with four or five balls of iron, each weighing thirty to forty catties. If a boat is hit by this cannon ball, it will be crushed to pieces.<sup>142</sup>

Another observer in 1622 was impressed by the speed of the Dutch sailing ships. He also describes the Dutch ship as larger than a Chinese junk of the Fujian model. Huge iron spikes were fixed to the exterior of the ship, each weighed more than a catty and had a length of two *chi* (1 *chi* = 0.3581 meters). This rendered the Chinese technique of crushing opponent's vessels by their own junks of larger size ineffective. There were three tiers of guns on each side, totaling 40 to 50 in all. The cannon balls could be fired to a distance of ten *li*: "When our vessels meet with them, we shall either be sunk or crushed to pieces. Their cannon are cast from bronze ... and will not rust.... When they land, each soldier carries a fowling-piece.... They therefore are invincible."<sup>143</sup> No wonder Chen Xueyi remarked:

[Dutch] mechanical skills are incomparable among the barbarians.... Had they not been persuaded by General Shen to leave and had they been allowed to trade, they would have become a source of trouble and caused a clash. Had that happened, the sea

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142. For the two quotes, see Shen Yourong, *Minhai zengyan*, *TWWXCK*, no. 56, pp. 34–5.

143. Dong Yingju, *CXJXL*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 237, p. 142.

routes in the southeast would have been obstructed. Then how could Quanzhou have remained at peace?<sup>144</sup>

After their encounters with the Dutch in Zhongzuosuo (Amoy) and Penghu during the 1620s, the Fujian governor, Nan Juyi, received suggestions that some one thousand troops be sent to garrison Penghu, which was then considered the frontline for the defense of Fujian against the Dutch, and that a dozen or so large-sized war junks be built, each equipped with a dozen or more cannon.<sup>145</sup> By that time, the method of casting the “Red-haired barbarian cannon” had become widely known and the firing of the *folangji* (here referring to cannon) has also become a common skill.<sup>146</sup>

In the early eighteenth century, the threatening maritime situation continued to loom large in the minds of Chinese observers. Lan Dingyuan again showed his rare insight into the danger. Commenting on Western nations including England, Spain, Portugal, France and Holland, he said their ships were solidly built and feared no great storms at sea, their cannon and weaponry were better than those in China and they were extremely fierce people, violent, treacherous and unpredictable. They all cast covetous eyes at other countries, that was why, among the “island barbarians” in the world, the “Red-haired barbarians”, the “barbarians in the Western Ocean” and Japan would cause China the most trouble. He mentioned Batavia, that had previously belonged to the Malays. It had traded with the Dutch and was later occupied by them. The Spanish had also occupied Luzon, while Japan had been a thorn in the side since Ming times.<sup>147</sup> In the wake of these external threats, Lan saw Taiwan as a bastion against foreign intrusions. He said,

Taiwan, located beyond the seas, is a natural defensive barrier (*haiwai tianqian*) and a place toward which Japan and Holland had cast their covetous eyes. It takes only little more than ten days to reach Guandong (Liaodong). It is in as close proximity [to the mainland], as lips are to teeth. One should not treat it as a faraway deserted island. Even though peace is prevalent, military preparations should not be neglected.<sup>148</sup>

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144. Shen Yourong, *Minhai zengyan*, *TWWXCK*, no. 56, pp. 34–5.

145. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 29a–32a.

146. Dong Yingju, *CXJXL*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 237, p. 119.

147. *XFHZYDCC*, 10: 502a–b.

148. Lan Dingyuan, *Pingtai jilüe*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 14, p. 41.

By and large, the Portuguese in Macao were considered less threatening. By the seventeenth century, as perceived by the President of the Board of War, Dong Hanru, “although [the Portuguese] are barbarian by nature, they have long been submissive [and can be trusted]”.<sup>149</sup> This perception changed in the eighteenth century, and the Chinese did begin to show some concern about the Portuguese presence in Macao. The Portuguese were thought to be fierce and cruel and they had the potential to cause trouble for the Chinese authorities. Their presence was tolerated because they provided trade opportunities but, for those who thought about the future, Macao was an unresolved issue and hence a source of anxiety.<sup>150</sup>

Such warnings of looming dangers on the sea horizon were cries in the wilderness. The sense of crisis had subsided by the late eighteenth century because of the confidence accumulated through a long century of peace and prosperity. When Hong Liangji compiled his work *Qianlong fu ting zhou xian tuzhi* (Illustrated gazetteer of the prefectures, sub-prefectures, departments and districts during the Qianlong Reign) in 1788, Holland and England were grouped as trading states along with other Western countries. Neither was considered threatening. When a real challenge suddenly emerged in the events that led to the Opium War, the Chinese did not have the capability to confront the enemy. Wei Yuan could only propose a retreat as he said,

instead of defending the outer coastal waters, it is better to hold out in the seaports; instead of holding out at the seaports, it is better to defend the inner waters (*neihe*).

Only in this last resort would the barbarians lose the superiority given them by their large, solid warships armed with two tiers of cannon. In the past, according to Wei Yuan, Wang Hong was able to defeat the Portuguese in the early 1520s and Zheng Chenggong to rout the Dutch in the outer seas because both made use of favorable winds and currents and could therefore launch surprise attacks on the enemy. If both sides had held on longer, the Chinese war junk would not have been able to match the Western man-of-war in construction and maneuverability.<sup>151</sup> Retreat, not advance, was the only alternative available to the Qing authorities in the nineteenth century.

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149. “Ming shilu Minhai guanxi shiliao” 明實錄閩海關係史料, in *TWWXCK*, no. 296, p. 129.

150. *XFHZYDCC*, 9: 320a.

151. For Wei Yuan’s remarks cited here, see *HGTZ*, 1: 1a–2b.

## Conclusions: The *Haifang* and the Self-imposed Limits of Maritime Expansion

Since antiquity, the Chinese had possessed a meticulous sense of territorial boundaries. The consistent use of territorial maps and registers of population to form tax units reflects an unambiguous concept of territorial jurisdiction derived from actual governance. Waterways, hills or mountains and islands often formed the natural and visible boundaries of geographical units. When there were no natural features to serve this purpose, the authorities planted markers or pillars. On account of this administrative tradition, boundaries were clearly demarcated even in the case of maritime borders, with jurisdiction over offshore islands unmistakably assigned to the respective local authorities to make them fully aware of their responsibility. Although the littoral communities, especially along the southeast coast, began to look upon the sea as their paddy-fields and hence expanded the maritime frontier from the mid-sixteenth century, the imperial governments made no claims to territorial waters or lands beyond those under the administration or supervision of civil or military appointees, or appointed native chiefs (*tusi*). In other words, although inner coastal waters or harbors (*ao*) were seen as part and parcel of coastal defense, there was no clear sense of territorial waters extending beyond the coastline in imperial China. Therefore, the sea became a natural defensive barrier rather than a means of easy access to lands elsewhere. Occupations of the offshore islands merely served the purpose of enhancing land-based coastal defenses. Indeed, *haifang* issues attracted the attention of major authors on statecraft writing during the period in question. While the two late imperial governments sought to defend the seaboard against disruptions of law and order, scholars of statecraft were able to foresee potential threats to the empire that were emerging on the horizon.

Economic benefits per se did not provide an impetus for maritime expansion. Although the economic value of Taiwan was discussed by Shi Lang, the decision to annex the island into the imperial domain was based less on economics than on the need to strengthen the *haifang*. Strategic concerns alone could justify occupation for the small offshore islands close to the coast. However, the annexation of a distant island such as Taiwan required both a strong strategic justification and sufficient local revenue to cover the cost of its administration.

The case of Taiwan is illuminating. It was commonly perceived as a territory “beyond the seas”, a phrase conveying a sense of reluctance and helplessness. Taiwan was the farthest point away from its coastline on which the Qing government was willing to establish an overseas defense

outpost. Under such conditions, the continued heavy reliance on the land force for coastal defenses underwent no substantial changes.

Nevertheless, there was always a minority school of thought in the perception of the *haifang* that subscribed to a more sensitive and forward-looking approach, and offered views critical of the traditional strategy. Xu Guangqi, Shi Lang and Lan Dingyuan were among the scholar-strategists who adopted this position. They had vision and innovative ideas. While Xu's expansionist approach was adventurist in nature and its rejection was to be expected, the latter two skillfully tailored their perception to fit the traditional *haifang* concept, hoping that by doing so their views would stand a chance to be considered.

Despite the self-imposed limits on expansion, the imperial governments during the late Ming and high Qing pursued an active and relatively effective policy of coastal defense. Even in decline, the Ming authorities fared better along the seafronts than they did on the northern frontiers. During this part of the Ming-Qing period, the imperial governments did not lose any of their maritime domains. When they allowed the Portuguese to enjoy a leasehold in Macao, they saw this move as a way to contain the barbarians.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, the net gain during the period was the prized territory of Taiwan. Given the fact that both the Ming and the Qing governments were sensitive to fiscal constraints, their approach was necessarily cost-effective and therefore rational.<sup>153</sup> It worked reasonably well until the Opium War.

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152. K.C. Fok, "The Macao Formula: A Study of Chinese Management of Westerners from the Mid-Sixteenth Century to the Opium War Period", PhD diss., University of Hawaii, 1978, provides an in-depth discussion of this point.

153. John E. Wills, Jr., has rightly pointed out that such defensive policies "made excellent realistic sense for late imperial China, with ... its impressive but rather thin and passive bureaucratic control". See his *Embassies and Illusion*, p. 188. However, Wills' critique that the policies ended in self-destructive clinging to illusions and forms is a harsh one, as this paper has shown.

## CHAPTER 3

# Trade, the Sea Prohibition and the “Folangji”, 1513–50

### Introduction

Soon after their conquest of Malacca in 1511, the Portuguese set their sights on China as the next move toward their goal of expanding their trade in the region. They soon came to be known to the Chinese as the Folangji,<sup>1</sup> a term that might have been borrowed from Muslim traders. In 1513, the Portuguese first appeared on the China coast and in the years 1549–50 the Zoumaxi Incident brought to an end the era of roaming adventure, leading a few years later to the establishment of a permanent base in Macao. The Portuguese were received by the Chinese with mixed feelings of hatred and amicability. The images of the Portuguese held by the Chinese varied according to different circumstances and time periods.<sup>2</sup> Broadly speaking, men who had a stake in maritime affairs often tended to hold views different to those who had no connection with littoral society and economy and were concerned with Confucian ideals and order.<sup>3</sup> Modern Chinese scholarship on Sino-Portuguese relations sometimes provides divergent interpretations even when identical sources have been used. For example, the oft-cited commentary published 60 years ago by Chang Wei-hua in the chapter on the Folangji in the *Ming shi* (Standard dynastic history of the Ming) presents a somewhat detached view. On the other hand, Dai Yixuan’s study based

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1. The Feringhi or Franks. See C.R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1953), p. xix.
  2. On images, see K.C. Fok, “Early Ming Images of the Portuguese”, in *Portuguese Asia: Aspect of History and Economic History (Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries)*, ed. Roderich Ptak (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1987), pp. 143–55.
  3. See *ibid.*, p. 147, for the discussion of a similar idea.



on the same material and published three decades ago, contains a heavy dose of nationalistic rhetoric.<sup>4</sup>

In recent decades, scholarship on sixteenth-century Sino-foreign relations has also begun to articulate socioeconomic change and the internal dynamism of Chinese littoral society. Explaining the surge in maritime activities along the southeast coast during this period, scholars have argued that this society was moving from a phase of agrarian frugality “to a more hustling and bustling phase of agrarian affluence greatly promoted by the rising tempo of handicraft and commercial activities.”<sup>5</sup>

The Chinese-Portuguese encounter during this period has been substantially covered by many fine scholarly works, and Chinese as well as Portuguese sources have been meticulously combed through. However, the literature often perpetuates such stereotypes as dynastic decline, official intrigues and ossified Confucian institutions, and contains details that often prove confusing and contradictory.

This chapter takes a fresh look at this volatile period of Chinese maritime history and Ming-foreign relations and clarifies a number of ambiguous or misinterpreted aspects of the events. It considers both macro and micro perspectives. On the macro level, the littoral trade, that was clandestine in nature, flourished and the Portuguese venture was integrated into a larger and expanding multinational network. These developments challenged the imperial government’s Sea Prohibition (*haijin*) policy that barred its population from engaging in seafaring activities. On the micro level, this period of flux presented local society with new economic opportunities that were met with great enthusiasm.

Interaction between various domestic and foreign forces produced both collusion and confrontation. It provided not only impetuses for human endeavors, but also often paved the way for violence. By pursuing

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4. The two commentaries are: Chang Wei-hua 张维华, “Ming shi folangji zhuan” 明史佛朗机传 [Chapter on Portugal in the Standard Dynastic History of the Ming], in *Ming shi ouzhou siguo zhuan zhushi* 明史欧洲四国传注释 [A commentary on the chapters on four European states in the Standard Dynastic History of the Ming], *Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies*, monograph Series No. 7 (Peiping: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1934; reprint, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982); and Dai Yixuan 戴裔煊, *Ming shi Folangji zhuan jianzheng* 明史佛朗机传笺正 [A commentary of the chapter on Portugal in the Standard History of the Ming Dynasty] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1984).
  5. See, for example, So Kwan-wai, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China during the 16th Century* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1975), p. 63; and Chang Pin-tsun, “Chinese Maritime Trade: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Fu-chien (Fukien)”, PhD diss., Princeton University, 1983, also provides a fine example of this approach.

the themes of collusion, politics and violence, the chapter will illustrate the multi-faceted implications of the maritime enterprise and development during the period in question.

## Connections and the Abortive Diplomacy

When Diego Lopes de Sequeira sailed from Lisbon in 1508 to "discover" Malacca, he was given a lengthy set of instructions by King Manuel of Portugal, one of which was to enquire about the Chinese (*Chijns*). The king was interested in such matters as the frequency of their arrivals in Malacca, the types of merchandise that they brought, the financial position of their merchants, the construction features of their ships and other information about their country.<sup>6</sup> In the early sixteenth century, eight to ten Chinese junks came to trade in Malacca each year,<sup>7</sup> and when Sequeira reached Malacca in 1509, he found three or four Chinese junks lying in the port "with whom the Portuguese seem at once to have got on friendly terms".<sup>8</sup> The Chinese proved equally friendly when Commander Afonso de Albuquerque anchored off Malacca in 1511 because the latter spared their vessels when he ordered the burning of the ships of the Gujeratis in the harbor.<sup>9</sup>

After the Portuguese had established themselves in Malacca in 1511, they began to collect information about China, cultivated cordial relationships with the Chinese seafarers in Malacca and built up connections along the China coast through these junk traders. The Chinese junk masters "were of great help in conveying Albuquerque's envoys to and from Siam". They also carried back to China a very favorable report on the character and prowess of the Portuguese.<sup>10</sup>

Tomé Pires, who was to become Portugal's first ambassador to China, arrived in Malacca in mid-1512. Although he was busy with his official duties in connection with commerce and revenue during the two years

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6. J.M. Braga, *The Western Pioneers and their Discovery of Macao* (Macao: Imprensa Nacional, 1949), p. 60.
  7. Stephen Chang Tseng-hsin 张增信, *Mingji dongnan zhongguo de haishang huodong* 明代东南中国的海上活动 [Maritime activities on the southeast coast of China in the late Ming Dynasty] (Taipei: China Committee for Publication Aid and Prize Awards, 1988), p. 198.
  8. Donald Ferguson, "Letters from Portuguese Captives in Canton, Written in 1534 and 1536", *The Indian Antiquary, a Journal of Oriental Research* 30 (1901): 422.
  9. Z. Volpicelli, "Early Portuguese Commerce and Settlements in China", *Journal of China Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 27 (1892-93): 37-8; also Ferguson, "Letters", p. 422.
  10. Ferguson, "Letters", p. 422.

and three months he lived in Malacca, he used his leisure time to compile an extensive account of littoral Asia, the *Suma Oriental*,<sup>11</sup> that provided the Portuguese merchants with useful information about trade opportunities in China and other regions in the East.

Pires' account contains interesting information about Sino-Malacca trade. He reports that the chief merchandise that went from Malacca to China was pepper, "of which they will buy ten junk-loads a year". The Chinese also purchased large quantities of incense, elephants' tusks, tin, apothecary's lign-aloës, Borneo camphor, red beads, white sandalwood, brazil-wood and "the black wood that grows in Singapore". Other important commodities included carnelians from Cambay, scarlet camlets and colored woolen cloths.<sup>12</sup>

The chief items imported from China were many kinds of silk fabrics, seed-pearls in various shapes, musk in powder and in pods, apothecary's camphor, *abarute* (lead), alum, saltpeter, sulfur, copper, iron, rhubarb, vases of copper and *fuseleira* (?), cast iron kettles, bowls, basins, boxes, fans, needles, copper bracelets, gold and silver, brocades, and porcelain. Although these commodities had been imported from China, some had originated elsewhere. China produced "plenty of good sugar" and was also a major supplier of salt to countries in the region surrounding Malacca. Each year some 15 hundred sailing boats came to Malacca to purchase salt.<sup>13</sup>

The city of Guangzhou (Canton) on the estuary of the Pearl River was the gateway to China for both envoys and traders from Southeast Asia, a place where "the whole kingdom of China unloads all its merchandise, great quantities from inland as well as from the sea".<sup>14</sup> Upon their arrival, foreign vessels anchored at Tunmen (Tamao) and other nearby islands near the mainland of Nantou, which lay some 30 leagues from Guangzhou. Pires gives a vivid description of how junks from Malacca were received there:

As soon as the lord of Nantou sees the junks he immediately sends word to Canton (Guangzhou) that junks have gone in among the islands; the valuers from Canton go out to value the merchandise; they receive their dues; they bring just the amount of merchandise that is required: the country is pretty well accustomed to

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11. Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and India in 1512–1515*, trans. Armando Cortesão (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944).

12. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 127.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

estimate it, so well do they know of you the goods you want, and they bring them.

They ... [collect] twenty per cent on pepper, fifty per cent on brazil [wood], and the same amount on the Singapore wood; and when this has been estimated a junk will pay so much in proportion. They receive their dues on the other merchandise at ten per cent; and they do not oppress you; they have genuine merchants in their dealings. They are very wealthy. Their whole idea is pepper. They sell their foodstuffs honestly; business over, each returns to his own country.<sup>15</sup>

Pires claimed that the Chinese merchants in Nantou made a profit of 30 to 50 per cent on trade with foreigners.<sup>16</sup> He also observed that no Chinese "may set out in the direction of Siam, Java, Malacca, Pase and beyond, without permission from the governors of Guangzhou, and they charge so much for signing the licence to go and come back that they cannot afford it and do not go".<sup>17</sup> But, obviously many managed to bribe their way out or simply sneaked off. In Malacca, for example, there were so many Chinese traders that one of the Shahbandars, the harbor-masters who received foreign ships, was made responsible for junks from China.<sup>18</sup> After the Portuguese conquest, Chinese continued to come.<sup>19</sup>

During Pires' sojourn, the Portuguese busied themselves preparing for voyages to China by gathering navigational information. Among the maps drawn by Francisco Rodrigues, a pilot and cartographer at this time, for example, is a rutter for the voyage from Malacca to the Pearl River, in all likelihood based on information gathered from Chinese sailors before the first Portuguese voyage to China.<sup>20</sup>

In 1513, when the situation in Malacca had stabilized, the Portuguese commander of Malacca, Rui de Brito Patalim, sent Jorge Álvares on a trading expedition to China.<sup>21</sup> Existing Chinese goodwill toward the Portuguese made this pioneer exploration a success. Álvares and some other Portuguese sailed on board a Chinese junk that was among a returning merchant fleet and was assisted by these junk traders while on the China coast. Álvares and his company were not permitted to land

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 122.

17. Ibid., p. 119.

18. Ibid., pp. 265, 268.

19. Ibid., p. 283.

20. Armando Cortesão, "Introduction", p. xciv.

21. Concerning the departure date and the expedition, see J.M. Braga, "The 'Tamao' of the Portuguese Pioneers", *Tien Hsia Monthly* 8, 5 (May 1939): 422; also Stephen Chang, *Ming-chi tung-nan chung-kuo*, pp. 201-2.

because their Chinese contacts said it was against their custom to let foreigners enter their dwellings. However, the Portuguese were able “to sell their goods at a great gain”.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after this successful voyage, a second expedition went to China in 1515, under the leadership of Rafael Perestrelo, a man of Italian extraction in Portuguese service, who took with him a number of Portuguese. This time they traveled on board a junk belonging to a native merchant of Malacca. Perestrelo returned to Malacca in late 1516 with a great profit,<sup>23</sup> and brought back the welcome news “that the Chinese desired peace and friendship with the Portuguese, and that they were a very good people”.<sup>24</sup>

These first contacts with the south China coast by Portuguese merchant-adventurers who sailed from Malacca on Chinese or native junks demonstrated that there was “as great profit in taking spices to China as in taking them to Portugal”.<sup>25</sup> According to one estimate, pepper could be sent from Malacca to China at a profit of 300 per cent.<sup>26</sup>

At the beginning of September 1515, a new governor-general of India, Lopo Soares de Albergaria, arrived at Goa. With him came Fernão Peres de Andrade, whom the king sent as captain-major of a fleet to sail from India “to discover China” and take a Portuguese ambassador there. Tomé Pires, the royal apothecary, was chosen to be the ambassador because he was “discreet and eager to learn”, and “would know better than anyone else the drugs there were in China”.<sup>27</sup>

Andrade went from Malacca to Pasai in December to collect a cargo of pepper. He then returned to Malacca, and in June 1517 sailed to China with seven or eight ships, including three junks. One junk was owned by a Malaccan merchant named Curiaraja, another also by a Malacca merchant called Pulata and a third by António Lobo Falcão. The fleet arrived at Tunmen on 15 August 1517.<sup>28</sup>

They found a conducive environment. The latter half of the fifteenth and the early years of the sixteenth century constituted “a relatively stable and prosperous period in which ... [Ming China’s] economy grew, internal trade flourished and along the coast, private overseas trade gradually developed in spite of continuing laws and interdictions carried over from

22. Ferguson, “Letters”, p. 423.

23. Cortesão, “Introduction”, p. xxx.

24. Chang T’ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514 to 1644* (Leiden: Late E.J. Brill Ltd., 1934), p. 38.

25. Cited in Boxer, *South China*, p. xx.

26. *Ibid.*, fn. 1, p. xx.

27. Cortesão, “Introduction”, p. xxvii.

28. *Ibid.*, p. xxx.

[the early years of the dynasty]".<sup>29</sup> Tribute missions still came regularly and passed, for the most part, without dramatic incident. As Roland Higgins explains, despite "official criticisms and restrictions repeatedly placed on tribute missions, trade gradually came to overshadow the other political, ritualistic, obeisance-paying aspects of the tribute formula for managing barbarians".<sup>30</sup>

The Portuguese ships were fired on by a Chinese fleet cruising off the island to prevent piracy, but Andrade did not return fire, giving every demonstration of peace and friendliness. He sent a message to the Chinese commander, "explaining who he was and that he was bringing an embassy of King Manuel of Portugal his Lord to the King of China". The Chinese captain welcomed Andrade, saying that "through the Chinese who went to Malacca he also had news of the good faith and chivalry of the Portuguese", and advised him to address himself to the Commander of the Coastguard (*beiwu duzhihui*) of Nantou, who was empowered to examine all the ships that came to Guangzhou.<sup>31</sup>

After many messages and delays, Andrade eventually arrived in Guangzhou where he ordered a salute fired by the cannon on his ships as a gesture of respect. Very soon a message came from the Provincial Administration Commissioner (*buzhengshi*), the highest authority then in Guangzhou, expressing astonishment at such an act of imprudence. Andrade apologized that "he had erred through ignorance, and intended only respect".<sup>32</sup> Although the Chinese official accepted this explanation, he said that it never occurred to the Chinese that in some part of the earth a demonstration of war implements could be an expression of respect or courteous recognition.<sup>33</sup> Pending further Chinese instructions, Andrade ordered that no Portuguese should go ashore and no Chinese visitors should be allowed on board his ships.

Soon afterwards, the Governor-General of Liang-Guang (Guangdong and Guangxi), Chen Jin, returned to Guangzhou. Andrade sent ashore the factor of the fleet to explain their mission. Governor-general Chen and other high-ranking officials "replied with many words of satisfaction" and promised that they would immediately write to their emperor asking for

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29. Roland Louis Higgins, "Piracy and Coastal Defence in the Ming Period, Government Responses to Coastal Disturbances, 1523-1549", PhD diss., The University of Minnesota, 1981, p.18.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

31. Cortesão, "Introduction", p. xxxi; also Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 41. The Commander's chief function was to guard against the depredation of the Japanese pirates.

32. Ferguson, "Letters", p. 426.

33. Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 64.

instructions.<sup>34</sup> They also paid a courtesy visit to the ambassador, Tomé Pires, who was lodged in the house-compound in which the Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisor, Ying Xiang, lived.<sup>35</sup>

Andrade was invited to go ashore, but he declined, saying that he was responsible for the safety of the ships. Instead, he asked the favor of a house owner near the waterfront, "where he might offer for sale or exchange some of the goods he had brought",<sup>36</sup> and his request was granted.

At this juncture, Andrade received a message that his ships in Tunmen had been attacked by pirates. He left Tomé Pires and his suite at Guangzhou and, at the end of 1517 or beginning of 1518 returned to Tunmen. From there, Andrade sent a message to Malacca reporting "how the ambassador was received, the friendship established with the 'Governors' of Canton, and how we were welcomed in those parts".<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Andrade also sent Captain Jorge Mascarenhas to explore the Liuqiu Islands via Zhangzhou of southern Fujian. Mascarenhas was probably taken to southern Fujian by either the Fujianese or the Liuqiu merchants trading at Malacca.<sup>38</sup> During his sojourn in southern Fujian, he opened trade with the Chinese and found that "one could make just as much profit in Ch'uanchow [Zhangzhou?] as in Canton [Guangzhou]".<sup>39</sup>

Andrade set sail for Malacca with his squadron in September 1518, after nearly 14 months in China. He made a friendly farewell gesture by issuing a proclamation that, "if any Chinese had received any injury from or had any claim on a Portuguese he was to come to him and satisfaction should be made".<sup>40</sup> During his visit, Andrade had handled his mission "with such skill and tact that he left a very favourable impression of the Portuguese character on the Chinese".<sup>41</sup>

Before Andrade's departure from China, he had apparently received the impression from the high-ranking officials of Guangzhou that the emperor had agreed to welcome the ambassador.<sup>42</sup> In fact, Pires and his suite waited in Guangzhou for 15 more months. It seems that the senior provincial officials had been in favor of receiving the envoy, but realizing that Folangji was not among the tributary nations from the South Seas,

34. Cortesão, "Introduction", pp. xxxiii, xxxiv.

35. Ibid., p. xxxiv; also Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 22.

36. Ferguson, "Letters", p. 427.

37. Cortesão, "Introduction", p. xxxiv.

38. Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 45.

39. Ibid.

40. Ferguson, "Letters", p. 427.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

they had sought instructions from the Court. The Portuguese request for official relations was referred to the Board of Rites and the deliberation is mentioned in the *Ming shilu* (Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty), the Court records of the Ming dynasty, under the entry of February 11, 1518. Not surprisingly, the Board had recommended that the Folangji "be told to leave and their tribute returned", and the emperor had accepted this decision.<sup>43</sup>

The Court later reversed this decision and granted permission for Pires and his suite, numbering 30,<sup>44</sup> to travel to the imperial capital.<sup>45</sup> The standard dynastic history of the Ming explains that "the Portuguese bribed the eunuch who served in the capacity of Regional Commander (*zhenshou zhonggui*) and were thus permitted to proceed to the capital".<sup>46</sup>

The envoy left Guangzhou on January 23, 1520, and arrived in Nanjing in May. The emperor was in the city, but he decided to meet the Portuguese ambassador in Beijing, to which he returned in February 1521, in accordance with the conventions governing such occasions. While these diplomatic moves were underway, other crises occurred. Simão de Andrade, a brother of Fernão Peres de Andrade, arrived in Tunmen with a small fleet in August 1519. He was surprised to discover that Pires had not even left Guangzhou, and his indignation and irritation led to a regrettable episode. In contrast to his brother, Simão de Andrade has been described as covetous, selfish and despotic.<sup>47</sup> He behaved oppressively towards the Chinese, building a fort at Tunmen and contesting the jurisdiction of the Chinese officials. He was also accused of "committing acts of piracy, of enslaving the Chinese and kidnapping girls on the coast".<sup>48</sup> His activities were "the principal cause of the unfortunate end of Pires' embassy, and of all the misfortunes the Portuguese suffered in China for more than thirty years".<sup>49</sup>

There were also other incidents involving persons associated with the Portuguese. While in Nanjing, an interpreter in Pires' suite, a Muslim

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43. *Ming Shilu: Wuzong chao* 明實錄：武宗朝 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: Wuzong Reign] (hereafter *MSL: WZ*), 158: 2a–b.

44. Cited in Dai Yixuan, *Ming shi folangji zhuan*, p. 9.

45. *MSL: WZ*, 194:2b.

46. *Ming shi* 明史 [Standard dynastic history of the Ming] (reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), *juan* 325, "Folangji", p. 8430.

47. Geo. Phillip, "Early Portuguese Trade in Fuhkien", *The China Review, or Notes and Queries on the Far East* (Hong Kong) 19 (1891): 45.

48. Volpicelli, "Early Portuguese Commerce", p. 42.

49. Cortesão, "Introduction", p. xxxvi.



Chinese named Huozhe Yasan,<sup>50</sup> gave bribes to the emperor's favorite and the most powerful Court official, Jiang Bin, to obtain an imperial audience.<sup>51</sup> The emperor found the interpreter's knowledge of several languages amusing and kept him for company. Unfortunately, this overconfident and arrogant man offended a Chinese official named Liang Zhuo, who was in charge of the lodgings for foreign envoys, by refusing to kneel before him. For this insult, he was beaten. Learning of this, Jiang Bin quarreled with Liang and threatened to memorialize the emperor.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, Fernão Peres de Andrade's official letter had been translated by his interpreters in a way that indicated the king of Portugal wanted to be a vassal of the emperor of China. However, when the sealed letter of King Manuel was opened and translated by the Court, the language was found to differ entirely from that of the letter written by the interpreters in the name of Andrade. The Portuguese clearly had no intention of disguising themselves as a tributary mission from the former Malacca Kingdom,<sup>53</sup> but their Chinese interpreters had followed the customary form of correspondence. The irony is that, if the earlier translation had not been done to suit the Chinese world view, it would not have left the provincial officials any latitude to favor the Portuguese entry.<sup>54</sup>

50. Huozhe Ya-san himself said he was a Chinese. See *Ming shi*, *juan* 325, "Folangji", p. 8431. Another example of using "huozhe" as a title is an Arab (Tianfang guo 天方國) envoy named Huo-zhe A-li (*Ming shilu: Shizong/Jiajing chao* 明實錄: 世宗朝 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: Shizong/Jiajing Reign]) (hereafter *MSL: SZ*), 164: 5a. I would venture to suggest that their names actually were Haji Hasan and Haji Ali respectively. See also Chang Wei-hua, *Ming shi ou-zhou siguo zhuan*, p. 9 for the view that "huo-che" was a Muslim official title during the Yuan.
51. Yan Congjian 严从简, *Shuyu zhouzi lu* 殊域周咨录 [A comprehensive inquiry into strange lands] (Preface 1583; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), "Folangji", p. 320; also Fujida Toyobachi 藤田豊八, *Tōzai kōshōshi no kenkyū* 東西交渉史の研究 [A study of East-West relations] (Tokyo: Ogihara Seibunkan, 1943), p. 419.
52. *Ming shi*, *juan* 325, "Folangji", p. 8431.
53. Chang Wei-hua rightly comments that the claim in Ming records that "the Folangji sent an envoy to pay tribute and request conferment of titles" is an exaggeration. See his "Ming shi Folangji zhuan", p. 6.
54. Diplomatic letters involved values and world views. The Chinese stressed the importance of "the ritual relationship between the emperor and a tributary prince", whereas European states adhered to "the concept of a community of equal status". When such letters were translated for submission to the counterpart, the translation was made compatible with the world view of the reading party. For a discussion of the misunderstanding created by translated communications between Imperial China and the European states, see John E.

More complaints also reached the Court. The fugitive king of Malacca sent an ambassador to appeal for Chinese help against the Portuguese "sea-robbers" who had taken his kingdom.<sup>55</sup> Officials at Tunmen also sent news about the misdeeds of Simão de Andrade. Censors Chiu Daolong, who formerly served as a magistrate in Shunde of Guangdong, and He Ao, himself a native of Shunde, accused the former administration commissioner, Wu T'inju, who had followed a more flexible maritime policy during his tenure from 1514 to 1517, of being responsible for the sudden influx of foreign mariners into the province and the misdeeds of the Folangji. Chiu's and He's impeachment of the Guangzhou officials and recommendation that foreign trade with the exception of designated tribute missions be prohibited were approved by the Zhengde Emperor on January 13, 1521. The Portuguese envoy would now be subject to further cross-examination upon the impending arrival in the capital of the ambassador from the former Malacca kingdom.<sup>56</sup>

Before the Portuguese envoy's fate could be decided, the Zhengde Emperor died. Four days after the emperor's death, which occurred on April 20, 1521, about two months after his return to the capital, Grand Secretary Yang Tinghe, with the support of a few influential eunuchs, persuaded the empress dowager to put Jiang Bin, the patron of the Portuguese embassy, under arrest.<sup>57</sup> The new Jiajing Emperor (r. 1522–66), a youth of 14, ascended the throne on May 27, 1521<sup>58</sup> and ordered Jiang Bin's execution on July 11.<sup>59</sup>

In accordance with imperial precedence, foreign embassies that happened to be present in the imperial capital during the mourning period were courteously asked to withdraw from the country. The

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Wills, Jr., "Ch'ing Relations with the Dutch, 1662–1690", in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John K. Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 248–9.

55. Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 52.

56. *MSL: WZ*, 194: 2b–3a. He Ao's attack on Wu could have been caused by personal hard feelings toward the latter. Another impeachment against Wu was made by He in 1525 alleging Wu's mismanagement of famine relief in Huguang. See *MSL: SZ*, 36: 7a–b. It could have been because of the sudden death of the Zhengde Emperor two months later that the Malay ambassador was received by the new sovereign only on July 25. Probably, the Court's decision to keep Pires and his suite in custody was sent to Guangzhou at this time. According to Chang T'ien-tse, however, Tuan Mohammed, ambassador of the Raja of Bintang, son of the fugitive King of Malacca, lodged the complaint against the Portuguese before the Zhengde Emperor (*Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 52).

57. *MSL: WZ*, 197: 4a, 7a.

58. *MSL: SZ*, 1: 4b.

59. *Ibid.*, 3: 4a.

procedure had nothing to do with the new emperor's xenophobia, and the Portuguese embassy, together with two other tribute delegations from Hami and Turfan on the western borders of the country, were all suitably rewarded before their departure.<sup>60</sup> Pires left Beijing on May 22 and arrived in Guangzhou on September 22, 1521. However, imperial instructions had reached Guangzhou ordering that the ambassador and his suite be detained until the Portuguese evacuated Malacca.<sup>61</sup>

A few months earlier, in April or May 1521, a Portuguese fleet under the captaincy of Diogo Calvo had arrived in Tunmen. Jorge Alvares also came with his junk and more Portuguese ships from Pattani and Siam joined them later. The ships carried such merchandise as pepper and sandalwood. Despite the atrocity committed by Simão de Andrade, the Guangzhou authorities did not seem to want to order a stoppage of trade.<sup>62</sup> On the contrary, they stated that these foreign vessels had come to bring supplies to their tribute envoy, a common practice accepted by the Chinese authorities. Such supply missions were allowed to trade after duties had been levied on their merchandise in accordance with regulations. However, the new sovereign was determined not to allow the Portuguese entry into the country. He also announced that other tributary envoys whose arrivals were not on the approved schedule or whose documents were not in proper order should be refused entry.<sup>63</sup> These measures were a natural attempt at the beginning of the new reign, that was imbued with the spirit of reform, to rectify the infamous abuses committed by the eunuchs in charge of the ports designated to receive tribute missions.

Following the new order from the Court, the Chinese fleet used force on the orders of the Deputy-Commissioner of Guangdong Coastal Surveillance, Wang Hong, to suspend unauthorized trade and expel the foreigners. This contretemps led to the commencement of a long, fierce battle, during which many of the Portuguese trading ashore or on board the vessels were killed or taken prisoner. In the midst of the fighting, Jorge Álvares died of an illness in early July 1521. Only three junks managed to flee the horrible scene.<sup>64</sup> The unfortunate Tomé Pires and his suite arrived in Guangzhou shortly after this bitter clash. He was imprisoned there and died there without leaving China again.

An equally bloody confrontation occurred the following year when the Portuguese decided to make an effort to re-establish trade with China

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60. *MSL: WZ*, 197: 5b.

61. Cortesão, "Introduction", p. xl.

62. Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, pp. 53–4.

63. *MSL: SZ*, 4: 27b.

64. Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, pp. 54–5.

by sending a fleet to Guangzhou. It consisted of four ships and two junks, laden with pepper and other merchandise. Despite Captain-Major Martim Afonso de Melo Coutinho's peace overtures, and his formulaic assertion that he came to bring necessities to the envoy and his suite, the Chinese refused his ships permission to enter. Hostilities broke out and both sides suffered heavy casualties.<sup>65</sup> It is mentioned in Court records dated April 6, 1523 that the Chinese killed 35 of the invaders and captured 42 others, including their leader captain Pedro Homen. The Court later endorsed death sentences imposed on the captives.<sup>66</sup>

## Beyond the Imperial Legal Net

The China coast in the early 1520s became more turbulent than it had been earlier, the unrest fueled by increased smuggling activities and piracy. But the most calamitous event of the early Jiajing era was the eruption of a bloody and alarming conflict in 1523 between two rival Japanese tribute missions that arrived at Ningbo. The two missions represented different Japanese trading houses and each claimed to be the legitimate embassy from Japan. Heavily bribed by a Chinese named Song Shuqing, who was in the service of one of the delegations, the eunuch in charge of the Supervisorate of Maritime Trade and Shipping sided with Song's party. This partiality led to violence involving both groups and the tribute-bearers turned to piracy. In retaliation, the Ming Court suspended entry permits for all Japanese missions, and temporarily abolished the Supervisorates of Maritime Trade and Shipping at Ningbo, Fuzhou, and Guangzhou.

The Japanese, whether officials or private citizens, had always been dissatisfied with the restrictive tribute trade. Those who failed to obtain trading permits often turned to illicit transactions or piracy, and raiding the Chinese coast had become a favorite occupation of many from southwest Japan, who behaved as pirates or as traders as the occasion demanded. Cutting off the legal outlet for overseas trade only aggravated the situation and, as Higgins observes, "let the trade fall into the hands of smugglers and influential persons who connived with the Japanese and other foreign traders".<sup>67</sup>

The Portuguese were undeterred. The China trade was too valuable for them to abandon, and they continued to visit the China coast despite

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65. *Ibid.*, pp. 56–8.

66. *MSL: SZ*, 24: 8a–b. This record is generally consistent with the Portuguese sources as cited in Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 59.

67. Higgins, "Piracy", p. 58.

their expulsion from Guangzhou. They remained in touch with the China market through Chinese traders calling at Pattani,<sup>68</sup> and Chinese domiciled overseas urged them to operate farther up the coast, in Fujian and Zhejiang. To this end, they helped them establish connections with profitable smuggling networks.

A decade after their expulsion from the Guangzhou region, the Portuguese found new opportunities to slip back into the south. In November 1529, the Court approved the request of the Liang-Guang Grand Coordinator, Lin Fu, to reopen Guangzhou to foreign trade.<sup>69</sup> In the petition, Lin Fu argued from the institutional point of view that, although it was proper to expel the Folangji because their presence was unauthorized, permission should be granted to countries such as Annam, Chenla, Siam, Champa, Java, Pahang and Malacca to pay tribute as they had done before. Furthermore, restoration of the supervision system under the Supervisorates of Maritime Trade and Shipping (*shibo tijusi/shibo si*) would benefit the economy and help raise needed revenue for provincial military and administrative expenses. It would also ensure the supply of products from these countries that were very much in demand. He complained that cutting Guangzhou off from foreign trade only encouraged illicit trade activities elsewhere along the coast, and he singled out Zhangzhou in Fujian as a port where the smuggling trade was flourishing and openly tolerated by local authorities. Lin requested that Guangzhou be reopened to foreign trade, and that illegal trade elsewhere be suppressed immediately.<sup>70</sup>

Lin Fu excluded the Portuguese from the petition because he knew that it would be difficult to obtain the Court's permission to trade with them; but, after the reopening of Guangzhou for the tribute trade the following year, the Portuguese were able to obtain some of the benefits of the regulated trade, although their presence was still proscribed by the Ming state. One practice adopted by the Portuguese after 1533 was to accompany tribute missions sent by their Malay allies such as Pahang and Pattani.<sup>71</sup>

During the period 1521–49, Portuguese smugglers often conducted their trade in collusion with local officials who received large bribes.<sup>72</sup> No doubt, the Portuguese met with a good deal of sympathy and support from the Chinese of all classes who were anxious to do business with

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68. Ferguson, "The Letters", p. 434.

69. *MSL: SZ*, 106: 5a.

70. Yan Congjian, *Shuyu Zhouzi lu*, pp. 322–4 for Lin Fu's memorial.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 324; and Stephen Chang, *Mingji dongnan zhongguo*, p. 245.

72. Gaspar da Cruz, "The Treatise of Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, O.P.", in Boxer, *South China*, p. 192.

them. Local smugglers, merchants, even petty officials provided the Portuguese with information about trade conditions and movements of government patrols. Expatriate mariners and local fishermen acted as pilots for the Portuguese ships and junks. Moreover, as Chang T'ien-tse remarks, this smuggling trade along the coast of Fujian and Zhejiang could never have achieved such proportions had it not been actively encouraged and backed by the scholar-gentry.<sup>73</sup>

Elaborating on the smuggling networks, Chang Pin-tsun highlights two groups of people: the onshore group and the seagoing group. The former included "members of the local elite, such as retired bureaucrats, official brokers, rich families and even the incumbent officials". They played the role of "harboring hosts", providing storage for contraband and managing the distribution of smuggled goods. The latter group varied. They could be "relatives of powerful local families, small traders, miserable vagrants or even criminals. They formed armed units, risking their lives at sea and transporting the contraband under the severe penalty of Ming law." These people were most likely to turn to piracy when they were pursued by the authorities or under other desperate circumstances.<sup>74</sup>

Important families along the China coast were also instrumental in the rise of illegal trade because of "their ability to provide capital and manpower" and "protect illicit seafaring undertakings from government's interference".<sup>75</sup> The sea prohibition law was never effectively enforced against "the rich and the powerful" of local society. When their ships were seized by the coastguards for illicit trade, they simply went to the local authorities and stated that the sailors were their servants who had been sent to ship back grain and cloth from other provinces. The officials then released the men and the cargoes without a moment's hesitation. There were also cases when the coastguards were subject to false accusations by powerful people in retaliation for placing their followers under arrest, and many law-enforcing officials died in jail under such circumstances. With this fate hanging over their heads, they were afraid of offending the powerful families.<sup>76</sup>

Assisted by their collaborators operating within the smuggling networks, the Portuguese wintered at various sheltered but obscure islands and anchorages along the Fujian and Zhejiang coasts. Depending

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73. Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 70.

74. Chang Pin-tsun, "Chinese Maritime Trade", pp. 50–1.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

76. Ng Chin-keong, "Gentry-Merchants and Peasant-Peddlers—The Response of the South Fukienese to the Offshore Trading Opportunities 1522–1566", *Nanyang daxue xsuebao* 南洋大學學報 (The Nanyang University Journal) 7 (1973): 167.

on the circumstances, the gangs either traded as merchants, or raided as pirates. Their enterprise, trade or piracy, was truly multinational in nature. As Higgins has said about coastal piracy:

[It] was not a competitive nationalistic venture, rather it was a system built on personal ties and loyalties within competing collectivities. Often Chinese and Japanese or Malay, etc., joined together in the same band, a cosmopolitan nucleus into which various others, such as captives, refugees, shipwrecked or marooned sailors could be introduced.<sup>77</sup>

There is a dearth of detailed information about the life and adventures of the pirates and about the trading marts. The travel accounts of Fernão Mendes Pinto offer glimpses of the roving Portuguese adventurers along the China coast at that time. But the authenticity of Pinto's accounts remains controversial.<sup>78</sup> Donald Ferguson observes that the work is not entirely a fabrication, but many of the incidents related are pure fiction. Nevertheless, because Pinto was a contemporary observer and a participant in many of the episodes that he describes, Z. Volpicelli suggests that one can rely on his "general view of the life of the roving Portuguese adventurers of that time in the Far East".<sup>79</sup> The author surely witnessed similar events somewhere, and his adventures, "marvelous as some of them are, must be considered to have generally a small substratum of truth and to be based, if not on what he saw or did, on what he heard others had seen or done. Taken in such a light he gives us a picturesque view of the life of those times..."<sup>80</sup>

Pinto's story contains a reference to a "daring and unprincipled"<sup>81</sup> Portuguese corsair named Antonio de Faria, who roamed the whole coast as far as Ningbo in the early 1540s, capturing vessels and arming them with Portuguese prisoners he liberated or with piratical sailors he pressed into his service. At one time, he had 4 ships and over 600 men under his command, of whom only about 50 were Portuguese. By chance he sealed a cordial relationship with a Chinese pirate chief, Quiy Panjao, who had 30 Portuguese in his service. Quiy Panjao's acquaintance with the people of the coast, that enabled him to procure all the supplies and

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77. Higgins, "Piracy", p. 36.

78. See Boxer, *South China*, pp. xxin2, xxiii; and Ferguson, "Letters", pp. 439, 439n40.

79. Volpicelli, "Early Portuguese Commerce", p. 47.

80. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–9.

81. This description is seen in Andrew Ljungstedt, *A Historical Sketch of the Portuguese Settlements in China and of the Roman Catholic Church and Mission in China* (Boston: James Munroe & Co., 1836), p. 3.

trade goods that the Portuguese required for their ships, greatly helped Antonio de Faria.<sup>82</sup>

The coastal situation was fluid. The majority of the so-called Wokou (Japanese pirates) were in fact Chinese themselves with the genuine Wo or Japanese people playing a secondary role.<sup>83</sup> The situation became even more complex when Portuguese smugglers and Japanese pirates cooperated with each other along the China coast, something that was especially prevalent after 1542, when the Portuguese extended their trade to Japan. This broader trade network led to an increase in Portuguese activities along the China coast which coincided with an increase in the depredations of Japanese piracy.<sup>84</sup>

Quarrels among different trading parties were frequent, and led to raiding, plunder and murder.<sup>85</sup> Conflicts, disputes and disturbances in coastal society "gradually increased the overall level of violence and instability", and the presence of Portuguese ships, guns and men only aggravated the turbulent situation.<sup>86</sup> The various bands involved in clandestine activities often committed acts of barbarity in dealing with their opponents. On one occasion, according to Pinto, António de Faria held unsuccessful negotiations with a mandarin for the release of some Portuguese prisoners, after which he stormed the town with 300 men, including 70 Portuguese, and slaughtered its defenders without mercy. António de Faria allowed his men an hour-and-a-half to carry off what they liked and then set fire to the town.<sup>87</sup> The reliability of this story is dubious, but events of this sort are also described in contemporaneous Chinese sources.<sup>88</sup> As Zhu Wan observed in 1548, the Chinese and foreign sojourners on the Zhejiang coast not only traded but also raided and pillaged the neighboring regions.<sup>89</sup> Zhu was Governor of Zhejiang and concurrently in charge of Min-Zhe coastal military affairs.

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82. The affair is summed up in Volpicelli, "Early Portuguese Commerce", pp. 48–53.

83. So, *Japanese Piracy*, p. 23.

84. Boxer, *South China*, p. xxxvi.

85. Ferguson, "Letters", p. 438; also Cruz, "Treatise", p. 193.

86. Higgins, "Piracy", pp. 61, 63.

87. For the account, see Volpicelli, "Early Portuguese Commerce", pp. 58–60.

88. See, for example, *Ming shi jishi ben-mo* 明史紀事本末 [Records of events in the Ming history] (1658), 55: 10a, in *Wenyuange siku quanshu* 文淵閣四庫全書 (hereafter *SKQS*), Vol. 364, p. 684, concerning pirate attacks on numerous towns and villages in Chekiang and the burning of public buildings and civilian houses in late 1547 or early 1548.

89. *Ming jingshi wenbian* 明經世文編 [Collected essays on statecraft from the Ming dynasty] (hereafter *MJSWB*), comp. Chen Zilong, et al. 陳子龍 (1608–47), 徐孚



## The Destruction of the International Mart at Shuangyu

The most flourishing centers of trade and smuggling, places that attracted traders from far and wide, were the Shuangyu Island near Ningbo (Liampo) in Zhejiang, and Wuyu and Yuegang (Moon Anchorage) in southern Fujian.<sup>90</sup> Since the early 1520s, the Portuguese had regularly visited or even remained for a time at Shuangyu.<sup>91</sup> The poor in the region welcomed the presence of these foreigners, who provided them a living by purchasing their provisions.<sup>92</sup> Those Chinese merchants who came with the Portuguese helped arrange for the local merchants to bring their goods for sale and, as intermediaries between the Portuguese and the local merchants, reaped a great reward from their role.<sup>93</sup> Shuangyu “attracted traders of all nationalities, including especially Japanese and Portuguese, but also a number of Southeast Asian traders”.<sup>94</sup> A memorial submitted by Zhu Wan in 1548 testifies that, “treacherous people from the interior ... gang up with foreigners like the Japanese, Folangji and those from Pahang and Siam. Their ships are moored at Shuangyu in Ningbo. The evil people of the interior trade with them and supply them necessities. This has been a long-standing practice.”<sup>95</sup>

Trade at Shuangyu flourished especially after 1540. In that year, two former pirate chiefs, Li Guangtou (Li Qi) from Fujian and Xu Dong (Xu Er) from Anhui, accompanied by more than a hundred fellow-inmates escaped from a prison in Fujian. They went to the sea and joined Wang Zhi and others at Shuangyu. Xu Dong had earlier traded in Malacca and had established close connections with the Portuguese.<sup>96</sup>

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遠 (1599–1665) 等選輯 (Orig. 1638; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 205/1: 13b.

90. Boxer, *South China*, p. xxxiii.

91. Zhu Wan's memorial in 1548 states that the Chinese and other foreigners, including the Folangji, had occupied Shuangyu for more than 20 years. See *MJSWB*, 205/1: 13b, 17b.

92. Cruz, “Treatise”, pp. 192–3.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

94. Higgins, “Piracy”, p. 167.

95. *MJSWB*, 205/1: 13b.

96. *Zhejiang tongchi* 浙江通志 [A general gazetteer of Zhejiang Province] [Jiajing [1522–66] ed.], 60: 14a; also Tanaka Takeo 田中健夫, *Wokou—haishang lishih* 倭寇—海上历史 [倭寇—海の歴史] [The *Wo* pirates—a maritime history], trans. Yang Hanju 楊翰球 (Wuchang: The Wuhan University Press, 1987; Japanese ed. 1982), p. 67.

According to Pinto's account, the population of Shuangyu ("Liampoo") exceeded 3,000, including 1,200 Portuguese, and the place had more than a thousand houses, 7 or 8 churches and 2 hospitals. The bulk of the trade with Japan was conducted from this base by multinational parties and earned high profits. Pinto estimated the annual trade value in the 1540s at three million gold Cruzados.<sup>97</sup> Some aspects of Pinto's description are similar to the general picture given in Cruz's work<sup>98</sup> and in Chinese sources. Shuangyu was a bustling settlement overflowing with merchandise, and was undoubtedly an international meeting point for Chinese and foreigners during the trading season.<sup>99</sup> On June 15, 1548, shortly after its destruction by government troops, more than a thousand "bandit boats" (*zeichuan*) were still being sighted around the island.<sup>100</sup>

However, the population figure for the Portuguese and the extent of their settlement on Shuangyu as given by Pinto cannot be correct, since the Portuguese, along with other Southeast Asians and probably many Fujianese traders, would have traveled south when the northeast monsoon began, as indicated in a Ming source.<sup>101</sup> A contemporary source estimates that the Portuguese active on the China coast numbered five or six hundred, perhaps slightly more.<sup>102</sup>

As to the fall of the settlement, Pinto blamed it on the irritating conduct of Lancelot Pereira, a self-proclaimed magistrate. It is said that Pereira sold goods worth some thousand Cruzados to a Chinese on credit, and then, seeing nothing more of this man, decided to make good his losses. With a band of 18 to 20 men of reckless character, Pereira went to a town two leagues from Ningbo, where they plundered 11 or 12 families and killed a number of people. This act of violence opened the door for an attack on Shuangyu by government troops and brought about its destruction.<sup>103</sup> Pinto says these events took place in 1542, which again cannot be correct.<sup>104</sup>

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97. Volpicelli, "Early Portuguese Commerce", p. 65.

98. Cruz, "Treatise".

99. Fujida Toyobachi, *Tōzai kōshōshi*, p. 449.

100. *MJSWB*, 205/1: 22a. Shuangyu had been occupied by government troops a few days earlier. Many of these boats could have been those of small suppliers from around the region. This was also during the southeast monsoon when many Chinese, Portuguese, and other Southeast Asian trading vessels arrived from the south. They were either not aware of the condition of the place or were still waiting for the right moment to conduct trade.

101. *Ibid.*, 205/1: 20a.

102. *Ibid.*, 165/4: 6a.

103. Geo. Phillip, "Early Portuguese Trade", p. 46.

104. Volpicelli, "Early Portuguese Commerce", p. 68.

However, a similar incident is mentioned in the *Ming shilu* stating that the coastal disturbances in Zhejiang at the time could be traced to the smuggling activities of Chinese merchants and their foreign partners. On land, the prominent Xie clan of the deceased former Grand Secretary Xie Qian of Yuyao was the main business contact of the smugglers. The Xie clan exploited their collaborators by holding down the value of the merchandise and refusing to pay accumulated debts, even threatening to expose the smugglers to the authorities. Both fearful and resentful, the smugglers organized a band whose members included foreigners that plundered the Xie clan, burning their houses and killing several people.<sup>105</sup> Another source says that a certain Chinese named Lin Jian brought along a pirate fleet of more than 70 ships from Pahang (on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula) and joined forces with Zhejiang pirate chiefs Xu Er (Xu Dong) and Xu Si. They raided the Zhejiang coast and plundered the Xie house. This event took place in the summer of 1547.<sup>106</sup>

The pirate raids astounded the imperial government. In his memorial Inspecting Censor Yang Jiuzhe blamed the provincial authorities for their evasive attitude when performing duties that involved cross-provincial matters. To strengthen coastal defenses, he proposed the appointment of a high-ranking official with jurisdiction over Zhejiang, Fujian and eastern Guangdong. The Jiajing Emperor approved the proposal on July 10, 1547, but decided not to include eastern Guangdong.<sup>107</sup> Probably, the exclusion was for fear of giving the appointee too much power. The Court acted swiftly and two weeks later appointed Zhu Wan Governor (*xunfu*) of Zhejiang and concurrently overseeing the coastal defense and military affairs of Min-Zhe (*tidu Min-Zhe haifang junwu*).<sup>108</sup> Zhu's earlier career as former Provincial Administration Commissioner of Guangdong<sup>109</sup> provided him with the experience and credentials for managing maritime affairs. His main duty as the Governor was to clear the coast of Japanese pirates, Portuguese smugglers and Chinese collaborators. A year later, owing to the increased violence and instability on the coast, the Court granted Zhu's request to be given authority over the government troops.<sup>110</sup>

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105. *MSL: SZ*, 350: lb-2a.

106. Chen Wenshi 陈文石, *Ming-Qing zhengzhi shehui shilun* 明清政治社会史论 [Essays on the political and social history of the Ming and Qing] (Taipei: Hsueh-sheng shuchu, 1991), Vol.1, pp. 132-3.

107. *MSL: SZ*, 324: 7a-b.

108. *Ibid.*, 325: lb-2a.

109. *Ibid.*, 315: 7b.

110. *Ibid.*, 335: 7a.

The appointment of a single official with responsibility for the affairs of both Zhejiang and Fujian made it possible for the first time to provide military coordination between the two provinces. In response to raids on Ningbo and Taizhou by the Chinese and foreign maritime elements at Shuangyu that probably occurred toward the end of 1547 or the beginning of 1548,<sup>111</sup> Zhu summoned Lu Tang, the Assistant Military Commissioner (*duzhihui qianshi*) of Fujian,<sup>112</sup> to lead a pincer attack with the Fuqing fleet and the Zhejiang troops. In March–April 1548 the government forces scored a decisive victory over the pirate gang, that was forced to retreat to Shuangyu.<sup>113</sup>

Lu Tang directed a second major attack against the trading-cum-pirate settlement in Shuangyu in June 1548, and that campaign, too, was a complete success. Estimates of the number of pirates killed or captured ranged from 55 to a few hundred. It is not clear from the Chinese records if any Portuguese were among them.<sup>114</sup>

Zhu Wan decided to deal harshly with the captives taken in the battles. In a memorial to the Court, he argued his case by citing existing laws. He began by mentioning the sea prohibition adopted in the early days of

111. The *Ming shilu*, under the entry of February 7, 1548, records that, having received a memorial from Zhejiang Inspecting Censor Pei Shen concerning the plundering raids by sea bandits on Ningbo and Taizhou, the Court called for an investigation into the affair and consolidation of coastal defense (*MSL: SZ*, 331: 6a–b). Clearly, Roland Higgins' suggestion ("Piracy", p. 178) that the incident happened on this date is incorrect, since about a month's time or longer was needed for the transmission of the memorial and the Court deliberation. According to *Ming shi* (*Juan* 81, "shihuo 食貨", 5, p. 1981), about a hundred "pirate" ships were moored in Ningbo and Taizhou and several thousand men from the ships came ashore and plundered in the 26th year of Jiajing (sometime between January 22, 1547 and February 9, 1548).

112. *Ming shi*, *juan* 212, "Lu Tang", p. 5608.

113. *MSL: SZ*, 340: 7a; also *Chouhai tubian* 籌海圖編 [Sea strategy illustrated: A work on coastal defense], comp. Hu Zongxian, Zheng Ruzeng, et al. 胡宗憲 (1512–65), 鄭若曾 (1503–70) 等編撰 (1624 ed.; 1st printing, 1562), 4: 15a, in [WYG]SKQS (reprint, Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1973), Vol. 584, p. 102.

114. Boxer, *South China*, p. xxvii. The number of casualties and captives is given as "a few hundred", including the pirate leaders and those who harbored them or received "stolen" goods from them. Furthermore, "dark barbarians" and Japanese were included. See *Zhejiang tongzhi*, 60: 14B; and Fan Lai 范濂, *Liang-Zhe haifang leikao xubian* 兩浙海防類考續編 [A supplementary edition of the investigation into materials concerning the maritime defense in Zhejiang] (1602 ed.), 9: 43b. *Chouhai tubian* states that 55, including 2 Japanese, were captured and executed. Many were drowned during the action. See 4: 15a–b, in WYGSKQS, Vol. 585, p. 102.

the dynasty. The Ming Code (*Da Ming lü*), he said, stated that those who smuggled people and weapons to the sea or foreign lands or divulged information to foreigners were to be executed by beheading. Moreover, the regulations imposed capital punishment on officials or civilians who illegally built two-master vessels, shipped contraband goods to the sea, went to trade in foreign lands, conspired with pirates or guided them in plundering raids.<sup>115</sup>

Zhu Wan explained that, in the present incident, the captives had been taken off the coast and in battles. Some captives were “dark barbarians”, and he was surprised by their ability to speak the Chinese language. At the trial, the judges had accepted the captives’ contentions that they had been either coerced into taking part or kidnapped by the sea bandits, and imposed lighter sentences than Zhu wanted. Indeed, the judge even released some of them. Zhu Wan submitted a list of 14 “principal culprits” who were Chinese nationals and whose guilt was proven by incontestable evidence, and requested that the Court approve their immediate execution by beheading. He also asked permission to detain the rest of the captives pending further scrutiny and endorsement of the death sentences by the Court.<sup>116</sup>

## The Zoumaxi Incident and the Conspiracy Theory

In 1547, the Portuguese arrived in Zhangzhou, another smuggling center, to trade as usual but turned instead to violence. As Higgins relates:

It must have been very shortly after Chu left southern Fukien that it was reported [to the court that] the *Fo-lang-chi* barbarians had invaded Chang-chou. The report, dated December 27, 1547, stated the Portuguese were attacked and chased away by the coastal circuit Surveillance Vice Commissioner K'o Ch'iao [Ke Qiao]. When the Regional Inspector Censor Chin Ch'eng heard of it, he criticized the Wu-yu Guard Commander Ting T'ung and also the [former] Coastal Circuit Surveillance Vice Commissioner Yao Hsiang-feng for having received bribes and goods and for having let the Portuguese enter the frontier area.<sup>117</sup>

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115. *MJSWB*, 205/l: 10b–11a.

116. *Ibid.*, 205: 12a–b.

117. Higgins, “Piracy”, p. 177. Chang Wei-hua also states that the clash occurred after Zhu Wan’s departure from Zhangzhou (*Ming shi ouzhou siguo juan*, p. 30).

There are several points in this account that require clarification. The first matter is the date of the Portuguese "raid". December 27, 1547 was the date when the Court finally made a decision about Censor Jin's impeachment of the military officers and instructed him to arrest the accused. Considering the time required for Censor Jin's investigation, the transmission of his memorial and the deliberations by the Court, the raid could not have taken place later than November. From mid-November, Zhu Wan was in Zhangzhou. Throughout December and the beginning of the New Year, he remained in the Quan-Zhang region of southern Fujian where he conducted a successful military campaign against the "mountain bandits" in Tong'an.<sup>118</sup> In early February, Zhu Wan "had made his way as far as Xinghua",<sup>119</sup> a short distance from Quanzhou. He would certainly have mentioned the "Portuguese raid" had it occurred during his presence in the area.

The incident is more likely to have occurred towards the end of the trading season in September–October, when the Portuguese were about to return south on the northeast monsoon.<sup>120</sup> Soon after taking up his new appointment, Zhu Wan might have decided to begin his tour of duty in southern Fujian before heading north to his headquarters in Hangzhou in Zhejiang, in view of the urgency of the matter, it must have been reported to him before his arrival.

The victory claimed by Inspecting Censor Jin Cheng is also puzzling. A passage in *Zhangzhou fuchi* (Gazetteer of Zhangzhou Prefecture) clearly states:

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118. *MSL: SZ*, 336: lb–2a.

119. Higgins, "Piracy", p. 180.

120. Zhu Wan said in a memorial, that was probably written during his sojourn in southern Fujian sometime after mid-November, that the Portuguese sent two ships for repair openly at an offshore island during mid-August to mid-September when they were rounding up their trade for the season (*MJSWB*, 205/1 :7a). The passage did not mention the clash. But placing the date after his departure from south Fujian, as suggested by Roland Higgins ("Piracy", p. 177), does not seem to leave enough time for the memorial to reach the Court and be deliberated prior to the Court decision on December 27. It is also unlikely that the Portuguese would have stayed so long after the conclusion of the trading season, as noted above. Zhu did not mention the "raid" probably because the official-in-charge, Inspecting Censor Jin Cheng, had already memorialized the Court. It was improper for him to interfere with the matter since a Court ruling was pending. In 1549, for example, when Fujian Inspecting Censor Yang Jiuzhe reported to the Court on the victory over the Portuguese, he was reprimanded and demoted two grades by the Court because he transgressed the authority of Inspector-General (formerly Min-Zhe Coastal Defense Superintendent) Zhu Wan, who was handling the case (*MSL: SZ*, 347: 4b).

In 1547, there were Portuguese ships coming to trade with their merchandise in Wuyu (near Amoy). Traders from Zhang[zhou] and Quan[zhou] hastily went to do business with them. Coastal Surveillance Vice-Commissioner Ke Qiao, Zhangzhou Prefect Lu Bi and the Longxi Magistrate, Lin Song, sent troops to attack them but failed. This led to more intensive trade [later]. At this time, newly appointed Officer-in Charge of [Min-Zhe] Coastal Defense ... Zhu Wan enforced the sea prohibition and [later] captured more than ninety smugglers.<sup>121</sup>

The sequence of events in the entry suggests that the commotion occurred before Zhu Wan's adoption of more stringent measures against the smuggling trade, imposed after his arrival.

Another important source only causes further confusion. It is a letter by Lin Xiyuan written shortly after a "second" clash occurred off the southern Fujian coast between Chinese troops and the Portuguese. Lin Xiyuan was a very influential member of the gentry in southern Fujian. By this time he had retired to his home province, retaining the title of Assistant Commissioner without a posting. During or shortly after his inspection tour in southern Fujian at the end of 1547 and the beginning of 1548, Zhu Wan memorialized the Court and accused Lin of building large ships in breach of maritime regulations. The ships were disguised as ferry-boats, but were actually being used to transport contraband goods or loot seized by pirates, and also to trade with the Portuguese on their annual visits to the southern Fujian coast, where prosperous port cities such as Anhai in Quanzhou and Yuegang in Zhangzhou, and such notorious smuggling centers as Yunxiao, Zhao'an and Meiling were located.<sup>122</sup>

Lin was understandably opposed to the use of force against the Portuguese. He said that the importation of spices, drugs and aromatics was not prohibited in Guangzhou and the Folangji brought these much sought-after commodities. Moreover, the local people were keen on this trade that generated great profits, and the Portuguese did not cause trouble, and had even helped the authorities to suppress piracy. Therefore, he argued, they should be accepted as merchants.<sup>123</sup>

Lin Xuyuan was certainly not a principled advocate for an "open-port policy", nor was he necessarily pro-Portuguese, as suggested by Fujida

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121. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* 漳州府志 [Gazetteer of Zhangzhou Prefecture] (1573), 12: 13a-b.

122. *MJSWB*, 205/1: 7b-9b.

123. *Ibid.*, 165/4: 5a-6a.

Toyobachi and Tai Yixuan.<sup>124</sup> When questioned about his seemingly pro-Portuguese attitude by his critics, he defended himself by saying that he had never suggested that the Folangji should not be attacked, but he believed their offenses were minor. Furthermore, gaining a military victory over them would not be easy. Lin said that when he had learned of the government plans to attack the Portuguese, he intended to help the authorities by proposing tactics to Coastal Surveillance Vice-Commissioner Ke Qiao. He also sent some of his disciples, including Circuit Commandant Yu Dayou, to assist the Vice-Commissioner in drawing up a plan for the attack. All this, he said, proved that he was not colluding with the Folangji.<sup>125</sup> By Lin's own admission, clearly he was more concerned with his own commercial stake rather than those of the Portuguese.

Vice-Commissioner Ke visited Lin later and said, since the Portuguese had not perpetrated any damage, he too opposed using force against them. He added that he had told Yu to go on board the Portuguese ships to explain the uncertain situation, and to advise the Portuguese to withdraw temporarily from the coast. As for the debts owed to them by their Chinese counterparts, the Portuguese could request the assistance of the local authorities in pressing for payment. Lin agreed with this suggestion as he had always favored a peaceful solution.

Not all thought as he did. The Fujian Inspecting Censor, Jin Cheng, advocated the use of force. Vice-Commissioner Ke immediately sent one of Lin's confidants, Zheng Yue, to urge the Portuguese to follow Yu's earlier advice. Lin met Zheng before the latter's trip, and advised him not to tell the Portuguese about the government's hostility, fearing that the Portuguese would not trust the promise made earlier to collect debts on their behalf. Lin suggested that it would be reasonable to let the Portuguese enter the harbor and allow their merchandise to be subjected to levies. They could then request the authorities to recover their debts for them before withdrawing from the coast. Zheng proceeded to the Portuguese ships and reported what Lin had said. The Portuguese received the proposal enthusiastically, probably believing that it was an official proposition. There were nine ships present, but three others were absent. The three missing vessels were in fact Chinese junks disguised as foreign ships, and the Chinese mariners on these junks secretly proposed to Zheng that, in requital of their misdeeds, they were willing to help the government attack the foreigners. Lin was excited about this development. Now, the government could either tell the Portuguese

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124. Fujida Toyobachi, *Tōzai kōshōshi*, p. 453; and Dai Yixuan, *Ming shi folangji zhuan*, p. 46.

125. *MJSWB*, 165/4: 6a–b.



to pay the levies, or launch an attack with the help of the three junks. According to Lin, the government now had the advantage and was sure to triumph over the Portuguese.

Lin's high-handedness eventually stretched Vice-Commissioner Ke's tolerance to its limits. Putting Lin's plans aside, he launched a surprise assault on the Portuguese, some of whom he arrested and treated as bandit leaders. This action clearly broke the cordial working relationship between him and Lin, his former patron, and nullified the promise he had made to the Portuguese.

Lin was furious about the move by Ke, whom he accused of incompetence in the letter cited above, charging that Ke had wavered between pacification and assault in dealing with the Portuguese, had broken promises and had resorted to dirty tricks against the foreigners. Lin claimed that Ke had tarnished the image of the imperial authorities because his action had caused the Portuguese to retaliate by burning houses in Qingpu village and plundering ships. The outbreak of disturbances forced Ke to launch a counter-attack on the foreigners, and this had been unsuccessful, resulting in the burning of a large Chinese vessel, the death of a number of men, plus the loss of substantial public funds. Lin contrasted Ke's failure with the success of former Guangdong Coastal Surveillance Vice-Commissioner Wang Hong, whose decisiveness had triumphed over the Portuguese in the battle of 1521. After his military setback, Ke accepted the Portuguese proposal for a truce and entertained their messenger with great courtesy. However, subsequently Ke shifted his position yet again. This time, several score lives were lost at sea and public properties were burnt. Lin commented that the disaster was even worse than the "humiliating military defeat of the previous year".<sup>126</sup>

Lin's account of the above events mentions two subsequent clashes between the Chinese and the Portuguese off the southern Fujian coast over a period of two years. According to Fujida Toyobachi, the first clash, that Lin dated "the previous year", occurred in 1548, and the second took place in 1549.<sup>127</sup> Before examining Fujida's account, the events subsequent to the destruction of Shuangyu require further clarification.

In brief, after the victory at Shuangyu, the anti-smuggling campaign targeted the southern Fujian region. Skirmishes with Portuguese ships in

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126. For the above, see Fujida Toyobachi, *Tōzai kōshōshi*, pp. 453–5, citing Lin Xiyuan's letter to an official named Weng. As the latter was addressed as "biejia 别駕", normally used for a person who was an Assistant Prefect (*tongpan* 通判), it is quite certain that he was Assistant Prefect Weng Can mentioned in *MSL: SZ*, 363: 6b. For the text of Lin's letter, refer also to Chang Wei-hua, *Ming shi ouzhou siguo juan*, pp. 34–6.

127. Fujida Toyobachi, *Tōzai kōshōshi*, p. 455.

the latter half of 1548 occurred in Wuyu (present-day Jinmen/Quemoy), prompting the Portuguese to send a message to India via Malacca that "the ports of China were all up in arms against the Portuguese".<sup>128</sup> Despite these hostile conditions, the Portuguese continued to try their luck along the China coast. Although Portuguese adventurers avoided direct contact with the Chinese fleet near the Guangdong-Fujian border, they were unable to dispose of all the cargo before their return to Malacca. Therefore, they left two junks with unsold goods at anchor off Zoumaxi in Zhao'an district. Thirty Portuguese were left in charge of the ships to be assisted by their Chinese collaborators.<sup>129</sup> These junks were captured by the Chinese commander Lu Tang on March 18–19, 1549.<sup>130</sup>

Since the second clash described by Lin Xiyuan was a defeat worse than the one experienced during "the previous year", he cannot be referring to the decisive Chinese success in March 1549. Therefore it can be certain that the first clash occurred in 1547, as discussed earlier. The second took place in 1548 around Wuyu, and has received little attention. A Ming source written by He Qiaoyuan even confuses it with the third clash in March 1549 saying that,

The Folangji arrived to trade in Yuegang in Zhangzhou. Fearing the strict prohibition imposed by Zhu Wan, the Zhangzhou people dared not communicate with them. The Portuguese were even attacked. In response, they resorted to violence, but were captured.... Ninety-six of the Chinese among the captives were executed.<sup>131</sup>

In reality, the second clash occurred in the aftermath of the Shuangyu victory, but before the 1549 triumph by Chinese forces in Zhoumaxi. During late June and July 1548, as a Ming source records, "the bandits invaded Shatou'ao and repeatedly attacked the outer island of Dadan (in the vicinity of Wuyu). Because of the strong defense put up by [Vice-Commissioner] Ke Qiao, the bandits withdrew."<sup>132</sup> However, despite another claim to victory in the Ming records, the government troops in fact suffered a second defeat on the southern Fujian coast in two subsequent years, as Lin Xiyuan has mentioned. Another author, Gaspar da Cruz, also touches on the conflict in 1548. He says that a Chinese fleet cruising along the Fujian coast encountered some Portuguese ships off

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128. Boxer, *South China*, p. xxvii.

129. Cruz, "Treatise", p. 194.

130. Higgins, "Piracy", p. 192.

131. Cited in Fujida Toyobachi, *Tōzai kōshōshi*, p. 452.

132. Cited in Dai Yixuan, *Ming shi folangjii juan*, p. 42.

Zhangzhou and “they began to fight with them, and in no way did they permit any wares to come to the Portugals, who stayed many days there (fighting sometimes) to see if they could have any remedy for them to dispatch their business”.<sup>133</sup> The account clearly states that the Zhoumaxi Incident followed this earlier clash in 1548. Also, the fact that Lin’s letter mentions his quarrel with Zhu Wan, but not the Zhoumaxi victory and the subsequent executions ordered by Zhu,<sup>134</sup> suggests that it was written shortly after the second defeat and before the government triumph in March 1549.

There is yet another piece of evidence to support the proposition that the second clash occurred in 1548. In his letter, Lin Xiyuan mentions his disciple Yu Dayou as Commandant of Ding-Zhang Circuit (*Ding-Zhang shoubei chihui*). Yu, who was soon to become a prominent military officer active in the suppression of Japanese pirates, experienced a quick succession of promotions in 1548–49. After serving as Ding-Zhang Circuit Commandant, he was transferred, sometime in the latter half of 1548, to Guangdong with the title of Acting Assistant Military Commissioner. On Zhu Wan’s recommendation during his second inspection tour of Fujian in 1549, Yu was appointed Anti-Japanese Pirates Military Commissioner of Fujian.<sup>135</sup> As the second clash took place during Yu’s posting as Circuit Commandant in Fujian before his transfers first to Guangdong and then back to Fujian, clearly it must have occurred in 1548 and before the Zhoumaxi Incident in early 1549.

The captives from the Zhoumaxi Incident included 3 “Folangji kings”, 16 “white barbarians”, 46 “dark barbarians” (from the Portuguese band), the notorious pirate chief and self-proclaimed lieutenant “Lada Li Guangtou” and his 112 followers, and 29 females who were the wives of the barbarians. Thirty-three other men were killed in the battles. This list of casualties comes to a total of 239.<sup>136</sup>

The *Ming shilu* records that the Court received from Zhu Wan, formerly Governor and now Itinerant Inspector-General of Zhejiang, what was probably the latter’s first full report on the military success at Zhoumaxi. In his memorial, Zhu states that the local people had reacted strongly to government suppression and that he found it necessary to act promptly to guard against unexpected emergencies. He had ordered an investigation and 96 of the captives, including Li Guangtou, had been

133. Cruz, “Treatise”, p. 193.

134. Refer to Lin’s letter reproduced in Chang Wei-hua, *Ming shi ouzhou siguo juan*, p. 36.

135. *Ming shih, juan* 212, “Yu Dayou”, p. 5602; and *MSL: SZ*, 347: 11a.

136. Fujida Toyobachi, *Tōzai kōshōshi*, pp. 460–1; Higgins, “Piracy”, p. 192.

found guilty of colluding with the foreigners. Exercising his discretionary powers, he had ordered Assistant Military Commissioner Lu Tang and Coastal Surveillance Vice-Commissioner Ke Qiao to execute the captives, and this had been done on April 15, 1549.<sup>137</sup>

Zhu Wan’s action opened the door for impeachment by Censor Chen Jiude, who accused Zhu of having exceeded his authority in putting to death the prisoners taken at Zhoumaxi without the prior approval from the Court. Chen asked the Court to inflict punishments on Zhu, Lu and Ke. The emperor followed the usual judicial procedure by instructing the Board of War together with the three judicial offices (*san fasi*)—the Board of Punishments (*xinbu*), the Court of Judicial Review (*dali si*) and the Censorate (*ducha yuan*)—to comment on the case. The enquiry produced a cautious and legalistic recommendation that stated that Zhu Wan had indeed been granted discretionary powers, but noted that the “bandits” had been captured in the second month (March), but that Zhu’s report was sent in only a month later, indicating that the executions were carried out as a result of a later decision and had not taken place on the war front, where exigencies might have required summary punishments. Therefore, it would have been proper for Zhu to have waited for imperial approval on the matter. But the joint Board cautioned the Court that, until more evidence could be amassed, their view might just have been a wrong assumption. For this reason, it suggested sending a Censor to investigate the case.<sup>138</sup>

An investigation into the killing of prisoners, presided over by Supervising Secretary Du Ruzhen of the War Office, was ordered by the Court on May 7, 1549. The provincial authorities were also told to calm the coastal population and ensure that the innocent would not be unduly implicated in the affair. Pending the judicial findings, Zhu Wan was relieved of his post and Lu and Ke were subjected to interrogation.<sup>139</sup>

The inquest, that was held in Fuzhou, the provincial capital of Fujian, cleared the Portuguese of many of the charges laid against them. Most of the survivors were released from prison and sent into exile in the province of Guangxi. Zhu Wan and several of the provincial military and civil officials were “found guilty of unjustifiably executing traders, embezzling their goods and concealing the truth from the Court”.<sup>140</sup>

Zhu’s downfall has often been seen from a conspiratorial perspective in both traditional and modern writings. In the view of the conspiracy

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137. *MSL: SZ*, 347: 5a. For the date of the executions, see Higgins, “Piracy”, p. 192.

138. *MSL: SZ*, 347: 5a.

139. *Ibid.*

140. Boxer, *South China*, p. xxix.

theorists, it is not surprising that, within officialdom, there were “men with strong local ties representing and protecting vested interests within coastal society”.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, as Higgins explains, some very dramatic political developments occurred in the capital during this period that inevitably affected Zhu’s fate. Grand Secretary Xia Yan, Zhu Wan’s patron at the Court, and “the single most important advocate in the central government of the stronger defense policies Zhu was now trying to carry out on the coast”,<sup>142</sup> was disgraced as a result of a political intrigue set in motion by a rival group led by another Grand Secretary, Yan Song. A warrant was issued on April 25, 1548, for the arrest of Xia, who was condemned to death on May 6 and executed on November 1. Many of Xia’s allies were also purged during the period.<sup>143</sup> Now, the accusations leveled against Zhu by his enemies in the maritime provinces found support from a Court official, Censor Chen Jiude. Zhu’s downfall was, therefore, “a success for the coastal forces opposing Zhu’s enforcement of the maritime trade prohibition”<sup>144</sup> and his political enemies at Court. Even the compilers of the *Ming shilu* lamented some two decades later that, although Zhu Wan indeed exceeded his authority, his “guilt and merits” had not been duly assessed by his inquisitors.<sup>145</sup> C.R. Boxer’s conclusion that Zhu Wan was “the victim of a court intrigue and thus of a miscarriage of justice”<sup>146</sup> represents the conventional interpretation of the event.<sup>147</sup>

Nevertheless, a deeper scrutiny of the source materials highlights the complexity of the matter. Gaspar da Cruz’s detailed account of the Zhoumaxi Incident, for example, provides useful background information.<sup>148</sup> He claims that, in late 1548, the Portuguese attempted to conclude their trade in southern Fujian, but were frustrated by Chinese troops who were on the alert against them. The captains of the Chinese fleet then sent a message very secretly at night that, if they wanted to trade, they should send them some gifts. The Portuguese were very pleased with this development and prepared a great and sumptuous

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141. Higgins, “Piracy”, p. 147.

142. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

143. *Ibid.*, pp. 179–80. For the dates of Xia’s arrest and sentences, see *MSL: SZ*, 334: 4b, 335: 1b, 341: 1a.

144. Higgins, “Piracy”, p. 197.

145. *MSL: SZ*, 363: 6b.

146. Boxer, *South China*, p. xxx.

147. For example, both So in *Japanese Piracy*, Ch. 4, and Higgins in “Piracy”, Ch. 4, give a detailed analysis of Court politics and intrigues during the time.

148. In preparing his work, that was published in 1569–70, Cruz was able to meet several of the Portuguese, who had been captured by the Chinese at Zhoumaxi in 1549, including Galeote Pereira.

present that they sent by night as instructed, and from this point goods began to come to them. The trade was conducted in this manner during 1548.<sup>149</sup> This account substantiates the accusations made in the verdict of the inquest concerning corruption and cover-ups by the military officers.

Cruz's account provides another fascinating piece of information. It concerns the manner of delivering the captives to the provincial high authorities, and the motive behind the executions. Cruz suggests that "the chief captain" of the China armada "laboured to persuade four ... [Portuguese] who had more appearance in their persons than the rest, that they should say that they were Kings of Malacca". They were also told to dress up as such with gowns and caps tailored according to his instructions. Zhu Wan also mentions the capture of three "Folangji kings".<sup>150</sup> Cruz thought that the captain acted out of vainglory and covetousness, wanting to make a great display of the Portuguese captives to show that he had achieved a glorious triumph over the foreign chieftains. At the same time, he was intending to help himself to the goods taken from the two junks. To keep the truth secret, he executed potential eyewitnesses, among whom were some small boys. Three or four youths and one man were spared so that they could attest to the royal identities of the Portuguese and aver that they were pirates.<sup>151</sup> The matter came to the ears of the "Aitao" (Coastal Surveillance Vice-Commissioner) who "reproved him [the Chief Captain] severely", but lost no time entering into an agreement "to divide the goods between them" and "to keep this [plan] in secret".<sup>152</sup>

Although the two personalities, "the Chief Captain, who is the Luthissi", and "Aitao", are not clearly identifiable from Cruz's accounts, C.R. Boxer has made an informed guess that the former was Lu Tang and the latter Ke Qiao. Nevertheless, the title "Anti-Japanese Pirates Military Commander" (*beiwo duzhihui*) that he gives to Lu Tang is inaccurate.<sup>153</sup> Lu Tang's position at this time was actually Assistant Military Commissioner of Fujian (rank 3a).<sup>154</sup> This could be the reason he was addressed as "Luthissi", a corrupt form of the Chinese term Lu *dusi*. Although Cruz

149. Cruz, "Treatise", p. 193.

150. *MSL*: SZ, 350: la-lb.

151. Cruz, "Treatise", pp. 195-7.

152. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-7.

153. *Ibid.*, pp. 195fn2, 196fn1. Li Xiu was the *beiwo* 備倭 at this time. See *MJSWB*, 205/l: 4a; and *Chouhai tubian*, in *SKQS*, 4: 20b, Vol. 584, p. 104.

154. The Chinese title was *Fujian duzhihui qianshi* 福建都指揮僉事, often simplified as *dusi* 都司. He was appointed to this position on Zhu Wan's recommendation. See *Ming shi*, *juan* 212, "Lu Tang", p. 5608; and *juan* 76, "zhiguan 職官 (Offices), 5", p. 1872.

thought that Ke was senior to Lu, the latter in fact enjoyed a higher rank and for that reason his name is often placed before Ke in Ming writings. Ke was Coastal Surveillance Vice-Commissioner of Fujian (rank 4a).<sup>155</sup>

With regard to the aftermath of the Zhoumaxi Incident, Cruz's account is equally revealing.<sup>156</sup> During the judicial enquiry conducted in Fuzhou by Du Ruzhen with the assistance of Inspecting Censor Chen Zongkuei, the Provincial Administration Commissioner, the Provincial Surveillance Commissioner (*anchasi*) and other high-ranking officials, both accused and accusers, were cross-examined. The "Commander" and the "Chief Captain" allegedly bribed a Chinese pilot from one of the junks to testify against the Portuguese, and a Chinese youth who served as the Portuguese interpreter was taken away, so that the Portuguese would not have anyone who understood their language to help them in their defense. Luckily, the Portuguese were able to secure again the services of the Chinese youth by means of a petition drawn up for them by a Chinese prisoner.

In Quan-Zhang, southern Fujian, an investigation was also made into Portuguese claims that they were neither kings nor pirates but traders, who had been visiting the China coast for many years. The investigators' report supported these claims. The Chinese pilot also changed his testimony and revealed information about the goods that the naval officers had seized from the junks.

The verdict of the investigation can be found both in Cruz's account and in the *Ming shilu*. The two sources provide similar information. According to the latter, the inquisitors found that the foreigners from Malacca came to trade every year. They were not pirates, nor did they assume any pretentious titles. When they arrived off the southern Fujian coast, the local officials had failed to detain them and their merchandise. Instead, they (the "Aitao" and the "Luthissi"), according to Cruz's account,<sup>157</sup> accepted bribes and let the local people trade with them. It was only when the higher authorities were on the point of finding out about this arrangement that they took action against the Portuguese. The foreigners resisted arrest and in doing so were responsible for some killings. After the "bandits" were captured, the officials did not distinguish between leaders and followers, and ordered

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155. See, for example, Fujida Toyobachi, *Tōzai kōshōshi*, p. 460; also *MSL: SZ*, 347: 5a. For the rank, see *Ming shi*, juan 75, "zhiguan 4", p. 1840. Ke's full Chinese title was *Fujian anchasi xunshi haidao fushi* 福建按察司巡視海道副使, simplified as *haidao*, or "Aitao", a corrupt form of the Chinese term in Portuguese documents.

156. Cruz, "Treatise", pp. 199–210.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 206; and *MSL: SZ*, 347: 5a.

executions without the proper authority of the Court. Many innocent people died as a result. Zhu, Lu, Ke and several other officials were found guilty of mishandling the case, but with differing degrees of complicity. Among the captives, four foreigners (two Portuguese and two of their slaves, according to Cruz) were found guilty of killing while resisting arrest. It was proposed they be given the death penalty, and that the rest of the party, numbering 51 (a figure given in both accounts), be banished to Guangxi province. Having examined the pronouncement, the Board of War and the three judicial offices recommended the Court accept the findings and sentences. Both Lu and Ke were condemned to death but later pardoned, and an imperial edict for the detention of Zhu Wan, who was to be brought to Beijing to stand trial, was issued on September 1, 1550. Apprehensive about the impending inquisition, Zhu committed suicide.<sup>158</sup>

Understandably, the Portuguese survivors hailed the fair and meticulous judicial processes of China and "stated outright that accused persons in a similar position could never have had such a fair trial in Europe".<sup>159</sup>

## Ming Policies Revisited

A closer look at Ming maritime policy is indispensable if the implications of the Zhoumaxi Incident are to be appreciated better. Only then can the theory of Court intrigues and the claims that Zhu's disgrace was a triumph for the coastal interests and a failure for the advocates of strong defense policies be examined in proper perspective.

Ming foreign policy, as John E. Wills, Jr. has succinctly explained, banned all trade in Chinese ports by foreigners not connected with tribute embassies and forbade all Chinese voyages abroad, "so that China's only legal maritime trade was that carried on within the framework of the tribute system".<sup>160</sup> This sea prohibition law and the institution of Supervisorates of Maritime Trade and Shipping governed Ming China's relations with the maritime "tribute states".

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158. *MSL: SZ*, 363: 5b–6b. Under the same entry, the compilers of the above sources, while lamenting Zhu Wan's death, admitted Zhu's "excessiveness" in his handling of the matter.

159. Boxer, *South China*, p. xxix.

160. John E. Wills, Jr., *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666–1687* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 15.



From 1370, three designated ports, namely: Ningbo, Quanzhou (Fuzhou from 1469)<sup>161</sup> and Guangzhou, were opened for tributary trade. Ningbo was to trade with Japan, Quanzhou (later Fuzhou) with Liuqiu and Guangzhou with all other countries from the south. The Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorates were instituted in these ports to regulate the arrival of overseas tribute ships (*gongbo*) and the trading ships (*shibo*) that accompanied each tribute mission. Tributary states were allowed to bring along local products and trade through authorized agents (*yahang*). As a Ming official observed, “when there were tribute ships, there was also interchange of trade (*hushi*). It is clear that those who did not arrive as tribute missions would not be allowed to trade.”<sup>162</sup>

Under the regulations, whenever a tribute mission arrived in its designated port, the envoy went through the prescribed ceremonies or else proceeded to the imperial capital. His retinue, many of whom would have been merchants, was allowed to engage in trade at the port under supervision during the sojourn of the mission. The number of tribute vessels and personnel and the frequency of visits were fixed in accordance with the degree of intimacy of that country with China. Private merchants who did not come with a tribute mission were prohibited from engaging in trade and anyone who communicated with them could be punished by death. However, the strict regulations had seldom been followed by the port officials, particularly when eunuchs, many of whom abused their power and were corrupt, were appointed regional affairs overseers. Lured by the prospect of substantial profits, people in high office or from powerful families colluded with foreign visitors in semi-legal or illicit trade.

Although the Ming government inherited the Supervisorate institution from its predecessors, it introduced far reaching changes in the functions of the institution. During Song-Yuan times, as the name of the office suggests, the three Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorates in Guangzhou, Quanzhou, and Ningbo administered Chinese and foreign trading ships, managed customs affairs, purchased foreign products and received tribute envoys.<sup>163</sup> During the Ming era, when the sea prohibition was imposed and private trade disallowed, the Supervisorates no longer managed maritime (private) trade (*haishi*), but their duties were limited to receiving tribute ships and the restricted number of trading ships

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161. Gao Qi 高岐, *Fujian shibo tijusi zhi* 福建市舶提举司志 [Gazetteer of the Fujian Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorate] (1555), lb.

162. *Chouhai tubian*, 12: 110a, in [WYG]SKQS, Vol, 584, p. 399.

163. The duties of managing both private and tributary trade during Song-Yuan times are stressed in Gao Qi, *Fujian shihbo tijusi*, 2b, 6a–b.

allowed to accompany the tribute missions.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, the continued use of the name "Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorates" during Ming times is somewhat misleading.

As mentioned earlier, foreigners seldom found the regulated trade satisfactory, and consequently often became involved in smuggling activities. The trading ships from Southeast Asia, and later those of the Portuguese, visited the lesser ports around the entrance to the Pearl River where local officials levied taxes on their merchandise,<sup>165</sup> giving de facto authorization to their activities.

Chinese merchants were willing to disregard the prohibitory law and trade with foreigners off the coast. Chinese junks also violated the law by making regular voyages to such foreign countries as Siam, Pattani and Malacca. Many Chinese became sojourners in foreign lands, and some of these sojourners returned to China as interpreters assisting or even acting as foreign envoys, while others played an indispensable role on the China coast as go-betweens or brokers between foreigners and local Chinese. Despite the illicit nature of these coastal activities, local officials had long tolerated them.

In a nutshell, neither the ideology nor the policy that governed Ming foreign relations was coherent or uniformly enforced. Illegal, or as one might call it "private", trade flourished on the basis of a tacit understanding between the authorized or unauthorized "tribute-bearers", foreign and Chinese merchants, and provincial officials, including the eunuchs appointed to oversee provincial affairs (*zhenshou*). While the state was more concerned with coastal security, the provincial officials had both revenue and personal interests in mind. As long as the form of the tribute institution was preserved and coastal security was not threatened, the state and the provincial authorities tolerated such flexibility.

During the Zhengde Reign (1506–21), government policy toward tribute trade vacillated between firmness and flexibility. Japan is a case in point. The regulations of the early Ming era allowed Japan's tribute mission to come once every ten years, and each mission was limited to two hundred men and no more than two vessels. After 1511, however, the Japanese missions arrived with more than five or six hundred

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164. Ibid., 6b. Gao states that "[the Fujian Supervisorate] manages only tribute ships. Maritime (meaning "private") trade has not been in operation [since the early time of Ming Dynasty]". For a detailed study of the *shibo* institution, see Zheng Youguo 郑有国, *Zhongguo shibo zhidu yanjiu* 中国市舶制度研究 [A study of the *shibo* institution] (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 2004).

165. *Chouhai tubian*, 12: 110b, in *WYGSKQS*, Vol. 584, p. 399.

people and a larger number of ships but still at ten-year intervals.<sup>166</sup> In Guangzhou, foreign maritime traders could also come and go without much hindrance.<sup>167</sup> These irregularities prompted Guangdong Assistant Administration Commissioner (*canyi*) Chen Boxian to propose a ban, that was accepted by the Court, on all unscheduled trade. However, local officials proved reluctant to enforce the restriction. In response to a recommendation by Guangdong Inspecting Censor Gao Gongzhao, the Court re-affirmed the ban in 1515.<sup>168</sup>

Despite all attempts, the strict application of the Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorate regulations did not seem to work and, on June 15, 1517, two months before Pires' arrival, the Court agreed to accept Administration Commissioner Wu Tingju's earlier appeal for the relaxation of strict Supervisorate regulations and the rescission of the more recent restrictions implemented upon the recommendations of Chen Boxian and Gao Gongzhao.<sup>169</sup>

Having served in Guangdong as the Magistrate of Shunde for ten years and thereafter in two higher-ranking positions, Wu Tingju had an intimate knowledge of maritime affairs.<sup>170</sup> He assumed the position of Guangdong [Right] Administration Commissioner in 1514 and was promoted to full [Left] Commissioner two years later. Sometime before August 1517, he became the Grand Coordinator of Huguang, responsible for famine relief with the title of Vice-Censor-in-Chief.<sup>171</sup> While serving in Guangzhou, he called<sup>172</sup> for flexibility in handling tributary trade. He had two goals in mind: to meet the Court's demand for large quantities of spices (mainly pepper) and aromatic wood and to provide revenue

166. *MSL: SZ*, 80: 7a; also *Ming shi*, *juan* 81, "shihuo 5", p. 1980. A new regulation in 1539 allowed three ships, but not more than one hundred men. See *MSL: SZ*, 349: 4a.

167. *MSL: WZ*, 123: 4b.

168. *Ibid.* It cannot be ascertained from the sources when Chen submitted his recommendation.

169. *Ibid.*, 149: 9a.

170. *Ming shi*, *juan* 201, "Biography 89: Wu Tingju".

171. *Ming shu* (Ming history), comp. Fu Weiling 傅維麟編撰, 129: 31a. The work was compiled during the early Kangxi Reign of the Qing dynasty.

172. It is not certain when Wu memorialized the Court. Dai Yixuan places the date in 1514 (see *Ming-shi Folangji zhuan*, pp. 11–2), before Chen Boxian's call for strict compliance with the Supervisorate regulations. But from the sequence of events recorded in the *Ming shilu*, it is more logical to see Wu's proposal as a response to the rigidity in the management of tributary trade upon the recommendations by Chen and Gao Gongzhao. In other words, Wu's proposal was made sometime between Gao's recommendation in 1515 and the Court's adoption of Wu's proposal on June 15, 1517.

for local military expenses. He proposed that levies be imposed on merchandise brought by foreign vessels, even when their arrival was not on the approved schedule.<sup>173</sup> This measure would have allowed tributary states to visit the country as frequently as they desired and allowed provincial officials some leeway to accommodate private foreign merchant shipping.

This new flexibility was most opportune for the first Portuguese diplomatic mission, that otherwise could have been turned away outright. At this point, it is necessary to refute a long-held assumption that Wu Tingju handled the Portuguese application for trade in his capacity as the Provincial Administration Commissioner of Guangdong.<sup>174</sup> In fact, Wu no longer held the position when the Portuguese arrived at Tunmen on August 15, 1517. By that date he had already been promoted and transferred to Huguang province.<sup>175</sup>

Wu's reforms should not be seen as a measure to promote maritime trade,<sup>176</sup> but simply as a recognition of the reality and an effort to regularize a trade that was increasingly flourishing beyond government control. As a matter of fact, the state would have suffered a great loss of revenue had the rigid regulations been enforced, because officials would have been forced to turn away tributary missions that did not arrive according to the schedule. Furthermore, it was obvious that such rigidity only encouraged smuggling and irregularities, and at times smugglers engaged in plundering activities and brought calamity upon the locality.

When the new sovereign, the Jianjing Emperor, ascended the throne, he decreed on June 13, 1521, that strict Supervisorate regulations should be re-imposed. The reason given was that the laxity in the existing practice had given rise to conflicts among the tribute bearers and caused local disturbances.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, in reinstating the restriction, the reform-minded young sovereign was responding to a recommendation

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173. *Ming shi*, juan 325, "Folangji", p. 8430.

174. Dai Yixuan, *Ming shi Folangji zhuan*, pp. 11–2.

175. Dai Yixuan is correct to point out the confusion in the various sources and suggest that Commissioner Wu's reform was not related to the arrival of the Portuguese mission since it had been proposed earlier. He also suspects that Wu was no longer in Guangzhou when the Portuguese arrived, but fails to provide any direct evidence (*ibid.*). Under the entry of August 1, 1517, two weeks before the Portuguese arrival in Guangzhou, the *Ming shilu* clearly records that Wu was then the Grand Coordinator of Huguang. See *MSL: WZ*, 188: 5b.

176. One indication is his opposition in 1525 to the promotion of coastal shipping and construction of vessels for such purpose. See *MSL: SZ*, 41: 24a.

177. *Ibid.*, 2: 14b.

by the Board of Rites urging that the frequency of tribute missions be fixed in order to reduce the financial burden of receiving them.<sup>178</sup>

As he once said about himself, in the early years of his long reign, the Jianjing Emperor was diligent in the governance of the state.<sup>179</sup> His primary concern was security problems along the borders. In fact, there was a consensus among the Court officials about the need for strong defense policies. Supervising Secretary Xia Yan, who later rose to become the highest-ranked Grand Secretary, was among the hardliners in matters to do with national defense. It is recorded in the *Ming shilu*, under the entry of January 2, 1524, that he suggested sending a Supervising Censor to rectify the laxity in the coastal defense. The situation was revealed in the course of disturbances caused by the two rival Japanese tribute missions in 1523.<sup>180</sup> His prompting led to the temporary suspension of the Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorates,<sup>181</sup> but this move only aggravated the problem of coastal defense. The measure, ironically, also contradicted the traditional concept of tributary relations and the true spirit of the sea prohibition that disallowed private, but not tributary trade. Both the tributary relations and the sea prohibition had been upheld concurrently, though often rather flexibly, since the early days of the Ming era.

Meanwhile, debate among the Court officials continued after Guangzhou was reopened to tributary trade on Lin Fu's recommendation in 1529. For example, in 1530 Supervising Secretary Wang Xiwen argued that tribute missions did not benefit the country at all and should be totally banned. He added that, for security reasons, the fine example of former Guangdong Coastal Surveillance Vice-Commissioner Wang Hong, who expelled the Folangji from Guangzhou a few years earlier, should be emulated.<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, after deliberation, the Court agreed with

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178. *Ibid.*, 4: 10b–11a.

179. *Ibid.*, 280: 1a.

180. *Ibid.*, 33: 6b–7a.

181. *Ming shi jishi ben-mo*, 55: 8a–b, in *WYGSKQS*, Vol. 364, p. 683. In response to any further breakdowns of law and order in the coastal provinces in 1529, Xia Yan also recommended the appointment of an Itinerant Inspector-General (*xunshi* 巡視) for Zhejiang and its vicinity, with the rank of Censor-in-Chief (*tuyushi* 都御史), who would be given authority over military affairs. However, the position was filled only briefly. See *MSL: SZ*, 103: 8b; and Higgins, "Piracy", pp. 126–32.

182. Wang Hong, who was rising fast in his career during the early years of the new reign, was now an influential Court official and was promoted again in 1532 to assume the most prestigious position on the Six Boards, that of the head of the Board of Personnel. *MSL: SZ*, 142: 2b.

the view of the Censorate that tribute missions should continue to be received in accordance with the Supervisorate regulations.<sup>183</sup>

Although smuggling involving the Chinese and their foreign collaborators was rampant for the next decade and a half, the Court seemed to have been principally concerned with more immediate threats along the northern border and consequently the rules of maritime trade were no longer strictly observed. Moreover, the Court's dependence on foreign maritime merchants for supplies of spices and aromatic wood made it imperative to allow the arrival of the foreign merchants. The following entry in the *Ming shilu* indicates the demand of the Court for such foreign goods:

The palace storehouse sent a communication to the Board of Revenue hastening the delivery for palace consumption of fragrant wood including seven thousand catties of gharuwood, sixty thousand catties of top-quality lakwood, twelve thousand catties of *chensu xiang* (*xiang* means fragrant wood), thirty thousand catties of *su xiang*, ten thousand catties of *haitian xiang* and thirty thousand catties of *huangsu xiang*. The Board of Revenue requested a reduction in the quantity so that these could be made available by purchase. The Emperor rejected the appeal and ordered the purchase of the required quantity. The Board was also told that the Guangdong authorities should be pressed for speedy delivery.<sup>184</sup>

By the early sixteenth century, the practice of storing spices for personal consumption and probably also for resale had become widespread among official or prominent families. When the Zhengde Emperor, for example, ordered the confiscation of the property of a high-ranking official named Zhu Ning in 1519, three thousand cases of pepper were found among his valuables.<sup>185</sup> Even more significantly, foreign merchandise had been allocated to officials in Guangdong in lieu of their monthly emoluments.<sup>186</sup> The government as well as the society at large competed for the supply of spices and aromatic wood. To ensure supplies of these items for the palace, there was a ban on the private trading of

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183. *Ibid.*, 118: 2b–3a. A fuller version of Wang Xiwen's memorial is available in *Dongguan xianzhi* 東莞縣志 [Gazetteer of Dongguan District], comp. Chen Botao 陳伯陶編撰 (reprint; Taipei: Hsueh-sheng shu-chu, 1968; orig. 1911), 58: 4b–5a.

184. *MSL: SZ*, 361: 3b. Although the entry is dated July 12, 1550, it gives a very good description of the Court's demand for such supplies during the period in general.

185. *Ibid.*, 180: 3a.

186. *Ming shi, juan* 325, "Folangji", p. 8432.

quantities of sappanwood or pepper that exceeded a thousand catties.<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless, Provincial Administration Commissioner Wu Tingju during the Zhengde Reign and Grand Coordinator Lin Fu of Guangdong in the early Jiaping reign preferred to deal with shortages of supply at the root. In their view, to satisfy the demand of the Court for foreign merchandise, a more flexible policy toward the Supervisorate System was needed.<sup>188</sup>

With the realization of the deteriorating condition of coastal security after the mid-1540s, an intensive discussion of maritime affairs was resumed, leading to Zhu Wan's appointment as Governor of Zhejiang cum Min-Zhe Coastal Defense Inspector-General in 1547. The contention that Zhu owed his appointment to Grand Secretary Xia Yan and that the latter's downfall had a profound effect on his career<sup>189</sup> needs to be scrutinized. In the first place, doubts arise because Xia's case does not seem to have had immediate repercussions on Zhu's position, since his request for clear-cut authority over coastal affairs, including the command of troops, was granted by the Court on June 4, 1548,<sup>190</sup> almost one month after the death sentence had been imposed on Xia.<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, on October 30, 1548, some three months after his own demotion, Zhu was rewarded with silver cash on the recommendation of the Board of War for his conduct of the successful military campaign in late March of that same year.<sup>192</sup> Suffice it to say that his appointment was an outcome of the Court's concern about coastal defense and the need for a tougher policy toward maritime disturbances. Therefore, his downfall was more the outcome of his legal impropriety than of any political intrigues.

No doubt, Zhu Wan took his duty seriously. He was also a very competent and upright official. In mid-November 1547, during his first tour of duty in southern Fujian, he took prompt action to suppress a bandit group in Tong'an, although many of the captives later paid bribes to escape punishment. Zhu carried out a probe into local affairs that aroused discomposure and resentment among both officials and elite families.<sup>193</sup> This experience surely had great bearing on his merciless dealing with the later groups of captives.

In 1547, a Japanese embassy with four ships and six hundred men under Sakugen Shuryo arrived off Ningbo in advance of the approved schedule. On December 31 the Court referred the case to Zhu Wan, who

187. Such ban is mentioned under the entry of May 10, 1524 in *MSL: SZ*, 38: 4b-5a.

188. *Ming shi, juan* 325, "Folangji", pp. 8430, 8432.

189. Higgins, "Piracy", p. 179.

190. *MSL: SZ*, 335: 7a.

191. *Ibid.*, 335: 1a-b.

192. *Ibid.*, 340: 7a.

193. Higgins, "Piracy", pp. 172-5.

was then in Fujian, for his recommendation.<sup>194</sup> Zhu Wan's handling of the mission points to his positive attitude toward tributary relations and tributary trade. In contrast to Xia Yan, Zhu considered that the institution of the Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorates and the Sea Prohibition were not in contradiction to each other in their purposes. Although the prohibition banned private trade (*shangbo*), it did allow tributary trade (*shibo*) under the Supervisorates. For this reason, Zhu disagreed with an earlier recommendation by the Board of Rites that the extra ships and personnel of the Japanese tribute mission should be refused entry. He succeeded in convincing the Court that Sakugen Shuryo should be accepted as a tributary envoy and his mission be treated with leniency and flexibility.<sup>195</sup>

Probably Zhu Wan believed that the regulated trade controlled by the Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorates would satisfy the demands of the tributary states and, hence, restore law and order on the coast. However, as one observer explained a few years later, the restrictions on the volume and frequency of trade greatly disappointed the Japanese, who depended on China for supplies of both luxuries and daily necessities.<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, during the sixteenth century Sino-Japanese trade had become even more lucrative than before because of the large influx of silver into China. The demand for this metal in Ming China was stimulated by the accelerated commercialization of the country's economy and the increased circulation of silver as one form of currency. In Japan, that had large supplies of silver, the use of copper coins was more widespread. The exchange rate between one silver *Tael* and copper coins was 1:750 in China and 1:250 in Japan. Japanese trading ships to China were loaded with large quantities of silver that could be traded at very favorable rates for such Chinese commodities as copper coins, silks and medicinal drugs.<sup>197</sup> The Portuguese joined the Chinese and Japanese to form a triangular network of trade, but Portugal, not being a tributary state of China, was forced to engage only in smuggling activities.

The more turbulent situation in the late 1540s was just one of two major difficulties faced by Zhu Wan. A wave of controversy also confronted him over his appointment. From the outset some Court officials had questioned the wisdom of entrusting one official with such extensive

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194. *MSL: SZ*, 330: 5a.

195. *MJSWB*, 205/1: 12b-13a; *MSL: SZ*, 337: 2b-3a, 349: 4a-b.

196. *Chouhai tubian*, 12: 113b, in *WYGSKQS*, Vol. 584, p. 400.

197. Tanaka Takeo, *Wokou—haishang lishi*, pp. 52, 53, 65; also *Chouhai tubian*, 4: 28a, in *WYGSKQS*, Vol. 584, p. 108.



power. For instance, Censor Zhou Liang and Supervising Secretary Ye Tang both expressed their disapproval and memorialized the Court on the matter in early August 1548. They cited the recent event in Fujian to strengthen their argument that Zhu had overstretched himself. Moreover, it had been difficult for the provincial officials to seek instructions from him because of the large area over which he was obliged to tour. This, they claimed, had affected administrative efficiency and imposed an undue burden upon the local officials.

Zhu Wan's struggle for survival should also be viewed in the context of the Ming administration. Checks and surveillance were common features of the Ming political institution. Within the central government, the Censorate was established to undertake overall supervisory duties. Eight Censors-in-Chief and several dozen Investigating Censors were appointed to staff this office. In addition, there was a somewhat overlapping institution called the Supervising Secretariat (*jishi zhong*), comprising six offices to supervise the work of the six Boards respectively. The three judicial offices examined important legal cases. When a case involved matters that were the responsibility of another board, it was also represented in the deliberations.

Moreover, the dilution of power was the principle of a three-level supervisory structure of each provincial government so that no one official had absolute authority over the administration. The three provincial offices (*sansi*), namely: the Administration Commission, the Military Commission, and the Surveillance Commission, supposedly formed a tripartite body, but actually functioned independently. They were responsible to the related central boards. To safeguard central control to an even greater degree, Investigating Censors were sent to the 13 provinces for up to one year<sup>198</sup> to perform the role of Regional Inspecting Censors (*xun'an yushi*). Regional Inspecting Censors were responsible to the Emperor rather than the Censorate. On top of these two administrative levels was the Governor (*xunfu*) or Governors-General (Viceroys, *zongdu*). As in Zhejiang and Fujian, such appointments were not regular. The Grand Coordinators were often assigned special duties, such as handling coastal defense, and given authority over military affairs (*tidu junwu*) and the additional title of Censor-in-Chief (*duyushi*) to enhance their prestige, if not their actual powers. They were also normally granted discretionary powers (*bianyi xing shi*). Zhu Wan's appointment was of this nature.<sup>199</sup>

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198. *MJSWB*, 205/1: 5b.

199. For a general discussion of administrative structures, see Qiu Yongming 邱永明, *Zhongguo jiancha zhidu shi* 中国监察制度史 [A history of the Chinese

The relationship between the Itinerant Inspector-General and the Regional Inspecting Censor was not hierarchical. In 1534 it was specifically made clear that the authority of Regional Inspecting Censors included, among other duties, safeguarding the integrity of local judicature, especially by preventing the arbitrary or improper exercise of judicial power. They were also required to investigate or take part in the hearing of legal cases that involved severe punishments. This arrangement greatly constrained the authority of the Itinerant Inspectors-General.<sup>200</sup> Finally, all sentences of a certain level of severity, generally banishment and above, required the Emperor's endorsement. In case of doubt, a retrial was conducted by a high-ranking official sent by the Emperor and the verdicts of these officials were in turn subject to re-examination by the three judicial offices.<sup>201</sup>

Despite his wide experience, Zhu defined his duties in more theoretical than realistic terms. Upon his appointment, he was given specific terms of reference concerning his duties and authority as Itinerant Inspector-General. As his first duty, he was expected to control civil and military affairs in Zhejiang, including revenues, troop training, the welfare of soldiers and civilians and making administrative improvements. His second duty was related to military campaigns. He would then be given discretionary powers in decision-making and authority over local military personnel. Thirdly, in the case of the southern Fujian coast, he was specifically instructed to "devise means" (*shefa*) to eliminate the sea bandits, maintain law and order and, in times of emergency, conduct inspection tours of the region.<sup>202</sup>

Any attempt to interpret his duties and authority rigidly immediately brought him into conflict with other provincial officials. A case in point is his relationship with the Inspecting Censors. Prior to Zhu's appointment, the Inspecting Censors held overall authority in provincial matters. Consequently, Zhu Wan's assigned duties overlapped in several important aspects with those of the Regional Inspecting Censors. His complaint to the Court that he was often constrained and challenged by these officials clearly indicates the conflict of authority between him and his provincial colleagues.<sup>203</sup> In short, his assignments were simply

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supervisory system] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1992), pp. 385-418.

200. Huai Xiaofeng 怀效锋, *Jiajing zhuanzhi zhengzhi yu fazhi* 嘉靖专制政治与法制 [Autocracy and legal systems of the Jiajing Reign] (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1989), pp. 204, 206, 212.

201. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-2.

202. *MJSWB*, 205/1: la-5a.

203. *Ibid.*

a mission impossible. Under such a cumbersome political institution, getting himself into trouble was only a matter of time.

The deliberations among the Court officials concerning the extensive authority given to Zhu eventually convinced the Emperor that the avoidance of administrative confusion made good sense. Hence Zhu Wan's demotion to the less powerful Itinerant Inspector-Generalship causes no surprise.<sup>204</sup> But modern scholars as well as traditionalists are more inclined to believe that politics lurked behind the scene, a view even shared by Zhu Wan himself.<sup>205</sup> The disappointment of Ming traditionalists in Zhu Wan's disgrace can be understood because the latter's integrity and unwavering execution of his duty served as a perfect role model for the bureaucracy. Having said this, Zhu Wan's methods of managing maritime affairs were somewhat anachronistic and betrayed a poor grasp of broader economic realities. It was impossible to distinguish legality from illegality and to separate legitimate traders from violent lawbreakers. Instead of restoring law and order, he caused greater and unnecessary violence.

No doubt, Zhu's dismissal satisfied the coastal interests, but it was certainly premature for them to claim victory. Zhu had submitted a memorial to the Court before his dismissal, exposing the local collaborators of the smugglers and pirates. He mentioned Lin Gong, Yao Guangrui and more than a hundred and ten other people.<sup>206</sup> To prevent trouble in the future, Zhu firmly believe that the Court must get to the root of the problem to be rid of it. Although Zhu was dismissed from his post in May 1549, the Court acted upon his earlier recommendation and on July 28, 1549, decided to take tough measures against the blacklisted people. The Fujian Regional Inspecting Censor and other high-ranking officials were ordered to track them down and condemn them to death. It was also decreed that the Folangji captives and the circumstances of their capture should be carefully examined to uphold the law and in the interests of justice.<sup>207</sup>

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204. *MSL: SZ*, 338: la–b.

205. *Ibid.*, 346: la–b. Zhu's reasoning for his demotion and hence the conspiracy theory are echoed in Higgins, "Piracy", pp. 184–6, 190–1.

206. Lin Gong, like Li Guangtou, was mentioned with the title "La-da". According to Fujida Toyobachi, the term was probably a corrupt form of the Portuguese word *comprador* (Fujida Toyobachi, *Tōzai kōshōshi*, p. 460). See also Huai Xiaofeng, *Jiajing zhuanzhi zhengzhi*, p. 138, for the context of its usage as seen in the revised "Penal Regulations of the Jiajing" (1550) that supports Fujida Toyobachi's suggestion.

207. *MSL: SZ*, 350: la–b.

Zhu's dismissal did not immediately lead to a change in the sea prohibition policy. On the contrary, the revised penal regulations (*wenxing tiaoli*) promulgated in 1550 contained more stringent measures to restrict private trade. Now, the death penalty was prescribed for corrupt military officials whose conduct caused local disturbances or killings, people who built large-size vessels and sold them to foreigners for profit (an act that was now considered on par with smuggling weapons to the sea or acting as informants for foreigners) and those officials or civilians who built vessels with more than two masts and shipped prohibited articles (including weapons, coins, and silk products) to trade at sea or in foreign lands, or conspired with pirate gangs and guided them on plundering raids.<sup>208</sup>

## The Practicalities of Trade

Although the Ming government had developed a most sophisticated tributary concept and its foreign relations were defined in terms that represented the Confucian world view, the system was seldom, if ever, realized in its ideal form. The Maritime Trade and Shipping Supervisorate, the embodiment of this high ideal, was deprived of its rigidity. Despite occasional upsurges in idealism, there was normally room for flexibility to accommodate the wishes of both the Confucian state and local governments when the ideal was transformed into practice. The ability of private trade to survive within the framework of the Supervisorate institution was just one such distortion of high ideals.

The downfall of Zhu Wan removed the primary obstacle to Portuguese trade with the coastal region. By this time, the Portuguese had greatly expanded their triangular trade network with China and Japan that now became primarily a matter of exchanging Chinese silks, gold and porcelain for Japanese silver bullion and copper.<sup>209</sup> To take advantage of the rapid development in Sino-Japanese trade, the Portuguese urgently needed a firm base on the China coast. After prolonged negotiations, in 1554 the Capitão-Mor Leonel de Sousa concluded a verbal agreement with Wang Bo, the Coastal Surveillance Vice-Commissioner of Guangdong. Under a mutual understanding, the Portuguese were admitted to the Guangzhou trade not as Folangji but as Siamese, purportedly representing a country that was a tributary state. In 1557, the Portuguese

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208. Huai Xiaofeng, *Jiajijg zhuanzhi zhengzhi*, p. 138.

209. Stephen Chang, *Mingji tongnan Zhongguo*, p. 246. While copper was exported to China, copper coins were shipped back to Japan in large quantities.

established a permanent land base in Macao with the tacit approval of local officials, but without the Court's knowledge.<sup>210</sup> No matter what measures the Court took to strengthen the prohibitive laws, after the events of 1548–49 the concern with profit and a more orderly trading arrangement again led the Guangzhou authorities and the Portuguese to work out a *modus operandi*. Local maneuverability allowed such a compromise, as had normally been the case in the past.

In sum, the upsurge in private trade cannot be explained adequately by the dynastic decline theory and the loss of control by the state. Despite all its problems, as it entered into the seemingly chaotic sixteenth century the Ming state and its institutions remained vital. Whenever circumstance warranted firm action, a fleet of a hundred junks could be mustered, as happened in Guangzhou in 1523 to prevent the return of the Portuguese,<sup>211</sup> and successful campaigns could be launched against smugglers-cum-pirates, as in 1548–49. C.R. Boxer also observes, “[j]udging from the accounts of Pereira and Cruz, one would be justified in assuming that the Ming government was functioning exceptionally well at this period, and that the empire as a whole was rich and prosperous”.<sup>212</sup> On the other side of the coin, the cumbersome institution and treacherous Court politics had not enabled the state to gain a stranglehold on trade, which danced instead to the tune of the irresistible social and economic forces.

As profit drew together a heterogeneous assortment of people along the coast, both collaboration and confrontation were to be expected. The interests of these participants, and the complex trade forces, accelerated the pace of commercial development in Chinese littoral society and enabled trade networks to grow in sophistication. In the process foreign elements made adjustments to become players in the indigenous system, while for their part the Chinese became increasingly more collaborative with strangers from afar.

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210. Boxer, *South China*, pp. xxxiii, xxxv.

211. Higgins, “Piracy”, p. 63.

212. Boxer, *South China*, p. xxx.

## CHAPTER 4

# Treaties, Politics and the Limits of Local Diplomacy in Fuzhou in the Early 1850s<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The interaction between China and foreign powers in the post-Opium War era is often seen in the stark context of either Western imperialism or Chinese xenophobia. While Chinese nationalistic historiography stresses the inevitability of clashes in the wake of the intrusion of Western imperialism, Western-language accounts often depict the Sino-Western conflict as a consequence of differing conceptions of international relations. The latter interpretation assumes that the Chinese did not understand modern concepts of diplomacy.

The Chinese officials in charge of foreign affairs (*yiwu*) are generally portrayed as divided into two factions advocating different policy approaches: a group of hardliners that advocated the extermination of the barbarians (*jiao yi*) and an appeasement party that favored peaceful control (*fu yi*). Western scholars often show the appeasement party in a better light, expressing admiration of their compliance, while treating the hardliners as being ignorant of international affairs.<sup>2</sup> Nationalistic

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1. Using the FO dispatches deposited in PRO, London, and the Qing documents in the First Historical Archives in Beijing and the Palace Museum Library in Taipei, a preliminary paper in Chinese was given at the Second International Conference on Ming-Qing History held in Tianjin. The paper further incorporated materials from the Church Missionary Archives at the University of Birmingham. A rewritten version, from which this chapter originated, was presented at a conference in Perth.
  2. See, for example, Fred W. Drake, *China Charts the World: Hsu Chi-yu and His Geography of 1848* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University East Asian Research Center, 1975), and Ellsworth C. Carlson, *The Foochow Missionaries, 1847–1880* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University East Asian Research Center, 1974). The former sees Governor Xu Jiyu as a victim of conservatism and xenophobic local literati and the latter finds the event under discussion as a frightening

Chinese writers reverse these judgments, criticizing the former group for capitulating to foreigners and praising the latter for defending national interests.

Christian missionaries played a significant role in the process of contact and confrontation between East and West. This situation has led to a tendency to believe that the anti-Christian tradition upheld by the Chinese officials and literati was responsible for the difficulties experienced by Western missionaries in China, but this interpretation fails to take into account the complexity of the situation. An incident in 1850 that pitted the English Church Mission in Fuzhou (Foochow-fu), the provincial capital of Fujian, against local officials is one episode that reveals the complexity of the conflict. In that year, the Fuzhou authorities attempted to evict two English missionaries, William Welton and Robert David Jackson, who had rented quarters within the city walls. Welton and Jackson registered themselves at the British Consulate in Fuzhou on June 1, 1850. In several respects, the tension caused by their arrival resembles the "city question" of Guangzhou, in which the Chinese authorities refused to allow Western personnel into the city, confining them to a strictly designated area outside the city walls. On the other hand, the two cases differed in that the British Consulate and its personnel had already been allowed entry into Fuzhou. Throughout the confrontation, the question of keeping the consular officials outside the city did not arise.

Before Welton and Jackson departed from Hong Kong, an American missionary by the name of Rev. Samuel McClay arrived there from Fuzhou. He told the two missionaries of the efforts made by the Chinese officials to keep missionaries confined to a section of Nantai Island situated about three miles outside the south gate of the city walls. McClay impressed upon them that the missionaries were all living together and suggested Welton and Jackson "must do the same".<sup>3</sup> However, instructions given to the two men by the Anglican Bishop of Victoria, the Right Reverend George Smith, emphasized the importance of securing a residence within the city, "even though a very inferior lodging". If this proved impractical, they should locate themselves in some suburb "at a distance from the present missionary residence".<sup>4</sup> The Bishop also

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manifestation of the strength of anti-foreign or anti-missionary feelings in Fuzhou, particularly among the literati.

3. William Welton's "Journal", in Church Missionary Society Archives (hereafter CMS), C CH/O 91, May 31, 1850; also CMS, C CH MI, the Bishop of Victoria (Hong Kong), George Smith, to the Secretary of the Society Rev. H. Venn, July 19, 1850.
4. CMS, C CH MI, Smith to Venn, July 19, 1850.

prepared a letter to consular interpreter, W.R. Gingell, then Acting Vice Consul-in-Charge, requesting his assistance in the matter.

Gingell asked a local official, Prefectural Assistant Guo Xuedian, to procure a suitable residence for the two clergymen either within or just outside the city. Guo was a Commissioner (*weiyuan*) appointed by the provincial authorities to assist in foreign trade affairs.<sup>5</sup> After 15 days, Guo sent a message to say that three houses were available along the Min River. Two of these proved to be in a dilapidated condition. The third was commodious, but it was subject to inundation.<sup>6</sup>

A few days earlier, Gingell had located some rooms in a Buddhist Shenguang Temple on Wushi (Black Rock) Hill, where the consulate was also situated. With some alterations and repairs these would be a reasonable place to stay, and the abbot of the temple was willing to rent out the space. Gingell procured the rooms in his own name, and the Bishop of Victoria, in a later comment on Gingell's act, said he believed that his previous appeal to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, to permit consular agents to act for missionaries in their dealings with the Chinese had had a great effect on this occasion. On June 20, 1850,<sup>7</sup> a contract was drawn up and forwarded to Magistrate Xinglian of Houguan district for approval. After some minor alterations in the wording, the Magistrate affixed his official seal on the document, apparently believing that Gingell was the lessee. The rent for the first three months at the rate of 23 Spanish dollars per month was paid in advance.

Two days later, Xinglian sent a message to Gingell saying that the literati were opposed to the leasing of the lodgings and were about to petition the high-ranking provincial authorities on the subject. Worried about the repercussions should this take place, the Magistrate asked Gingell to give up the rooms. Gingell requested a written communication from the Magistrate before he would make a reply. The next day he received a message to this effect, and the abbot also came to ask for cancellation of the lease. Various communications passed between Gingell and the Chinese authorities, who argued that the lease was in

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5. FO 228/114, enclosure in no. 22, Gingell to Magistrate Xinglian, June 24, 1850.

6. FO 228/114, no. 22, Gingell to Bonham, June 26, 1850.

7. FO 228/114, enclosure in no. 23, n.d., Xinglian to Gingell.



contradiction to the treaty.<sup>8</sup> This matter triggered a diplomatic row that lasted for more than six months.<sup>9</sup>

The Shenguang Temple Affair has been discussed in a number of writings.<sup>10</sup> This chapter seeks to fill the gaps in the existing literature and, more importantly, to provide a critical re-examination of the stereotypes that highlighted the xenophobia of the Chinese and their alleged ignorance of modern concepts of diplomacy. It commences by scrutinizing the Sino-British confrontation over the rental issue that involved the observance of the treaties. This is followed by an exploration of the milieu of Fuzhou in which the missionaries lived and worked through their experiences. Lastly, the chapter will provide some new perspectives on the problem of Sino-Western contacts as seen in the case of the Shenguang Temple episode.

## The Fuzhou Authorities, Their Critics and the Xianfeng Emperor

The presence of foreigners in the Shenguang Temple caused a great stir among the Fuzhou literati, and in its turn the disturbance attracted the attention of the 20-year-old Xianfeng Emperor, who had ascended the throne on March 9, 1850. Moreover, at the time of this incident, Lin Zexu, the former Imperial Commissioner in Guangzhou at the outbreak of the First Opium War, was living in Fuzhou. Lin, who was a native of Fuzhou, had recently retired from active service because of failing health.<sup>11</sup> A patriot who had long shown his concern about Western intrusions, he

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8. For details, see Ng Chin-keong 吳振強, "Shenguang si shijian yu Fuzhou yiwu de zai jiantao" 神光寺事件与福州夷务的再检讨 [A re-examination of the Shenguang Temple affair and yiwu (foreign affairs)], in *Dierjie Ming Qing shi guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwen ji* 第二届明清史国际学术讨论会论文集 [A collection of essays presented at the second international conference on the Ming-Qing history] (Tianjin: Renmin chubanshe, 1993), pp. 386–402.

9. FO 228/114, no. 22, Gingell to Bonham, June 26, 1850.

10. See, for example, the works of Carlson and Drake cited earlier. Some of their contentions have been scrutinized and refuted by the present author in a detailed account of the affair. See Ng, "Shenguang si".

11. Lin Zexu was granted permission to vacate his post and return to his native place to recuperate on September 10, 1849. See Grand Council Records [hereafter GCR] (Beijing) (*junji dang* 軍機檔, GCR deposited in the First Historical Archives, Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts (*Shangyu Dang* 上諭檔), DG29/7 (Daoguang Reign 29th year/7th month), microfilm 233:299 (no. 233, p. 299).

provided leadership in the initial stages of opposition to foreign residence within the city. The morale and enthusiasm of his supporters received a boost in June, in the wake of an imperial edict addressed to Governor-General Liu Yunke inquiring whether Lin Zexu had recovered his health sufficiently to return to the capital immediately to resume service.<sup>12</sup>

The Court at this point in time was preoccupied with British attempts to send dispatches to Beijing via Shanghai and Tianjin, bypassing the proper channel via the Imperial Commissioner, Xu Guangjin, in Guangzhou. The British had grown increasingly frustrated with the mounting Anglo-Chinese friction in Guangzhou, and in April 1849 the British Plenipotentiary and Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Samuel George Bonham, advocated the use of force to reinvigorate the British position in China. In August, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, began to press for communications with the Chinese capital, initially through Shanghai and, later, Tianjin, going over the head of the Imperial Commissioner. Moreover, in September the paltry trade in Fuzhou and Ningbo prompted Palmerston to ask Bonham to suggest other ports as substitutions. In January 1850 he told Bonham that, if necessary, he should personally proceed to the north to deal with the matter. Bonham did exactly that in May. He returned to Hong Kong in the middle of July.<sup>13</sup>

In response to an imperial edict dated July 11 about Bonham's attempts to send dispatches to Beijing via Shanghai and Tianjin and the Court's instructions to take precautionary measures, Governor Xu Jiyu of Fujian sent a memorial, received at the Court on August 13, reporting that there were no signs of the Englishmen making trouble. He did not mention the Shenguang Temple dispute. Instead, in his memorial he dwelt on some basic principles of managing foreign affairs, arguing that matters concerning foreigners should be taken care of discreetly to avoid exciting the local population or arousing the suspicions of foreigners. Were this not done, disputes might arise.<sup>14</sup>

The new moves by the British greatly alarmed some Chinese officials, who advocated a hardline approach toward foreign affairs. The former Director-General of Grain Transport, Zhou Tianjue, submitted a memorial to the Court requesting an investigation into the situation. When it was

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12. *Qingdai chouban yiwu shimo: Xianfeng chao* 清代籌辦夷務始末：咸豐朝 (YWSM: XF) [Management of barbarian affairs of the Qing Dynasty from beginning to end during the Xianfeng Reign], I: DG30/5/3: 21a (*juan* 1: Daoguang Reign/30th year/5th month/3rd day: p. 21a).

13. John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports 1842–1854* (1964 edition; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 375–8.

14. YWSM: XF, II: DG30/7/6: 10a–11a.

received on August 25, an imperial edict was issued to the Governors-General and Governors of the maritime provinces reminding them that the peace treaty could now no longer be relied on to guarantee law and order and calling for measures to strengthen maritime defense.<sup>15</sup>

It is not surprising that the minor dispute over foreign residence in the Shenguang Temple became linked to the broader context of foreign relations. The first detailed report to the Court on the Shenguang Temple Incident was in a memorial submitted by Sun Ming'en, Reader-in-Waiting of the Hanlin Academy. It reached the Emperor on August 25. Sun prefaced his memorial with the statement that, "foreign affairs are in an unpredictable state". In his analysis of the dispute in Fuzhou, he accused the local officials of siding with the foreigners. He had heard that the officials had even escorted the two clergymen to take up their residence in the temple. He advocated the emulation of Governor-General Xu Guangjin who, with the assistance of the local people, took concerted action against the foreigners' demands in Guangzhou. Attached to Sun's memorial was a copy of the address forwarded to the British consular official by the scholars and the general public of Fuzhou. On the same day, in his edict to Governor-General Liu Yunke and Governor Xu Jiyu, the Emperor commented that, in order to manage the foreigners properly, the officials should unite with the people. If peace and tranquility were to prevail, officials should neither spark off conflicts with the foreigners nor go against the wishes of the people.<sup>16</sup>

Governor-General Liu and Governor Xu dispatched their first report on the Shenguang Temple dispute to the Court on August 19.<sup>17</sup> They began by discussing the background to the question of foreign residence in Fuzhou. When G.T. Lay arrived to open the first Consulate in 1844, his immediate wish was to take up residence within the city walls. Although Liu Yunke, the Governor-General, and Xu Jiyu, then the Provincial Administration Commissioner, were fully aware that under the terms of the treaty Lay was entitled to lodge in the city, they still hoped to keep him outside. They instigated a joint submission consisting of more than

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15. *YWSM: XF*, II: DG30/7/18: 11a–15b. *YWSM: XF*, II: DG30/7/18: 11a–15b.

16. GCR (Taipei) (Grand Council Records, deposited in the National Palace Museum Archives, Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials (*yuezhe dang* 月摺檔). DG30/Autumn, received DG30/7/18; GCR (Taipei): Square Record Books of Imperial Edicts (*fangben shangyu* 方本上諭), DG30/Autumn/7th month; and GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/7, microfilm 236: 169–70.

17. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, DG30/Autumn; GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 95, no. 2; and GCR (Beijing): Imperialist Invasions, file 150, no. 21 (microfilm).

two hundred signatures from members of the literati and the general public to oppose Lay's entry into the city. However, when the signatories were asked to be present at the city gate to express their objection to Lay's arrival, not one of them showed up. Lay successfully moved into his residence in the Jicui Temple on Wushishan. In their next step, Liu and Xu attempted to boycott trade with the foreigners, but succeeded only for a short period. Local people simply could not resist the temptation of the profit to be had by doing business with foreigners. These events led Liu and Xu to understand that the Fuzhou people were not keen on confronting the Europeans. Nevertheless, Liu and Xu pressed ahead and made it clear to the foreigners that, in accordance with the terms of the treaty, only foreign officials were allowed to lodge within the city, and that merchants would have to reside at the harbor area. Furthermore, all rental contracts were required to have the approval of local officials.

One chief point of friction in Sino-British relations after the First Opium War was their differing interpretations of treaties, arising from discrepancies between the English and Chinese versions.<sup>18</sup> The Chinese text contained some key points that did not appear in the English text. In the case of the Treaty of Nanjing, Article II of the English version stipulated that "British Subjects ... shall be allowed to reside at the Cities and Towns of Canton (Guangzhou), Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow-fu (Fuzhou), Ningpo (Ningbo), and Shanghai, and Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, etc., will appoint Superintendents or Consular Officers, to reside at each of the above-named Cities or Towns...." But the corresponding part of the Chinese version provided that temporary residence of non-official British subjects was allowed only in the "harbour areas" (*gangkou*) of the five cities, and that of consular officers in the corresponding "walled cities" (*chengyi*).<sup>19</sup> In fact, the "city question" in Guangzhou, an issue of foreign entry into the city walls, had been causing a controversy in Sino-British diplomacy for several years and contributed to the tension and violent clashes between the two countries.<sup>20</sup>

In the case of Fuzhou, the distinction between the rights of residence of foreign officials and merchants had not been challenged by the foreigners until Gingell rented rooms in the Shengguang Temple for the two missionaries. When affixing his seal, Magistrate Xinglian thought he

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18. One incisive observation is provided in Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, pp. 102–3, 121–6, 200–1, 275, 378.

19. China, Imperial Maritime Customs, *Treaties, Conventions, etc., between China and Foreign States*, Vol. 1 (Shanghai: Inspectorate General of Customs, 1908), p. 160; see also Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, pp. 200–1.

20. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, pp. 200–1, 275–80.

was following a precedent set the previous year in which approval was granted to the consular official to rent temple space for luggage storage. Governor Xu discovered the true purpose of the rental soon afterwards and immediately instructed Xinglian to withdraw his approval. Gingell refused to take any action before the arrival of Governor Bonham's instructions, and Xu decided to wait until these instructions arrived, even though he believed that the British official had breached the terms of the treaty.

When the matter became known a few days later, some members of the literati decided to emulate their counterparts in Guangzhou by lodging a protest in the form of a public address to the British consular official sent through Magistrate Xinglian, noting public displeasure at the British disregard of the treaty by taking up residence in the temple without the consent of the local people. They warned that the people of Fuzhou might be compelled to follow the example of their Guangzhou compatriots in protesting against foreign encroachment.<sup>21</sup> Another public statement made by scholars of the local colleges followed. The general public also posted copies of a statement similar in content to the one prepared by the scholars. Meanwhile, anonymous placards appeared in the city threatening to kill the foreigners. Gingell refused to receive the public address and returned it to the Magistrate. However, when other statements began to arrive, Gingell approached Governor Xu for protection.

Both Liu and Xu feared that the situation might get out of control and lead to an open confrontation with the British. Sino-British relations were already tense in the wake of Bonham's journey to the north in May. Xu appealed to the scholars for patience while he was negotiating with the British. He also decided to retain Xinglian in his official function because his dismissal at this juncture, in Xu's opinion, would only bring the authorities into contempt.

A few days later, responding to an edict dated July 11,<sup>22</sup> Liu together with Xu again memorialized the throne, stating that peace prevailed in Fuzhou and Xiamen despite the excitement caused by the British actions. By this time, the Fuzhou literati had accepted a gradual approach to the Shenguang Temple dispute and had dispelled the foreigners' doubts and suspicions. For their part, the two clergymen could not agree between

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21. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, DG30/ Autumn; also in GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 93, no. 3.

22. The edict was about the return to Shanghai of the British mission from Tianjin, and Xu had earlier already sent a reply while Liu was absent on a military inspection tour.

themselves whether or not to move out, but it seemed their stay in the temple would not be long.<sup>23</sup>

The Xianfeng Emperor's comments on the joint memorial of August 19 sent by Liu and Xu were sent on September 1. In the edict, the Emperor repeated the principle that commercial treaties were concluded with foreigners for the purpose of maintaining law and order between the two parties. Strict observance of the treaties was the best guarantee of peace. To avoid violent clashes with the foreigners and incurring the displeasure of their own people, officials should not panic in their handling of the matter, but neither should they be timid in their approach.<sup>24</sup> As to Liu's memorial, an imperial edict dated September 8 similarly advised that it was equally important to maintain peace with the foreigners and win the support of the public, and warned that the two officials would be held responsible for any disharmony between the local people and the foreigners.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, former Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu took the lead in submitting a presentation to Governor Xu. Lin had already written to Xu in early July, and had been assured that, allowing more time, the Shengguang Temple affair would be settled. Lin waited a fortnight before he sent another letter, saying that he was troubled by information that the two missionaries had not moved out of the temple, and that more foreigners were moving into the city. Every day, baggage and large trunks containing weapons and cannon were being brought in, and local officials chose to ignore this traffic. As a citizen of Fuzhou he considered it his duty to remind the authorities of the worsening situation. He hoped the authorities could enlighten him as to what military preparations had been made to meet the emergency. He felt particularly angry with the placards displayed by foreigners, threatening to put to death any local troublemakers who dared to oppose them.<sup>26</sup>

In his reply, Xu said that the literati had been misinformed. In fact, the two clergymen had brought along only eight trunks of personal belongings. Those who had arrived in the city after them were Consular Interpreter C.A. Sinclair and Vice-Consul W. Connor, the latter accompanied by his wife and a maid. The largest trunk, containing household utensils, had been checked by the local officers in Nantai. Sinclair brought along

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23. GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 95, no. 4.

24. GCR (Taipei): Square Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/Autumn/7th Month; also in GCR (Beijing), Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/7, microfilm 236: 243-4.

25. GCR (Taipei): Square Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/8.

26. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, DG30/Autumn, pp. 31-4. For the contents of the posters by foreigners, see DG30/Autumn, p. 37.

a Cantonese clerk, who came with his wife. Xu contended that the treaty did not contain any stipulations that would disallow the employment of Chinese by foreign officials. Although he admitted the Magistrate of Houguan district had made a mistake, he warned that the Chinese authorities would be in the wrong were they to expel the two clergymen by force, since the local official had affixed his seal to the lease. Any drastic action would only invite foreign military intervention. As to the consular officials' residence within the city, it was in accordance with the treaty. To stress the point, Xu said he did not intend to invite trouble unnecessarily, but would not hesitate to take a small boat and approach any invading foreign vessels head-on, and that he would be prepared to sacrifice his life should he fail to dissuade them from invading. Then, and only then, would it be time to use force to confront the foreigners.<sup>27</sup>

More people were drawn into the debate. Among them was Lin Yangzu, a Supervising Censor in the Office of Scrutiny of Works. Citing the local reaction to the Shenguang Temple Affair and the Governor's argument, he sought to impeach Governor Xu for handling the matter improperly and causing disharmony between the officials and the general public in the face of foreign penetration. He said that, as a Fujianese himself, he felt obliged to report the affair to the Court.<sup>28</sup>

Responding to Lin Yangzu's memorial, in an imperial edict dated September 4, the Xianfeng Emperor instructed Liu and Xu that, although he could see the need to deal calmly with the foreigners, he found it more important to seek support from within. The officials concerned should outrightly reject any demands that contravened the treaty stipulations.<sup>29</sup>

The imperial edict of August 25 replying to Sun Ming'en's memorial reached Liu and Xu on September 15. In their answer, dated September 27, these two officials refuted the claim that soldiers had been sent to escort the two clergymen to their residence. In fact the soldiers had been posted in the neighborhood of the Shenguang Temple as a precautionary measure against possible disturbances made by local troublemakers, and remained in the vicinity for more than a week after the two clergymen had moved into the temple. Soon after Governor-General Liu's return from his military inspection, the memorial went on, he met with the literati and explained to them that, although the leasing of the rooms contravened the treaty, patience was needed to settle the dispute. Any hasty decisions

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27. GCR (Taipei): DG30/Autumn; also in GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 93, no. 3.

28. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, DG30/Autumn; also in GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 93, no. 3.

29. *YWSM: XF*, II: DG30/7/28: 25a-b.

would only worsen an already delicate situation. Bonham was becoming restless and should not be given another pretext to intervene. The literati, according to the two officials, accepted Liu's advice.

At this juncture, Liu learned of Bonham's instructions to Connor and concluded that, after the British attempt to enter Guangzhou had failed, Bonham was now deliberately twisting the meaning of the treaty in order to bypass Guangzhou. Any efforts to argue with Bonham through the proper channels, using the good offices of Xu Guangjin, the Governor-General of Liang-Guang and concurrently Imperial Commissioner, would be time-consuming and fruitless. To expedite a settlement of the affair, Liu decided to communicate directly with Bonham. His dispatch maintained that the treaty stipulations were very clear about the matter of residence, and that contravention of the treaty by the two clergymen had greatly antagonized the general public of Fuzhou. He was prepared to let them remain, but only until the expiry of the six-month lease. In his memorial to the Emperor, the Governor-General defended this offer by arguing that such flexibility had not compromised his determination to remove the clergymen from the temple. He had instructed Circuit Intendant Lu Zezhang, the two Magistrates, and Prefectural Assistant Guo Xuedian, to prevent workers from repairing the place, and did not expect the clergymen to remain in the temple long. When the scholars came to deliver their petition, he also won their support for his measures. He understood that there were all sorts of rumors in circulation, but he assured the Emperor that they were all unfounded.

In conclusion, Governor-General Liu opined that words alone could never defeat the foreigners. Only a few members of the literati actively took part in the rental issue. Their concern was admirable and respectable. However, to insist on trifles at the present time but ignore the dangers lurking in the future was irresponsible.<sup>30</sup>

In early September, while this debate was going on, another request for the impeachment of Liu and Xu reached the throne. It was presented by He Guangying, Investigating Censor of Huguang, who charged the two high officials with dereliction of duty. He claimed that among the five ports opened to foreign trade, only Fuzhou allowed foreigners to reside in the city. He was highly critical of the points raised by Governor Xu in the reply to the literati's petition, seeing them as excuses for their cowardice in managing the foreigners. Such behavior only served to encourage the foreigners' arrogance and undermine the spirit of the local people.<sup>31</sup>

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30. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, DG30/Autumn.

31. GCR (Taipei): DG30/Autumn; also in GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 99, no. 1.



In his imperial edict dated September 6, the Xianfeng Emperor instructed Governor-General Liu to conduct a secret investigation into the case and to report whether or not Governor Xu had mismanaged the affair and had as a consequence disrupted the tranquility between the local people and the foreigners.<sup>32</sup> In a subsequent edict dated September 8, in response to a joint memorial by the two provincial officials reporting on Bonham's return to Hong Kong from Shanghai, the Emperor cautioned that they should continue to be on full alert.

The imperial edict of September 6 reached Governor-General Liu on September 25. In the confidential report he sent to the throne he said he fully supported Governor Xu's handling of the lease affair. He refuted the claim that the treaty stipulations did not permit foreign residence within the city walls. On the contrary, the treaty clearly stipulated that foreign consular officials were entitled to reside in the city, and Governor Xu had managed the matter in accordance with the treaty. Moreover, it was inaccurate to say that, among the five ports, only Fuzhou allowed foreigners to reside inside the city. In fact, foreign residents could be found within the city walls of Ningbo and Shanghai, also in accordance with the treaty. He suggested that the most appropriate way to conduct foreign affairs under the present conditions was to adopt a calm approach to avoid excitation on either side. He knew he and Xu had made some of the literati unhappy because they refused to adopt their proposal to mobilize troops and hold a firing practice. To show personal concern about the security of their native province was understandable, but it was wrong for the literati not to consider the consequences, or to base their understanding of the affair on mere hearsay. He and Xu would not let hostilities be triggered by a petty affair and were determined to supervise Lu Zezhang and Xinglian in an effort to see the question settled quietly. Nor would they allow those who were interested only in fishing for fame to influence their approach.<sup>33</sup>

The great debate over the ways to forestall a possible invasion by the British continued in September and October. Memorials written by Fujian Education Commissioner Huang Zantang and former Director-General of Grain Transport, Zhou Tianjue, reached the Court in early September suggesting how coastal defense should be strengthened.<sup>34</sup>

At this point, when the hard-liners' proposal was gaining influence, Grand Secretary Qiying joined in the debate. While agreeing to the principle of active defense and military initiative, Qiying warned the Emperor that no hasty action should be taken unless the precise situation

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32. GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/7, microfilm 236: 2.

33. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, DG30/Autumn.

34. *YWSM: XF*, II: DG30/8/4: 29a–33a.

had first been properly calculated.<sup>35</sup> Another moderate, Governor-General Naerjinge of Zhili, criticized Zhou's proposal which called for Chinese forces to lure the enemy into inland rivers and then launch an all-out attack, saying it was impractical and showed ignorance of the actual geographical situation.<sup>36</sup> Governor-General Lu Jianying of Liangjiang also considered Zhou's suggestion to be alright on paper but with little connection to reality, showing the writer's unfamiliarity with matters of coastal defense.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, four submissions by Governor-General Liu Yunke and Governor Xu Jiyu reached the Court on October 30. They commented on the recent events in Sino-British relations and offered their analysis of the country's maritime defense. Liu and Xu listed the major problems confronting coastal defense, including the superior naval power of the British, the great length of China's coastline and the fact that, despite the placement of fortresses and batteries at the mouth of the river, the great expanse of the estuary of the Yangzi meant that the interior was vulnerable to penetration. They cited Xiamen as a case in point. Although there were more than two hundred large guns in place when the British attacked in the last war, the battle had been lost in less than half a day. Also, during the war, several million *taels* were spent recruiting more than 100,000 "braves" (*yong*, or irregular troops), and yet local defense had not benefited from their deployment. On the contrary, many of these braves had turned to banditry and caused turmoil in the coastal districts after the war.

As for the Shengguang Temple Affair, the two officials summed up once again the main points raised in their previous memorials. They said they shared the concerns shown by the literati and were equally determined to remove the two clergymen. The two parties differed only in their means, not their ends. Knowing that the British were now keen to exchange the economically inactive ports of Fuzhou and Ningbo for other locations offering greater commercial potential, they should not arouse British suspicions and give them a pretext to push their demands.<sup>38</sup> Lastly, they stressed that they were very willing to consult the literati if the latter could provide a foolproof scheme; but they would not accept an approach that compromised the region's security.<sup>39</sup>

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35. *YWSM: XF*, II: DG30/8/5: 36b.

36. *YWSM: XF*, II: DG30/8/15: 38a–41a.

37. *YWSM: XF*, III: DG30/9/23: 4a–5b.

38. *YWSM: XF*, III: DG30/9/26: 5b–15b.

39. Guangzhong dang zhupi 宮中檔硃批 (The palace memorials with imperial vermilion endorsements, deposited at the First Historical Archives, Beijing): Imperialist Invasions, file 150, no. 9, microfilm 4.

The Emperor was unconvinced by the submissions made by the two officials, and reproached them for having allowed the clergymen to move into the temple in the first place. He demanded a definite answer as to when the two foreigners would move away. In the meantime, he ordered the immediate sacking of Xinglian. Commenting on British designs on other places, officials should take a firm stance and observe existing treaties on the strictest of terms. At the same time, they should work together with the literati and seek to consolidate the support of the people. Calmness and equity were the principles by which relations between their own people and foreigners should be managed.<sup>40</sup>

Impeachments of the Fujian officials continued to arrive at the capital. The Supervising Censor of Huguang, He Guangying, launched a new attack on Liu and Xu in two memorials that reached the Court on November 21. He reported that, on account of the appeasement policy of the officials, the foreigners were now becoming even more arrogant and restless. They not only refused to move from the Shenguang Temple, they had now also occupied several other temples. The memorialist was apparently most shocked by the news that some cannon used for coastal defense had been sabotaged by foreigners. This had happened, according to He, just at a time that piracy had become rampant and the provincial naval force was powerless to deal with the situation. Under such circumstances, foreign vessels extorted protection fees from merchant junks to provide them escort services. Certain foreigners in Nantai had fired their muskets and hurt two small children. Despite all this, the Governor-General continued to side with the foreigners and failed to perform his duty properly.<sup>41</sup>

On November 21, an imperial edict was sent to the Governor-General of Liang-Guang, Xu Guangjin, who was concurrently Imperial Commissioner in Charge of Foreign Trade Affairs for the five ports, instructing him to investigate the accusations and submit a report. Another edict was also issued to Liu Yunke and Xu Jiyu requiring them to provide full explanations for their misdeeds.<sup>42</sup>

Xu Jiyu received the edict on December 10. He prepared a detailed reply the following day, emphatically denying the charges against him, saying that most of the claims were unfounded. Referring to the escort provided by the foreign vessels, he said the treaty had no stipulations

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40. *YWSM: XF*, III: DG30/9/26: 15b–16a.

41. *YWSM: XF*, III: DG30/10/18: 20a–22b.

42. For the edict to Xu, see *YWSM: XF*, III: DG30/10/18: 22b–24a; also GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/10, microfilm 237: 227–8. The edict to Liu sent three days later is in GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 95, no. 7.

that prohibited such practices. Consequently, it would be difficult to stop them. He reassured the Emperor that, in handling foreign affairs, he never adopted a permissive attitude towards the foreigners lest he tarnish the image of the state. Nor did he take hasty action that could create conflict. This was the reason that peace and harmony had generally prevailed in the past seven or eight years. He had never tried to conceal facts, nor did he want to trouble the Emperor with trifles that he himself could handle properly to maintain tranquility.<sup>43</sup>

Governor-General Liu, who was at the moment on a tour to inspect the troops in Zhejiang, had already memorialized the throne to request an audience with the Emperor. The imperial edict reached him on December 15, commanding that he should follow the instructions in an earlier edict and wait until the next autumn for the imperial audience. The edict then mentioned the charges made in He's memorials. In his reply on December 26, Liu refuted the distorted claims in the same manner as Xu had done. He assured the throne that peace and harmony prevailed in Fuzhou; had they not, he would not have departed on the present tour. Moreover, only a dozen or so foreigners resided in the provincial city, and their small numbers would not allow them to make trouble.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, Governor-General Xu Guangjin's report reached the Court on January 12, 1851. He reported that he had asked Fujian officials serving in Guangdong about the foreign affairs in their native province. All were critical of the Governor-General and of the Governor of Fujian for being too submissive to the foreigners, and acting repressively against their own people. Consequently, it was said, the foreigners had grown increasingly arrogant and the local people were alienated. However, Xu Guangjin cautioned that all these charges would need to be substantiated. He would send deputies to investigate and report back to the Court, but in consideration of the distance involved it would take two months to gather information. He recommended that only light punishments be given to the two high officials as a warning and reminder.<sup>45</sup> Imperial edicts addressed to Xu Jiyu and Xu Guangjin were subsequently issued on January 12, 1851. The former was reprimanded for taking the lease issue lightly and failing to report on it regularly to the Court; the latter was commanded to conduct an investigation.<sup>46</sup> Earlier, on December 1, the two patrons of the *yiwu* officials, Grand Councillors Muzhang'a

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43. GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 95, no. 8.

44. GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 95, no. 7; also in GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, DG30/Winter.

45. GCR (Beijing): Foreign Affairs, Sino-British Relations, file 99, no. 2.

46. *YWSM: XF*, III: DG30/12/11: 38a–b.

and Qiyong, had been denounced by the Emperor;<sup>47</sup> and Liu Yunke was ordered to vacate his post on the grounds of ill health on December 21,<sup>48</sup> in contradiction to the earlier edict sent less than two months before. Now Xu Jiyu became Acting Governor-General pending the arrival of his successor, Yutai. An edict was sent to the Governor-General Designate, Yutai, commanding him to check the details mentioned in Liu's memorial of December 26 and to conduct a thorough investigation into the affair.<sup>49</sup>

Xu Guangjin's second memorial, which was imperially endorsed on January 19, reported further developments in Fuzhou following the lease affair. According to the information that he gathered, the British people had planned to build houses in several locations just outside the city gates, but the literati and the elders had prevented carpenters from being employed for the projects. It was the Min and Houguan Magistrates who made a joint public announcement on November 7 issuing the workers with a stern warning against such boycotts. The literati dissidents took this act as concrete evidence of the compromising attitude of the local authorities.<sup>50</sup>

## The End of the Affair

The Shenguang Temple Affair dragged on through the month of December. It took a sudden twist with a new instruction from Bonham, written on December 5, that reached the Fuzhou Consulate only on December 28. Bonham commanded Sinclair to restore to the two missionaries the whole amount of money lodged in the consular chest for the payment of their rent. Sinclair executed the order immediately and also notified the newly-appointed Daotai (Circuit Intendant) Lu of Bonham's decision in this matter. Lu reaffirmed the decision that the Chinese authorities could not, any more than before, permit the abbot to accept the money. In such an awkward and embarrassing position, Sinclair pointed out in his dispatch to Bonham on January 2, 1851 that the missionaries would "have inhabited these quarters during [the] three months for nothing; a circumstance which formed a chief point in the *Taoutai* (Daotai)'s

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47. GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/10, microfilm 237: 337–40.

48. GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/11, microfilm 237: 217 and 223. Liu Yunke had not been in good health since 1847. See GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG27/6, microfilm 226: 217.

49. *YWSM: XF*, III: DG30/12/16: 42a–b; see also GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/12, microfilm 238: 231–2.

50. *YWSM: XF*, III: DG30/12/18: 43a–b.

arguments for their ejection”.<sup>51</sup> He added that, as the clergymen had rented other houses of their own choice in the city, into which one of them had already moved, with the other to follow in a week’s time, the Shenguang Temple Affair could be considered to have drawn to a close.<sup>52</sup>

In a subsequent dispatch to Bonham dated January 14, 1851, Sinclair reported that Welton and Jackson had left the temple. Wishing to obtain permanent and separate residences inside the city, they had rented two sets of rooms in a Taoist temple, a short distance from the Consulate, and on the same hill within the city.<sup>53</sup> A rental agreement in triplicate was signed by the contracting parties and stamped with the official seals of the Magistracy and Consulate conjointly. The agreement also allowed building extensions on their premises, a liberty that the contract with the Shenguang Temple forbade.<sup>54</sup>

Xu Jiyu’s report on the removal of the two missionaries from their premises at the Shenguang Temple to a “temporary lodging” in the Daoshan Taoist Temple reached the Court on January 27. He informed the Court that the rooms in the Shenguang Temple had been duly returned. According to Xu, the Daoshan Taoist Temple was in the neighborhood of the Jicui Temple, in which the British Consulate was located. The consular interpreter had rented the place for some years without raising objections from either the literati or the public.<sup>55</sup> Another memorial from Xu Jiyu arrived on February 24, confirming that the two clergymen had moved out from the Shenguang Temple on January 1 and January 21 respectively, and noting that the dismissed Magistrate of Houguan, Xinglian, had handled the matter throughout.<sup>56</sup>

Following the arrival of Xu Guangjin’s and Xu Jiyu’s memorials, the Xianfeng Emperor issued five successive edicts, on January 17, January 19, January 27, January 28 and February 24, commanding the Governor-General Designate, Yutai to verify the contents of the memorials and investigate the matter upon his arrival in Fuzhou. The Emperor was dissatisfied with the vague nature of Xu Jiyu’s memorial. He wanted to know exactly how far apart the Shenguang and the Daoshan Temples were. Since the latter was located within the city, he feared that the change would not satisfy the gentry and the public. The Emperor also

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51. FO 228/128, no. 3, Sinclair to Bonham, January 2, 1851.

52. *Ibid.*

53. FO 228/128, no. 6, Sinclair to Bonham, January 14, 1851.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *YMSM: XF*, III: DG30/12/26: 44a–45a.

56. *YMSM: XF*, IV: XF1/1/24: 1a. It seems that Xu Jiyu had memorialized the court earlier on January 23 concerning the dates of the two clergymen’s removal. See GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, XF1/2, p. 12.

wanted to know why Xinglian remained in charge of the matter, despite his dismissal.<sup>57</sup>

Xu Jiyu received the imperial edict of January 12 on February 2. It seems he did not respond to it immediately, probably because he had already made a report to the throne on January 23. His reply, which reached the Court on March 13, explained that his reports of December 23 and January 23 concerning his handling of the lease case might have been delayed on their way to the capital. He apologized for all the undue anxieties that he had caused the Emperor and asked to be referred to the board of civil appointments for deliberation on his penalty. The literati and the public opposed the leasing of the rooms at the temple because the temple was a place of study for the scholars of the local colleges. After the rooms had been vacated, tranquility had been restored between the people and the foreigners.<sup>58</sup>

An imperial edict commanding the Tartar-General of Fuzhou, Yurui, and the Fujian Education Commissioner, Huang Zantang, to investigate the temple affair reached these two officials on January 17. They spent more than a month gathering information before submitting their report, which reached the Court on March 26. Their verdict was inconclusive, and they found no concrete evidence to substantiate the accusations of misgovernment on the part of the former Governor-General.<sup>59</sup> Three days later, Xu Guangjin's reply to the imperial edict of January 12 also reached the Emperor. Xu Guangjin remained critical of the Fuzhou authorities, but his report confused even the dates and events and seemed to have been based more on hearsay than on-the-spot investigations. In connection with his earlier report on the boycott staged by the carpenters and the subsequent public announcement made by the Min and Houguan Magistrates to prohibit such acts, Governor-General Xu Guangjin now had to concede that the Magistrates had acted in accordance with the stipulations of the treaty.<sup>60</sup>

In response to a succession of imperial edicts, the new Governor-General, Yutai, memorialized the Court on February 24 and again on March 10 informed it that the literati and the public had not made any further complaints after the removal of the missionaries from the Shenguang Temple. However, the two foreigners used the fact that the

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57. GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, DG30/12, microfilm 238: 231–2, 279, 405; GCR (Beijing): XF1/1, microfilm 238: 159; GCR (Taipei): Record Books of Dispatches from the Grand Council (*junji dang* 軍機檔), DG30/Winter; GCR (Taipei): XF1/Spring & Summer; and YWSM: XF, IV: XF1/1/24: la–b.
58. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, XF1/2, pp. 11–3.
59. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, XF1/2, pp. 33–5.
60. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, XF1/2, pp. 36–40.

Daoshan Temple was formerly a consular residence as a pretext to remain inside the city; other foreigners might follow their example. In Yutai's view, such an arrangement was indeed improper.<sup>61</sup> Despite his annoyance about the matter and his impatient temperament, the Emperor managed to maintain a cautious and balanced approach. On March 24 he instructed Yutai that he should be neither too rash nor too lenient in handling the matter.<sup>62</sup>

A memorial from Yutai that reached the Court on April 8 referred to the treaty provisions, which allowed consular officials to reside within the city but required others/other foreigners to remain outside the gates. Therefore, the missionaries were contravening the treaty by remaining in the city. However, considering the fact that since 1845 foreigners had resided in the Daoshan Taoist Temple and law and order had prevailed, the literati and the public hesitated to challenge the foreigners' right to remain lest they should come into conflict with them. The Emperor accepted the recommendation that the authorities should temporarily put aside the matter of residence in the Taoist temple until further discussions could be conducted with the successor to Vice-Consul Connor, who had recently died.<sup>63</sup>

Other queries raised in the imperial edicts were answered point by point in Yutai's memorial that reached the throne on April 23. Yutai informed the Emperor that most of the charges against Liu Yunke, Xu Jiyu and other local officials were unfounded. He also confirmed that the local merchant junks sailed under the convoy of foreign (Portuguese) *lorchas* on a voluntary basis based on mutually agreeable arrangements. The reason Liu and Xu continued to assign official duties to Xinglian after his dismissal was to ensure that the missionaries would not renege on their promise to move out.<sup>64</sup>

Yutai's well-considered reports had not saved Xu Jiyu from being removed. Xu was summoned to the capital for an imperial audience on

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61. *YWSM: XF, IV: XF1/2/22: 13a–14a*; also in GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, XF1/3, pp. 30–2.
  62. GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, XF1/2, microfilm 238: 250; GCR (Taipei): Square Record Books of Imperial Edicts, XF1/2; and GCR (Taipei): Record Books of the Grand Council, XF1/Spring & Summer.
  63. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, XF1/3, pp. 1–4; GCR (Beijing): Record Books of Imperial Edicts, XF1/2, microfilm 238: 250; and GCR (Beijing): Square Record Books of Imperial Edicts, XF1/3.
  64. GCR (Taipei): Monthly Record Books of Palace Memorials, XF1/3, pp. 30–4; refer also to *YWSM: XF, IV: XF1/3/22: 34b–37a*.



the very day Yutai's memorial arrived,<sup>65</sup> and he was officially relieved of his Governorship on June 22. Nevertheless, during his imperial audience, Xu apparently impressed the Emperor and was deemed trustworthy rather than deceitful.<sup>66</sup>

## Welton's Perception of the Affair

Misperception made a large contribution to the conflict in Fuzhou. The Right Rev. George Smith believed that firmness on the part of late Consul Lay had succeeded in effecting the removal of his official residence from an insalubrious site near the river to a scenic location within the city, with the result that the Union Jack was flying at the top of Black Rock Hill.<sup>67</sup> He thought he could repeat Lay's success.

In their first letters to Smith, Welton and Jackson wrote very discouragingly about their experiences in Fuzhou and initially seemed to deprecate his instructions. However, they soon had good reason to be proud of being inside the city, despite the unfavorable predictions and dissuasions of the other missionaries. Welton dwelt long on the importance of the site and the principle involved, and he commended Gingell for devoting his energies to the promotion of their "designs".<sup>68</sup> A letter from Jackson congratulated Smith on the success of his plans.<sup>69</sup>

Welton's perception of the affair had undergone changes. His first reaction was that the mandarins and the abbot of the Shenguang Temple were acting together to evict them from the rooms. The literati were perceived to be acting in unison as a privileged and powerful class opposed to their presence within the city. At the same time, he also conceded that the objections were mostly attributable to the fact that they were refurbishing a college at the back of the temple. The construction had begun some months before Welton's arrival. As it was a place of study for candidates attempting literary degrees, it had the support of the Chinese authorities as well as the literati. The building was opened on September 28, 1850, with great pomp, the ceremony attended by many mandarins.<sup>70</sup>

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65. Gongzhong dang zouzhe 宮中檔奏摺 (Palace memorials deposited at the National Palace Museum Archives, Taipei), XF1/4/23.

66. Drake, *China Charts the World*, pp. 49–50.

67. Rev. George Smith, *A Narrative of an Exploratory Visit to Each of the Consular Cities of China* (London: Seeley, Burnside & Seeley, 1847), p. 331.

68. CMS, C CH M1, Welton to Venn, July 8, 1850.

69. CMS, C CH M1, Smith to Venn, July 19, 1850.

70. Welton's "Journal", September 28, 1850.

Bishop Smith also observed that the opposition arose entirely from the prejudice against foreigners residing within the city and did not seem to be directed against them as missionaries. In fact, initially, the Chinese did not appear to know the two foreigners were missionaries.<sup>71</sup> In his earlier account on Fuzhou before the Shenguang Temple Affair, Smith commented on the Chinese attitude towards foreigners as follows:

The individual natives, with whom I formed acquaintance during my stay, as well as the people generally, whose feelings I had an opportunity of testing, showed the same friendly disposition, which is prevalent among the Chinese in other parts accessible to foreigners.<sup>72</sup>

As to the Chinese officials' attitude toward their English counterparts' religious practices, Smith had the following to say:

The liberality of the Mandarins was perceptible in one of the conditions that they, of their own accord, introduced into their agreement with the building contractor; *viz.* that the masons and carpenters should never perform any work on the Sabbath-day, nor in any way interfere with the religious observances of the English. In the same spirit, the Mandarins, before paying the Consul a visit, frequently sent to inquire whether it was the Sabbath-day or not.<sup>73</sup>

Welton also admitted that the Chinese authorities had acted responsibly. It was the Governor-General, Liu Yunke, who had stationed a guard of 80 soldiers around the temple, ready to quell any disturbance.<sup>74</sup> He mentioned that the Governor-General and a party of mandarins had called on Gingell and informed the latter of their determination to leave the two missionaries undisturbed and to offer them protection. As for Governor Xu Jiyu, Welton considered him "one of the most eminent and enlightened Chinese Governors" and regretted Xu's departure from Fuzhou in mid-1851.<sup>75</sup> Welton shared the views of Bishop Smith, who in his 1847 work praised Liu Yunke and Xu Jiyu, the two highest civil officers of the province, for their liberal views and for being increasingly favorably disposed to foreigners. The two officials also cultivated a friendly intercourse with the British Consul. It was in fact the liberal disposition of the authorities and the religious indifference of the people

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71. CMS, C CH MI, Smith to Venn, July 19, 1850.

72. Smith, *A Narrative*, p. 350.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

74. Welton's "Journal", June 21, 1850.

75. CMS C CH/O 91/2B; and 91/5.

that encouraged Smith's hope that no jealousy of proselytism would place obstacles in the way of Protestant missionaries.<sup>76</sup>

On December 12, the District Magistrate met Welton at the Consulate, and proposed that Welton and Jackson take rooms in an adjoining temple and relinquish those in the Shenguang Temple. The Magistrate explained that such a move would relieve him of enormous difficulty. In reply, Welton set down conditions, saying that the proposed rooms must be as secure as those of Shenguang Temple, and that rooms for a hospital and school in the city should be provided at a proper rent. He mentioned some locations that had been offered to him, but said he could not give up possession of the present rooms until an agreement for the rooms in the Daoshan Taoist Temple had been signed and sanctioned by the District Magistrate. Four days later, Welton had the agreement for the hire of the room for the hospital and school made out and signed by the landlord. However, Governor Xu Jiyu sent a verbal protest to Sinclair announcing his displeasure at Welton's hiring the school and hospital rooms, although this move was clearly intended as a reiteration of principles rather than as a real effort to prolong the issue.

As a medical missionary, Welton certainly felt welcomed by the local community, and Smith hoped that Welton's medical activities would soon "disarm prejudice".<sup>77</sup> In fact, Welton had established a surgical reputation before long on account of his successful cases. A typical entry in his journal on September 26, 1850, for example, records that he operated on a patient with a considerable tumor situated in front of the left ear. Another patient, a respectable literary man, had a tumor on his left temple the size of an egg. This too was removed, and the patient recovered within a week. In a third case Welton removed a bleeding fungus from the nose of a Buddhist monk, who quickly recovered.<sup>78</sup>

Not surprisingly, his residence was always crowded with large numbers of sick people seeking treatment. Within ten days of his taking up residence at the temple, he was receiving an average of 150 to 200 visitors daily. His patients included "a higher and better class of Chinese, many elderly". Among these respectable Chinese were groups of literati and Tartars, including a son of the Prefect. In general they conducted themselves decorously, but manifested great curiosity. The majority, however, were "a rude rough" lot. As soon as the door was opened to admit or send away a patient, numbers crowded in. After some weeks, he noted in his journal, patients were of "a better class

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76. Smith, *A Narrative*, pp. 369–70, 374.

77. CMS, C CH MI, Smith to Venn, July 19, 1850.

78. Welton's "Journal", September 26, 1850.

and better conducted, less idle curiosity [was] exhibited".<sup>79</sup> Clearly, even officials felt no qualms about seeking cures from a missionary, and one mandarin called at Welton's residence for treatment. As Welton was away, he left his address, requesting him to call at his house in the city the following day, which Welton did. This official subsequently came back for further treatment.<sup>80</sup>

Welton himself saw his efforts as a desirable way of making a favorable impression on the people. In fact, he later decided not to encourage the sick to come and consult him, as he had done in the first instance. Having fully gained his object of obtaining a residence within the city, he deemed it better to devote his energies to acquiring the local language.<sup>81</sup>

In the meantime, all sorts of rumors were causing excitement among the local population. On one occasion, a Chinese official called on Welton and used the opportunity to have a private conversation with his servant to enquire as to whether Welton had ever operated on a tumor situated on a child's head. A complaint had been made that the child had since died, and the child's father was seeking monetary compensation. Welton realized that it was not uncommon for local practitioners to pay compensation in such cases, and that lower-class Chinese used this method to extort money. But Welton denied there had been any such incident.

Welton was sanguine about prospects for spreading the Gospel in Fuzhou. He was able to distribute religious books freely and said people eagerly sought them. He mentioned a Lieutenant-General who sent his servant for a copy of the scriptures in Chinese. There were enquiries by literary men about the meaning of scripture passages, such as "born again". He recorded such encounters with joy in his journal. In early 1852, Welton was able to report that he had lately adopted the practice of making excursions into the countryside around Fuzhou in the company of another American missionary. He found that the people had become accustomed to their presence and reconciled to them. While the American missionary preached openly, Welton administered medicine.<sup>82</sup>

The Shenguang Temple Affair had not actually made the environment hostile to foreigners. Welton moved about the city freely and undisturbed. On one occasion, he took a long walk into the Tartar quarter of the city with Sinclair. In Welton's words, "the people were curious but exceedingly well behaved".<sup>83</sup> Living as they did in "a heathen temple", they had frequent

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79. Welton's "Journal", July 3, 1850, July 13, 1850 and August 5, 1850.

80. Welton's "Journal", September 29, 1850.

81. CMS, C CH M2, Welton to Venn, March 31, 1851.

82. CMS, C CH M2, Welton to Venn, January 9, 1852.

83. Welton's "Journal", December 26, 1850.

opportunities for observing the abbots' devotions. From time to time, Jackson argued with them about what he considered "the folly of idolatry as the object of their worship". The reply was generally a laugh, and they made no attempt to defend their beliefs.<sup>84</sup>

Given Welton's aggressive style of Evangelism, it was a blessing for him that local religious leaders, Buddhist and Taoist, were tolerant and restrained. As Bishop George Smith had observed, Chinese priests watched "with complacency" and "with a remarkable absence of bigotry" as their benefice and grounds were transformed into a foreign residence.<sup>85</sup> During Smith's earlier visit to Fuzhou, he had had several encounters with local Taoist and Buddhist monks who showed him hospitality and procured religious literature from him. One venerable abbot remarked that all religions were in principle the same. Smith was surprised that there was "the total absence of any alarm [among the Chinese priests] at the possible diminution of their influence by the dissemination of Christian tenets in these publications".<sup>86</sup>

There were moments of frustration when Welton did not hesitate to advocate the use of force in dealing with the Chinese authorities. For instance, when two married missionaries of the Methodist Church in America arrived in Fuzhou in July 1851, they were treated with civility but strictly forbidden to erect a church building. Welton commented that, unless the American chargé d'affaires in Guangzhou, Dr Parker, sent a man-of-war, it was unlikely that the Chinese officials would give way.<sup>87</sup> Welton was highly critical of Vice-Consul Walker and even Governor Bonham for failing to protect missionary interests. Chinese officials prevented Welton from converting his house into a place suitable to be used as a hospital, from which he might also distribute books and the scriptures, and also prevented him from carrying out repairs. He referred these problems to the Vice-Consul, who positively refused to intervene. The Vice-Consul even demanded that Welton abandon the building altogether. Welton pointed out that he had hired the place legally and part of the agreement was that he should be allowed to move to another temple. He criticized the apathy and neglect of British interests by the consular authorities and expressed incredulity that they could evade responsibility in such matters. He also discovered that Governor Bonham of Hong Kong would at one time have sacrificed missionary rights and interests in Fuzhou to evade active intervention, had it not been for the

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84. CMS, C CH M2, Jackson to Venn, received June 20, 1851.

85. Smith, *A Narrative*, p. 332.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 350–1.

87. CMS, C CH M2, Welton to Venn, January 9, 1852.

firmness of himself and Bishop Smith in insisting on their rights. He appealed for joint action by England, America and France to secure better terms in a forthcoming revision of the treaty. He particularly regretted that the English Treaty made no reference to missionary work, for what he saw as a selfish objective—the extension of commerce between China and England. On the revision of the treaty, he wanted to see something more definite secured “for the honour of the English nation”.<sup>88</sup>

Towards the end of 1852, however, Welton mitigated his confrontational approach. He felt encouraged by the improved bearing of the people, noting that he had met with scarcely any unpleasantness from the people of late, and none from the authorities. There were, he noted, “many advantages and comforts at this port for a missionary, and now our troubles with the literati are passing away”.<sup>89</sup> In his observation, there was also an increasing confidence on the part of the local people in receiving him and in the eagerness with which they sought his medical aid. He was very much in want of a suitable building for seeing the sick, distributing books and addressing the people. He proposed giving up the house in the city that he had intended to use as a dispensary, in return for one outside the city, feeling that he was losing time dealing with the issue. He hoped such a conciliatory gesture on his part might disarm much of the prejudice.

## **Concluding Reflections**

The Fuzhou affair provides revealing glimpses into the operation of Chinese diplomacy and the milieu in which the missionaries lived and worked. It shows that viewing the episode as a choice between anti-foreignism and capitulation oversimplifies a complex situation in which different contending forces, both domestic and foreign, were at work. Liu and Xu were among a small but growing group of pragmatic provincial officials who emerged after the war. They were at the forefront of contact with foreign powers. They soon grasped the reality of diplomatic constraints under the new treaty system and adjusted themselves to its modes of operation.

The insensitivity and uncompromising attitude of the British consular officials and the two missionaries undoubtedly aggravated anti-foreign and anti-missionary feelings among the leading literati in Fuzhou. The latter’s genuine concerns and unhappiness about the new international

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88. CMS, C CH M2, Welton to Venn, October 4, 1852.

89. *Ibid.*

environment after the war are not hard to understand. Their position was shared by some extra-provincial officials, including those originally from Fujian.

An evaluation of the Chinese response to the lease issue needs to consider the broader context of the incident. The crux of the conflict was differing understandings of the existing treaties, not ignorance of their provisions. First and foremost, there were imperfections in the wording of the treaties. On the basis of the Chinese text, Chinese officials believed that the treaties did not grant foreign subjects, apart from consular officials, the right to reside within the city walls.<sup>90</sup> The trend in British policy at this time is also relevant to an understanding of the whole episode. As John K. Fairbank points out, historians have not paid sufficient attention to the role of the British diplomatic initiatives in 1850 in touching off the anti-foreign measures of the young Xianfeng Emperor.<sup>91</sup>

The Chinese reaction to the affair was to insist on strict compliance with the treaty provisions. This attitude remained one major guiding principle of both the Fuzhou authorities and the Court, as can be seen from the imperial edicts. Even the literati cited the treaty as evidence to support their contentions. The Chinese and the British in fact shared one common approach, in that both cited the clauses most favorable to their case. To the Chinese, this was exactly what was written in the Chinese text, which local Chinese officials possessed and could understand. Throughout the dispute, the contending Chinese parties saw strict observance of the treaty as the best protection of the status quo, and the way to prevent further British infringements of Chinese interests. None of them ever hinted at defying the treaty. In their eyes, it was the British who were failing to observe its provisions.

As to the interpretation of treaties by different parties, some rules enumerated by L. Oppenheim, the late Whewell Professor of International Law of the University of Cambridge, are worth quoting here. He states, among other things, that "(i)f two meanings of a provision are admissible, that which is least to the advantage of the party for whose benefit the provision was inserted in the treaty should be preferred" and that "(u)nless the contrary is expressly provided, if a treaty is concluded in two languages and there is a discrepancy between the meaning of the two different texts, each party is only bound by the text in its own language".<sup>92</sup> In defining rules of interpretation, George B. Davis, Judge-

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90. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, pp. 102–3.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 378.

92. L. Oppenheim, *International Law, a Treatise*, ed. H. Lauterpacht (8th ed.; London, New York & Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), pp. 954, 956–7.

Advocate General and United States Army Delegate Plenipotentiary to the Geneva Conference of 1906 and to the Second Peace Conference at The Hague, 1907, shared a similar view. "Where a treaty is executed in more than one language", Davis affirms, "each language being the language of a contracting party, each document is to be regarded as an original, and the sense of the treaty is to be drawn from them collectively." He goes on, "clauses inserted at the instance, or for the benefit, of one party, are strictly construed; that is, they are given the meaning least favorable to the party at whose instance they were inserted; it is his fault if he has not expressed himself clearly."<sup>93</sup> This opinion is also supported by William Edward Hall: "When terms used in a treaty have a different sense within the two contracting states, they are to be understood in the sense which is proper to them within the state to which the provision containing them applied."<sup>94</sup>

The Chinese were not able to benefit from the above principles of international law, of which they might have been unaware. It is worth noting that during the dispute the British disregarded this issue. Although they admitted privately, and with some astonishment, that there were differences between the English and Chinese versions of the treaties, they cited only the English version. Had they argued in reference to the international law that governed such cases, they would have damaged their own case.

Therefore, by overstressing the anti-foreign feelings of the literati and indecisiveness of the *yiwu* officials in the affair, scholars have understated the responsibility of the British personnel and the positive contribution made by the cool-headed Chinese officials in reaching a peaceful settlement. On the other hand, criticism of the officials for adopting an attitude of capitulation when faced with foreign pressure ignores their rationality and flexibility in meeting the challenge of new international relations. Finally, the assumption that the Chinese were ignorant of, and therefore on the wrong side of, international law, does not seem tenable in the Shenguang Temple Affair.

Chinese misconceptions of the West have often been discussed. However, the Fuzhou affair shows similar tendencies on the British part. Men on the spot frequently relied on their Chinese language teachers or even on servants for information, and these figures did not have direct

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93. George B. Davis, *The Elements of International Law, with an Account of its Origin, Sources and Historical Development* (3rd ed.; New York & London: Harper & Brothers, 1908), p. 246.

94. William Edward Hall, *A Treatise on International Law*, ed. A. Pearce Higgins (8th ed.; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 302.



access to reliable sources and based their comments on hearsay or gossip. Certainly, foreigners did not have a firm grasp of the workings of Chinese society and the political system. A case in point is that, whereas the Chinese provincial authorities were more than passive recipients of orders from the Court, their authority was often constrained by local pressure groups. On one occasion, Sinclair informed Welton and Jackson that he had received a communication from a Chinese official, requesting him to have them removed from their rooms in the Shenguang Temple. The communication included a statement to the effect that “the basis of good government consisted in complying with the wishes of the people”. Sinclair took the statement lightly, and in reply stated that in England and Europe good government consisted in making the people obey the Laws.<sup>95</sup>

Consequently, firmness and a confrontational approach were deemed effective means. As a matter of fact, even some editorials in the Hong Kong newspapers at the time commented that it was impolitic for the two missionaries to retain possession of rooms within the city contrary to the will of the authorities. When Sinclair wrote Welton a note expressing his surprise that he had not moved, Welton in turn felt surprised by the letter, and referred him to the terms upon which he agreed to give up possession of the Shenguang Temple. He said in his letter that he intended to abide fully by the terms, and asked Sinclair to communicate his determination to the Chinese authorities. When Welton consulted two of the longest-serving missionaries in Fuzhou on the matter, they urged him to be cautious and wary.<sup>96</sup>

This chapter is not suggesting that the labor of spreading the Gospel in Fuzhou might have been more successful had Welton been more tactful and compromising. What it shows is that the missionary’s misconception about conditions in the field and his confrontational approach made life difficult for him. The hardship that the two missionaries experienced in the present case has been seen in the literature as a showcase of Chinese xenophobia and anti-Christianity. In fact, it had little to do with either of these issues.

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95. Welton’s “Journal”, September 18, 1850.

96. Welton’s “Journal”, January 3, 1851.

## CHAPTER 5

# “Shooting the Eagle”: Lin Changyi’s Agony in the Wake of the Opium War<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In discussing China’s response to the West in the nineteenth century, Paul A. Cohen generalizes that “the vast majority of the educated classes of China either passively or actively rejected Christianity”.<sup>2</sup> He places this Chinese reaction to Christianity in historical perspective, suggesting that the roots of Chinese xenophobia were long and deep, and might be better understood by making an extensive study of Chinese intellectual history and the strong tradition of Chinese ethnocentrism. Ellsworth C. Carlson also observes that much of the Chinese response to the missionary presence was hostile, and that gentry led the resistance—as in the case of the Wushishan (Black Rock Hill) Affair of 1850 in Fuzhou.<sup>3</sup> This confrontation was caused by an attempt by two missionaries from the Church Missionary Society to acquire lodgings within the walled city of Fuzhou. After the incident, the missionaries found the attitude of the people toward them had changed, with frequent manifestations of friendliness and curiosity giving way to hatred and anger.<sup>4</sup> Explaining the difficulties experienced by the missionaries, Carlson describes the nature of their interaction with the Chinese as an encounter between

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1. I would like to record my sincere thanks to Professors Huang Guosheng and Lin Rizhang, who rendered their kind and generous assistance during my research trip to Fuzhou. My deep appreciation also goes to the libraries of the Fuzhou Normal University and People’s University of China in Beijing. They greatly facilitated my access to their excellent collections of Lin Changyi’s works.
  2. Paul A. Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860–1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. ix, 3, 265, 269.
  3. Refer to Chapter 4.
  4. Ellsworth C. Carlson, *The Foochow Missionaries, 1847–1880* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1974), pp. 2, 3, 18, 32.

representatives of Western religion and culture and residents of a thoroughly Chinese city that foreigners found hard to penetrate.

Moreover, the Chinese literati's response to the Western presence in the nineteenth century is not infrequently viewed in the literature as reflecting a division between two groups: the conservatives and the open-minded. The former often included the local literati or gentry presented more or less as an anti-foreign faction. Often their anti-foreignism is ascribed to the inflexible Confucian culture that was incompatible with the modern era.<sup>5</sup> The latter consisted of an enlightened few such as Wei Yuan (1794–1856), known especially for his work *Haiguo tuzhi* (Illustrated gazetteer of the maritime nations),<sup>6</sup> and Xu Jiyu (Hsu Chi-yu, 1795–1873), who served in Fujian in the late 1840s. Xu later produced a frequently cited treatise entitled *Yinghuan zhilue* (A short account of the maritime circuit) in 1848. He is said to have fallen victim to conservatism when he failed to resolve conflicts with the West in Fuzhou. Against this background, Fuzhou's local literati are often perceived in the Western literature as the conspirators behind the Wushishan Affair. They are lumped together as a faceless homogeneous group and labeled advocates of resistance to a foreign presence.<sup>7</sup>

The scope of this chapter does not permit an examination of the broader and more complex issue of cultural traditions. Neither does it discuss what the Fuzhou literati should have done or assume they were in the wrong owing to their "ethnocentrism". Such a Sinocentric approach not only emphasizes differences between cultures, but also suggests another kind of "centrism". More often than not, it masks the realities. To highlight this aspect, the chapter profiles a Fuzhou scholar, Lin Changyi, and looks into the issue of "anti-foreignism" by exploring his mental world. It hopes to understand his feelings, emotions and intellectual horizon in the wake of the humiliating defeat of his country in the First Opium War (1839–42). His works are used as the illustration not so much of his anti-foreignism, but of the situational factor of his perceptions. Lin was apparently the core member behind the Wushishan Affair.

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5. Fred W. Drake, *China Charts the World: Hsu Chi-yu and His Geography of 1848* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1975), p. ix.

6. Jane K. Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984).

7. Drake, *China Charts the World*.

## Perceived Threats from Fuzhou

In late 1851, the British Vice-Consul in Fuzhou, J. Walker, was informed about a recent publication by a local scholar named Lin Changyi. It caused him great alarm because the work seemed inflammatory in its anti-foreign message. Such a reaction is understandable following the recent tension between the British and the local authorities aroused by the Wushishan Incident. To the consular officer, the work provided clues to the incident the preceding year and the thinking of the local literati community in Fuzhou. A report was immediately forwarded to the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Samuel George Bonham. In it Walker commented:

As illustrative of the disposition prevailing at Foochow [Fuzhou] in regard to Foreign Intercourse, and of the position which the Authorities hold between their own people on the one hand and just and conventional rights of Foreign nations upon the other, I have the honor to bring to Your Excellency's notice the fact of the publication, within the last few months, of a work in six volumes by a Keu Jin [*juren*, a provincial graduate] named Lin-chang-e [Lin Changyi] of which the first volume is chiefly devoted to the criticism ... aimed against the establishment of Foreigners within the City of Foochow.<sup>8</sup>

The work was partially translated, and commented upon by the Consular Interpreter Charles A. Sinclair. It reached Bonham shortly afterward, and in his covering note Walker elaborated on his earlier message:

The compiler started for Peking a few days since, to compete in the forthcoming Examinations for the Third Literary Degree [*jinshi*, or metropolitan degree], and this circumstance may be not unimportant in assisting your Excellency to form an estimate of his motives for the compilation of such a book ... and I understand that he takes with him a considerable number of copies for circulation at the Capital....<sup>9</sup>

In explaining the title of Lin Changyi's work, namely *Sheying lou shihua* (A commentary on poems from the Eagle Shooting Pavilion), Sinclair noted that the word “*ying*” (eagle) had the same pronunciation as the Chinese term for England (Ying Ji Li). Lin had a house on the Wushishan inside the walled city of Fuzhou, facing a temple rented by British consular officials, and he had chosen the phrase “Shooting the Eagle” to

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8. Great Britain, Foreign Office, Embassy and Consular Archives, China, FO 228/128, no. 56, Walker to Bonham, 10.12.1851.
  9. FO 228/144, no. 4, Walker to Bonham, 8.1.1852.

name the pavilion. In Sinclair's view, this literary work was produced for the consumption of "a greedy and biased reading public". In particular, the inclusion of "political poetry" was calculated "to excite the animosity of the people against the English in particular and Foreigners generally". Sinclair pointed out that the compiler was related to the late Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu, whose hostile policy toward the English had contributed to the outbreak of the Anglo-Chinese war, and blamed the late Lin Zexu for a revival of bitter, inimical anti-foreign feelings in the minds of his political and patriotic friends and adherents in Fuzhou.<sup>10</sup>

## Lin Changyi and His Works

Lin Changyi (1803–76) was a native of Houguan district, Fuzhou prefecture, Fujian province. His father Lin Gaohan had traded overseas.<sup>11</sup> Lin Changyi derived great benefits from his teacher Chen Shouqi (1771–1834), who was a Compiler in the Halin Academy and the Editor-in-Chief of *Fujian tongzhi* (The general gazetteer of Fujian). Chen permitted his disciple access to his private library containing works totaling some 80 thousand *juan* (volumes).

In 1839, Lin passed his imperial provincial examination and became a *juren*. However, although he took the metropolitan examinations six times between 1840 and 1850, he was unsuccessful. He did not succeed in two more subsequent attempts. During his trips to and from the capital to take the examinations, he traveled widely in many parts of the country and saw the general conditions of the people, on which he commented in his works. Also during his journeys he made new acquaintances among the literati. Despite his repeated failures in the metropolitan examinations, Lin Changyi's contemporaries acclaimed his literary achievements and deemed him to be in the same class of literary laureates such as Gu Yanwu (1613–82) and Zhu Yizun (1629–1709), leading scholars in the early Qing.<sup>12</sup>

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10. *Ibid.*, enclosure.

11. Lin Changyi, *Lin Changyi shiwenji* 林昌彝詩文集 (hereafter *LCYSWJ*) [A collection of poems and essays composed by Lin Changyi] (reprint; Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), "Foreword", p. 1.

12. "Qing shi liezhuan: Lin Changyi zhuan" 清史列傳: 林昌彝傳 [Biographies in the Dynastic history of the Qing: The biography of Lin Changyi], reproduced in *LCYSWJ*, pp. 381–2. For Gu's and Zhu's biographies, see *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644–1912)*, ed. Arthur W. Hummel (reprint; Taipei: Ch'eng Wen, 1970; orig. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), pp. 182–5, 421–6.

His work *Sheying lou shihua*, a collection of poetry composed before and after the Opium War, was published in 1851.<sup>13</sup> Lin had been gathering and reviewing poetic works composed by others since the 1820s, and the material reflected the prevailing somber mood among the literati at Fuzhou about foreign intercourse. After the defeat of Qing China in the First Opium War and the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, Lin began to pay special attention to poetic works relating to the events surrounding the conflict, and to make remarks on the foreign presence in Fuzhou, one of the five treaty ports opened to foreign trade. He was most offended by the influx of opium and the presence of foreign missionaries. Explaining why he named the pavilion "Sheying lou", he said:

There is a pavilion to the northeast of my study. It faces the Jicui Temple on the Black Rock Hill that is now the hiding-place of a flock of hungry eagles. They have built their eyries there and have resided in them ever since. Whenever I rest my eyes upon the spot, the sight of it disgusts and embitters me. My first impulse is to snatch my strong bow, and shoot a deadly arrow at them. But, alas! My dart would not be fatal, and I relinquish my purpose in despair! To console myself I have sketched a painting to which I have given the name "Shoot the Eagles and Hunt the Wolves". Hence I named my study the Eagle Shooting Pavilion.<sup>14</sup>

Lin Changyi had frequent discussions on current affairs with his acquaintances. Whenever the conversation turned to the humiliating defeat of Qing China in the war, the atmosphere was immediately charged with emotion and indignation. Lin felt great anguish and was on the verge of "drawing his sword and dancing" to express the depth of his feelings.<sup>15</sup>

In 1853, Lin Changyi presented his major work entitled *Sanli tongshi* (A general analysis of the three *li* Classics) to the Xianfeng Emperor. The court highly commended his solid scholarship and awarded him the position of Education Instructor of Jianning prefecture in Fujian. However, he resigned shortly after assuming the post because he was greatly disturbed by the malpractices within official circles.

During the 1860s and the early 1870s he spent a substantial amount of time in Guangdong, where he lectured at the Haimen Academy. His

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13. Lin Changyi (comp.), *Sheying lou shihua* 射鷹樓詩話 (hereafter *SYLSH*) [A commentary on poems from the Eagle Shooting Pavilion], 24 *juan* (prefaced 1851).

14. *Ibid.*, 1, la. See also the abridged translation in FO 228/144, enclosure in no. 4, Walker to Bonham, January 8, 1852, 7b-8a.

15. *SYLSH*, preface: la.

scholarship was so greatly appreciated that the Acting Governor of Guangdong, Guo Songtao (1818–91), who was known for his reformist views, employed him as a tutor for his son, and the Provincial Education Supervisor Liu Xizai appointed him textual copy-editor.

During his sojourn in Guangdong, he published a work entitled *Yiyinshanfang shiji* (A poetry anthology from the Yiyinshanfang Studio) in 1863. These essays lament the British intrusions, the devastation caused by natural catastrophes and the sufferings inflicted by the dereliction of duty by greedy and corrupt officials. The currency reform that introduced iron coins was severely criticized because the measure had been poorly prepared and contributed to the inflation that affected the life of commoners.<sup>16</sup> He also felt saddened by the victories of the Taiping rebels.

Following the steps of the traditional statecraft scholarship of the Ming-Qing periods on coastal defenses (*haifang*),<sup>17</sup> Lin wrote an essay entitled “Haifang shi’er ce” (The twelve tactics in coastal defense) in 1833. After much revision, it was presented to the Xianfeng Emperor in 1853. This work advocates the purchase of Western warships and cannon to “beef up” defenses and stresses the strategic importance of Taiwan.<sup>18</sup> He recognized the strength of Britain’s warships and on these grounds did not advocate direct confrontation with them, but he observed that, although the powerful guns on the foreign warships were terrifying, they were not suitable for land battles owing to the problems associated with shifting the heavy equipment around. Once the British troops landed, they relied on light weapons for swift movement. Another constraint faced by the foreign warships was their immobility once they had entered shallow coastal waters. These considerations highlighted the importance of mobilizing fishing-boats to obstruct them, while strengthening inland defenses by building strong fortifications.<sup>19</sup>

Two other works by Lin, compilations of poetry by contemporary authors entitled *Haitian qinsi lu* (A poetry commentary) and its sequel, *Haitian qinsi xulu*, were printed in 1864 and 1869 respectively.<sup>20</sup> Although he did not abandon his earlier anti-British feelings, he did observe events

16. Lin Changyi, *Yiyinshanfang shiji* 衣讎山房詩集 [A poetry anthology from the Yiyinshanfang Studio], *juan* 7.

17. Refer to Chapter 2.

18. *LCYSWJ*, *juan* 16.

19. “Jingni shi’er ce” 靖逆十二策 [Twelve tactics to suppress the rebels], 15b, 17b, in Lin Changyi, *Longhong ge wenchao* 龍鴻閣文鈔 [A collection of essays from the Longhong pavilion].

20. Foreword to the combined volume of Lin Chanyu, *Haitian qingshi lu* 海天琴思錄 [A poetry commentary from the lute-playing pleasure-boat] and *Haitian*

and modern developments in foreign countries, such as the steam-propelled trains used in Egypt as a means of modern transportation, which he found amazing.<sup>21</sup> Like many eminent scholars in traditional China, Lin Changyi had interests that were wide-ranging, including history, astronomy, technology, medicine and geography, as shown in his work *Yangui xulu* (An introductory interpretation of the classical texts), printed in 1866. His comments on historical events often reveal solid scholarship and deep insights.

In 1873, he wrote a foreword to the work *Wengyou yutan* by Wang Tao (1828–?). Wang had close association with Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857) of the London Missionary Society and was invited by the latter to become the Chinese editor of the mission press in Shanghai. Wang had earlier asked Lin to pen a foreword for another publication, which Lin did.<sup>22</sup> Mutual respects were clearly shown between Lin Changyi and the reformists. He had said he was fortunate to have made the acquaintance of Wei Yuan during his sojourn in Beijing and of Wang Tao in Guangzhou. He was greatly impressed by their works, singling out Wei's *Haiquo tuzhi* and Wang's *Pu Fa zhanji* (An account of the Franco-Prussian War).<sup>23</sup>

## Lin Changyi's Relationships with Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan and Shen Baozhen

Lin Changyi's interest in international affairs and his country's fate following the First Opium War brought him into close contact with such scholars as Lin Zexu, Wei Yuan<sup>24</sup> and Shen Baozhen. Lin Zexu has often been seen in modern scholarship as a hardliner, whose anti-opium actions when he was Imperial Commissioner in Guangzhou had sparked off the Opium War in 1839; Wei and Shen were considered to be among the few open-minded *yiwu* (barbarian affairs) experts.

Lin Zexu was Lin Changyi's clansman of the same generation, although the Imperial Commissioner was 18 years older. They greatly admired each other's literary achievements, shared common perceptions of Sino-

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*qinsi xulu* 海天琴思續錄 [The sequel of *A poetry commentary*, Part 2] (reprint; Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984).

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 445–6.

22. *LCYSWJ*, "Foreword", pp. 3–6. See also Lin Changyi, "Foreword" to Wang Tao 王韜, *Wengyou yutan* 瓮牖餘談 [Random comments from the humble lodging] (reprint; Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1988), p. 1. Wang Tao's biography can be found in Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 836–9.

23. Lin Changyi, "Foreword" to Wang Tao, *Wengyou yutan*, p. 1.

24. "Qing shi liezhuan: Lin Changyi zhuan".



British relations and lent each other moral support in their endeavors to make known their views on foreign affairs. Lin Zexu read Lin Changyi's works with great interest and admiration.<sup>25</sup> When Lin Changyi returned to Fuzhou in 1850 after another failed attempt in the metropolitan examination, Lin Zexu was then also living in the city in retirement. During this period tensions between the local literati and the two missionaries from the Church Missionary Society were mounting, culminating in the Wushishan Affair. The two men met frequently to discuss current affairs during the few months before the senior Lin left for his new appointment. Lin Zexu died soon afterwards in eastern Guangdong.

As mentioned earlier, Lin Changyi formed strong ties of friendship with Wei Yuan, compiler of a 60-volume work entitled *Haiguo tuzhi*. Lin Changyi placed great value on his friendship with Wei Yuan, and during his journeys to and from the north he always lodged at Wei's home in Yangzhou. On these occasions, they exchanged views about scholarship and admired each other's works.<sup>26</sup> Lin lauded Wei Yuan's work, that he considered an outgrowth of Lin Zexu's *Sizhou zhi* (A gazetteer of the four continents). What impressed him about Wei's work was that, unlike its predecessors that were written by the Chinese themselves and explained maritime affairs from a Chinese perspective, it offered a history and an account of the Westerners as written by Westerners themselves. In compiling his work, Lin commented, Wei Yuan emulated the barbarians' expertise, using barbarians to attack barbarians, and barbarians to entertain barbarians. Lin fully agreed to the effectiveness of these methods to reduce the influence of the English.<sup>27</sup> His own ideas of coastal defense were similar to Wei's, and were probably influenced by the latter.

Although he and Wei Yuan shared many ideas regarding maritime affairs, Lin Changyi was less receptive to Western learning. He believed that such Western inventions as the clock and the armillary sphere had all originated in China. Since the Chinese were able to manufacture the same products, where was the need to import them? He hoped that along with opium China would ban the import of other manufactured goods. However, as mentioned above, curiously and inconsistently Lin Changyi advocated the purchase of Western warships, an option that he saw as more cost-effective than building them in China.

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25. *LCYSWJ*, "Foreword", pp. 2–3.

26. Wei would not hesitate to consult Lin Changyi on matters of scholarship. Lin Changyi, *Xiaoshiqu ge wenji* 小石渠閣文集 [A collection of essays from the Xiaoshiqu pavilion], 3: 16a–18a.

27. *SYLSH*, 1: 2b–3a.

On the other hand, both Wei Yuan and Lin Changyi belonged to a category of traditional strategists who accepted the concept of coastal defense developed since Ming times. This approach was defensive in nature, using geographic advantages to enhance defense capability, and Lin stressed the importance of familiarizing oneself with the terrain and garrisoning strategic locations.<sup>28</sup>

Lin Changyi was also close to Shen Baozhen (1820–79), Lin Zexu's nephew (Shen's mother was Lin Zexu's sister<sup>29</sup>) and son-in-law. At the age of 17 Shen had studied under Lin Changyi, and he became a renowned reformist. One significant contribution he made to China's efforts to modernize was the construction of an up-to-date naval dockyard in Mawei, Fujian.<sup>30</sup> In an introduction to Lin Changyi's work *Sheying lou shihua*, Shen expressed his high regard for his mentor's literary achievements, and praised his strategic thinking, saying it was on par with that of Lin Zexu.<sup>31</sup>

## Lin's Reflections on War Atrocities and the Foreign Presence

The depredations of the barbarians along the Chinese coast, especially in Dinghai (Chusan) and Ningbo, aggrieved Lin Changyi, and he lamented the cruelty and the atrocious behavior of the barbarians toward his people. He particularly mentioned the sufferings of Chinese women: Some, he understood, had been carried off to the barbarians' country, some sold in human traffic, some after having been debauched inhumanely thrown into pits and drowned, and some given as presents to Chinese adherents of the foreigners.

He blamed not just the foreign troops for the atrocities and horrors committed during the war, but also the imperial forces that used the conflict as a pretext for pillaging innocent families. The poems collected in Lin Changyi's work include one written by his friend Sun Zhifang that vividly portrays the terrible atrocities perpetrated by government soldiers.

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28. *LCYSWJ*, 3: 1b.

29. *SYLSH*, "Fanli 凡例", 1b.

30. Shen obtained his metropolitan degree in 1847 and was made a Compiler of the Hanlin Academy in 1850. In 1854, Shen became a Censor. He was appointed Imperial Commissioner and Director-General of an arsenal for the construction of a navy in 1867. See Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 642–4.

31. *SYLSH*, "Fanli".

Reflecting on the conduct of some high-ranking officials who had taken charge of foreign affairs, Lin commented that their duty was to defend the country and uphold the dignity of their nation, but instead they made peace with the English and even ceded Hong Kong to them, adding insult to injury. By way of contrast, he alluded to the British attack on Dinghai, where the defenses were poor and the garrison force unprepared for the attack, but in which a few “brave men” (*yong*, or irregular troops) fought nobly and died in battle.<sup>32</sup> In particular, he commended the bravery of Guan Tianpei and Chen Huacheng, who spearheaded the defense and sacrificed their lives. The latter was a native of Tong’an, Fujian province, who had distinguished himself at the battle of Wusong and showed consummate daring and valor in a struggle that lasted for many hours. Lin Changyi described Chen Huacheng, who sank several barbarian vessels unaided, as a hero worth a hundred combatants. Unfortunately, reinforcements did not arrive and he lost the advantage that he had initially gained. Despite his great courage and struggle, he was overcome and killed. His friend, Chen Qingyong, who was a native of Jinjiang, Fujian, made the death of this patriot the subject of an ode that vigorously describes the splendor of Chen’s actions, and this piece naturally found a place in Lin Changyi’s volume. Lin was at an utter loss to interpret the sentiments that actuated those who counseled and conducted peace negotiations with the English, and the stipulations in the treaty immediately aroused his indignation.

He proposed two alternatives to rescue China from the disastrous effects of its contact with the West. One was to cut off commercial intercourse entirely; the other to lift maritime prohibitions. The first could only be accomplished by waging a war. However, Lin Changyi argued that a policy of peace would cause officials and the people to fall into a state of apathy and indifference, enjoying only the present without any heed for the future, as pointed out earlier; therefore he did not suggest another war to resolve the conflict. Instead, he proposed the lifting of the prohibitions on seaborne trade, believing that the Chinese people would then be able to participate fully in trade with those nations that had come to trade in China. In this way, he said, “the riches of the empire would be divided amongst our own people and not, as at present, allowed to go out of the country to foreign lands”.<sup>33</sup>

He certainly did not advocate a policy of seclusion. On the subject of Macao, for example, he seemed to subscribe to the traditional *jimi* or loose-rein approach that treated foreign people from afar generously.

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32. *Ibid.*, 1: 6a.

33. *Ibid.*, 1: 12a.

He did not suggest the expulsion of the Portuguese and other foreigners from the territory.<sup>34</sup>

## **Lin's Perceptions of Christian Missionaries**

The missionaries in Fuzhou formed another subject of Lin's discussions. He pointed out the abuses committed by the Christian missionaries, and observed that, after the removal of the prohibition of the Roman Catholic religion in the aftermath of the war, chapels of worship were erected in each of the ports. Every seventh day was called a Sunday or Prayer Day, when some "stupid and ignorant people" were lured to meetings in all sorts of ways. At a Roman Catholic chapel within a mile of the South Gate of Fuzhou city, about 80 to 90 persons of both sexes, male and female, "swarmed together like moths while attending services". Most of the exponents of this religion were Europeans, but there were some Chinese priests amongst them. Lin said,

The tracts or pamphlets they publish for that purpose are written and composed in the most extravagantly foolish style and contain fallacies. The book of the Ten Commandments recently printed by them goes to even greater lengths in ridiculing and vilifying our Confucius and Mencius. In order to catch the eye, lofty chapels with carved pillars executed in the most extravagant manner have been erected. Men and women go to these places and huddle together without the least shred of decency. But it is very true that most of these ignorant and deluded people attend these chapels out of necessity. They have been driven to do so by poverty and the need to relieve their distress.<sup>35</sup>

Although the court accepted a submission by Keying, the former Governor-General of Liang-Guang, on behalf of the French government, that the penalties against all Chinese professing the Roman Catholic religion be revoked, Lin Changyi warned that this change should not mean that "our people and women would be lured to those chapels by wicked means and for wicked purposes".<sup>36</sup>

The missionary presence in Fuzhou naturally aroused both curiosity and suspicion. There was little communication between the church community and the local community. As a result, speculation was rife about their activities. For example, Lin heard about the extraction of eyes of the

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34. *Ibid.*, 4: 8a.

35. *Ibid.*, 2: 2b-3a; see translation in FO 228/144, 15b.

36. *SYLSH*, 2: 3a.

dead by the priests, most likely resulting from rumors about the surgical treatments performed by missionary doctors. This misunderstanding provoked a strong reaction, and Lin considered that such actions, that he described as crimes, should be punishable by law. He also mentioned that new proselytes to this religion were made to swallow a pill and received a small payment of money. The sum given to a new proselyte was about 130 *taels* as capital to set the person up in a trade. Should he fail in his first enterprise, he received a supplementary sum. (Possibly on account of an increase in conversion, the sum was greatly reduced later to less than one-seventh or one-eighth of the original amount.) Lin particularly objected to the requirement that renounced the worship of their ancestors. However, he was relieved to find that “very few men of conscience agreed to the demand. After all, what person with any human decency would relinquish the worship of his ancestors or let his wife and children succumb to such infernal temptations and debauchery?”<sup>37</sup>

## The Opium Issue: Conflict and Convergence of Minds

Britain’s involvement in the opium trade hugely influenced Lin Changyi’s antagonistic view of the West. He remarked that opium had been the cause of misery and calamity, and that the barbarians in fact wanted a higher prize than the opening of the five ports for trade.

Let us take, for instance, just the single port of Fuzhou.... Here the drug comes in at a fearful rate. Three large chests valued at eight hundred dollars each and more than sixty smaller chests valued at six hundred dollars each pass through the port every day, totaling more than six thousand dollars per day, ... therefore, no less than three million dollars are spent on this vile drug every year. Taking all five ports into account, the total consumption of the drug must be twenty million dollars at the very least. Neither the hills of Fuzhou, even if made of gold, nor the seas, even if filled with silver, could satisfy the rapacity of these barbarians, to say nothing of the fact that Fuzhou is barren and its population lives in poverty. Alas, to what misery will our people be doomed in a few years!<sup>38</sup>

Surprisingly perhaps, Lin’s views found unexpected proponents among his Western antagonists, and they in fact used much stronger language in discussing the issue. For example, The Right Rev. George Smith, the Bishop of Victoria (Hong Kong), stated that drugs worth two million

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37. *Ibid.*, 2: 2b–3a; see translation in FO 228/144.

38. *SYLSH*, 1: 2a–b; translation from FO 228/114, enclosure in no. 4, 8b–9a.

dollars were annually imported into Fuzhou. An opium depot for the smuggling vessels operated at the mouth of the River Min, just beyond the consular limits of the port. A considerable portion of the opium found its way from Fuzhou to other places in the interior; and Smith estimated that half of the population were addicted to the drug. The lowliest coolies and beggars often denied themselves the necessities of life in order to enjoy this costly luxury. There were some one hundred smoking dens scattered throughout the city, and even the police and military frequented these places. Smith suggested that the failure of the mandarins to enforce the law against those involved in this contraband traffic was their fear of the consequences of a clash with foreigners arising from a lurking suspicion of the connection of the British government with the opium system, a sense of inability to put down by force the well-armed foreign vessels stationed at the smuggling depots and the lure of profits that could be reaped from connivance in the smuggling trade. Smith concluded:

These separate causes operate conjointly in fostering and upholding an evil which, by the general stagnation of native trade, and the constant drain of the precious metals from the country, is fast producing a crisis, involving alike the commercial ruin of the cities along the sea-board, and the financial improvement of the empire....<sup>39</sup>

Lin Changyi contrasted the "cruelty of the barbarians" with the humanity of the Chinese. He said that China fed these barbarians with its rhubarb and tea "rescuing them from death", while the latter spread their poison, called opium, amongst the Chinese and robbed China of its money and treasures. He believed this state of affairs would arouse the wrath of Heaven and the universal rage of mankind.

From what Lin could gather, the duties derived from the exportation of this drug alone were the cause of the immense wealth and trade in Calcutta, the capital of Bengal. From this source alone, England obtained substantial revenues, amounting to more than three million dollars. This revenue meant that England attached great importance to the trade that was so calamitous for his country, Lin perceived.

What puzzled Lin Changyi most was England's inconsistency in the opium issue. Although opium was prohibited in England itself, it was spread in China. He asked, "Does not so much deliberate barbarity and cruelty fill one with feelings of injustice and lawful anger?"<sup>40</sup>

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39. Rev. George Smith, *A Narrative of an Exploratory Visit to Each of the Consular Cities of China* (London: Seeley, Burnside & Seeley, 1847), p. 331.

40. *SYLSH*, 1: 18b.

The Christian missionaries in Fuzhou shared this critical view of the opium trade, although they and the Fuzhou literati were at odds over many other matters. For instance, in his early days in Fuzhou William Welton of the Church Missionary Society blamed the local literati for obstructing his efforts to rent a place to stay within the city walls on the Wushishan.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, he also expressed scorn at the “libertine and licentious conduct” of his countrymen in the city. Among other disturbing matters, consulate officials and merchants openly kept Chinese concubines.<sup>42</sup> Since his arrival in 1850, Welton had been deeply involved in the fight against opium addiction. He had been shocked to find that opium-smoking was widespread and that regular dens were kept for the purpose, and he helped addicts to get rid of their drug-taking habit not only by medical means but also by making the patients deposit their opium pipes with him as a way of showing their sincerity in discontinuing the habit.<sup>43</sup>

In a letter to the Church Missionary Society, Welton reviewed the whole subject of the opium trade and its evils, giving instances of the misery caused by opium-smoking and earnestly entreating Britain to cooperate with China in the suppression of the trade. He thought that the opium trade had direct bearing on the future progress and success of missionary work in China. He referred to the anticipated revision of the Chinese treaty with foreigners and the pending renewal of the East India Company’s Charter in connection with the growth and supply of opium. He wished to draw the serious attention of British Christians to the great hindrance that the opium trade was posing to the reception of Christian truth by the Chinese. It was an evil of great magnitude and the trade, as Welton pointed out, was carried on in China almost exclusively by reputable British merchants using English ships and sailors.

In Welton’s observation, the trade was attaching “such a stigma to the English name and character that some of us, engaged in missionary operations, would almost be glad not to be known as such”. In his words, it was also a fact that the Chinese people felt so deeply the injury the British were inflicting upon them, individually and nationally, that “when we attempt and profess to give them good doctrine, religion, and rules of life, they meet us with the rebuff, ‘Why do you bring us opium?’” He pointed out that opium was a prohibited article according to Chinese law. Nevertheless, large quantities of it were openly, and with the use

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41. For his confrontation with the local literati, see Chapter 4.

42. William Welton’s “Journal”, in Church Missionary Society Archives, C CH/O 91, 26.5.1856.

43. *Ibid.*, 2.8.1850.

of force, smuggled into China by English merchants, English ships and English seamen.

One cannot but blush and be grieved for those of our countrymen who are living and getting rich upon such unhallowed gain, at the sacrifice of Chinese morality and welfare, and thus placing so great a stumbling-block in the way of religious improvement and Christianity among them.

As the Chinese had no physical force to stop the contraband trade, they were obliged to submit to it. The Englishmen were lost to Christian duty and philanthropy, he lamented, and earnestly bent on personal gain to the exclusion of every right principle or means. He said, "We must always owe this people a great debt for the misery and wretchedness Englishmen have been the instrument of entailing on them."

He found his position in Fuzhou anomalous, for he was an English missionary protesting to the Chinese against the practice of opium-smoking, and giving them medicine and encouraging them to eradicate the addiction, whereas a body of Englishmen was at the mouth of the river supplying the Chinese with all the opium they could dispose of. "It is by no means surprising", he admitted, "that the Chinese, the intelligent at least, should regard the English among foreigners as their greatest enemies, and be led to ask, 'how can we receive any good from such a people?'" Welton likened the opium trade to the slave trade, except that it produced slavery of both mind and body. He asked, "Should not some sympathy and effort be shown and made by British Christians and by a British government, to co-operate with the Chinese government, if possible, in its suppression?" Opium "is desolating China, corrupting its government, and bringing the fabric of that extraordinary empire to a state of more rapid dissolution". The existing situation, he lamented, was a disgrace to the English people.<sup>44</sup>

Here at last we find a convergence of minds between the two antagonists.

## Final Remarks

The opium trade conducted by the Westerners along the China coast threatened the very survival of Chinese society. The strong response to it on the part of the Chinese literati was natural and understandable.

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44. The above quotes are taken from *The Church Missionary Intelligencer* 3.12 (1852): 273–6.



Moreover, missionary activities were simultaneously posing a challenge to fundamental cultural values. As Paul A. Cohen observes, “The missionary then—partly by the mere fact of his presence in the Chinese interior and partly by the manner in which he made his presence felt there—clearly played a major role in encouraging the growth of Chinese antiforeignism.”<sup>45</sup>

Lin Changyi’s worldview reflected the general feeling of the Chinese literati in Fuzhou. He was among those literati known as writers on statecraft (*jingshi zhiyong*) who were commentators on their own times.<sup>46</sup> His knowledge of foreign nations was fragmentary, and inferior to that of Wei Yuan, Xu Jiyu,<sup>47</sup> or Wang Tao, who had carried out active and systematic enquiries and investigations. He did not always get his facts correct, and there was considerable confusion in his understanding of the Protestant and Roman Catholic religious denominations; he was evidently quite ignorant of the distinction that existed between them. However, misinformation and skewed perceptions were common on both sides in a situation of cultural contacts, and conflict often emerged from the mutual misunderstandings that existed between two parties.

Despite these limitations, Lin Changyi was a significant figure in an emerging group of Chinese literati who were concerned about the great disparity in national strength and inequality apparent in many aspects of contact between China and foreign powers, and felt powerless and helpless at being unable to improve the situation and rectify what they perceived to be wrong. Lin’s response to the foreign presence was situational rather than metaphysical.<sup>48</sup> He had strong patriotic sentiments, and the way he employed the terms Zhongguo (China)—rather than the Qing dynasty—and Yin Ji Li (England), showed a rudimentary idea of conflict between nation-states.

The sense of helplessness, patriotic consciousness and humanitarian concerns found in Lin’s works explains the great frustration and anger among the Chinese literati in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the spectacular growth of anti-foreignism. Dividing the literati into conservative and open-minded camps obscures an understanding of the nature of their common concern with the fate of their country.

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45. Cohen, *China and Christianity*, p. 271.

46. LCYSWJ, “Foreword”, p. 1.

47. For a fuller discussion on their works, see Drake, *China Charts the World* and Leonard, *Wei Yuan*.

48. Cohen also states that, “the Chinese response to Christianity was conditioned not by metaphysics”. See *China and Christianity*, p. 265.

## CHAPTER 6

# Information and Knowledge: Qing China's Perceptions of the Maritime World in the Eighteenth Century

### Introduction

Eighteenth-century Qing China was “at the height of its celebrated ‘Prosperous Age’”,<sup>1</sup> when the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736–95) extended the country’s inland borders westward and built a vast and powerful land empire. He could also have become another enlightened monarch, following the path of his contemporary European counterparts and establishing a place for his country in the emerging modern international order, particularly in the maritime world. Instead, China passed its heyday toward the end of Qianlong’s long reign and, in contrast to Europe, where a succession of maritime powers emerged after the sixteenth century, China firmly remained a continental state, even at its political and economic apogee in the eighteenth century.

Among all the factors of a complex reality, it appears that during the country’s prosperous eighteenth century, the Chinese authorities continued to focus on domestic issues and chose not to play an active role in the maritime world. C.A. Bayly observes that successful intelligence gathering was a critical feature of empire building,<sup>2</sup> but China made no systematic, institutionalized effort to collect information on the emerging European maritime powers that would soon pose threats to its maritime defenses.

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1. Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 30.
  2. C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 365.

The collection and accumulation of information would involve not only the state, but also groups or individuals in society.<sup>3</sup> As Hiram Morgan points out:

The question of information gathering was more than simply a bureaucratic and technical operation. It is in fact an intensely ideological process—not only why information is gathered, but how, by whom, under what criteria, how it is processed, represented and utilized.<sup>4</sup>

Information collection could simply be a matter of curiosity about the outside world. More commonly, states sought to understand foreign countries in order to secure a favorable position in the international order, or for the purpose of safeguarding national security.

This chapter provides a general survey of Qing China's perceptions and knowledge of the maritime world, and makes an attempt to understand why China abstained from competing with the European states in the quest for a place in the maritime world. The principle source for this analysis is the *Qing shilu* (Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty) of the Qianlong reign that provides a succinct and continuous record of Court activities and offers an overview of the Court perceptions, management and discussions of maritime affairs.

## Geographical Knowledge of Foreign Lands in Perspective

Throughout their long history, the Chinese have displayed a strong interest in the world beyond their borders. China's long tradition of geographical writings reflects intense curiosity about their own living conditions in various parts of the country and also in the non-Sinic zone on the periphery, an area that affected the country's security and trade. The geographical texts provide extensive information about "a broad range of practical subjects, from local customs and topography to history, politics and economic conditions".<sup>5</sup> The Qing period inherited this long interest in foreign countries that was extended to a search for knowledge about

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

4. Hiram Morgan, "Introduction", in *Information, Media and Power through the Ages*, ed. Hiram Morgan (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2001), p. 5.

5. Jane Kate Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984), p. 94.

the Western world. A case in point is the work *Haiguo tuzhi* (Illustrated gazetteer of the maritime nations), compiled by Wei Yuan (1794–1856) and completed four months after the Treaty of Nanjing (1842) was signed in the aftermath of the First Opium War (1839–42). Jane Kate Leonard argues that the *Haiguo tuzhi* “played a pivotal role” in shaping Chinese foreign relations in the nineteenth century, because it “directed official-literati attention to the maritime world which the Manchus had almost totally neglected in strategic considerations prior to the Opium War; and it sparked a searching revision of Ch’ing (Qing) views about maritime relations”.<sup>6</sup> In preparing his study, Wei Yuan drew on China’s voluminous geographical literature to write about foreign lands that were of great importance to his country.

Aside from its traditional interest in the non-Sinic zone around its land borders, Imperial China also maintained relations with territories in the maritime world for more than two millennia, particularly in the “Nanhai” (South Seas) that became known as the Nanyang (Southern Ocean) from the early eighteenth century. “Nanhai” or “Nanyang” was the most commonly used geographical term for the maritime sector of present-day Southeast Asia. Well-known geographical works such as Zhao Rugua’s (1170–1231) *Zufan zhi* (Gazetteer of barbarian lands; 1225) and Wang Dayuan’s (c. 1311–?) *Daoyi zhilue* (Brief notes on island barbarians; 1349) provided wide-ranging accounts of the maritime world. Zhao was in charge of maritime trade and shipping (*shibo*) in Quanzhou and obtained information about the customs and commodities and other aspects of the maritime countries, particularly those in the Nanhai, from merchants and sailors who frequented this port. Wang was himself a seafarer, and began his visits to the various maritime countries at the age of 20.

The earlier works had a great impact on studies compiled during the Ming era (1368–1644). Among the important geographical texts of this period were Ma Huan’s (fl. 1414–51) *Yingya shenglan* (Overall survey of the ocean’s shores) and Zhang Xie’s (1574–1640) *Dongxi yang kao* (An investigation into the affairs of the Eastern and Western Oceans). Ma Huan took part in the Zheng He (1371–1435) expeditions (1405–33); Zhang Xie’s work that was printed in 1617 recorded substantial information about maritime trade during the late Ming. The two texts advanced knowledge about the Nanhai and beyond. The first important geographical work during the Qing was *Haiguo wenjian lu* (Record of matters seen and heard in the maritime countries) by Chen Lunjiong (c. 1683–c. 1747), which was completed in 1730. Chen learned about

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6. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

maritime affairs from his father, Chen Mao, who was a scholar-merchant. The older Chen engaged in overseas trade and traveled extensively in the maritime world. While holding an official military appointment in Guangdong, Chen Lunjong acquired information about maritime affairs by regular meetings with merchants from foreign countries, and by studying their customs, books and maps. Moreover, since Chinese junks had been visiting Japan and Southeast Asia in growing numbers since the sixteenth century, by that time there was a substantial body of seafarers, including traders, with extensive knowledge of the region. However, despite these networks, the contributions of Chinese writers never reached a level comparable to that of their Western counterparts.

Information about Europe was especially sparse. Although China's first contact with Europe had occurred some two thousand years earlier, later encounters were sporadic until the arrival of Portuguese adventurers early in the sixteenth century. Other Europeans soon made their presence felt in Chinese waters, and Sino-European relations were subsequently placed on a more regular footing. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Qing China had intensive contacts with the maritime world, particularly with the Nanyang, and, through European trading centers there, with Europe itself. European traders were also present at the southern Chinese port of Guangzhou. Zhang Xie describes Chinese contacts with the Spanish in Luzon and the Dutch in the Nanhai, and includes passages about the two European countries. Chen Lunjong also provides scattered, sometimes vague pieces of information about Europe, although he shows little interest in developing knowledge of Europe or in searching for accurate and useful details.

One source that could easily have aroused curiosity about the world in general and the West in particular in China were Western-style maps drawn by the Jesuits after their arrival in the late sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The Italian Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) produced a map entitled *Kun yu wan guo quan tu* (A complete map of nations) in 1602, and the Belgian missionary Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–88) prepared the *Kun yu quan tu* (A Complete Map of the World) in 1674, but these maps were stored in the palace and few people ever saw them.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, although the Jesuits

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7. Cf. the *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji—Ming dai* 中国古代地图集—明代 [An atlas of ancient maps in China—Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)], ed. Cao Wanru 曹宛如, et al. (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1994), plates 77–80; and *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji—Qing dai* 中国古代地图集—清代 [An atlas of ancient maps in China—Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)], ed. Cao Wanru, et al. (1997), plates 4, 144–7.

8. *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji—Qing dai*, p. 9. Cf. also Guo Shuanglin 郭双林, *Xichao jidang xia de wan Qing dili xue* 西潮激荡下的晚清地理学 [Studies on geography

introduced the world to China, neither their maps nor their writings and contributions to scientific knowledge had a significant impact on the Chinese people and, by the eighteenth century, the initial enthusiasm shown by the Ming-Qing Courts had largely died away.<sup>9</sup> One rare example of a Chinese map that closely resembled the Western-style world map can be found in *Haiguo wenjian lu*. It was prepared by Chen Lunjiong, a Chinese who was not part of Court circles.

A change of attitude can be seen in the generation of scholars that included Liang Tingnan (1796–1861), who was assigned to begin the compilation of the *Yue haiguan zhi* (Gazetteer of the Guangdong maritime customs) in 1838, by which time the presence and impact of the West was being palpably felt and there was a sense of an impending crisis. The work was intended to explain the maritime world. Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu (1785–1850) had consulted Liang Tingnan on matters relating to coastal defenses against threats from the West. The two men had similar ideas about maritime affairs.

## Geographical Knowledge and Perceptions of the Maritime World

The present discussion concerns two sectors of the maritime world known to the Chinese: the Nanyang and the Da Xiyang (the Great Western Ocean). The following is a general survey of the Court discussions as recorded in the *Qing shilu* during the Qianlong era.

### *The Nanyang*

An examination of the Qianlong reign in the *Qing shilu* reveals the Qing obsession with traditional perception of maritime defenses (*haifang*). Despite the cumulative knowledge available in late imperial times of the maritime world since the arrival of the Europeans, the Qing limited their attention to security within the Inner Ocean (*neiyang*) and coastal regions. The case of Taiwan is most illustrative. Almost without exception, discussions among Court officials on the governance of the island stressed

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during the late Qing under the intense impact of the West] (Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), p. 5.

9. Sun Zhe 孙喆, *Kang Yong Qian shiqi yutu huizhi yu jiangyu xingcheng yanjiu* 康雍乾时期舆图绘制与疆域形成研究 [A study of mapping and the boundaries during the Kangxi, Yongzhen and Qianlong reigns] (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue, 2003), p. 269.

its vulnerability on account of the great divide between the island and the mainland constituted by the sea.<sup>10</sup>

Taiwan was described as being situated in isolation across the seas (*haiwai*), and the official perception of the island was that it provided a refuge for “evil people and bandits” (*jianfei*).<sup>11</sup> In fact, even such offshore islands as Jinmen (Quemoy), which was within sight of the mainland, caused security concerns.<sup>12</sup> As a land power, the Manchu government was mentally more willing to expand inland toward the western frontiers than it was to explore or dominate the ocean.

The Qing authorities cautiously allowed Han Chinese seafarers to seek their livelihood along the coast and abroad, since the maritime populations on the southeast coast could barely sustain themselves through agriculture alone. Any stoppage of maritime trade would have caused hardship for the people and subsequent social tension. However, overseas trade was not seen as a potential source of wealth for the state. On the contrary, the Court cast a suspicious eye on the maritime populations and their external contacts. The lengthy debates among high officials in the early 1740s arising from a massacre of Chinese in Batavia are a case in point. The Court did not find it necessary to take action against the Dutch authorities in order to protect its overseas subjects because the Chinese in the foreign land were seen as local-born and no different from the native people of the host country. They were not deemed to be worthy of the Court’s sympathy.<sup>13</sup> Even though China was a state with large numbers of enterprising seafaring people, the country remained self-contained and did not find it necessary to develop an active and forward-looking maritime policy.

Rhetorically, tributary relations were upheld as the normal and conventional mode of official reception of foreigners. Qing perceptions of the maritime world were based on universal harmony and foreign submission to the Heavenly Kingdom (*tianchao*), a notion supported by the Court’s reception of tributary missions to China. The *Qing shilu*

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10. *Qing shilu: Gaozong chao* 清实录：高宗朝 [Veritable records of the Qing Dynasty: Gaozhong/Qianlong Reign] (hereafter *QSL: GZ*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985–86), 11/12 (12th month of the 11th year of the Qianlong Reign), *juan* (volume) 281, p. 670. The pagination of the Zhonghua Shuju reprint is used instead of the original edition, because the reprint edition does not clearly show the original pagination in most cases.

11. *QSL: GZ*, 17/10, *juan* 424, p. 551.

12. *QSL: GZ*, 44/9, *juan* 1091, p. 651.

13. *QSL: GZ* 7/10, *juan* 176, pp. 264–5.

frequently mentions the arrivals of foreign envoys, including those from such places in the Nanyang as Siam and Sulu.<sup>14</sup>

The Court was well aware that the Nanyang offered economic benefits to the people in China's littoral regions who sought their livelihood in trade-related activities, and that it had empty spaces that could relieve population pressures in the homeland. Moreover, the region was a source of highly valued commodities, among them spices, aromatics, medicinal products and rice. Siam in particular exported large quantities of rice to grain-deficit coastal China.<sup>15</sup> However, the Qing state did not always perceive the Nanyang as lands of opportunity and tranquility. Even though the indigenous states in the Nanyang were non-threatening, the region caused the Qing authorities some uneasiness. In the first place, seafaring people made the authorities uncomfortable because their activities could not be kept under official surveillance. The Qing state was especially suspicious of its subjects who were employed by foreign countries as headmen,<sup>16</sup> interpreters<sup>17</sup> or crew members of foreign trading junks. For example, the attitude of the Qing Court toward the Dutch colonial outpost in the Indonesian Archipelago ranged from suspicion to outright hostility, as on the occasion of the Batavia incident.

In the eastern region of the Nanyang lay the Spanish Philippines, better known to the Chinese as Luzon. The Qing state saw Manila as another trouble spot because, like Batavia, it was home to a large south Fujianese settlement, and because Roman Catholic missionaries had infiltrated Fujian, especially the prefecture of Funing, where their teachings were enthusiastically received by the local population.<sup>18</sup> Roman Catholicism was mentioned among the "*xiejiao*" (evil beliefs)

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14. See for example, *QSL: GZ*, 16/6, *juan* 392, p. 153; 17/9, *juan* 422, p. 522; 19/11, *juan* 476, p. 1148; 46/7, *juan* 1137, p. 201; 49/8 *juan* 1213, p. 268; 51/3, *juan* 1251, p. 812; 51/i7, *juan* 1260, p. 953; 54/8, *juan* 1337, p. 1133; 55/8, *juan* 1360, p. 225; 58/1, and *juan* 1421, p. 19.

15. *QSL: GZ* 8/11, *juan* 204, p. 627.

16. As in the case of Chen Yilao 陈怡老, who sojourned in Batavia for more than 20 years and was appointed "Jiabitan" (Captain). The Court thought that people like Chen naturally assisted the Dutch to gather information about the conditions in China. See *QSL: GZ*, 14/8, *juan* 346, p. 785; and 16/i5, *juan* 391, p. 138. Refer to Chapter 13 about Chen's case.

17. Ma Can 马灿 (Ma Guangming 马光明) and Chen Rong 陈荣 (Chen Chaosheng 陈朝盛) were two seafarers who settled in Sulu, serving as interpreters, and even acted as the tributary envoys for Sulu on several occasions in the 1740s. The Court perceived them as trouble makers. See *QSL: GZ* 12/1, *juan* 282, p. 682.

18. *QSL: GZ* 11/5, *juan* 267, p. 472; 11/6, *juan* 269, p. 502; and 11/8, *juan* 273, p. 575.



that the authorities were determined to keep in check.<sup>19</sup> The Qing Court realized that Roman Catholicism was widespread in Luzon and the place accordingly attracted Chinese converts.<sup>20</sup> The Court also suspected that its own subjects were assisting the spread of the foreign religion and helping the missionaries from Luzon in gathering intelligence to facilitate the missionary activities in Fujian.<sup>21</sup>

The upshot was a strong sense of insecurity on the part of the Court. Its nervousness about the Nanyang was enhanced in early 1740 by the Batavia incident. It realized that, although war junks were deployed in the provinces along the coast like Shandong, Jiangnan, Zhejiang, Guangdong and Guangxi, effective control had been adversely affected by the long peace (*chengping rijiu*) and, as a result, “the readiness among the officers and the rank and file had become lax”.<sup>22</sup>

### **The Da Xiyang**

Chen Lunjong’s work *Haiguo wenjian lu* included such European countries as Portugal, Spain, England (Ying Ji Li), Holland, France and Russia under the geographical term “Da Xiyang”.<sup>23</sup> On the basis of the concept of universal harmony and voluntary submission to the Heavenly Kingdom, imperial rhetoric did not differentiate the countries in the Da Xiyang from those in the Nanyang. The *Qing shilu*’s entry for 1752, for example, recorded the arrival of a Portuguese “tributary mission” in Guangzhou, from where it was escorted to the imperial capital.<sup>24</sup> And, in 1794, the Court warmly welcomed the arrival of the Dutch “tributary envoy” (*gongshi*).

At times the Da Xiyang was even considered a source of foreign talent, supplying people who could serve or work in the imperial capital. Medical practitioners, astronomers, artists and watchmakers were among the skilled people sought by the Court.<sup>25</sup> Although it banned missionary activities in the country, the imperial government often reiterated its approval of such services as the above categories.<sup>26</sup> European people (*Xiyang ren*, or Western Ocean people) could submit applications to serve

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19. QSL: GZ 11/9, *juan* 275, p. 583.

20. QSL: GZ 13/5, *juan* 315, p. 169.

21. QSL: GZ 13/3, *juan* 310, p. 69; and 13/5, *juan* 315, p. 169.

22. QSL: GZ 5/8, *juan* 125, 831.

23. Chen Lunjong 陳倫炯, *Haiguo wenjian lu* 海國聞見錄 [Record of matters seen and heard from the maritime countries] (1793 ed.; orig. 1730), 1: 31a–35a.

24. QSL: GZ, 17/9, *juan* 422, p. 522.

25. QSL: GZ, 31/9, *juan* 768, pp. 427–8.

26. QSL: GZ, 49/8, *juan* 1213, pp. 267–8.

the Court through the local authorities, who would in turn send them to the imperial capital. The Court instructed the high-ranking provincial officials to treat these requests in a positive manner and not to turn them down.<sup>27</sup> Two such applications arrived in 1783, and four more in the following year. At that point, the Court instructed that the recruitment of foreign talent should stop for the time being until a shortage of people with technical skills might arise in the future.<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding this appreciation of foreign skills, there were incidents that indicated a deep distrust of and at times hostility toward the Europeans. First was the Court's hostile attitude toward the missionary presence in the country. Strict restrictions were imposed on their activities, and the Court was never slow to prosecute them; many were arrested or severely punished.<sup>29</sup> Second was the government's sense of insecurity about the European presence. The authorities were particularly nervous about the arrival of the Europeans in places other than the designated port of Guangzhou. It was reported in 1756 that in recent years ships from European countries (*hongmao deng guo*) had frequented Dinghai in Zhejiang. It was feared that allowing the continuity of such visits would transform Dinghai into another Macao, something that would have undesirable effects on local people and threaten the security of the maritime provinces.<sup>30</sup> A third issue was the large quantities of silk shipped out of China by the western vessels, considered to be the cause of the high price of silk on local markets and a threat to the local economy. To stabilize prices and meet local demand, the Qing Court placed an embargo on silk exports.<sup>31</sup> A fourth matter was Lord Macartney's (1737–1806) embassy to China in 1793.<sup>32</sup> His entourage

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27. *QSL: GZ*, 43/9, *juan* 1066, p. 259; 49/8, *juan* 1213, p. 267; and 43/11, *juan* 1218, p. 339.

28. *QSL: GZ*, 49/11, *juan* 1219, p. 359.

29. *QSL: GZ*, See for example, 49/10, *juan* 1216, pp. 317–8; 49/11, *juan* 1218, pp. 339–44; and 49/11, *juan* 1219, pp. 346–8.

30. *QSL: GZ*, 22/2, *juan* 533, pp. 720–1; 22/10, *juan* 549, p. 1010, 24/8, *juan* 594, pp. 620–1; 24/9, *juan* 597, pp. 650–3; and 24/10, *juan* 598, pp. 677–8.

31. *QSL: GZ*, 24/9, *juan* 596, pp. 539–40; 24/12, *juan* 603, p. 771; 27/5, *juan* 660, p. 391; 29/2, *juan* 704, p. 867; 29/3, *juan* 707, p. 895; and 29/4, *juan* 708, p. 909.

32. *QSL: GZ*, 58/1, *juan* 1421, p. 12; 58/4, *juan* 1426, p. 72; 58/5, *juan* 1428, pp. 99–100; 58/5, *juan* 1429, pp. 116–7; 58/6, *juan* 1429, p. 121; 58/6, *juan* 1430, pp. 125–6; 58/6, *juan* 1431, pp. 131–40; 58/7, *juan* 1432, pp. 143–53; 58/7, *juan* 1433, p. 154; 58/7, *juan* 1434, pp. 165–6; 58/8, *juan* 1434, pp. 168–72; 58/8, *juan* 1435, pp. 180–94; 58/9, *juan* 1436, pp. 196–202; 58/9, *juan* 1437, pp. 206–11, 213–5; 58/10, *juan* 1438, p. 218; 58/10, *juan* 1439, p. 225–30; 58/10, *juan* 1440, pp. 233–4; 58/11, *juan* 1440, 235; 59/12, *juan*

consisted of more than 50 officers and 800 crew members on board five ships.<sup>33</sup> The Court received a letter from a British subject conveying his king's regret about the country's absence from the celebration of the Qianlong Emperor's 80th birthday two years previously, and saying that the king was sending a "tribute" mission led by Lord Macartney. The mission would travel to Tianjin by sea and proceed from there to the imperial capital. The Court was satisfied with the respectful (*gongshun*) language of the letter in the Chinese translation, and gave its permission, even though coastal-defense officials had misgivings about allowing the mission to sail along the coast up to Tianjin, which was considered the front gate to the national capital. Disarmed by the flattering Chinese-language letter, the Court allowed the British vessels to sail north along the coast.<sup>34</sup>

Imperial China had had opportunities to accumulate greater knowledge about countries in the Da Xiyang since the sixteenth century. By the time of Lord Macartney's arrival, Qing China was aware of the fact that, of all "the Xiyang nations" (*Xiyang geguo*), Great Britain was a particularly strong naval power and might become a military threat. The Court was well informed about Britain's prowess and aggressiveness in the maritime world. And yet the Qianlong Emperor was indecisive in dealing with the British mission. On the one hand, provincial authorities were told to keep a watchful eye on the movements of the British envoy and his suite and, if necessary, to restrict their movements.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, in response to persistent requests by the British envoy, on his return trip the Emperor allowed him to travel by inland waterways to Jiangxi and from there to cross the mountain range to Guangdong.<sup>36</sup> This provided a rare opportunity for the British to gather valuable intelligence about conditions in the interior.

## Scholarship on China in Perspective

The subject of Qing China's perceptions of the foreign lands beyond its borders and particularly of the maritime world has been well researched

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1466, p. 579; 59/12, *juan* 1467, pp. 591–2, 595–6; and 60/12, *juan* 1493, pp. 980–1.

33. *QSL: GZ*, 58/6, *juan* 1431, pp. 131, 134.

34. *QSL: GZ*, 58/1, *juan* 1421, p. 12.

35. *QSL: GZ*, 58/8, *juan* 1435, p. 192.

36. *QSL: GZ*, 58/10, *juan* 1438, p. 128.

over the past few decades. This section provides a sketch of the main historiographical trends.

“Sinocentrism” is a convenient point of departure. Explaining Qing China’s perceptions of non-Chinese states, the concept of “Sinocentrism” had often been used to characterize a “Chinese world order”, within which China’s foreign relations were “hierarchic and nonegalitarian”.<sup>37</sup> According to this understanding, China was indolent and ignorant of the outside world, waiting to be awakened to reality by the West as happened during the Opium War. Tributary rituals governed the relationship between the Son of Heaven and all other rulers, and defined Chinese attitudes to and practices in foreign relations.<sup>38</sup>

The Chinese imperial government, in the words of John E. Wills, Jr., “showed an astonishing lack of curiosity”<sup>39</sup> about non-Chinese countries, and few Qing officials even attempted to collect commercial information systematically. Wills states that the general lack of systematic empirical curiosity resulted from “the Sino-centric idea that foreigners weren’t worth that much attention”.<sup>40</sup> Writings adopting this point of view have noted that the Qing Court believed in economic self-sufficiency, with agriculture at the core of the national economy and commerce and the handicraft industry as secondary endeavors. One often quoted statement used to illustrate this perception is the condescending edict of the Qianlong Emperor to King George III of Great Britain in 1793 following the Macartney embassy. It reads:

The Celestial Court has pacified and possessed the territory within four seas. Its sole aim is to do its utmost to achieve good government and to manage political affairs, attaching no value to strange jewels and precious objects.... As a matter of fact, ... there is nothing we lack, ... nor do we need any more of your country’s manufactures.<sup>41</sup>

More rigorous thinking found in recent scholarship has moved discussions of Chinese history beyond such cultural explanations.

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37. *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 2.

38. James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1790* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 9.

39. John E. Wills, Jr., “Ch’ing Relations with the Dutch, 1662–1690”, in *Chinese World Order*, ed. John King Fairbank, p. 247.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *China’s Response to the West: A Documentary Survey 1839–1923*, ed. Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank (Orig. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954; fourth Atheneum reprint, 1967), p. 19.

The concept of Sinocentrism, that supposedly manifested the Chinese world view as expressed in the tributary relations and China's sense of superiority, has been subjected to increasing scrutiny. Writing 20 years after his earlier essay, that was contributed to John King Fairbank's volume, John E. Wills, Jr. modifies his strong view and suggests that the concept of Sinocentrism is "the wrong place to begin" a study of Qing social and economic history or of China's foreign relations.<sup>42</sup>

Several scholars have proposed alternative interpretations that go beyond European models to explain the dynamics of change.<sup>43</sup> From the perspective of political economy, Bin Wong, for example, has said that "what governments think is important", and that the Chinese imperial governments defined "their challenges and capacities" within "a world of limited possibilities". Security in relation to China's contacts with border peoples and the maintenance of social order remained the principal concerns of the state.<sup>44</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

Imperial China's knowledge of the maritime world was developed through contacts that extended over many centuries. Information was passed down orally and later compiled in geographical and historical texts prepared by minor local officials, scholars or seafarers.

By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the broad maritime space was more clearly divided into several geographical sectors. Two of these were the Nanyang and the Da Xiyang, discussed in this chapter.

Although the Nanyang was the maritime sector closest to China, it was perceived as less threatening, despite increasing complications following the establishment of Dutch and Spanish colonial outposts in the region. The growing power of the British and the Dutch created a less friendly image of the Da Xiyang countries, and Qing China became increasingly uneasy about them, but they were seen more as a nuisance than as an

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42. John E. Wills, Jr., "Tribute, Defensiveness, and Dependency: Uses and Limits of Some Basic Ideas about Mid-Qing Dynasty Foreign Relations", *American Neptune* 48 (1988): 225–6.

43. Among the recent interpretations, refer especially to Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1973); R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

44. R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed*, pp. 280–1.

active threat, partly because of the illusion that distance precluded an imminent danger to China. The lack of a sense of crisis rather than cultural superiority explains the apathy of Qing China regarding the advances of Western civilization, an attitude reflected in the work of the Chinese compilers of geographical and historical texts.

The rhetoric associated with tributary states continued during the prosperous Qianlong Reign, despite expanded contacts with the West in the port of Guangzhou. There was no sense of impending danger, and China displayed no interest in moving beyond its tributary perspective in external relations. Qing concerns remained focused on internal security and social order, and China expended considerable efforts on tightening security and centralizing imperial control.<sup>45</sup> The country displayed a contradictory mix of confidence and insecurity. Perceived threats from within and without were dealt with through coercive administrative or penal measures, and a similar approach prevailed in foreign relations. As John King Fairbank has written:

China's external order was so closely related to her internal order that one could not long survive without the other; when the barbarians were not submissive abroad, rebels might more easily arise within.... Every regime was therefore under pressure to make the facts of its foreign relations fit the theory and so confirm its claim to rule China.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, no institutionalized efforts were made to tackle perceived external threats at their source through, say, the collection of intelligence.

It is true that the perceptions of the maritime world of the Qing state and its people differed greatly from each other. For the former, maritime space denoted uncertainty and danger, but coastal populations viewed the sea as a highway to promising lands and prosperity. Society at large lacked access to information held by the state, and had no institutional support for obtaining precise and accurate information about foreign countries. Information about foreign nations was often superficial or faulty and based on outdated geographical texts.<sup>47</sup>

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45. Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, p. 51.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

47. The work by Chen Lunjiong is one example. Even the curious Liang Tingnan 梁廷柀 (1796–1861), in his work *Yuehai guan zhi* 粵海關志 [Gazetteer of the Guangdong maritime customs], was not able to obtain much first-hand information about recent developments of the Western powers that had become threatening forces.

With reference to information and empire building, C.A. Bayly observes that British knowledge of India and its people “arose as much from natural inquisitiveness and the desire to comprehend the world as it was, as from a simple aim of domination”.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, intelligence gathering and knowledge generating had not been part of Qing China’s political culture in the face of a rapidly changing maritime world. It is far-fetched to say that eighteenth-century Qing China was not curious about the outside world, or rejected outright all things foreign. However, what attracted the Emperor, officials and rich families were “curios” rather than steam machines. Consequently, there was no sense of urgency and no desire to go beyond existing rudimentary ideas about the maritime world until the crisis of the Opium War shook the country and changed the nature of curiosity among the Chinese. In the meantime, Qing China was content to follow the tributary formula, and to maintain amicable trade relations with the outside world in Guangzhou.<sup>49</sup>

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48. C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 371.

49. One recent work on the topic can be found in Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).

## PART THREE

### Pushing the Traditional Boundaries

*Part Three consists of five chapters illustrating attempts to push the traditional boundaries.*

*Chapter 7 studies the changing socioeconomic conditions in rural southern Fujian in late Ming times, how the changes affected the life of the common agriculturists and in what ways the peasants were responding to the challenges.*

*Chapter 8 depicts how the smuggling activities of the Portuguese, the Japanese and the Chinese maritime adventurers created new offshore enterprises that involved both wealthy gentry investors and humble seafarers. The rampant piratical activities were often connected to the contesting interest groups.*

*Chapter 9 presents a case study of the enthusiastic response of the littoral people to the new trading opportunities created by the presence of the Portuguese and the opening of Spanish Manila to trade. The development of the domestic commodity economy and extensive maritime opportunities provided two forces that tended to shake the traditional and state-stipulated boundaries.*

*Chapter 10 surveys how Chinese merchants in late imperial times identified themselves with the traditional Confucian culture and value system. One clear effort of theirs was made through liturgical services for the common good. It enabled them to become more acceptable and their commercial activities better appreciated by the state and Confucian scholars.*

*Chapter 11 explores the issue involving large-scale shipments of Chinese coolies mostly by British local agencies and their vessels to foreign countries from the treaty port of Amoy causing the riots of 1852 by the contract coolies in the port city. Embarrassed by the incident, the British government instigated an enquiry into the affair, while the local Chinese officials refrained from further complicating the bilateral relations.*





## CHAPTER 7

# The Changing Landscape in Rural South Fujian in Late-Ming Times: A Story of the “Little People” (1)

### Changing Socioeconomic Conditions in Rural Fujian

In 1506 for the first time the local gazetteers recorded that a small band of “Guangdong plunderers” had raided Zhangzhou prefecture. They came very likely from the Chaozhou area of eastern Guangdong bordering southern Fujian. Perhaps, the incident itself was insignificant. However, the successive intrusions of Guangdong plunderers into Zhangzhou and also Quanzhou shortly thereafter in the years that followed signal a turning point in local socioeconomic conditions. All these events marked the beginning of a new chapter in the socioeconomic development of southern Fujian.

There is a surprising amount of information about the hard time experienced by the ordinary peasants, known as “little people” (*xiaomin*), a term used by contemporary writers to mean the mass of the commoners. Somewhat unexpectedly, the descriptions of their hardships are found in compilations or writings by high- and low-ranking officials as well as the literary gentry who assisted in compiling local gazetteers. In line with the emerging scholarship on statecraft, whose writers were most concerned with people’s well-being, the local gazetteers are windows on the current conditions in local society.

The late Ming era saw the rapid development of China’s commodity economy and monetization. In the 1950s and the 1960s Mainland Chinese scholars used to describe the phenomenon as “budding capitalism” in Chinese history. Nevertheless, the opposite side of the coin revealed a great contrast to the favorable picture of the socioeconomic conditions in Ming China. In this and the next chapters, the intention is to understand Ming society through the lens of the ordinary agriculturists.

The discussion examines the changing socioeconomic conditions in rural southern Fujian in late Ming times, how the changes affected the life of the common agriculturists and in what ways the peasants were responding to the challenges. It begins with the most frequently raised issue of “population pressure” and scrutinizes the assumption that “the hilly terrains and scarcity of arable lands” in southern Fujian contributed to the poverty of the rural population.

## Population

Quanzhou was first mentioned in Chinese history around AD 600. At that time the Fujianese population was still sparsely distributed. In the mid-eighth century, the Yangzi region and the areas farther south had only 40 to 50 per cent of the country’s population. The distribution had changed by the end of the thirteenth century, when the population of southern China rapidly rose to 85 to 90 per cent of the total. No fewer than 20 per cent of it lived in the valleys of Fujian and eastern Zhejiang along the southeast coast.<sup>1</sup> In terms of the total number of *hu* (households), Fujian’s figure increased from two million in 1102 to 2.8 million in 1162.<sup>2</sup> The population figures for the various prefectures of Fujian from the Tang to the Ming periods are given below:<sup>3</sup>

Prefecture	Tang	Song	Yuan	Ming
Fuzhou	34,084 <i>hu</i>	308,529 <i>hu</i>	199,694 <i>hu</i>	94,514 <i>hu</i>
福州	75,876 <i>kou</i> <sup>4</sup>	595,946 <i>kou</i>	—	285,265 <i>kou</i>

1. E.A. Kracke, Jr., “Sung Society: Change Within Tradition”, *Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, 4 (Aug. 1955): 479–80.
2. Zhang Jiaju 張家駒, *Liang Song jingji zhongxin de nanyi* 兩宋經濟重心的南移 [The southward movement of the economic centre of gravity during the two Song Dynasties] (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1957), p. 50.
3. Huang Zhongzhao 黃仲昭, *Bamin tongzhi* 八閩通志 [A gazetteer of the eight prefectures of Fujian] (1490 ed.), 20: 2–6a.
4. In counting population, the Chinese census uses different units such as: (1) *hu* 戶 (households), that was a customary Chinese extended family rather than a “nuclear” family in the Western sense; (2) *kou* 口 (mouths), which was identical to “head-count”. In the Confucian way of thinking, enough food was the most essential prerequisite for daily life. Hence, the word *kou* became the numeral coefficient in population counting; (3) *ding* 丁, an adult male between 16 and 60 years old who paid the *ding* tax. One should be aware that such official definitions are sometimes over-simplified.

Prefecture	Tang	Song	Yuan	Ming
Jianning 建宁	22,770 <i>hu</i> 142,774 <i>kou</i>	197,137 <i>hu</i> 439,677 <i>kou</i>	127,254 <i>hu</i> 506,926 <i>kou</i>	122,142 <i>hu</i> 393,468 <i>kou</i>
Quanzhou 泉州	23,806 <i>hu</i> 160,295 <i>kou</i>	255,758 <i>hu</i> 358,874 <i>kou</i>	89,060 <i>hu</i> 455,545 <i>kou</i>	41,824 <i>hu</i> 180,813 <i>kou</i>
Zhangzhou 漳州	5,846 <i>hu</i> 17,940 <i>kou</i>	112,014 <i>hu</i> 160,566 <i>kou</i>	21,695 <i>hu</i> 101,306 <i>kou</i>	49,254 <i>hu</i> 317,651 <i>kou</i>
Dingzhou 汀州	4,680 <i>hu</i> 13,701 <i>kou</i>	150,331 <i>hu</i> 327,380 <i>kou</i>	41,423 <i>hu</i> 238,127 <i>kou</i>	43,307 <i>hu</i> 252,871 <i>kou</i>
Yanping 延平	— —	157,089 <i>hu</i> 297,145 <i>kou</i>	89,825 <i>hu</i> 435,869 <i>kou</i>	63,584 <i>hu</i> 236,325 <i>kou</i>
Shaowu 邵武	— —	212,952 <i>hu</i> 558,846 <i>kou</i>	64,127 <i>hu</i> 248,761 <i>kou</i>	39,644 <i>hu</i> 132,282 <i>kou</i>
Xinghua 兴化	— —	64,887 <i>hu</i> 148,641 <i>kou</i>	67,739 <i>hu</i> 352,534 <i>kou</i>	31,687 <i>hu</i> 180,006 <i>kou</i>
Funingzhou <sup>5</sup> 福宁州	— —	— —	— —	20,359 <i>hu</i> 67,923 <i>kou</i>

Although the gazetteer from which the figures are taken does not specify any exact dates for the census, there is reason to believe that they were taken during the early South Song period and during the Ming around 1502.<sup>6</sup> After the fall of the North Song capital, Kaifeng, into Jin hands in 1127 and the shift of the Court to the south, the Chinese population, as stated above, poured into the region south of the Yangzi River. Therefore, the sudden increase in the Fujianese population during that period is not surprising. What does attract our attention is the general decline in the population of the prefecture from the Yuan to the mid-Ming periods. The following figures show the tendency:<sup>7</sup>

5. Funing Subprefecture was considered to be a part of Fuzhou prefecture during the Song and Yuan periods.
6. The conclusion is arrived at after comparing the following sources: (1) A Song gazetteer compiled between 1241–52, quoted in *Quanzhou fuzhi* 泉州府志 [Gazetteer of Quanzhou Prefecture] (1870 ed.), 18: 16; and (2) Wei Qingyuan's work (see fn 7). The Fujianese population in 1502 given in Wei's work is about the same as in *Bamin tongzhi* (506,315 *hu* and 2,046,604 *kou*).
7. Wei Qingyuan 韦庆远, *Mingdai huangce zhidu* 明代黄册制度 [The yellow-registry system in the Ming Period] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), p. 248.

<b>AD 1391</b>	<b>AD 1502</b>
815,527 <i>hu</i>	508,649 <i>hu</i>
3,916,806 <i>kou</i>	2,062,683 <i>kou</i>

When reading a traditional Chinese census, the nature of Chinese population data and the factors affecting population registration should be borne in mind. Ho Ping-ti indicates several aspects to be considered, including the population-land ratio, interregional migrations, land utilization, food production, catastrophic deterrents and other economic and institutional factors.<sup>8</sup> In short, the fluctuations in the figures in the population registration can be read as reliable indicators of the socioeconomic conditions prevailing in the different periods. Rapid growth might well reflect social stability and economic development. On the other hand, natural or man-made disasters might account for a decline. Since the Chinese census served as a basis for land distribution and taxation, its figures are more accurate when the society was stable. Nevertheless, under-registration and depopulation were by no means uncommon even when the actual population was not necessarily in decline. Several factors explain these phenomena. With the passing of the strong rulers of the early Ming, for example, the gentry families gradually reverted to various practices by which, in connivance with the local officials, they often succeeded in shifting a part, or all, of their burden of labor services and land tax onto the poor.<sup>9</sup> Their illegal methods of effecting such evasions became increasingly shrewd and varied. Unable to bear the extra burden, the victims eventually resorted to desertion. Another factor, to be discussed later, in the failure of later Ming registrations to cover the entire population was the under-reporting by people with the protection of the powerful rural interests.<sup>10</sup> Even under such conditions, it is amazing to note the exceptionally large increase in the Zhangzhou population. The development of that prefecture, located in the southernmost part of Fujian, was much later than that of Quanzhou. Considering the dubious character of the population registrations, the actual number of the Zhangzhou population must have been much greater than what was recorded. In any case, the figure does show a continuous trend of interregional southward migration and the fully exploited condition of the waste land in Zhangzhou.

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8. Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1953* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Agricultural production would have better chances of yielding enough surplus for an increasing population provided that extortion and exploitation were still within a tolerable limit. More labor-intensive cultivation and the introduction of advanced agricultural technology would bring additional returns. Students of this field often take much for granted when they use the term “population pressure” to explain social changes in Fujian and its people’s massive migration to Southeast Asia in this period. The charm of such an oversimplification has proved so irresistible that commentators easily ignore the basic factors without which a simple net increase in population would not have created pressure or led to an explosive situation. The following discussion, therefore, attempts to establish the relative importance of “population pressure” examined from a broader perspective.

## Land Conditions and Natural Catastrophes

The discussion commences with a brief examination of the condition of the land. In 1542, the total area of cultivated land for Fujian as a whole, was 135,475.331 *qing* 顷.<sup>11</sup> The average holding was 6.4 *mu* 亩 (0.97 acres) per *kou*, or about 25 to 26 *mu* per family. The surplus, if there was any, was severely limited by the nature of its small size. Furthermore, the deterioration in the quality of the soil reduced the yield. Before the massive southward migration in the early South Song period, agrarian problems were a minor issue. At that time, Fujian was a wilderness with an abundance of rich land. Irrigation works were well maintained. Therefore, famine was uncommon.<sup>12</sup> When the population grew, land was no longer as abundant as it had been, even when lower quality arable land was included.<sup>13</sup> During the Yuan period, people were only just able to meet their daily needs by toiling hard ceaselessly throughout the year.<sup>14</sup> Because of its southernmost location in the province, the more intensive land exploitation in Zhangzhou occurred much later; consequently, it was the last to feel the impact of the waves of migration from the north. While land was fully exploited in the central and northern parts of Fujian during the Song period, Zhangzhou still consisted of a large amount of uncultivated land.<sup>15</sup> The same was true on the outskirts

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11. Wei Qingyuan, *Mingdai huangce zhidu*, p. 250. One *qing* = 100 *mu* = 15.13 acres.

12. Huang Zhongzhao, *Bamin tongzhi*, 3: 1a.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, 2: 18b.

of the coastal plains. For instance, the land situation in Yongchun, an inland district of Quanzhou, began to be affected by population growth much later than other places. A gazetteer published in 1526 describes in favorable tones how the area as a whole was arable, fertile and well irrigated. As a result, the population was well fed and decently clothed.<sup>16</sup> Even a bad year would not cause a disaster.<sup>17</sup> However, a prefecture gazetteer edited about a century later (1612) that includes Yongchun paints an entirely different picture. Quanzhou prefecture, it states, had become an economically backward area with only a few products. Arable land was not available in sufficient quantities. The land there was so barren and the people were so poor that even an abundant harvest did not assure a surplus. One season of failure was enough to cause starvation.<sup>18</sup> Poor agriculturists in Yongchun at that time were so hard pressed by living conditions that they were sometimes forced off their cultivated land and had to look for a new occupation.<sup>19</sup> In Zhangzhou, which was once considered to be a “paradise” in Fujian, the production was no longer sufficient to feed the growing population.<sup>20</sup> Everywhere in Fujian, the peasants developed terraced fields reaching from the edge of the plains to the hill-tops.<sup>21</sup> The populous condition and the extreme land exploitation greatly surprised a foreign eyewitness, Fr Martin de Rada, who was on an official mission from Manila to Fujian in 1575. His narrative vividly describes what he saw during his journey from Amoy to Fuzhou, the provincial capital:

We arrived at a town called Tangua (Tong’an).... We were greatly astonished to see so many towns on both banks of the river, and so close to each other that it could be said they were rather all one town than many. And not only there, but as we found along the whole way to Hogchiu (Fuzhou) ..., it was populated in the same way.... The natives of these other towns through which we passed have cultivated their land to such an extent, that even the tops of crags and rocks were sown, although it seemed as if no result of

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16. *Yongchun xianzhi* 永春縣志 [Gazetteer of Yongchun District] (1526 ed.), *juan* 1, “on custom”.
  17. *Yongchun zhouzhi* 永春州志 [Gazetteer of Yongchun Subprefecture] (1787 ed.), 7: 3b–4a.
  18. According to a gazetteer edited in 1612; cited in *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 3b–4a, 5a.
  19. *Yongchun xianzhi* 永春縣志 [Gazetteer of Yongchun District] (1684 ed.), 2:1b.
  20. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* 漳州府志 [Gazetteer of Zhangzhou Prefecture] (1877 ed.), 38: 3.
  21. Xie Zhaozhe 謝肇淛, *Wu zazu* 五雜俎 [Miscellaneous notes on five aspects] (Wanli [1573–1620] ed.), 4: 35.

any kind could be achieved there; whence it appeared to me that this country is the most populous one in the whole world.<sup>22</sup>

The exhaustion of arable land in Fujian was reflected in the stagnancy of the cultivated acreage as shown by the following figures:<sup>23</sup>

AD 1391	AD 1502 (Unit: <i>qing</i> )	AD 1542
146,259.69	135,259.92	135,475.331

No new lands were brought under cultivation, even in the following centuries, as shown below:

**Usable Land of Quanzhou Prefecture<sup>24</sup>**  
(Unit: *qing*)

Subprefecture	AD 1562	AD 1582	AD 1752
Jinjiang	4,252.30	5,733.19	3,979.93
Nan'an	3,609.91	3,615.85	3,047.45
Tong'an	2,596.72	2,24.34	2431.68
Hue'an	2,469.55	2,476.74	2,482.72
Anchi	1,401.65	1,12.96	1,420.05
Total	14,330.13	15,863.08	13,361.83

Note: Table includes all types of cultivated land, ponds, dams and land used for other purposes.

**Usable Land of Zhangzhou Prefecture<sup>25</sup>**  
(Unit: *qing*)

Year	Area
1512	12,380.13
1552	12,114.61

(cont'd overleaf)

22. Fr Martin de Rada, "Narrative of the Mission to Fukien, June–October, 1575", in C.R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century* (reproduced from the Hakluyt Society; Nendeln: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1967), p. 248.

23. Wei Qingyuan, *Mingtai huangce zhidu*, p. 250.

24. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20:21a, 35b, 47b, 57a; 21: 6b, 7a, 21b, 35b, 47b, 57a.

25. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1877 ed.), 14: 22b, 23, and 15: 12b.



Year	Area
1571	12,038.94
1612	12,453.87
1711	12,744.84
1767	10,213.74

Remedies for the lack of arable land were sought in every possible direction, among them an improvement in unit productivity. Some progress was made by improving agricultural implements. Manure was also widely applied as fertilizer in the late Ming.<sup>26</sup> On account of shortages of fertilizer, Fujianese cultivators in the hilly areas resorted to the slash-and-burn method, setting alight grass and bushes on the hills when spring came and then waiting for rain to sweep the ashes down to the rice-fields.<sup>27</sup> In the more barren and hilly lands in Zhangzhou, there was even shifting agriculture, so that cultivators came to till their land once in three years.<sup>28</sup>

Irrigation works in southeast China had very much deteriorated by the late Ming, the infrastructure falling victim to maladministration and social turmoil.<sup>29</sup> Only a slight drought would bring disaster on the peasantry.<sup>30</sup> The condition of the rice-fields in northern Fujian was described as not so critical. Thanks to the Min River, the longest and the largest in capacity in the province, better irrigation works were constructed and maintained. In the south, the capacity of the waterways was proportionately smaller. In most cases, the rice-fields in southern Fukien depended mainly on rain. Agriculturists in Zhangzhou and

26. Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633), *Nongzheng quanshu* 農政全書 [A complete record of agriculture] (Chongzhen [1628–44] ed.), 7:4b–8a.

27. The scene was captured by an eyewitness, a Ming mandarin, who, as an enthusiastic lover of scenery, complained that what he saw in the countryside was not the expected beauty of nature, but fire everywhere, set by the cultivators among the hills; see Wang Shimao 王世懋 (1536–88), *Mingbu shu* 閩部疏 [An account of Fujian], 14b. The preface of the account was written in 1585. In the gazetteers, we often find a term *huogeng shuिनou* 火耕水耨, that literally means “cultivate by fire and hoe by water”. This refers to a similar method; see, for example, *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 8b; also Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–82), *Tianxia junquo libing shu* 天下郡國利病書 [Problems and Challenges in Various Regions of China] (hereafter *TXJGLBS*), Vol. 26, p. 84a.

28. *Fujian tongzhi* 福建通志 [A general gazetteer of Fujian] (1871 ed.), 56: 23.

29. Xu Guangqi, *Nongzheng quanshu*, 16: 29b.

30. *Ibid.*, 15: 1b.

Quanzhou often had to lift water from the wells by means of pulleys.<sup>31</sup> The watering was much more difficult in the hilly areas such as in Hue'an District, because the cultivators used a more complicated technique to pump water up to the terraced fields.<sup>32</sup> The apparatus consisted of a chain of water paddles that fitted into a trough and then pushed the water uphill. Without a breakthrough in agricultural technology, such limited improvements did not provide a total solution. Hence, the southern Fukienese people could only resign themselves to Heaven's will, especially during the dry seasons.

Natural calamities plunged them into greater grief. People suffered severely from this kind of disaster. What happened in Zhangzhou during the Jiajing reign (1522–66)<sup>33</sup>, as recorded in one of the local gazetteers, allows one to appreciate the tragic grievances:

Year	Location	Calamity
1530	Zhangpu	starvation
1535	Pinghe	drought in summer; floods in autumn
1536	Nanjing	disaster caused by drought & locusts
1537	Zhangpu	starvation caused by drought
1538	Changtai & Pinghe	drought & earthquake
1543	Longchi & Changtai	earthquake
	Changtai	damage from frost
1544	Longchi & Pinghe	starvation
	Changtai	drought
	Zhangpu	starvation
1545	Zhangpu	starvation
	Changtai	flood
	Longchi & Changtai	drought & starvation
1546	Zhangpu	starvation
	Whole prefecture	starvation
	Longchi & Changtai	damage from hailstorm

(cont'd overleaf)

31. Wang Shimao, *Minbu shu*, 16b–17a.

32. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 8b.

33. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1877 ed.), 47: 4a–10a.

Year	Location	Calamity
1548	Zhangpu	floods
1549	Whole prefecture	earthquake
1557	Zhao'an	damage from hailstorm
1558	Zhangpu & Haicheng	damage from hailstorm
1560	Nanjing	floods
1561	Longchi & Nanjing	drought
1562	whole prefecture	drought
1563	Longchi & Nanjing	floods
1564	Nanjing	floods
1565	Nanjing	damage from hailstorm
1566	Zhao'an	drought

Remedy was sought by introducing new crops to suit the geographical conditions. As a maritime province, Fujian benefited from new knowledge obtained through contacts with foreign lands. As early as the eleventh century, a new crop—early ripening rice—had been introduced into Fujian from Champa. It brought revolutionary economic consequences such as double-cropping and terracing.<sup>34</sup> In the late fifteenth century, the Zhangzhou people brought back another new rice variety from Annam.<sup>35</sup> The introduction of the sweet potato (*fanshu*), literally “foreign potato” into Fujian was also an important event in Chinese agricultural history. It came, it was said, from Luzon around 1594 when there was a widespread crop failure in Fujian. Governor Jin Xuezheng issued pamphlets about how it should be cultivated and exhorted its extensive cultivation in order to stave off famine.<sup>36</sup> The many advantages of the sweet potato were pointed out by both He Qiaoyuan, a scholar from southern Fujian, and the Court minister-cum-agriculturist Xu Guangqi. These benefits included its unusually high yield per acre, its nutritiousness (in terms of calories second only to rice), pleasant taste, preservability, value as an auxiliary

34. Ho Ping-ti, “Early Ripening Rice in Chinese History”, *Economic History Review* 9 (1956–57): 200–18; also *Yongchun xianzhi* (1526 ed.), *juan* 1 “on products”.

35. Guo Bochang 郭柏蒼, *Minchan luyi* 閩產錄異 [The typical products of Fukien] (1886 ed.), 1: 1a.

36. Ho Ping-ti, “The Introduction of American Food Plants into China”, *American Anthropologist* 57, 2 (1955): 192.

food, relative immunity to locusts, greater resistance to drought and the fact that it adapted well to poorer soils, hence competing with no other food crops for good land.<sup>37</sup> It cost less than one *qian*: (a copper cash) per *catty* (1 *catty* = 1 1/3lb). Usually two *catties* of it were more than enough for one meal.<sup>38</sup> Peanut (*luohuasheng*) was another food plant introduced into China, probably by the Portuguese, who arrived in the Guangzhou (Canton) area in 1516 and subsequently traded in southern Fujian ports and Ningbo. It was first grown in Fujian.<sup>39</sup> The result was “a revolution in the utilization of sandy soils”.<sup>40</sup> With the nitrogen-fixing rhizomes on its roots, the peanut plant even helped to preserve soil fertility.

Given sound social conditions, the quick response of the Fujianese to challenges could have helped them to improve their living standard. Unfortunately, they still had to contend with social ills beyond their control and, therefore, the agricultural remedies failed to achieve a permanent solution.

## Deteriorating Social Conditions and Tenant Uprisings

From the last decade of the sixteenth century and thereafter, funds in the national treasuries steadily dwindled away. Their depletion was partly attributable to the military campaigns that the Wanli Emperor (r. 1573–1620) ordered in the 1590s against the Mongol rebels in the northwest, against the aboriginal tribesmen in the southwest and to contribute to the struggles in Korea with Japanese invaders under Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Eventually, another long military contest was to bring down the Ming dynasty. This was China’s struggle with the rising Manchus. When Emperor Xizong (r. 1621–27) came to the throne in 1620, the situation was worse than ever. He permitted the ruthless eunuch, Wei Zhongxian, to extend his influence over the central administration, the provinces and the frontier marches. Social and economic dislocations increased in severity.

The Ming government had no other solution but to resort to immediate relief. Taxes were increased to meet the financial crisis. One of the measures was the imposition of a land surtax that had become a

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37. He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠 (1558–1631), *Min-shu* 閩書 [Fujian history] (c. 1628–31 ed.), 130: 4b–6b; Xu Guangqi, *Nongzheng quanshu*, 27: 29b–30a; cited in Ho Ping-ti, *Population of China*, p. 186.

38. He Qiaoyuan, *Min shu*, “on southern products”; see also *Yongchun zhouzhi* (1787 ed.), 7: 9b–10a.

39. Ho Ping-ti, “Introduction of American Food Plants”, p. 192.

40. Ho Ping-ti, *Population of China*, p. 185.

common government practice to balance the annual budget. As early as AD 1551, a land surtax amounting to 1.2 million *liang* (*taels*) had already been sought from the southern provinces.<sup>41</sup> The southeastern areas, especially Zhejiang and Fujian, were badly affected by different forms of additional levies.<sup>42</sup> During the Wanli reign, military spending emerged as the main item in the budget. A successive, nationwide increase in land surtax, that was called *liaohsiang* (Liao military payments), came into effect in 1618. The additional amount was 3.5 *li* (1 *liang* = 1,000 *li*) per *mu* for the first year, 7.0 *li* the second year, and 9.0 *li* the third year,<sup>43</sup> or approximately an increase of 3, 6 and 8 per cent respectively.<sup>44</sup> Another 3.0 *li* was added in 1630<sup>45</sup>—a 10 per cent increase within 12 years. Fujian had its share of 161,069.0 *liang* in the total surtax for its 13,422,000 *mu* of cultivated land.<sup>46</sup>

Other forms of additional taxation were also introduced. The following figures indicate the total amount levied from each form of additional tax between 1619 and 1627: (unit: *liang*)<sup>47</sup>

Land Surtax	Salt Surtax	Customs Surtax	Miscellaneous	Total
31,217,841	1,756,020	677,794	5,765,487	39,417,144

The whole nation had a population of 51,655,459 *kou*. The average additional Liao tax for each *kou* during that period was 0.76 *liang*. A pre-calculated amount of the land surtax was assigned to the local administration according to the total acreage of rice-fields under

41. *Ming shi* 明史 [Standard dynastic history of the Ming], 78: 10a.

42. *Ibid.*, 78: 10b.

43. *Ibid.*, 78: 11b.

44. The percentage is based on the rate given as 1.2 *liang* (various levies of service besides the land tax itself) for 10 *mu* of rice-field in 1571; see *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 7a. The rate itself, evidently, was already too great a burden, even for the rich. See *Ming shilu: Chongzhen changbian* 明實錄：崇禎長變 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: A long account of the Chongzhen Reign (1628–44)], 43: 9a–9b [Peiping Library Collection; reprint, Taipei, 1966].

45. *Ming shi*, 78: 12b; also *Ming shilu: Chongzhen changbian*, 41: la–lb.

46. The *mu* figure is taken from Li Wenzhi 李文治, *Wanming minbian* 晚明民變 [The rebellions in the Late Ming] (Hongkong: Yuandong tushu gongsi, 1966), p. 23. According to *Chongzhen changbian*, 38: 14b–16b, Fujian originally had 120,802.0 *liang* as its share. The proposed increase in land tax in 1630 assigned an additional amount of 40,267.0 *liang* to Fujian.

47. Li Wenzhi, *Wanming minbian*, p. 22.

its administration. Since tax inequities resulted from the privileged exemptions of the scholar-gentry and from evasions by landlords with large holdings generally, the rest of the people had to share the amount. This must have placed an intolerable burden on the shoulders of the common people. The officials and the gentry were legally entitled to exemptions on certain amounts of property and on this basis many devices were employed to evade taxation. In Zhangzhou, for instance, the officials and the gentry put all the land-holdings of their relatives and followers under their own holdings to avoid taxes.<sup>48</sup> A large part of their share fell also upon the shoulders of the poor. It is estimated that the actual per capita increase rose to one *liang*<sup>49</sup> or about 32 per cent more than originally calculated. Considering only that the actual size of small-holdings was mostly far below the average of 6.4 *mu* per *kou*, the yield could hardly cover the taxes. Taking into account only the land tax per *mu* in the late Ming, it was almost 200 per cent higher than that in the early years of the dynasty<sup>50</sup> and this did not include the increases resulting from fraudulent practices.<sup>51</sup> In the most general terms, the evenly distributed system also had its defects. It did not take into consideration the different productivity and economic conditions in each area.

Labor services were another nuisance. Under Ming laws, every *ding*, or adult male, was obliged to serve in the militia. In the mid-Ming period, a certain amount of payment to support local administrative spending was required in addition to the militia service. The corvée was another type of labor service which required every adult male to take part in road, bridge and other civil construction work. However, he could choose to pay for replacements.<sup>52</sup> No matter what the alternatives were, the ordinary folk who were poor just could not afford either the payment or the time spent in labor services. Among the labor services, perhaps the courier service (*yichuan*) caused the most suffering. In Zhangzhou, there were

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48. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* 漳州府志 [Gazetteer of Zhangzhou Prefecture] (1573 ed.), 5: 5–6.

49. *Wanming minbian*, p. 22.

50. It was 0.033 *dan* of rice per *mu* for the public land in the early Ming; see *Ming shi*, 78: 4a. In 1571, it increased to 0.0963 *dan*; see *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 7a.

51. Among the many malpractices, it was reported in 1572 that local administrations used to maintain two sets of land registries to facilitate their corruption. See *Ming shilu: Muzong chao* 明實錄：穆宗朝 [Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty: Muzong Reign], 68: 5a–5b. In one fraudulent case, a 53 per cent overcharge in land surtax was reported by two Fujianese Censors in 1631. See *Chongzhen changbian*.

52. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 34.

eight post-stages (*yi*) at which couriers took their rest or shift.<sup>53</sup> It was a government service for the transmission of dispatches and various types of official transportation services. Although small allowances were paid to the couriers, they never amounted to a substantial income compared with the loss they incurred by leaving their farm-work unattended. As pointed out by a Censor in 1622, their bitterness “was intolerable for the observer to behold and hear about”.<sup>54</sup> Courier expenses actually came from another surtax at the rate of 0.12 *liang* on every *dan* of rice paid as tax in kind (approximately taken from the yield of 10 *mu*).<sup>55</sup> The long list of taxes does not end with those mentioned above. Expenditure on wars and palace construction work during the 1590s, for example, caused the Wanli Emperor to send out eunuch collectors to supervise tax matters and to levy a variety of special new taxes on mines, shops, boats and so forth. The common people were exhausted, lamented the celebrated mandarin Xu Guangqi.<sup>56</sup>

As a result, for the “little people” the possession of rice-fields was nothing but an extra burden. To escape from this burden, the agriculturists often abandoned their holdings and moved out to seek new fortunes. It was estimated that 90 per cent of the land in southeastern China was abandoned by people in this situation.<sup>57</sup> Whether or not this remark is an exaggeration, the percentage does paint a disastrous picture.

Apart from land desertion, the agriculturists were also caught up in the peculiar “three-lord holding” pattern (*yitian sanzhu*). This was a common practice in southern Fujian, especially in Longchi, Nanjing, Zhangpu, Changtai and Pinghe. Sometimes, it could even occur in the form of the so-called “four-lord holding”.<sup>58</sup> In the early Ming, Emperor Taizu’s insistence on the successive counting of the entire population arose from his eagerness to make an equitable distribution of land as well as of labor service. So, every *ding* who became a small-holder was called the “grand leaseholder” (*da zuzhu*) as soon as he was swallowed up in the pattern. His holding right was recorded in the official land-registry and this meant that he was simultaneously required to pay land tax and be responsible for labor services. When land-holding became a burden rather than a

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53. *Ibid.*, 5: 38b.

54. Quoted in Li Wenzhi, *Wanming minbian*, p. 24.

55. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 38b. 1 *dan* = 1 *picul* or 100 *catties*. The word *dan* is written as 石 in Chinese.

56. Xu Guangqi, *Nongzheng quanshu*, 16: 29b.

57. *Chouhai tubian* 籌海圖編 [Sea strategy illustrated: A work on coastal defense], comp. Hu Zongxian and Zheng Ruozeng, et al. 胡宗憲 (1510–65), 鄭若曾 (1503–70) 等編撰 (1624 ed.; first printing 1562), 11: 56b; 12: 31a.

58. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, pp. 85–6, 88–9, 119, 122–4.

privilege, the “grand leaseholder” sold his holding at a very low price to someone who, besides the purchase price, was required by an agreement to pay annual rent in kind. The new holder, who was called the “secondary leaseholder” (*xiao zuhu*),<sup>59</sup> did not pay any tax at all even though he was the one who actually held the land. The government tax collectors went to the original holder whose name was still in the land register. The new proprietor soon employed some tenants (*dianhu*) to work for him. He became a middleman between the “grand leaseholder” and the tenants. Finally it was the tenants who not only engaged in cultivation but also provided both the proprietor and the “grand leaseholder” with their fixed income. Although in name they did not have to pay the land tax, the tax that finally went to the government was derived from their rent. These people were pressed at the bottom and suffered the most.<sup>60</sup> Ironically, the tenants were also called “landlords”. The reason is that a tenancy was not legally transferable during the Ming period. Nevertheless, the transfer was made whenever the tenant was so desperately in need of money he had no other alternative but to give away his “life bowl” for instant relief, although such an action was economic suicide. The whole process of land transfer became more complicated when the “grand leaseholder” decided to get a “tax-farmer” (*baidui*, literally, to trade with empty hands), who became the “fourth landlord”. Evidently, the “grand leaseholder” often could not afford to pay taxes from the income of the rent alone. Written contracts always existed between the parties to such an agreement. The following example is intended to give a clearer picture of the malpractice.<sup>61</sup> Say there was a holding of 10 *mu* with a yield of 50 *dan* of rice. The tenants kept 40 per cent of the harvest and paid the rest (30 *dan*) to the proprietor, the “secondary leaseholder”, as rent. In turn, the latter gave 10 *dan* to the “grand leaseholder” as required by the terms of the sale. The “grand leaseholder” duly paid the land tax, both in kind and in cash, that would amount to slightly less than 1 *dan* of rice plus 1.2 *liang* of cash. But more often, he would choose to keep 3 or 4 *dan* for his own consumption and give the rest to a tax-farmer. In around 1573, ten *dan* of rice was worth 2.5 *liang* of *taels*. Therefore, the tax-farmer was still able to make a little profit. However, should he choose

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59. Also called *xiao shuizhu* 小稅主 (minor tax-receiver) or *yezhu* 業主 (proprietor).

60. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 123b.

61. The example is given in *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 6–8. The late Ming scholar Gu Yanwu gives a figure ranging from one to three *dan* of rice as yield per *mu*. Cited in Fu Yiling 傅依凌, *Fujian diannong jingji shi congkao* 福建佃農經濟史叢考 [An examination of the economic history of the Fukienese tenants] (Fujian, 1944), p. 54.



a “shady” transaction with local officials it would finally free him from paying anything.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Three- (or four-) Lord Pattern**

(An ideal distribution of a yield of 50 *dan* of rice)

#### **Authority**

(tax: 1 *dan* + 1.2 *liang* of taels)

#### **Grand leaseholder**

(income: 3–4 *dan*)

#### **Tax-farmer**

(pay tax out of 6–7 *dan*)

#### **Secondary leaseholder**

(income: 20 *dan*)

#### **Tenants**

(income: 20 *dan*)

Source: *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 7.

In the “three- (or four-) lord” pattern, the “grand leaseholder” was usually the independent small-holder who could only narrowly escape bankruptcy. It was the “secondary leaseholder”, who, as a tax-free proprietor, benefited most. A slip of the pen in a contemporary gazetteer reveals that these people were “mostly well established with property”.<sup>63</sup> Together with the tax-farmers, they belonged to the category of *shihao* (the rich and powerful), a term that frequently appears in the source materials.

Who actually was a *shihao*? Let us first look back to the structural setting of Chinese traditional society. Confucian scholars denied that there could be a society of uniformity and equality. It was clearly pointed out by Mencius that, “Those who labor with their minds govern others; those who labor with their bodily strength are governed by others.” The officials, the backbone of the ruling class, were the superiors, commoners the inferiors. Therefore, the peasant farmed the gentry’s land and the rents supported the gentry in their leisure. Since China was a huge agrarian country, the tremendous majority of the people were peasants. The gentry was small in number but of immense power, dominating Chinese society for more than two thousand years. In Fujian, the gentry played a predominant role in local affairs. They controlled not only the local economy but also the administration. They again relentlessly

62. *Fujian tongzhi* (1871 ed.), 56: 22–3.

63. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5:8b. See also this comment in the Guangxu edition of the gazetteer as follows: “The rich and powerful people privately enjoy land-proprietorships without taxation. But the poor and weak suffer from paying land-tax without proprietorships.” (14: 32a)

exploited people of the lower social classes. Their members consisted mainly of the heirs to prominent government officials (called *shijia*), the successful candidates in the various levels of the imperial examination<sup>64</sup> and the retired officials<sup>65</sup> who, with their relatives, took advantage of their prestige and special privileges. They found it easy to oppress the common people by extortion, by violence and by disruption of the judicial process.<sup>66</sup> These people were in a favorable position to associate with the government officials. Not only were they surrounded by a large group of flatterers and followers, even the local minor officers, whose salaries were usually nominal, came to make their bow. The tax-farmers mentioned belonged to the gentry or became their protégés almost without exception. As a consequence of the perpetration of malpractices or, in certain extreme cases of squeezing, proposing false taxes, nothing went to the government. The little people, consequently, groaned under the weight of their coercion and exploitation.

In the Ming period, the unprecedented concentration of landholdings in fewer and fewer hands was a long-recognized tenancy problem. Besides the distribution of land to every *ding*, garrison forces throughout the country, in the proportion of seven-tenths of the whole, were given lands to cultivate, each soldier being granted 50 *mu*.<sup>67</sup> Princes and nobles were also granted lands. Furthermore, officials had a right to official lands. Land during the Ming period either belonged to the category of official land (*guantian*) or of public land (*mintian*). The former mainly included royal estates (*wangzhuang*), service land (*zhitian*) and military colonization holdings (*tuntian*).

The degree of land concentration can be seen from the large number of royal holdings. Such grants were most popular during the period 1488–1521. The Jiajing Emperor once prohibited further grants but, in the late sixteenth century, the practice resumed.<sup>68</sup> In the early years, only unoccupied lands were granted to members of the royal family. In the late

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64. Li Wenzhi, *Wanming minbian*, p. 2.

65. Referring to a local turmoil, the *Quanzhou fuzhi* mentions a landlord called Shi *xiangguo* 史相國 (Premier Shi). He was probably a retired official with the title of Premier. See 20: 13b.

66. Xie Zhaozhe, *Wu zazu*, 4: 37a. The author, a contemporary eyewitness, states that it was hopeless to think of obtaining justice over the rich.

67. In Quanzhou, the ratio was 4:6; it means that 40 per cent of the garrison troops stood on guard over the walled cities, whereas the rest were assigned land amounting to 24–26 *mu* each soldier (see Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 66a). The Zhangzhou ratio was 3:7 with 27–30 *mu* each (see *ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 105a).

68. Li Wenzhi, *Wanming minbian*, p. 4.

Jiajing period, the royal holdings were largely expanded by encroaching on the public lands.<sup>69</sup> In connivance with eunuchs, officials, local gentry, big brokers and merchants sped the course of land alienation. The fertile lands were all falling into the hands of a few.<sup>70</sup>

The public land was still not in the commoners' hands for the most part. Let us return again to the tradition. Every family had its ancestral hall (*citang*) with common land to cover its ceremonial expenditures. Accordingly, a clan had its common land for different functions, including school-land (*xuetian*), temple-land (*miaotian*), lineage-land (*zutian*) and tea-land (*chatian*). All these lands were common property and they constituted quite a high percentage of the public land. The control or supervision of the common property was entrusted to the pre-eminent family of each clan. Even the income drawn from the common land benefited them mostly. For example, the yield from the school-land became a reserve fund to support the candidates for the imperial examinations. Without doubt, they were mainly drawn from the rich families. The presence of ceremony and relief funds was an effective means of maintaining the gentry's special social status and keeping the clan members under control.<sup>71</sup> Hence, the so-called common lands were a disguised form of land concentration.

The gentry's control of the local economy, especially the rice market, gave it a better device to foreclose land. The simplest method was to stock-pile rice until the price rose.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, they monopolized fisheries, ferries and transportation. The prices of daily necessities climbed without any limitation being imposed.<sup>73</sup> Eventually people had to give up their land.

The privileged holdings of monasteries also became their target. In his youth, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty had been a monk. After he came to the throne, all the monastery holdings were granted tax-exemption. However, the monasteries lost that privilege in the mid-Ming era when the government found itself in financial difficulties. Fujian had the highest percentage of monastery holdings in the nation and Quanzhou ranked top in the province. The larger holdings consisted of several

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69. Ibid.

70. See *Yongchun xianzhi* (1684 ed.), 2: 1b; Chen Mauren 陳懋仁, *Quannan zazhi* 泉南雜誌 [Miscellaneous notes on southern Quanzhou] (Chongzhen [1628–44] ed.), pt. I, p. 20a; and Xie Zhaozhe, *Wu zazu*, 4: 36–7. Chen was a minor mandarin in his native region of Quanzhou.

71. Fu Yiling, *Fujian diannong jingji shi*, pp. 25–6.

72. Chen Renxi 陳仁錫 (1581–1636), *Huangming shifa lu* 皇明世法錄 [The inimitable institutions of the Royal Ming] (Chongzhen [1628–44] ed.), 75: 6–7.

73. *Fujian tongzhi* (1871 ed.), 56: 22–3.

thousand *mu* and even the smaller ones possessed several hundred *mu*.<sup>74</sup> Zhangzhou was not far different. It was mentioned in the gazetteer that six-sevenths of its land was held in the names of temples.<sup>75</sup>

In actual fact, the monastery holdings in the second half of the Ming period were so vulnerable that they fell an easy prey to ruthless land-hunters. Even more unfortunately, the monasteries also became the target of tax squeezing. Their holdings were then nothing but nominal and their position was no different from that of the “grand leaseholder”. As non-temporal institutions, they had never conducted direct supervision of their lands. They did not even want to bother about the unauthorized transfers of land among the cultivators, provided that rents were paid. With the lapse of time, their holdings had spun beyond their control. However, in the land registry, their proprietorship remained the same and, fired with fierce avarice, the authorities were always casting envious eyes on their property. When increasing tax rates were imposed upon them after the mid-sixteenth century, the monasteries wallowed in a miserable situation.<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps it is surprising to find that the monasteries also turned to mortgagees to raise money for taxes. Since mortgage and foreclosure always come together, in the end the monastery holdings were trapped in the “three-lord” pattern. A heavier land tax was imposed in 1564. Besides its financial purpose, it was put in place to prevent the bulk of the monastery holdings from slipping into land-hunters’ hands.<sup>77</sup> The outcome was the bankruptcy of the monasteries and the grievous suffering of the cultivators.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, “the corrupt officials and the powerful families ... [continuously] took away the sources of the monastery income by compulsory means”.<sup>79</sup> A local official who witnessed the decline in monastic fortunes described it with an air of melancholy by quoting a poem: “The prosperity had gone with the royal tax, when the old monk returned from his begging, he heard neither the evening bell nor the drum, only the temple’s empty hall teeming with bats.”<sup>80</sup>

74. Fu Yiling, *Fujian diannong jingji shi*, p. 4.

75. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 10: 33b. A different work cited gives the figure of 7/10; see 10: 42b. In 1631 the Board of Revenue mentioned that the powerful local people in Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong used to register their landed property as religious properties. The confusion paved the way for tax evasions. See *Chongzhen changbian*, 45: 20a–21a.

76. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 50b–54a.

77. *Ibid.*, 5: 52b.

78. *Ibid.*, 5: 53–54a.

79. Xie Zhaozhe, *Wu zazu*, 4: 36–7.

80. Chen Maoren, *Quannan zazhi*, pt. II, p. 3b.

Around the mid-sixteenth century, sources also indicate that, under the guise of “monks”, the followers of the *shihao* were in actual control of the monastery property.<sup>81</sup> Petitions against the *shihao* are often found in the source materials, accusing them of immorality, encroachment on others’ land, collusion with officials to seize land and acting coercively toward the ordinary people.<sup>82</sup>

Land alienation also did not spare the military colonization holdings which occupied 3.6 per cent of the total in Zhangzhou<sup>83</sup> during the Jiajing reign between 1522 and 1566. This land was either foreclosed on account of indebtedness or “voluntarily” offered to the *shihao* for protection. Some soldiers simply resorted to desertion;<sup>84</sup> their abandoned land was subsequently commandeered by the *shihao*. Holdings of even this size met with a disastrous end and the authorities floundered in a helpless position:

When the *shihao* are asked by the authorities to pay taxes, they disclaim the holdings. But when the administration intends to redistribute them, they refuse to give up.... It results in great confusion in the land records.<sup>85</sup>

Occasionally, malpractices were checked when honest, incorruptible officials were in office. If one studies the figures given in the table of usable land in Quanzhou prefecture carefully, one finds a sharp increase in acreage in Jinjiang, namely: from 4,252.30 *qing* in 1562 to 5,733.19 *qing* in 1582. The reason is simply that Magistrate Peng Guoguang took the 1582 land survey seriously. He personally went to the fields to guarantee their proper measurement. An additional 1,480.89 *qing* were found to have been unreported or falsely reported. This was almost 35 per cent of the preceding figure obtained two decades earlier. As a consequence, the amount of rice production reported also increased by two-fifths.<sup>86</sup>

Owing to land concentration, the actual size of small-holdings for each family in Zhangzhou was far below the average<sup>87</sup> of 25 *mu* for both

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81. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 52b–54a.

82. *Ibid.*; also *Ming shilu: Shizong chao* 明實錄: 世宗朝 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: Shizong/Jiajing Reign] (hereafter *MS: SZ*), 155: 2a.

83. The military land was 43,696 *mu* out of the total of 1,211,461 *mu* in 1522 in Zhangzhou; see *ibid.*, 5: 5 and 28b.

84. *Ibid.*, 5: 29–30.

85. Quoted in Li Wenzhi, *Wanming minbian*, p. 3.

86. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 69.

87. This was especially true in the case of tenants who constituted a large portion of the local population in the final decades of the Ming dynasty. Each tenant

the prefecture and the province,<sup>88</sup> not to mention the national average holding per household, that amounted to 116 *mu* during 1573–1620 and 76 *mu* during 1621–27.<sup>89</sup> Most of the small land-holders could not even reach the standard of self-sufficiency after a whole year of unceasing labor. It was often the case in Fujian that smallholders, such as the colonization soldiers, transformed themselves into tenants by offering their holdings to the *shihao*. This was a common practice especially during the last two decades of the Ming dynasty. So, the protectors annexed additional holdings in due course without difficulties, but the protégés had suffered a different fate.<sup>90</sup>

The presence of an increasing number of “secondary lease-holders” signaled the rapid development of land alienation. It is estimated that 70 to 80 per cent of the land in Nanjing fell under the *shihao*’s control.<sup>91</sup> The same must have been true in other more developed areas. In Yongchun, “the fertile land mostly belongs to the officials’ estates.”<sup>92</sup> In southern Quanzhou, prominent families were many, their average holding per household ranging from 500 to 1,000 *mu*.<sup>93</sup> In summing up the situation, an eyewitness said:

The officials and the rich families compete with one another for more land. The land of the corrupt officials and the powerful is so vast that it sometimes extends to the neighboring districts. They annex not only the lands next to their holdings but also those abandoned by the original occupants. The income of the temples is also seized by them. Golden crops are growing everywhere all over the vast countryside; junks are crammed with precious grain. What a pity that nine out of ten belong to the prominent families! This is why the rich become richer while the poor [become] poorer.<sup>94</sup>

Ground down by such harsh conditions, the Fujianese were so desperate that they had no other option but to drown their baby daughters as a

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cultivated fewer than 2–3 *mu* of rice land. See Fu Yiling, *Fujian diannong jingji shi*, p. 54.

88. The Zhangzhou average of holdings in 1571 was about 25 *mu*; see *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 3a, 5b; the population was 48,863 households, and the land 1,203,893 *mu*. Also Wei Qingyuan, *Mingdai huangce zhidu*, pp. 248–51; the population in 1542 is given as 519,878 households and the cultivated land as 13,547,533 *mu*.

89. Li Wenzhi, *Wanming minbian*, p. 6.

90. Fu Yiling, *Fujian diannong jingji shi*, p. 65.

91. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 122.

92. *Yongchun xianzhi* (1684 ed.), 2: 1b.

93. Chen Maoren, *Quannan zazhi*, pt. I, p. 15a.

94. Xie Zhaozhe, *Wu zazu*, 4: 36b–37a.

last resort. Since they could not take care of their own livelihood, any additional consumers would only bring more hardship on the family. This tragedy happened even in well-to-do families when the concubines gave birth to baby girls because they feared that the new-born baby might interrupt the work in the fields and also that they might not be able to afford its dowry in the future.<sup>95</sup> This sinful practice was said to be most common in Zhangpu.<sup>96</sup>

All these evils naturally damaged social stability. They created an untenable relationship between the landlord and the tenant. Furthermore, the absence of essential incentives suffocated agricultural productivity. The landlord oppression was the immediate reason for the outbreak of tenant uprisings and subsequent social turmoil.

A tenant's life was worst among the agriculturists.<sup>97</sup> They were subject to the payment of all taxes (other than the land tax) and labor services. The contract between the two parties tied the tenant to the land,<sup>98</sup> and served the landlord as a strong guarantee of maintaining sufficient man-power. The landlord was in a position to dominate the will of the tenant who was often obliged to ask for loans from his landlord to cover the costs of cultivation, household expenses and the purchase of cattle. The maintenance of the irrigation works also fell upon his shoulders. As a landlord tended to squeeze as much out of his tenant as possible, the latter became ever more entangled in the web of indebtedness. A harvest could never satisfy his financial needs.<sup>99</sup> The landlord frequently kept an eye on his tenant and supervised all his production activities. Instructions such as the following were issued from time to time to direct the tenant's work:

It is now cultivation season,... the elders should instruct and advise their juniors to begin sowing seeds....

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95. *Xiamen zhi* 厦门志 [Gazetteer of Amoy] (1839 ed.; reprint, Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1967), 15: 13.

96. *Fujian tongzhi* (1871 ed.), 56: 37b.

97. Absentee landlords from other subprefectures in Nanjing controlled almost 70 to 80 per cent of local cultivated land. Consequently, "most of the native agriculturists became tenants". See Gu Yanwu, *Tianxia junguo libing shu*, Vol. 26, p. 122a. In Pinghe, the tenants suffered greatly because they were obliged to supply rents to the other three "landlords". See *ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 123b.

98. Sources like Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 86a; and *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.) (5: 8) mention the existence of such contracts.

99. The tenants' frequent failure to pay rent and the landlords' heavy-handed tactics resulted in an official notice advising both parties to adopt a cordial relationship. Quoted in *ibid.*, 10: 26b.

Irrigation work is the principal support of agriculture. The users should get ready for construction works....

The tillage depends greatly upon cattle, ... their slaughter should be prohibited.... Millet, beans, hemp [ramie], wheat, vegetable, egg-plant, taro and etc. ... should also be planted during their slack hours of farming. They should also try to plant ... mulberry trees.... In case this is not successful, they should, then, plant cotton or hemp-producing plants....<sup>100</sup>

Before the tenancy disputes became serious, the landlord used to collect rents personally in spring and winter. By custom the tenant was required to provide a meal and present a fowl and other items for a feast. In return, the landlord gave him napkins, fans and the like.<sup>101</sup> Such offerings actually had become a compulsory portion of the rent.

Probably ceremonial donations (*xiangshui*, literally, village tax) were also collected in the name of the temples. As they were related to superstition, this kind of expenditure was far more distressing than the regular taxes themselves.<sup>102</sup>

Last, but by no means the least, was the scourge of the irregularity of the measurement system. Landlords took full advantage of it. The capacity of a local peck (*xiangdou*), for example, was sometimes only between four-fifths and two-fifths as large as that of the official peck (*guandou*).<sup>103</sup> While collecting rents, the landlord would make extra profit by using larger capacity measures. When he sold, the smaller one was used.<sup>104</sup> The use of fraudulent measuring baskets (*doulao*) was one of the major reasons that led to frequent violence disturbances. In the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, tenants often took action in defiance of such tyrannous practices.<sup>105</sup> Several cases that happened in the last few years of the dynasty are referred to in the Gazetteer of Quanzhou Prefecture. In one outbreak in Nanjing, for example, several landlords were killed on the first day of the uprising. The rebellious tenants built up their resistance in the hills, while others remained in the villages but on rent strikes. The rebels also made an unexpected attack on the junks carrying grain. During the turmoil landlords had to hide in fear of their lives. Other districts, including Yongchun and Anchi, responded to the uprising soon after. The case of Yongchun is the most

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100. Ibid., 10: 26; 11: 43b-44b.

101. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 13b.

102. Such was the case in South Song. See *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 10: 141-2.

103. Ibid., 5: 53.

104. Cited in Fu Yiling, *Fujian diannong jingji shi*, p. 15.

105. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 13.



surprising. A Jiajing gazetteer (1526 ed.) still boasted of its fertility, saying that, “people here are well-fed and well-clothed”.<sup>106</sup> But in the last decade of the Ming dynasty “the poor tenants were in debt, homeless and vagrant”.<sup>107</sup> The disturbances went on for several years. Walled cities in the area suffered greatly from price inflation. When government troops arrived, they found only deserted villages inhabited solely by the aged. With tears in their eyes, the older people told the commander a woeful story. They claimed that the villagers were all law-abiding citizens, but the intolerable bitterness caused by the cruelty of the rent-collecting servants had incited the rebellion. The situation did not allow the commander to resort to strong military action, even though he was pressured to do so by the local gentry. On account of the restraint exercised by the military officers, peace was slowly restored. Finally, the authorities promised not to take any reprisals against those rebels who came back. As a further concession, their leaders were permitted to supervise rent-collection. The extortion of unauthorized taxes was also entirely banned.<sup>108</sup>

Tenancy uprisings of this type persisted throughout the second half of the Ming period, although the protestors were labeled differently in the local gazetteers, as “robbers”, “plunderers”, “rebels”, “bandits” or “evil people”. Whatever the term, they all tell almost the same story. The outlaws occupied a *shanzhai* (a hill fortress) and launched attacks on the walled cities whenever they were strong enough to do so. It is reminiscent of what is told in the famous classical novel, the *Shuihu zhuan* (Water Margin) about a North Song uprising. In Chinese history, one can almost rely on these occurrences as indicators of social conditions. Although local uprisings were by no means uncommon throughout the history of southern Fujian during Ming times, the frequency and intensity of the rebellious violence in the later part of the dynasty, as shown in the local gazetteers after 1506, clearly points to deteriorating social conditions.

The local uprisings in southern Fujian listed below are taken from a few gazetteers.<sup>109</sup> One might want to take note that in most cases the participants or the supporters were former tenants:

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106. *Yongchun xianzhi* (1526 ed.), *juan* 1.

107. *Yongchun xianzhi* (1684 ed.), 2: 1b.

108. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 13–4.

109. The cases indicated by “\*” are cited from the *Quanzhou fuzhi*, 73: 21–2, while the rest are taken from *Fujian tongzhi* (1871 ed.), *juan* 278. In the 40th year of the Jiajing reign (1561), it was recorded that all eight prefectures in Fujian were seriously infested with “bandits”. See *MSL: SZ*, 503:3a. Another reference for 1563 also mentions that “... all the Fujianese people are connected with bandits (*Minmin jie dao* 閩民皆盜)”. See *ibid.*, 519: 2a.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Locality of Uprisings</b>	<b>Identity or Origin of the Participants</b>
1506	Zhangzhou, Anchi	Guangdong plunderers
1507	From Nan'an to Jinjiang	Guangdong plunderers
1508	Anchi & Nan'an	Guangdong plunderers
1510	From Anchi, Nan'an to Jinjiang	Guangdong plunderers
1522	Anchi, Nan'an, Dehua, & Yongchun	Guangdong & Zhangzhou plunderers
1523	Zhang(zhou), Quan(zhou), & Yongchun	Guangdong plunderers
1524	Zhang(zhou) & Quan(zhou)	Guangdong & Zhangzhou plunderers attacked by joint troops of 6 districts
1533	Changtai & Anchi; Zhang(zhou) & Quan(zhou)	Yongding plunderers*; local bandits
1538	Anchi	Yongding plunderers*
1546	Zhao'an	local bandits
1547	Anchi & Tong'an	local bad men*
1560	Zhao'an	villager rebellion
1561	Longyan, Yongchun, Nan'an, Zhangpu, Nanjing, & Zhangping	villager rebellions or plunderers from neighboring areas
1562	Tong'an, Pinghe, Zhangping, Longyan, & Yongchun	villager rebellions or plunderers from neighboring areas
1563	Longyan	local rebellion
1564	Zhangping & Zhangpu	Longyan & Guangdong plunderers
1565	Longyan	Longyan plunderers attacked Shaowu in the far north
1583	Longchi	local rebellion
1590	Zhangzhou	Uprising staged by famine victims
1592	Changtai	local rebellion
1624	Zhao'an	bandit attack on the walled city

*(cont'd overleaf)*

Year	Locality of Uprisings	Identity or Origin of the Participants
1639	Changpu	bandit attack on the walled city
1642	Nan'an, Pinghe, Zhangzhoufu, & Nan'an	tenant uprisings
1643	Changpu & Zhao'an	disturbances begun by local bandits
1644	Pinghe, Longyan, Zhangping, Nan'an, & Yongchun	turmoil staged by bandits

Earlier the plunderers had come from the neighboring areas. However, in the later period more "local bandits" were involved. As a local gazetteer comments:

Whether or not the disturbances in Fujian can be coped with successfully depends largely on the conditions in Zhangzhou and Quanzhou. If their people are starving, assuredly the number of plunderers will enormously increase.<sup>110</sup>

The first intrusion into Fujian by Guangdong plunderers occurred in 1506, on which occasion the intruders were said to have numbered fewer than 90.<sup>111</sup> But, this "bandit" band was soon able to recruit many participants and supporters from Zhangzhou. Another disturbance caused by them in 1524 could barely be quelled by the joint forces of six districts. Thereafter, outsiders looked upon southern Fujian as an outlaws' haven.

The story will never be complete without mentioning the fate of numerous salt-producers. Salt revenue constituted the second largest item of state income.<sup>112</sup> Under the state salt monopoly system, all salt-producing areas were organized into 13 distribution commissions and superintendencies.<sup>113</sup> In the first century of the dynasty, the public consumed salt sold by the government on a rationed basis. Although the

110. *Fujian tongzhi* (1871 ed.), 87: 10b; see also *Minbu shu*, 16b-17a, the content runs: "The Zhangzhou people frequently resort to breaking the law if they are starving."

111. *Yongchun zhouzhi* (1787 ed.), 15:4b. Reference is also found in *Ming shilu: Shizong shilu* saying that, "those bandits are of Guangdong origin". See 25: 3a.

112. Ray Huang, "Fiscal Administration during the Ming Dynasty", in *Chinese Government in Ming Times*, ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 94.

113. *Ibid.*

Court discontinued salt distribution in 1474, the collection of payment for rationed salt from the population was not suspended. Fujian was not included in any of the official distribution regions but payment for the salt ration was required. Consequently, salt consumption in Fujian had long been more burdensome than in other regions.<sup>114</sup> In fact, the monopoly of the private salt-farmers had created a worse situation than the state monopoly had done.<sup>115</sup> The salt trade was a profitable business. Zhangzhou merchants used to transport salt to the upstream interior districts such as Longyan, Zhangping and Ningyang where they could profit tenfold.<sup>116</sup> The large profits had led the powerful people to exercise their influence over the local authorities to gain more stringent control of private selling so that they could effectively manipulate prices. The gazetteer of Tong'an records that in 1546 the local authorities took rigorous measures against the salt-peddlers. Many "xiaomin" were arrested or harassed by government officials.<sup>117</sup> The salt-farmers were then in a good position to monopolize the market and proceeded to take the salt-producers "by the throat". Bear in mind that the coastal people depended largely on fishing and salt production, especially in southern Zhangzhou where there was very little cultivated land.<sup>118</sup> As fishing was badly affected by the seafaring prohibition, salt production became even more indispensable to the people. "The coastal population would starve were they to stop selling salt for just a single day," tells a gazetteer.<sup>119</sup> Protected by the corrupt administration, the salt monopolists often refused to buy in order to wait for lower purchasing but higher selling prices. After working in the blazing sun the whole day long, the destitute producers could only produce two *dan* of salt for an unreasonably low selling price of 2 or 3 *fen* (1 *fen* = 1/10 *qian* = 1/100 *liang*/tael) per *dan*.<sup>120</sup> Under such circumstances, the livelihood of the salt-producers and the free flow of salt supplies were both cut off. The *xiaomin's* suffering is told as follows:

We see the old and the weak [from the interior] crawling over hills and valleys for whole days, carrying with them firewood and

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114. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1877 ed.), 15: 30.

115. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 96.

116. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1877 ed.), 15: 21-2.

117. *Tong'an xianzhi* 同安縣志 [Gazetteer of Tong'an District] (1929 ed.; reprint, Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1967), 10: 21a.

118. "Only 20 to 30 per cent of the land is arable", stated in Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 84.

119. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1877 ed.), 15: 22-3.

120. *Ibid.*, 15: 21-2.

rice, just to exchange for a few catties of salt. [The monopolists' followers] relentlessly take away all the salt and even their other belongings. Then they bring the confiscated evidence to the salt-sellers as a threat. Only after squeezing every single thing they possess will they be satisfied.... For merely a part of the revenue benefit, the Court let the evil merchants squeeze a hundredfold profit. While the evil merchants gain a profit of a hundredfold, the *xiaomin* suffer [a] thousand times worse than ever.<sup>121</sup>

Without a sufficient supply of salt, the interior of Zhangzhou erupted into an uprising in the late sixteenth century.<sup>122</sup> Obviously, the administration had not learned a lesson from all the troubles caused by such a private monopoly. In 1598, when a eunuch was assigned to Fujian to exact more revenues, the local powerful people saw it as an opportunity to collaborate with the administration for personal gain.<sup>123</sup>

## Unleashing the Potential for a Better Livelihood

While becoming social outcasts was a desperate recourse of the distressed peasants, others attempted to find economic solutions to their plight. Eventually this trend was to lead to a changing landscape in southern Fujianese society. It was by no means a smooth process of improvement if the strength of the traditional resistance to any change in the status quo is taken into account.

The Chinese peasantry was characterized by the smallness of the basic functional units.<sup>124</sup> The family in a peasant community was a self-sufficient unit, striving to provide the necessities and minimum social solidarity in everyday economic pursuits. The traditional ideology in China suppressed individualism in favor of familism<sup>125</sup> in which all values were determined by reference to the maintenance, continuity and functioning of the family group. Extended organizations were formed on this basis. They gathered on ceremonial occasions associated with kinship and helped each other when they were in need. The family's very small piece of farm-land, which was only a few acres on average and made capital

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121. *Ibid.*, 15: 22–3.

122. *Ibid.*, 15: 25a.

123. *Ibid.*, 15: 24b.

124. Fei Hsiao-t'ung, "Peasantry and Gentry: An Interpretation of Chinese Social Structure and its Changes", *American Journal of Sociology* 52 (1946–47): 1.

125. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

accumulation impossible, left no room for any individualistic ambition that could jeopardize the collective interest.<sup>126</sup>

In the economic sphere, the Chinese family was able to carry self-sufficiency to surprising lengths. Its members produced and consumed on a family basis. Only a few staples were bought or exchanged. Ideally speaking, society ranked merchants at the bottom of the social ladder, whereas artisans were only a grade below the peasants, and the latter were ranked well below the gentry. There were even periods in which attempts were made, though never successfully, to create a closed class of the merchants by forbidding them or their sons or grandsons to sit for the imperial examinations. The low prestige of their role was closely connected to the fact that families were expected to be highly self-sufficient and in such a situation exchange activities were a threat to the ideal patterns.<sup>127</sup> However, if the bureaucracy and the gentry, who did not actually produce, were to be maintained as groups, exchange services were required. And the manner in which social conditions developed only enlarged and accented the scope of this need. The latter was what happened in Fujian in the second half of the Ming period.

Before the land problem and the concomitant undesirable social conditions worsened, people attended to what was thought to be fundamental—self-sufficient agriculture—and kept away from the inferior pursuits of trade. Although for a long time Quanzhou had enjoyed commercial intercourse with foreign countries, and Zhangzhou also had an active part in the early seafaring adventures in the Nanhai (the South Seas), most of the rural people who resided beyond the walled cities did not waver in their daily routine and lifestyle. In actuality, the *shibo* trade (the tribute-trade or state-trade institution) had long been a state monopoly in which the common people at large were not involved. As late as the early sixteenth century, when the prefectures were not yet badly plagued by pirates, such places as Nan'an, a district of Quanzhou, still observed the old way of life. There were some peddlers but they never strayed beyond the village boundary.<sup>128</sup> Zhangzhou underwent social and economic changes even much later. As late as the mid-Ming period, according to a gazetteer of 1490, its sub-prefecture of Longyan was seldom visited by merchants from outside; the people of Changtai “never attend to trading”; the people of Nanjing lived off the land; Zhangping

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126. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

127. Marion J. Levy, Jr. and Shih Kuo-Heng, *The Rise of the Modern Chinese Business Class* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1949), p. 4.

128. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20:8a.

was “not accessible by waterways and rarely visited by traders”.<sup>129</sup> In Quanzhou prefecture, as recorded in a gazetteer of 1526, “the people of Yongchun were familiar with neither commerce nor skills other than the fundamental ones. Only non-residents attend to occupations other than farming. As for the local people, they value the fundamental and hold the inferior in contempt.”<sup>130</sup> Only slowly “did a few occasionally take up a job as trader”.<sup>131</sup> In other words, with the exception of the larger cities along the sea-coast, southern Fukien was still generally characterized by its autarkic economy up to the first half of the sixteenth century. Men cultivated the soil and women spun and wove. The soil provided them with staple foodstuffs and the family manufactured its own clothing. They raised pigs and poultry for ceremonial use in their backyards. Fish were quite abundant in the ponds. Vegetables were grown in the small empty spaces nearby. There were some fruit trees grown around the house for the family’s consumption. There was scarcely any thought of making a living by selling these products.<sup>132</sup> Having said this, the existence of some limited commercial exchanges cannot be denied. For example, the inland people had to rely on salt supplied from the outside. Some peddlers did travel to and fro between the walled cities and the villages. Nevertheless, this small-scale peddling trade was under the landlord’s control and limited to the supply of basic economic needs.

A change got underway in the one hundred years following the mid-sixteenth century. Sources from the last decade of the Ming dynasty describe the trend as follows:

(In Quanzhou) only 40 per cent of the population who reside on the sea-coast take up jobs as rice-field cultivators, and 60 per cent live by fishing. On the hillsides, only 30 per cent belong to the first category and the rest depend on hill products.<sup>133</sup>

By this time, commercial activities were no longer the monopoly of the larger coastal cities. Even in the remote interior people were participating in trade more frequently and in larger numbers. In the first half of the sixteenth century, only merchants from Jinjiang, the largest city in Quanzhou, had ventured as far into the remote interior as Dehua.<sup>134</sup> However, people from Hui’an soon caught up and traveled

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129. He Qiaoyuan, *Bamin tongzhi*, 3: 9a.

130. *Yongchun xianzhi* (1526 ed.), *juan* 1.

131. Cited in *Yongchun zhouzhi* (1787 ed.), 7: 3b.

132. Such a description is given in *Dehua xianzhi* 德化縣志 [Gazetteer of Dehua District] (Jiajing [1522–16] ed.), 2: 26.

133. Cited in *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 13b.

134. *Dehua xianzhi* (Jiajing [1522–66] ed.), 2: 26.

much farther, not confining their peregrinations to areas within the boundaries of Quanzhou, but also venturing into Xinghua, a Fujian prefecture north of Quanzhou, not to mention many other parts of the country.<sup>135</sup> Some might go far west to Sichuan.<sup>136</sup> Late in the century, it was estimated that 50 per cent of the Fujianese people had to live from activities performed outside their homeland.<sup>137</sup>

Probably the first major commercial activity undertaken by the South Fujianese in the outside world was the grain-supply business. Sources during the period of this study show that they depended on the provinces of Zhejiang in the north and Guangdong in the south for their supplies of grains and textiles.<sup>138</sup> They shipped rice in large quantities from Wenzhou in Zhejiang and from Huizhou and Chaozhou in Guangdong.<sup>139</sup> The following quotation is characteristic in this respect:

The unproductivity of the land and the poverty of the people have promoted commercial activity. People no longer feel sad to leave their homeland for the Lower Yangzi and Guangdong areas.<sup>140</sup>

The grain trade was essential to their livelihood, especially after the mid-Ming period. A contemporary work written during the Wanli reign (1573–1620) substantiates this point:

In recent years (after the mid-sixteenth century), the population (in Quanzhou) has grown rapidly. Even hill products have ceased to be produced and fish stocks are exhausted. People have to rely on sea-going vessels (for their grain shipment from other provinces).<sup>141</sup>

Toward the end of the dynasty, food shortages grew even more severe. Just a few months' discontinuity in rice supplies would ineluctably result in starvation.<sup>142</sup>

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135. Cited in *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 8b.

136. See Song Yingxing 宋應星, *Tiangong kaiwu* 天工開物 [The exploitation of the works of nature] (1637 ed.), pt. I, "on clothing", p. 12; He mentions merchants brought raw silk back from Sichuan.

137. Xie Zhaozhe, *Wu zazu*, 4: 35.

138. Cited in *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 3–4, 13b; also *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1877 ed.), 38: 3.

139. Chen Renxi, *Huangming shifa lu*, 75: 6–7. Also cited in *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 13b; *Chouhai tubian*, 4: 20b–21a.

140. *Pinghe xianzhi* 平和縣志 [Gazetteer of Pinghe District] (1889 ed.; reprint, Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1967), 10: 7b.

141. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 13.

142. Cited in *ibid.*, 20: 13b.



The emergence of the monetary economy facilitated the development of trade. Different currencies were used in Fujian in the later decades of the Ming dynasty, including Song coins, Spanish silver coins<sup>143</sup> and others. A Spanish eyewitness, who has been quoted above, tells of the commercial activity that he saw in Tong'an in 1575:

We passed along a street that was over half a league long, and which throughout its length on both sides was a veritable fish-market of different kinds of fish, although there were likewise some meat and fruit; but most of it was stocked with fish, and in such quantity that it seemed as if there would never be enough people to consume what was there. They told us that this was the ordinary state of that market, and I can well believe it; for we found it as plentifully stocked on our return trip as if nobody had taken anything.<sup>144</sup>

The nationwide development of a commodity economy gave a significant impetus to commercial development. In the second half of the Ming period, the specialization of the handicraft industry reached a new stage with many new fields being developed. For instance, cotton-weaving, silk-work and metalworking became increasingly specialized and divided into several independent manufactory departments. As did other industries such as the sugar, paper and pottery manufacturing industries, they spread to different regions.<sup>145</sup> Along with the growth of industrial productivity and the expansion of marketing, handicraft industry centers emerged in their early stages.

Agriculture became more commercialized to suit new demands; people began to convert consumer articles into commodities. Especially after the mid-Ming period, more food plants were replaced by commercial crops. The planting of sugar-cane, tobacco, tea and cotton were a few crops in this category. The planting of such fruit trees as litchi, longan (both were grown in southern China), olives and banana were also aimed at commercial profit. Even grains, as mentioned above, were commercialized. Going beyond the scope of agriculture, rice-

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143. As told by Wang Shengshi 王勝時, in his *Manyou jilue* 漫遊記略 [A brief travel account], *juan* 1. The author spent almost two years traveling through seven out of the eight prefectures in Fujian in 1652–53, shortly after the fall of the Ming dynasty.

144. Fr Martin de Rada, "Narrative of the Mission to Fukien", p. 250.

145. Zhongguo renmin daxue 中國人民大學 (People's University of China), *Mingqing shehui jingji xingtai de yanjiu* 明清社會經濟形態的研究 [A study of the socioeconomic patterns of the Ming-Qing Dynasties] (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1957), p. 7.

hulling mills became an independent industry. Gradually, this form of production and commerce broke down the regional economic isolation. Economically speaking, the people were more dependent on one another than ever before.

With the combination of this national economic background and the desperate local living conditions, it is not surprising to see a trade-oriented development in South Fujian. Before the sixteenth century, South Fujian had few local products for export. However, it did re-export non-indigenous commodities, especially to Southeast Asia. The highly celebrated porcelain from Jiangxi was one of these re-exported products. Sometimes the Fujianese brought back raw materials including silk yarn from Zhejiang and wove it themselves.<sup>146</sup>

They took pains to improve their handicrafts industry to suit a wider market. Their gauze work was excellent and was considered as valuable as silk.<sup>147</sup> The silk-weaving in Quanzhou also enjoyed a fine reputation. Even the gentry families had a taste for these products.<sup>148</sup> The Quanzhou people were good at imitating all kinds of skills<sup>149</sup> and quick at learning all sorts of crafts.<sup>150</sup> A contemporary record shows that people of Zhangzhou and Quanzhou learned their satin-weaving skills from Japan. Although their product was less durable compared to those from Japan, its glossy black color entranced even the foreigners on the northern frontier.<sup>151</sup> Women were active in the handicraft industry. In Jinjiang, for example, they took part in the manufacture of straw shoes.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, the most outstanding industry of the Fujianese was probably the manufacture of bamboo-paper. In the mid-Ming period, it had already won the reputation for being the best in the country.<sup>153</sup>

Besides their long-standing and famous export of fruit, including litchi, longan, olives and oranges,<sup>154</sup> in the second half of the Ming period South Fujianese people had begun to grow even more commercial crops. Sugar-cane was one of the most popular as indicated in the following source:

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146. Wang Shimao, *Minbu shu*, p. 17a.

147. *Dehua xianzhi* (Jiajing [1522–66] ed.), 2: 29b.

148. Wang Shengshi, *Manyou jilue*, juan 1.

149. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 4b.

150. *Jinjiang xianzhi* 晉江縣志 [Gazetteer of Jinjiang District] (1765 ed.; reprint, Taipei: Ch'eng-wen, 1967), 1: 69b.

151. Song Yingxing, *Tiangong kaiwu*, pt. I, "on clothing", p. 12.

152. *Jinjiang xianzhi* (1765 ed.), 1: 69b.

153. Song Yingxing, *Tiangong kaiwu*, pt. II, "on bamboo-paper".

154. Wang Shimao, *Mingbu shu*, pp. 3b, 6a and 17a, mentions that the oranges from Zhangzhou were the best in Fujian.

People manufacture sugar, and sell it to other places transporting it by sea. The profit to be had from the rice-crop there is so small that people often turn their rice-fields over to growing sugar-cane since it can fetch [a] considerably higher price.<sup>155</sup>

In the sixteenth century, sugar-cane was grown in Fujian and Guangdong provinces. The production from these two areas occupied 90 per cent of the nation's total acreage.<sup>156</sup> In Fujian, "sugar-cane is planted all over the valleys (in South Fukien) and all the cultivators are people of southern Zhangzhou".<sup>157</sup> Tobacco was also introduced, probably from Jiaozhi (northern Vietnam), and first grown in Zhangzhou and Quanzhou in the early seventeenth century.<sup>158</sup> The large profits earned from tobacco led to the widespread cultivation of the plant in other new areas, first in the Lower Yangzi region at the end of the Ming period and throughout the whole country by the early Qing period. Tea has a long history in China, but it was not until the Ming period that its cultivation spread from Sichuan to most parts of the Yangzi Valley and its southern region. Fujian tea soon became famous and tea-growing became more widespread in the hilly areas where the rice-crop became a subsidiary during the late Ming period.

Another commercial crop was cotton. It was called *jibei*. When pronounced in Fujianese dialect, it resembles the Malay word "kapas" which was a common term in Southeast Asia. Cotton cloth had long been a famous tributary item. On account of their close contact with foreign countries, Fujian and Guangdong in the southeast together with the northwest regions of China were among the first to introduce the plant in the thirteenth century. It did not become an important product until the Ming period because neither the *Song shi* (Standard dynastic history of the Song) nor the *Yuan shi* (Standard dynastic history of the Yuan) mentions it.<sup>159</sup> In his account an eyewitness in the late sixteenth century says that cotton was grown in quite a large area between Tong'an and Longchi.<sup>160</sup> Despite the fact that Fujian was one of the first areas to grow it, cotton cultivation there did not achieve a prominent position in

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155. Chen Maoren, *Quannan zazhi*, pt. I, p. 12a.

156. Song Yingxing, *Tiangong kaiwu*, pt. I, "on sugar-cane", p. la.

157. Wang Yingshan 王應山, *Min daji* 閩大記 [Notes on Fujian] (1582 ed.), *juan* II; quoted in Fu Yiling, *Mingqing shehui jingji shi*, p. 10.

158. Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–71), *Wuli xiaoshi* 物理小識 [Notes on the things on the earth], *juan* 9 "on plants"; and *Enping xianzhie* 恩平縣志 [Gazetteer of Enping District] (1637 ed.), *juan* 7, "on products"; both cited in Fu Yiling, *Mingqing shehui jingji shi*, p. 11.

159. Xu Guangqi, *Nongzheng quanshu*, 35: 11b–12a.

160. Wang Shimao, *Minbu shu*, 8a.

China's economy because of geographical conditions. Nevertheless, the South Fujianese did try to spread the planting of it on the best soil in the area, on which they were supposed to grow rice-crops. Its cultivation is of great significance because of the way the people sought assiduously for every possibility to improve their economic conditions, even if they had to replace their rice-land to do so.

Dyeing works also flourished, keeping pace with the expansion of the textile industry. Indigo planting was developed to meet the great demand for the dye. The country's best indigo came from Quanzhou.<sup>161</sup> The Fujianese grew it in the ravines and made great profit by selling it all over the country.<sup>162</sup>

Summing up the plurality of the local economy, a gazetteer editor observes: "People grow rice, millet and wheat ... in the lowlands, and nettle-hemp and cotton in the hilly areas. Sugar-cane is also cultivated. A large amount of tobacco is exported to other provinces."<sup>163</sup> Every day, without any breaks, the local products were carried out along the narrow paths through the mountain passes to neighboring provinces, resembling nothing so much as "a flow of water".<sup>164</sup> More were shipped out by sea.<sup>165</sup> Again the South Fujianese were quick to find ways to meet the testing challenges imposed on them by the living conditions in their native villages.

The story of the "little people" will continue. Meantime, a few words will suffice to conclude the present discussion. What has been shown is the willingness of the South Fujianese to adapt themselves to changes and respond to possibilities as they arose. What has not been pursued in the discussion is that this same dynamic character is what spurred many of the South Fujianese people to take to the sea: a change of status from that of peasants to seafarers and merchants. This latter aspect will be the focus of the following chapter.

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161. Ibid., 17a.

162. Wang Yingshan, *Min daji, juan 2*, quoted in Fu Yiling, *Mingqing shehui jingji shi*, p. 13.

163. *Pinghe xianzhi* (1889 ed.), 10: 7a.

164. Wang Shimao, *Minbu shu*, 17a.

165. Ibid.

## CHAPTER 8

# Gentry-Merchants and Peasant-Peddlers in Offshore Trading Activities, 1522–66: A Story of the “Little People” (2)

### The Maritime Past

As early as the twelfth century in the South Song era (AD 1127–1279), Quanzhou had arisen as the most important port for foreign trade and as a major shipbuilding center. The prosperity of Quanzhou coincided with that of Guangzhou in the south and of Mingzhou (later called Ningbo) in Zhejiang in the north. After the Jin state had occupied northern China, the land routes to the west were totally sealed off. Consequently, all the tribute-and-trade missions came to China by sea and maritime trade naturally became an essential part of the national economy. Nevertheless, despite the government's beneficent attitude toward maritime trade, private participation was made punishable by branding on the face, exile to desert areas inland or assignment to corvée. Broadly speaking, this trading policy was continued by the Yuan and the early Ming governments.

In its golden age during Song-Yuan times, Quanzhou served the political and economic purposes of the country rather than the socioeconomic needs of the locality. Politically, it was a port of call for foreign tributary missions and, economically, a port for the collection of customs duties and for state trade. Despite the state's strong grip on it, Quanzhou also became the home port for some South Fujianese traders who sailed their ships to Southeast Asia. Some even emigrated and established probably the first permanent Chinese settlements in that part of the world. During the Yuan, more than a few Fujianese from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou settled in Tuban, East Java.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, one early overseas settlement in

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1. Li Changfu 李长傅, *Zhongguo zhimin shi* 中國殖民史 [History of Chinese overseas colonization] (reprint; Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1966), p. 74. During Zheng He's overseas expeditions, people from these two prefectures were still numerous. See Ma Huan 馬歡, *Yingyai shenglan jiaozhu* 瀛涯勝覽校注

Palembang succumbed to the blow delivered by the Ming fleet led by Zheng He. The most reasonable explanation for this disaster is that their direct participation in trade threatened the government monopoly. The base in Palembang was relentlessly smashed on the pretext of protecting the tribute trade from piratical disruption.

Not all who were looking for a new means of livelihood joined in the exciting adventures in Southeast Asia. The South Fujianese soon attracted the attention of foreigners desirous of utilizing their outstanding seamanship. The Ryukyu junks, for example, were mainly manned by Zhangzhou crews.<sup>2</sup>

The maritime pioneers impressed their fellow villagers who regarded them with awe. From the mid-Ming, they themselves also began to follow in the footsteps of their more adventurous countrymen, engaging in maritime activities that soon swelled to become an impressive enterprise.

In the early sixteenth century two concurrent activities—South Fujianese domestic trade with other provinces and the presence of foreign merchants—boosted each other and created extensive opportunities that resulted in a commercial boom. Since trade carried out on land was 20 times more costly,<sup>3</sup> even the hill-dwellers preferred to deliver their products by sea.<sup>4</sup> The shipping boom offered incentives to build ships for commercial purposes.<sup>5</sup>

## Intensified Maritime Atmosphere

The presence of foreign traders along the Chinese sea-coast intensified the maritime activity on the southeast coast. Among them were the Portuguese, who had established friendly contacts with Chinese junk-masters on their first arrival and in the subsequent occupation of

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[Annotated overall survey of the ocean shores], annotated by Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞 (reprint; Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1962), p. 8.

2. He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠, *Min shu* 閩書 [Fujian history] (Chongzhen [1628–44] ed.), 146: 1a.
3. *Quanzhou fuzhi* [Gazetteer of Quanzhou Prefecture] (1870 ed.), 25: 11a.
4. *Ibid.*, 20: 2b.
5. In his work Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–82) says, “(In 1547) every household in Yuegang (月港) in Zhangzhou Prefecture built seagoing vessels and traded in Siam, Folangji (Malacca) and some other countries.” See *Tianxia junguo libing shu* 天下郡國利病書 [Problems and challenges in various regions of China] (hereafter *TXJGLBS*), in *Siku shanben congshu* 四庫善本叢書 [The perfect series of the complete library of the four treasure], Vol. 26, p. 6b.

Malacca.<sup>6</sup> The first contacts of the Portuguese with China proper were made by individual merchant-adventurers who sailed for the South China coast from Malacca aboard native junks. The earliest mention of such a visit is by the Italian Andrea Corsali, who, in his letter to Duke Giuliano de Media dated January 6, 1515, says:

The merchants of the land of China also make voyages to Malacca across the Great Gulf to get cargoes of spices, and bring from their own country musk, rhubarb, pearls, tin, porcelain, and silk and wrought stuffs of all kinds, such as damasks, satins, and brocades of extraordinary richness.... During this last year some of our Portuguese made a voyage to China. They were not permitted to land; for they say 'tis against their custom to let foreigners enter their dwellings. But they sold their goods at a great gain, and they say there is as great profit in taking spices to China as in taking them to Portugal; for 'tis a cold country and they make great use of them.<sup>7</sup>

Giovanni da Empoli, another Italian, then in the Portuguese service, who wrote from Cochin on November 15, 1515, mentions the pioneer voyage again:

The country abounds with all fine white silk, and it costs thirty cruzados the cantaro; damasks of sixteen good pieces, at five hundred reals the piece; satins, brocades, musk at half a ducat the ounce, and less. Many pearls of all sorts in great abundance; and many caps, so that from there to here there is made on them a profit of thirty to one. The ships bring spices from [to] there; so that every year there come from Zamatra [Sumatra] some sixty thousand cantara of pepper; and from Coccin and the land of Mallibari fifteen to twenty thousand cantara of pepper along; it is worth fifteen to twenty ducats the cantaro. In like manner, ginger, mace, nutmeg, incense, aloes, velvet, our gold thread, coral, woolen clothes, robes. There come from there somedrom (?), cloths like ours, much white alum and good vermilions.... Everything is sold by weight. They have many grains: the great things are so many that come from there.<sup>8</sup>

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6. C.R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century* (reproduced from the Hakluyt Society; Nendeln: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1967), p. xix.

7. Quoted in T.T. Chang, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514 to 1644* (Leiden: Late E.J. Brill Ltd., 1934), p. 36.

8. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

Two years later, in 1517, a Portuguese squadron anchored in the Pearl River off Guangzhou (Canton). There is reason to believe that the Chinese in Malacca were mostly South Fujianese and hence the Portuguese already had acquired information about Fujian. Furthermore, in Malacca they had also established trade relations with the Ryukyu people,<sup>9</sup> whose crews in most cases were Zhangzhou men, as mentioned above. Therefore, when the Portuguese mission in Guangzhou became entangled in the complexities of diplomatic procedure, a detachment was sent to visit not only South Fujian but also the Ryukyu Islands. They sojourned in Zhangzhou and opened trade with the Chinese there.<sup>10</sup> For the next 30 years they continued to visit the maritime provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang. It was only in South Fujian that the Portuguese felt at home and ever established good relations with the local people.

Portuguese smugglers were not the only ones who frequented the China coast at this time. Even more serious, in the eyes of the Ming authorities, were the depredations of the Wokou (literally “dwarf robbers”, a term that indicated Japanese pirates). At that time the Japanese needed many Chinese products. Silk and mercury, for example, were worth ten times more in Japan than in China. Silk wadding was also expensive. Many other items were in demand, including cotton cloth, brocade, red thread, needles, iron chains, cooking pots, porcelain, ancient coins, celebrated paintings, famous calligraphy, rare books, medicine, felt, face powder, food baskets, lacquer ware and vinegar.<sup>11</sup> The Japanese paid for their goods in silver cash because they did not have many products attractive to the Chinese.<sup>12</sup> The Sino-Japanese trade produced a great deal of profit for both parties.

During the reign of the founding Emperor of the Ming, Taizu, Japan was theoretically excluded from the tribute-and-trade system by the imposition of the maritime prohibition laws, a step taken because they

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9. Mentioned in the *Commentaries of Afonso d'Albuquerque*, cited in *ibid.*, p. 45.

10. T.T. Chang states that the place was Quanzhou (see *ibid.*, p. 45). The Portuguese and Spaniards often confused either Zhangzhou or Quanzhou, using with the same pronunciation of “Chincheo”. I would suggest “Chincheo” was a corruption of Zhangzhou rather than Quanzhou, since the former and its port Yuegang (later the area was promoted to be a new District called Haicheng) became very active in trade during the second half of Ming. Interested readers might refer to the discussion on this question in the appendix of C.R. Boxer’s book, pp. 313–26.

11. *Chouhai tubian* 籌海圖編 [Sea strategy illustrated; a work on coastal defense], comp. Hu Zongxian (1510–65), Zheng Ruozeng (1503–70), et al. 胡宗憲、鄭若曾等編撰 (1624 ed.; 1st printing 1562)), 2: 32–3.

12. *Ibid.*, 4: 20a.



were accused having been complicit in the alleged conspiracy of Premier Hu Weiyong. The outcome was not as disastrous as it might have been as the prohibition was seldom strictly carried out and the maintenance of tribute-and-trade relations with China was economically important to the Japanese *daimyo* (great lords). The Ming ban was even lifted from time to time. Unfortunately, the resumption of Japanese tribute missions in the mid-Ming era came to a disastrous conclusion. In 1523 two separate tribute missions appeared simultaneously in Ningbo, sent under the auspices of different *daimyo*. Both parties were competing for the trading privileges. Heavily bribed by a Chinese named Song Shuqing, who was in the service of one of the two delegations, the *shibo* eunuch sided with Song's party. This partiality resulted in violence. Disappointed, the tribute-bearers turned to piracy. In retaliation, the Ming Court again suspended entry permits for all Japanese missions. Searching for safe ports in which to pursue illegal trade, the Japanese went south and found their opportunity on the Fujian coast. Thereafter what was known as the Wokou problem became serious for the first time in Chinese history.<sup>13</sup> Actually, the Japanese, whether officials or private citizens, had always found the tribute trade, limited to once every ten years and to not more than a hundred participants at a time,<sup>14</sup> unsatisfactory. In their frustration, those who failed to obtain trading permits often turned to illicit transactions or piracy. Indeed, raiding the Chinese coast became a favorite occupation for many of the *samurai* from southwest Japan, who behaved as pirates or as traders as the occasion warranted. As is said in the *Ming history*:

The Wo (Japanese) were shrewd by nature; they carried merchandise and weapons together, and appeared here and there along the sea-coast. If the opportunity presented itself, they displayed their weapons, raiding and plundering ruthlessly. Otherwise, they would exhibit their merchandise, saying that they were on their way to the Court with tribute. The southeast coast was victimized by them.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Shen Yiguang 沈一貫, "Lun wo gongshi buke xu shu" 論倭貢市不可許疏 [On why Japanese tribute trade should be disallowed], in *Ming jingshi wenbian* 明經世文編 [Collected essays on statecraft from the Ming Dynasty] (hereafter *MJSWB*), comp. Chen Zilong, Xu Fuyuan, et al. 陳子龍 (1608–47), 徐孚遠 (1599–1665) 等選輯 (compiled in 1638) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 435: 1b.

14. *Chouhai tubian*, 12: 75a.

15. *Ming shi* 明史 [Standard dynastic history of the Ming], 322: 8.

## The Offshore Enterprise

Soon after the arrivals of foreign traders, an enormous amount of illegal commercial activity under the thinly veiled patronage of the local gentry began to emerge.<sup>16</sup> The Portuguese smuggler-traders who frequented the China coast in 1521–51 built up many contacts with Chinese of all classes who were anxious to do business with them.<sup>17</sup> Lin Xiyuan, a celebrated contemporary scholar from South Fujian, explains:

The Folangji (the Portuguese) who came brought their local pepper, sappanwood, ivory, oil of thyme-oil, aloes, sandalwood and all kinds of incense in order to trade with our frontier people. Their prices were particularly cheap. Every day they consumed supplies of drinks and foodstuffs that they obtained from our people, such as quantities of rice, flour, pigs and poultry. The prices that they paid for these were double the usual amount, and therefore our borderers gladly provided them with a market.<sup>18</sup>

The good relationship between the Portuguese and the coastal dwellers is also mentioned in another contemporary record by a Dominican missionary. He says that the poor people of the coastal area:

... were very glad of the Portuguese.... In these towns were those China merchants who came with the Portugals, and because they were known, for their sakes the Portugals were the better entertained, and through them it was arranged for the local merchants to bring their goods for sale to the Portugals. And as these Chinas who came with the Portugals were the intermediaries between the Portugals and the local merchants, they reaped a great profit thereby.<sup>19</sup>

The meagerly paid mandarins of the lower ranks were even less eager to offend the local members of the gentry. They knew very well that they had much to lose by attempting to deceive them and had much to gain in

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16. *Ming shilu: Shizong shilu* 明實錄：世宗實錄 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: Shizong Reign] (hereafter *MSL: SZ*), 189: 9a–b, 422: 5b.

17. *Ibid.*, 106: 5a

18. Quoted in Chang Wei-hua 張維華, "Ming shi folangji, Lusong, Helan, Yidali zhuan zhushi" 明史佛朗機呂宋荷蘭意大利傳註釋 [A commentary on the four chapters on Portugal, Spain, Holland and Italy in the Standard History of the Ming Dynasty], in *Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies*: monograph series No. 7 (Peiping: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1934), p. 44. Following Boxer's translation, p. xxiii.

19. "The Treatise of Fr. Gaspar da Cruz", in C.R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 192.

the form of gifts and bribes by turning a blind eye to the smuggling.<sup>20</sup> The above account is quoted again at length to show such illegal transactions:

The inferior Louthias<sup>21</sup> of the sea coast received also great profit of this traffic, for they received great bribes from the one and from the other, to give them leave to traffic, and to let them carry and transport their goods. So that this traffic was among them a long while concealed from the king and from the superior Louthias of the province.... The superior Louthias of the province ... commanded presently to make a very great armada in the province of Fuque (Fujian) to drive the pirates from all the coast.... They went to the coast of Chincheo, where finding some ships of the Portugals, they began to fight with them, and in no wise did they permit any wares to come to the Portugals, who stayed many days there (fighting sometimes) to see if they could have any remedy to dispatch their business. But after many days had passed, and seeing that they had no remedy they determined to go without it. The captains of the armada knowing this, sent a message to them very secretly by night, that if they would that any goods should come to them that they should send them something. The Portugals were very glad with this message, prepared a great and sumptuous present, and sent it by night because they were so advised. From thence forward came many goods unto them, the Louthias making as though they took no heed thereof, and dissembling with the merchants. And thus in this way was done the trade for that year, which was the year 1548.<sup>22</sup>

Evidently, the most prominent figure among the “superior Louthias” was Zhu Wan, Governor (*xunfu*) of Zhejiang concurrently taking charge of the Zhejiang-Fujian coastal defense. The “secret message” affair is confirmed by Lin Xiyuan in a letter<sup>23</sup> that gives the same story. Doubtless the first thing Zhu Wan did after his appointment was to exert pressure upon Ke Qiao, the *haidao* (Coastguard Commanding Officer), to take action against smuggling. Ke immediately passed the information to Lin who was not only an influential member of the local gentry but, as was common practice among the people like him, also had a stake in the seagoing transactions. Ke knew very well that he could not conceal anything

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20. T.T. Chang, *Sino-Portuguese Trade*, p. 70.

21. Louthia 老爹 (老爺?), the title of the head of the family, gentry and high-ranking mandarins. Here it refers to mandarins.

22. Cruz's account, in C.R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 192–3.

23. Cited in Chang Wei-hua, “Ming shi folangji, Lusong, Helan, Yidali zhuan zhushi”, pp. 43–7.

from Lin, since his private advisors were all Lin's disciples, including Yu Dayou, who later became an outstanding general at the forefront in tackling the Wo problem. While Ke was on his way to Quanzhou to have his audience with the *xun'an* (Regional Inspecting Censor), he paid a visit to Lin at Tong'an. In the discussion of the current development, they reached the conclusion that the Portuguese should be informed of the *xun'an's* intentions. This was done. As soon as Ke returned from his meeting with the *xun'an*, he unexpectedly launched a lightning attack on the Portuguese and the Chinese smugglers. This action reflects the uncompromising attitude adopted by Zhu Wan and the dilemma faced by the local authorities. In retaliation, the hard-pressed Portuguese, assisted by their Chinese allies, raided Zhao'an, but they were totally routed at Zoumaxi and 96 of them, including the Fujianese pirate leader Li Guangtou and many Chinese, were taken prisoners. In punishing the smugglers, Zhu Wan showed no mercy. More than 90 of them were executed immediately.<sup>24</sup>

The enthusiasm of the South Fujianese for trade was also shown in their contacts with the Japanese pirate-merchants. Despite the government ban on trade, people still went out to negotiate with them. Perhaps for the first time in Chinese history, the local shipbuilding industry found its way onto the international market. Among other things, the Japanese placed orders for seagoing vessels with the Fujianese. It is said that it was less economical to build ships in Japan. Only the *daimyo* or rich people could afford the prices charged there. The average merchants preferred to place their orders with the Chinese. Ships built either in Japan or in Fujian had about the same capacity. The large ones could carry 300 passengers; the small ones, 40 or 50. But the Japanese ships were flat-bottomed and had their sails fixed to the central part of the mast. Therefore their speed was much slower. Moreover, when they ran up against the Chinese patrol ships, that were much more solid and comparatively gigantic in size, the Japanese craft were often crushed to pieces. Their only recourse was to sail close to shore where the water was not deep enough for these big monsters to follow them. The Fujianese vessels were more advanced in structure and design since they did not depend too much on wind.<sup>25</sup>

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24. *Ming shi*, 205: 3a. Refer also to Cruz's account, in C.R. Boxer, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, pp. 194–203. A Portuguese prisoner, Galeote Pereira, gives us a very interesting eyewitness account of the detention after the incident; see Boxer's book, pp. 1–43. Also *Zhangzhou fu-chih* 漳州府志 [Gazetteer of Zhangzhou Prefecture] (1877 ed.), 47: 21a; and Chapter 9 of this book for details.

25. *Chouhai tubian*, 2: 31.

During the time of the changing monsoons, transactions were busiest among the offshore islands off the Fujian Coast. Commercial activity reached its height in March, April and May when the Japanese junks caught the last of the northeast monsoon winds to arrive in time in the Penghu Islands in the Taiwan Straits,<sup>26</sup> where they could meet the Portuguese and the native merchants from Pahang, Siam and other Southeast Asian states<sup>27</sup> who, in most cases, left Guangzhou for Fujian at the beginning of the southeast monsoon.<sup>28</sup> September to October was the other trading season, though less busy.<sup>29</sup> Merchants from Southeast Asia were actually entitled to trade in the *shibo* port of Guangzhou, the only port kept open, with the exception of some short interruptions, throughout Ming times. Despite this privilege, they found the smuggling trade more lucrative and less restrictive.<sup>30</sup> The South Fujianese acted as middlemen between the two parties off the Zhangzhou coast where the myriad creeks and sheltered bays were too many for the sea patrol to find them.<sup>31</sup>

Although breaches of the seafaring prohibition were subject to severe punishment, it seems that the laws were never effectively enforced, especially upon the local *shihao* (the rich and the powerful).<sup>32</sup> For instance, when their ships were seized by the coastguards on suspicion of illicit trade, they simply went to the local authorities and stated that the sailors were their servants who had been sent to ship grain and cloth back from other provinces. The officials would then release the men and the cargoes without hesitation. There were cases when the coastguards were falsely charged by the *shihao* in retaliation, just because the former had unintentionally placed the *shihao*'s followers under arrest. Many law-enforcement officials died in jail under such circumstances. The upshot was that they were afraid of offending the rich and powerful.<sup>33</sup> It

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26. Chen Renxi 陳仁錫 (1581–1636), *Huangming shifa lu* 皇明世法錄 [The inimitable institutions of the Royal Ming] (Chongzhen [1628–44] ed.), 75: 6b.
27. Zhu Wan 朱訥, “Haiyang zeichuan chumo shi” 海洋賊船出沒事 (On piracy), in *MJSWB*, 205: 13b.
28. Chen Renxi, *Huangming shifa lu*, 75: 9a.
29. In his work, Gu Yanwu mentions that the Japanese pirates were most active in March–April–May season. The second active period was September and October. See Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 3.
30. *MSL: SZ*, 38: 4b–5a.
31. Chen Renxi, *Huangming shifa lu*, 75: 1, 5a, and 9a; also *MSL: SZ*, 422: 2b–3a.
32. *Ibid.*, 417: 6a–7a, 422: 2b–3a.
33. A contemporary account is given by a Magistrate Chou Junqing 仇俊卿, who was a Fujianese. Cited in *Chouhai tubian*, 4: 22–3. See also *Fujian tongzhi* 福建通志 [General Gazetteer of Fujian] (1871 ed.), 87: 1.

was not uncommon for the families of the officials to work together with the *shihao*, using their authority to confiscate petty merchants' cargoes or to force them to undertake seagoing business for the *shihao*.<sup>34</sup> By such tactics, the prominent families virtually controlled the maritime trade.<sup>35</sup>

The *xiaomin* (literally "little people") had always had a hard time and had also fallen prey to the powerful. Without any protection, they easily laid themselves open to exposure because of their seagoing activities and hence would be confronted with punishment.<sup>36</sup> Law-abiding petty merchants had a small chance of survival, especially when their only livelihood was cut off by the strict imposition of trade prohibition. Finding no alternative, they could do nothing but become outlaws, as described in a contemporary record:

Since the *shibo* was terminated in the early Jiajing Reign,... piracy has become common. Why? It is because pirates and merchants are the same group of people. When trade is permitted, pirates become merchants. When trade is prohibited, merchants transform into pirates. The laws were originally aimed at suppressing commercial activity, but now they mainly deal with piracy. Rather than being suppressed, the piracy is growing more rampant.<sup>37</sup>

A good example is given by Gu Yanwu who says:

(In 1561) the Rebellion of the "Twenty-four Generals" broke out in Yuegang. At first, in the *dingsi* year (1557) Zhang Wei and other twenty-three people pooled their capital to build a large vessel. They constantly supplied the foreign ships and the authorities failed to stop their activities. In the winter of the *wuwu* year (1558), the Coastguard Commanding Officer ... made an attempt to arrest them but met with the resistance of the twenty-four generals.... (In 1564) Zhang Wei was beheaded.<sup>38</sup>

Evidently, the self-styled generals were no more than petty traders who could only afford to build a ship by collaborating with others. The construction costs of a small boat for off-shore activities varied from 50

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34. *Jiajing dongnan pingwo tonglu* 嘉靖東南平倭通錄 [A general record of the suppression of Wo in Southeast China during the Jiajing Reign (1522–66)], comp. Xu Xueju 徐學聚撰 (?), p. 1b. Xu was appointed Governor of Fujian in 1604.

35. See *Fujian tongzhi* (1871 ed.), 56: 21a; it runs: "the prominent families mostly engage themselves in maritime trade".

36. *Ibid.*, 87: 1.

37. *Chouhai tubian*, 11: 3.

38. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 8.

to 200 taels (*liang*),<sup>39</sup> depending on quality and size. Comparing the cost of a ship with the price of a rice field gives a more concrete idea of the value of the boat. In 1571 a secondary leaseholder could buy ten *mu* of rice-land at a cost of 50 to 60 *liang*.<sup>40</sup> Building a larger ship would have definitely been beyond the means of the common people. As Zhu Wan puts it: “The profit derived from a two-master vessel does not go to the *xiaomin*.”<sup>41</sup> The reason he gave was that they were financially incapable of owning the vessel. Zhang Wei and his friends, like many other peasant *xiaomin*, were desperately anxious to participate in the off-shore retail trade. They customarily “supplied” (the word “*jieji*” often appears in the source-materials to describe the activity of these peddlers) the foreigners, mainly with their daily necessities as indicated in Lin Xiyuan’s letter cited earlier. Unfortunately, as the authorities wished to avoid irritating the *shihao* who were the major group engaged in substantial transactions, they picked on the *xiaomin* to be their victims. Zhang Wei and his group, who were forced into a position to which there was no alternative, were just a few among many others. They transformed themselves into what were known as the “disguised Wo” and created an even more serious situation than the real Wo (Japanese pirates).

Turning to the real Wo problem, if the truth be told, the *shihao* and their shady relations with the local authorities were responsible for much of it. The very devastating intrusion that erupted in the *renzi* 壬子 year (1552) was nothing but the outcome of such malpractices. Before the incident, the authorities had been even more vigilant in patrolling the sea-coast. Therefore, the Japanese merchants could rely only on a few prominent families to act as their business agents. Unfortunately, the latter turned the strained situation to their own benefit by swindling the foreigners. They received payment in advance from the Japanese traders but never delivered any cargoes or kept the cargoes without paying the costs. Waiting off the coast in vain, the Japanese traders were desperately worried about the consequences if they were to go back to their lords with empty hands. With no other alternative, they resorted to violence.

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39. The estimate is made after comparing the following sources: Zhu Wan 朱訥, “Yeshi haifang shi—moguan haichuan” 閱視海防事—沒官海船 [Matters concerning coastal defense—On confiscated vessels], in *MJSWB*, 206: 8b; *MSL: SZ*, 92: 12a; and 118: 5b–6a; *Ming shilu: Shenzong chao* 明實錄: 神宗朝 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: Shenzong/Wanli Reign], 239: 6b–7a; and *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 7: 17a–b.

40. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* (1573 ed.), 5: 7a: For the term “secondary lease-holder”, see Chapter 7 of this book.

41. Zhu Wan, “Haiyang zeichuan chumo shi” 海洋賊船出沒事 [Activities of the pirate junks], in *MJSWB*, 205: 14b.

Acting to their own advantage, the prominent official families urged the local administration to expel them by force. But they simultaneously played the tricky game of deliberately informing their partners of the imminent military attacks, just to make sure they could manage to escape in time. The gratitude of the Japanese might bring them greater benefits in the future transactions. After several similar occasions, the Japanese merchants realized that they were being duped and treated their relationship with such influential families more cautiously. The upshot was that they decided to launch relentless reprisals to recoup their earlier investments. Subsequently the Wokou problem reached a critical point.<sup>42</sup>

The term “Wokou incursions” is somewhat over-generalized and misleading. In fact, almost 70 per cent of the so-called Wo, especially in southern Fujian in the Jiaping period (1522–66), were local people, or the “disguised Wo” rather than “real Wo”,<sup>43</sup> as a local gazetteer observes:

The tighter the restriction, the more people collaborate with the foreigners. They even become the Wo’s guides. In retaliation, the local authorities detain their families as hostages. Fearful of coming back, they join the Wo bands and make frequent raids on the area.<sup>44</sup>

Around 1559 and 1560, according to a gazetteer, there were so many destitute Chinese joining the local bands in the guise of the Wo that Wo could be found everywhere in South Fujian, with the exception of the capital cities of the prefectures.<sup>45</sup> The local “Wo” varied in composition. Quoting an eyewitness account by Magistrate Chou Junqing, a gazetteer tells that:

Some of the pirates were those who had suffered grievances or injustice; they joined the bands out of resentment. Some became pirates because of their failure in trade. Some were induced to

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42. *Ming shi*, 146: 4a–6b and 12–3; also in Chen Renxu, *Huangming shifa lu*, 75: 52.

43. *Ming shi*, 322: 13b; also in *Jiaping dong’nan pingwo tonglu*, p. 10b; and in *Quanzhou fuzhi*, 73: 29a. Another source claims that only 10–20% were real Wo (real Japanese pirates); see Mao Ruizheng (Ming) 毛瑞徵, *Huangming xiangxu lu* 皇明象胥錄 [The interpreter’s record of the Royal Ming], 2: 17. For the percentage of the “disguised” Wo, *Shizong shilu* gives two different figures as 70% and 90%, see *MSL: SZ*, 403: 7a–b, 426: 2a–b.

44. *Quanzhou fuzhi* 泉州府志 [Gazetteer of Quanzhou Prefecture] (1870 ed.), 25: 10b–11a.

45. He Qiaoyuan, *Min shu*, 146: 17a.



join for their geomantic studies. Some were forced to participate because their relatives were being detained as hostages.<sup>46</sup>

Even though the source is from a magistrate's private writings, the gazetteer compiler decided to omit some groups of the participants from the original text, an understandable decision to protect the dignity of prominent people and avoid being seen as a critic of social conditions. As was always the case, gazetteer compilers were either officials or respectable literary men who enjoyed gentry status. The parts omitted are about "people who use their prominent social status and power to gain profit by sponsoring piratic activity", "people who have been unsuccessful candidates in the civil [service] examinations" and "tenants or other laborers who were desperately poor and obliged to resort to piracy".<sup>47</sup> In other words, it was common for the prominent families to guide the real Wo inland covertly. Unquestionably, the authorities did try to gain some control of the vessels owned by the rich to eradicate the root of the evil,<sup>48</sup> but from a practical point of view, it was a mission impossible.

Since the Jiajing Emperor had ascended the throne in 1522, one main feature of the Wo problem was different from before. Until the mid-Ming period, the Wokou were limited to Japanese pirates active along the coast north of Zhejiang. However, after 1522, corresponding to the drastic change in the local socioeconomic conditions, one comes across references that "Fujian is the heart of the Wo turmoils",<sup>49</sup> and Zhang-Quan prefectures were the most seriously Wo-infested areas.<sup>50</sup> As mentioned, in the second period Zhangzhou was more active than Quanzhou in the seafaring business that had become the major livelihood of its people.<sup>51</sup> Yuegang was also a port of frequent resort for the people involved in illicit activities. They, or smugglers, embarked from this place bent on their business.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, it was also a main resort of the Wokou who used the seaport as a stepping-stone for inland forays in which the

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46. *Fujian tongzhi* (Tongzhi ed.), 87: 1; see also *Fujian tongzhi taiwan fu* 福建通志台灣府 [General gazetteer of Fujian, Section on Taiwan Prefecture] (Taipei: The Bank of Taiwan Economic Research Center, 1960), p. 382; and Chen Renxi, *Huangming shifa lu*, 75: 52.

47. *Chouhai tubien*, 12: 24a.

48. *Ibid.*, 4: 23-4.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*, 4: 22-3.

51. Wang Shimao 王世懋, *Minbu shu* 閩部疏 [An account of Fujian, preface 1585], 17b-18a.

52. *Jiajing tongnan pingwo tonglu*, comp. Xu Xueju, p. lb; also Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 6b.

Zhangzhou people were active participants.<sup>53</sup> In order to cope with the existing conditions and keep an eye on the increasing maritime activity in 1567, the Ming government decided to elevate the status of the port to that of district with the name Haicheng. Thereafter, until the fall of the Ming dynasty, it remained the most prosperous seaport in Fujian.<sup>54</sup>

An overview of how serious the Wo (real/disguised) problem was in South Fujian during the Jiajing period is shown by the recorded raids below:<sup>55</sup>

Year	Destination	Pirates' Identity
1532	Weitou	local pirates <sup>56</sup>
1540	Zhang & Quan	Fujianese pirate leader Li Guangtou escaped from jail and was active thereafter
1548	Tong'an, Hui'an & Jinjiang	local pirates
1549	Yuiegang	Wokou
1550	Yongchun & Anchi	Wokou <sup>57</sup>
1555	Quanzhou	Wokou
1556	Yuegang, Quanzhou <i>wei</i> , Zhangpu & Zhao'an	local pirates led by Xie Lao; Wokou
1557	Yuegang	local pirates led by Xu Lao, Xie Ce and others
	Wuyu, Tong'an, Hui'an & Nan'an	Wokou
	Zhao'an	Wokou <sup>58</sup>
1558	Hui'an, Nan'an, Zhao'an, Zhangpu & Quanzhou <i>fu</i>	Wokou

(*cont'd overleaf*)

53. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 73: 27a.

54. Song Yingxing 宋應星, *Tiangong kaiwu* 天工開物 [The exploitation of the works of nature] (1637 ed.), *juan* 2, "On Transports", p. 5b; it runs: "Fujianese people sailed from Haicheng".

55. Sources are drawn from *Fujian tongzhi* (1871 ed.), *juan* 278 unless otherwise indicated.

56. *Quanzhou fu-chih* (1870 ed.), 73: 21b.

57. *Ibid.*, 73: 23b.

58. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, 133a.

Year	Destination	Pirates' Identity
	Yuegang	local pirates led by Zhang Wei
1559	Yuegang, Zhao'an, Zhangpu, Yunxiao, Quanzhou <i>fu</i> , Tong'an, Changtai & Pinghe	Wokou
1560	Nan'an, Changtai, Tong'an & Yongchun	Wokou
	Zhangzhou, Yunxiao, Zhao'an, Nanjing & Longyan	Guangdong pirates led by Zhang Lian
1561	Jinjiang, Zhao'an, Changtai, Nan'an, Changpu, Anchi & Tong'an	Wokou
	Zhangzhou	Wokou <sup>59</sup>
	Zhao'an, Zhenhai <i>wei</i> (in Zhangzhou), Nanjing & Longyan	Guangdong pirates led by Zhang Lian
	Changtai	local pirates
1562	Changpu, Yongning <i>wei</i> , Yongchun & Zhao'an	Wokou
	Zhangzhou <i>fu</i> , Nanjing & Zhangzhou <i>xian</i>	pirates led by Zhang Lian or by Xu Chaoguang
1563	Jinjiang, Hui'an, Dehua & many other places	Wokou
	Zhao'an	pirates led by Xu Chaoguang
1564	Tong'an & Zhangpu	Wokou; massive counter-attacks were launched by General Qi Jiguang
	Zhao'an	Wokou <sup>60</sup>
	Quanzhou	Wokou <sup>61</sup>

59. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 73: 25–6.

60. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 134a.

61. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 73: 31b.

Year	Destination	Pirates' Identity
1565	Yongning wei	Wokou
	Zhao'an	local pirates led by Wu Ping <sup>62</sup>
1566	Zhao'an	pirates led by Lin Daoqian
	Quanzhou	Wokou <sup>63</sup>

These records reveal that between 1523 (the Song Shuqing Incident) and 1547 (Zhu Wan's appointment) the Wo problem had not yet emerged as a serious threat. The reason was that, although the trade prohibition was imposed, smuggling continued almost unchecked. As soon as Governor Zhu Wan assumed office, drastic actions were taken. However, his resolute military campaign resulted in fatal disturbances since no thought was given to finding solutions to the basic social problems.

The Ming authorities were so much troubled by the Wo that the Emperor made a very rare decision to send a special envoy to Japan in 1546, requesting the 13th ruler of the Ashikaga Shogunate, Yoshiteru, to help suppress the pirates. The most amazing outcome was the latter's response the following year, asserting that the reason that China was suffering from the ravages of the pirates was the presence of Chinese outlaws. This group of Chinese had induced members of the unruly class of the Japanese people to invade and plunder the country. Therefore, Japan was neither concerned with nor bore any responsibility for this problem.<sup>64</sup>

In 1565, a year before the death of the Jiajing Emperor, Shogun Yoshiteru was assassinated and Japan descended into chaos. Just at this time, the Ming troops, under the command of such celebrated generals as Qi Jiguang, began to show more ability in coping with the Japanese raiders. Hence the coastal areas were gradually freed from the real Wo devastation. Furthermore in 1588, Hideyoshi, founder of the fourth military government in Japan, framed and promulgated laws devised to deal with the pirates. These laws, that were vigorously enforced, prohibited piratical activities, but perhaps he was too much tied up with his military campaign against Korea to oversee their enforcement.<sup>65</sup>

62. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 134a.

63. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 73: 31b.

64. Yoshi S. Kuno, *Japanese Expansion on the Asiatic Continent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937), Vol. 1, p. 124.

65. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 125.

This was by no means the end of the maritime problem in Fujian. The entrenched social ills had never been dealt with successfully. So the South Fujianese people continued to participate in seafaring activities and piracy lingered on.

The piratical turmoil worsened the already unstable social conditions. "Since the Wo disturbances broke out, the incessant ravages of the soldiery and brigands has caused nine out of ten families to abandon their farmland", said a minister for the Board of Military Affairs in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>66</sup> In 1561, for instance, the Wokou devastation resulted in serious starvation in seven districts of Quanzhou. Only after more than a thousand junk-loads of rice were shipped in from Guangdong to remedy the critical situation was the disaster relieved, and then only temporarily.<sup>67</sup>

Besides the sufferings of the commoners, the troubles caused by the government troops were no less harmful than the plunderers. "People even prefer to encounter the Wo bandits to the *kebing* (guest troops) sent from other regions."<sup>68</sup> "They can still manage to escape if Wo are approaching, but they barely stand a chance if they run into the government troops", commented a local observer.<sup>69</sup> One government Censor gave his comments as follows: "The turmoil caused by the *kebing* is just the same as that of the Wo barbarians."<sup>70</sup> These soldiers were "as greedy as wolves".<sup>71</sup> The following example is highly illustrative of the common people's attitude towards the government troops. In 1555 there were rumors in Changtai about the arrival of a battalion. The people became so terrified, they rushed to escape and shortly afterwards the walled city was deserted.<sup>72</sup>

Even after the critical period of the Wokou raids, places like Nan'an had already suffered so much destruction, they could not restore half of the previous settlements.<sup>73</sup> Under these conditions, even more people looked to the seas as a last resort to find a livelihood. A few decades after the Jiajing period, claims a late Ming record, 90 per cent of the South Fujianese looked on the sailing junks as their own homes.<sup>74</sup> The Wo

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66. *Chouhai tubian*, 12: 31a.

67. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 73: 26.

68. At that time, most of the troops stationed in Fujian came from other provinces.

69. *Chouhai tubian*, 11: 66.

70. *Ibid.*, 11: 69a.

71. *Ibid.*, 11: 68a.

72. *Fujian tongzhi* (1871 ed.), *juan* 278 under "The 34th Year of the Jiajing Reign".

73. *Quanzhou fuzhi* (1870 ed.), 20: 8a.

74. Gu Yangwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 103b. An earlier source gives a more conservative figure that "five out of ten had to feed themselves outside the rice-fields and

devastation can also be seen as one important factor that contributed to the migration of South Fujianese to Manila and Taiwan at the end of the sixteenth century.

## **The Gentry-Merchants *versus* the Peasant-Peddlers: Some Concluding Remarks**

Notwithstanding the fact that, throughout its long history, China remained land-centered and anti-commercial and that the traditional ideology irrevocably regarded the merchant class as the lowest rung of the social ladder, the trade that the Confucians never ceased to attack had always been able to play its own role in the traditional society of China, not to mention the state's own involvement in it under the guise of tributary trade.

The monopolized character of the state-trade institution (*shibo*) was effective only in the early Ming period when the bureaucratic machine was under the strict control of the Court. The long reign of the Jiajing Emperor (1522–66) was marred by signs of losing control of the coastal affairs. The smuggling activities of the Portuguese, the Japanese and the Chinese maritime adventurers detrimentally affected state trade and gave rise to the private trade that substituted for the once flourishing tribute ships.

Quanzhou declined in the prosperity it previously enjoyed as one of the national centers for the state trade. The Supervisorate of Maritime Trade and Shipping was later removed to Fuzhou in northern Fujian. Simultaneously with the emergence of private trade as a force to be reckoned with after the mid-Ming period, Yuegang in Zhangzhou, situated south of Quanzhou, became the port of frequent resort for the "smuggling" business. The eclipse of Quanzhou and emergent Yuegang (elevated to Haicheng District in 1567) represented two subsequent periods during which state trade slowly had to cede to the private trade. Unlike Quanzhou, which served the political and economic interests of the state, Yuegang was a symbol of maritime trade pursued by the peasant population of South Fujian. Under the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, the hard-pressed peasants sought a way out of their dilemma by readily involving themselves in the maritime activities. Many of them became peasant-peddlers, collaborating with foreigners in offshore

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their homeland", see Xie Zhaozhe 謝肇淛, *Wu zazu* 五雜俎 [Miscellaneous notes of five aspects] (Wanli [1573–1620] ed.), 4: 35. Note that the latter account does not cover the whole of the southernmost area of Fukien.

businesses. In the beginning, they mainly supplied the foreign traders with daily necessities or participated in the peddling trade, since without even the minimum capital to invest, they were in no position to exchange commodities in bulk. However, more and more of them began to pursue adventurous undertakings by sailing overseas.

The local gentry were never slow to respond. Their wealth and prestige in local society enabled them to conduct large-scale maritime businesses. From time to time, these gentry-merchants were severely criticized when the imperial ban on maritime activities was strictly followed by those officials who had been sent from the Court. As outsiders, they were not part of this interest group and were principally concerned with law and order. Nevertheless, the eroding force of corruption meant that the bureaucratic machine lost its grip on enforcing the restrictions on the sea-going businesses. Mutual understanding and collaboration flourished between the local officials and the gentry-merchants. To gain full control, the gentry-merchants often acted against the interests of peasant intruders from outside their camp and instigated the government forces to suppress the latter's activities. Many of the peasant participants were treated as members of piratical bands and were therefore eventually forced to turn to these activities for survival.

## CHAPTER 9

# Managing Maritime Affairs in Late-Ming Times

### Introduction

It is generally accepted that throughout the whole of its long history China remained land-centric and anti-commercial. Agriculture was considered the proper and fundamental economic activity that provided a solid foundation for society. For this reason, the state would not support commercial entrepreneurship in general and maritime enterprises in particular on a sustainable basis. In contrast to her European counterparts, that ventured out to discover and explore new lands from the late fifteenth century, the Chinese developed their culture independently, forming a self-centered Chinese “culturalism”. It was always a top priority of the state to strive for self-sufficiency in agriculture and provide enough food for its large population. The only form of foreign trade recognized by the Confucian state was the transactions conducted within the tributary framework.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the traditional state ideology and economic policy orientation, seafaring activities actually had a long history in China, especially on its southeast coast. Even the government indulged in maritime commerce under certain circumstances. For example, maritime commerce became an essential part of the national economy during the South Song period.<sup>2</sup> The grand scope of overseas commercial contacts during this time persisted until the Chinese state closed itself off again after the founding of the Ming dynasty. Following a brief period of 28 years commencing in 1405, the state initiated seven sea expeditions under the command of Zheng He. Then the door open to the maritime world was shut off again with the re-imposition of the strict Seafaring Prohibition (*haijin*).

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1. For a general discussion, see Dun J. Li, *The Ageless Chinese—A History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1965), pp. 281–92.
  2. See Lo Jung-pang, “The Emergence of China as a Sea Power during the Late Sung and Early Yüan Period”, *Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, 4 (Aug. 1955): 497–9.



It was exactly at the time when the Seafaring Prohibition policy was in force that the South Fujianese (*Minnan ren*, or *Minnan nang* in the South Fujianese dialect) on China's southeast coast were embarking on seafaring activities in increasingly large numbers. Many of them even sailed to or migrated overseas; others involved themselves in piracy.

The second half of the Ming Dynasty between the years 1522, the beginning of the long-reign of the Jiajing Emperor (r. 1522–66), and 1644, when the Ming collapsed, was a time of striking contrasts to the earlier part of the dynasty. Although despotism was at its height, dynastic rule was in decline, eventually leading to the downfall of the dynasty. Nevertheless, in response to fresh challenges diverse changes were taking place, especially in the traditional economy. Among these new endeavors were efforts to improve agricultural techniques by the introduction of new implements, a better understanding of the use of manure and the introduction of new plants. Much technical progress was also achieved in the fields of weaving and irrigation. Such utilitarian or statecraft scholars as Xu Guangqi (1562–1633) and Song Yingxing (1587–1666)<sup>3</sup> occupied themselves with the scrutiny of practices that might contribute to the well-being of the country. Beyond the boundaries of traditional occupations, there was a surge in the commodity economy and in domestic inter-regional trade.

In South Fujian, where the rugged terrain dropped abruptly into the sea to form an irregular coastline, littered with many bays and good harbors, fertile arable land was scarce. After one thousand years of development prior to the mid-Ming period that was accompanied by population growth, land utilization there had reached its limits. Even the agricultural improvements and innovations mentioned earlier could do nothing to reverse the adversity. Natural catastrophes, though not new in Chinese agricultural history, became fatal in this land of low productivity on which the population relied it for their livelihood.

In addition to the economic hardship, intolerable social oppression had pushed the South Fujianese people to breaking point. It became commonplace in the countryside that witnessed the malpractices of the *shijia* (local prominent families) and the *shihao* (powerful people), hand-in-glove with corrupt local officials in their efforts to exploit the already

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3. Xu Guangqi 徐光啟, a high-ranking Court official and agriculturist, was the author of *Nongzheng quanshu* 農政全書 [A complete record of agriculture]. Song Yingxing 宋應星, a local official, was among many others during the late Ming who endeavored to improve the nation through practical studies. He was the author of *Tian gong kai wu* 天工開物 [The exploitation of the works of nature], an important work on technology in late imperial China.

helpless *xiaomin* (“little people”) who were the most hard pressed by the unfavorable socioeconomic conditions. “For the rich the field dividers stretch one after another; for the poor there is not even the space to put an awl on”, ... a popular Chinese saying describes the cases of extreme poverty. Whenever outbreaks of famine and hunger occurred, the desperate people would form smaller or larger bands here and there on the mountain sides and on the river banks to engage in sporadic uprisings.

Not all resorted to lawless responses. A considerable number of South Fujianese people sought positive remedies for their plight by engaging in small trade, ignoring what the state ideology advocated as a proper occupation. They engaged in commercial endeavors not only in other Chinese regions but also overseas. The presence of such foreigners as the Japanese and Portuguese on the coast gave rise to new opportunities in maritime activities. Their willing participation in trading with them had created a favorable environment that in turn attracted more frequent visits by foreign merchants and adventurers wanting to join them in common pursuits. As the sea traffic flourished, it became profitable to build ships to meet the rising demand. Writing during the Ming-Qing transition, Gu Yanwu (1613–82) said, “[In 1547] every household in Yuegang in Zhangzhou Prefecture built seagoing vessels and traded to Siam, Folangji (Malacca) and some other countries”,<sup>4</sup> for instance, Korea, the Ryukyu Islands, Luzon and Annam.<sup>5</sup> Local fishermen and salt-producers shifted to the new occupation of maritime trade because “its profit is tenfold”.<sup>6</sup> “Only those who were inferior in mind and weak in strength remained in the old jobs.”<sup>7</sup>

According to traditional perceptions, their trading and maritime enterprises were a breach of Confucian values, trespassing beyond the bounds of acceptable occupations. Ironically, the imperial ban on maritime activities had never been a convincing policy in the eyes of the common people because the state continued to keep the *shibo* (Supervisorates of Maritime Trade and Shipping) open to foreigners, under the pretext of receiving their tribute, and yet prevented its own subjects from engaging in trading with foreigners. Broadly speaking, even

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4. Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, *Tianxia junguo libin shu* 天下郡國利病書 [Problems and challenges in various regions of China] (hereafter *TXJGLBS*), in *Siku shanben congshu* 四庫善本叢書 [The complete library of the four treasures], Vol. 26, p. 6b.
  5. Xie Zhaozhe 謝肇淛, *Wu za zhu* 五雜俎 [Miscellaneous notes of five aspects] (Wanli [1573–1620] ed.), 4: 35.
  6. Mao Yuanyi 茅元儀, *Wubei zhi* 武備志 [A compilation on military defense] (1621 ed.), 214: 21–2.
  7. *Ibid.*

the government officials were far from unanimous among themselves on matters regarding maritime activities and the majority of local officials in particular made only half-hearted attempts to enforce the prohibitory laws that jeopardized their extra income. Both the local scholar-gentry and the Fujianese who held high offices at the Court strongly opposed strict restrictions on maritime endeavors.

The following discussion explores the social and political complexities of this situation by studying Ming government policy and the contesting views on maritime affairs.

## **Frontier Relations and the Concept of Coastal Defense (*Haifang*)**

A brief study of the Ming frontier policy from the time at which it was established will help comprehend the late Ming government's attitude toward maritime affairs in general, and the South Fujianese involvement in seafaring activities in particular.

The best place to begin is to trace many of the policies to the time of Zhu Yuanzhang, the founding Emperor of the dynasty. Soon after his re-unification of China, he decided to follow the preferred traditional approach of refraining from the unnecessary use of force against foreign countries since it would not benefit the state. He decreed:

Those barbarians surrounding China are all located in remote areas with natural barriers formed by mountains and seas. Even if we were to occupy them, their limited resources could never support our administration, and it would be difficult to assimilate their people to our rule. If they disturb our border areas recklessly, they will be punished by natural self-destruction. If they never cause us any trouble and we send precipitate expeditions against them, we shall be confronted with evil omens. My descendants should forever restrain themselves from using the nation's strength to undertake military operations without a reason, thereby causing unnecessary casualties for only temporary military success. Nevertheless, we should train our army constantly and be on guard against the Hu barbarians [residing in northeast China], the Yong [in the west] and those on the northern frontier [Di], since they are closely connected with China proper and have waged wars with China for generations. We should never invade those foreign countries named on the following list: Chaoxian guo (Korea) ..., Riben guo (Japan) ..., Da liuqiu guo (the Ryukyus) and Xiao liuqiu guo (Taiwan) ..., Annan guo (Northern Vietnam), Zhenla guo (Cambodia), Xianluo guo (Siam), Zhancheng guo (Champa),

Sumendala (Sumatra), Xiyang guo (a country in the South China Sea), Zhaowa guo (Java), Pengheng guo (Pahang), Baihua guo (Batak?), Sanfoqi guo (Srivijaya) and Boni guo (Brunei).<sup>8</sup>

Zhu Yuanzhang's approach was also guided by political considerations. His policy priority was to keep a watchful eye on the latent menace posed by the remnants of the defeated Mongol forces. He had learnt the lesson of the preceding (Yuan) dynasty, weakened by its bitter failure in its overseas expeditions against Japan and Java. In terms of border defense, he concentrated his attention on the north rather than the south, and the inland conditions rather than the coastal frontier. In the face of the threat of the Japanese piracy along the coast, as punishment he simply terminated the arrival of their tributary missions by closing down all the *shibo* at Ningbo, Quanzhou and Guanghou in 1373. Six years later, Hu Weiyong, his premier, was accused of colluding with the Japanese and of allowing the latter to come to trade. Outraged by such an incident, the Emperor urged his future generations not to maintain contacts with Japan under any circumstances whatsoever.<sup>9</sup> In 1381 he stiffened his stance and decreed a rigid Seafaring Prohibition known as the *haijin*, to prevent his people from engaging in any maritime trade.<sup>10</sup> This policy was intermittently re-enforced during the Ming period. The main regulations in the Sea Prohibition are as follows:

1. Anyone who ships out horses, cattle, military supplies, iron, copper coins, satin, lustring, silk and cotton, or engages himself in sea-borne trade will be subject to punishment with one hundred blows of heavy bamboo. Anyone who transports or helps carry the above-mentioned articles should be subjected to the same punishment but one grade lighter. The cargo, vessels and carts concerned will be subject to confiscation. Informers are entitled to a reward of 30 per cent of the value [of the goods] confiscated. Anyone who ships out weapons or engages in such seafaring activities will be subject to death by hanging. Anyone who discloses local information to outlaws

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8. *Mingchao kaiguo wenxian* 明朝开国文献 [Documentary records of the Ming Dynasty in its founding period], ed. Wu Hsiang-hsiang 吳相湘, Vol. 3 (Taipei: Hsueh-sheng shuju, 1966), pp. 1588–91.

9. Zhang Xie, 張燮 (1574–1640), *Tong xi yang kao* 東西洋考 [An investigation into the affairs of the Eastern and Western Oceans] (1617 ed.; reprint, Taipei: Cheng Chong shuju, 1962), 6: 4a.

10. *Ming shilu: Taizu chao* 明實錄：太祖朝 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: Taizu Reign], 139: 7a (hereafter *MSL: TZ*) (Taipei: Peiping Library Collection; reprint, 1966).

- will be punished by beheading. Officials who act as accomplices will be subject to the same punishment.
2. Officials who use their positions to connect themselves with unauthorized trade will be subject to punishment extending to their whole families.
  3. Foreign merchants who engage in maritime trade should report their cargo for tax purposes immediately after their arrival in ports of call. Should they fail to do so, they will be punished by one hundred blows of bamboo.
  4. Any officer who receives bribes for allowing cargo vessels to enter and connects himself with such transactions that lead to piratical activities will be sentenced to death if he is the principal, and banishment to the frontier if he is the accessory.
  5. Any officer or civilian who sells prohibited weapons to tribute-bearers will be subject to punishment by beheading.
  6. Vessels can only be put to sea with an official permit. Any civilian or officer who builds three-master or larger vessels (later two-master and above) without authorization, transports any prohibited cargo by sea and trades in foreign countries, has secret commerce with pirates and acts as a guide in plundering law-abiding people will be subject to the death sentence by beheading and the other members of his family are to be banished to the frontier. Anyone who builds a forbidden type of vessel and sells it to foreigners will suffer the same punishment.
  7. Any civilian or official who trades with Woguo (Japan) will be subject to the death penalty by beheading.
  8. Any civilian who purchases foreign cargo from tribute-bearers before they report to the customs office or collects prohibited cargo for the foreigners, will be banished to the frontier.
  9. Influential and wealthy families who provide capital to purchase cargoes and ship them out to sea via the agency of evil people, even though they have not engaged in such activities personally, will also be subject to banishment to the frontier. The cargo will be confiscated.
  10. Anyone who harbors wicked merchants or hides their cargo and transports it out to sea will be charged with theft, and sentenced to wearing the cangue for two months. Neighbors or petty officials who are aware of such events but fail to inform the authorities will likewise be guilty and be subject to punishment by wearing the cangue for one month.<sup>11</sup>

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11. Ch'en Wen-shih 陳文石, *Ming hongwu jiajing jian de haijin zhengce* 明洪武嘉靖間的海禁政策 [The Sea Prohibition policy during the Reigns from Hongwu

As mentioned earlier, the Sea Prohibition policy that prevented their own people from engaging in maritime trade existed alongside a separate tribute-and-trade system. The latter was actually an extension of the Song *shibo* model that persisted until the Jiajing Emperor's succession to the throne in 1522. Thereafter, a change was ushered into maritime affairs, in response to the presence on the coast of the Portuguese, the Japanese pirates and Chinese maritime adventurers. Eventually, their illicit activities supplanted the role of tribute trade.

During Ming times, with the exception of the early years of the first Emperor, the *shibo si* (Supervisorates of the Maritime Trade and Shipping) took charge of foreign trade in Guangzhou, Quanzhou (later removed to Fuzhou) and Ningbo. Throughout the dynasty, Guangzhou was the port of call for incoming foreigners from Champa, Siam and other countries in the "Western Ocean", Quanzhou for the Ryukyus and Ningbo for Japan. Guangzhou was almost always kept open, but the other two were closed intermittently in response to the prevailing situation on the coast.

Under the *shibo* system, once a foreign country was accepted as a tributary country, a special permit was issued to allow it to engage in limited, supervised trade upon its arrival. The number of vessels and personnel on board and the frequency of the tribute missions were specified according to the size or status of each individual country. Their cargo was allowed to be sold under supervision in the port of call or the national capital for only three to five days.<sup>12</sup> The tribute system was actually an important component in traditional foreign relations. The dynasty intended to use such measures to bind and appease aggressive frontier peoples. In his policies, Zhu Yuanzhang was not unlike his predecessors in previous dynasties, who intentionally suppressed commercial activities, especially among the civilians. He even adopted discriminatory laws against merchants prohibiting them from wearing silk clothing.<sup>13</sup> This attitude was generally followed by his successors.

Two reasons led to a more rigid control of the tribute-and-trade activities. Since the tribute system was principally regarded as a means to enhance imperial prestige and maintain goodwill between foreign countries, especially those along the borders, profit was reduced to a secondary consideration. In other words, the state had no intention of profiting from trade, even though this enterprise was considered the exclusive prerogative of the state. The Imperial Court accepted tribute

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to Jiajing] [Taipei: Taiwan daxue, 1966], pp. 35–8; see also Chen Renxi 陈仁锡, *Huangming shifa lu* 皇明世法录 [The inimitable institutions of the Royal Ming] (Chongzhen Reign [1628–44] ed.), 75: 41–3.

12. Ch'en Wen-shih, *Ming hongwu jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, p. 14.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

and in turn bestowed generous gifts on the tribute-bearers, resulting in an exchange which was seldom in the dynasty's favor. The Court's dilemma is vividly expressed in the following memorial by a Ming official:

Your humble servant realizes that the Court will suffer real harm for vainglory if it does not limit foreign tributes.... Although they do display some sort of sincerity and respect, they make the voyage to China because they are covetous of Chinese products and they have sold such products to other countries for considerable profit. The Court should limit the frequency of the tribute ... to the degree that it still can achieve the purpose of building up goodwill and simultaneously save our people from the wearisome service of taking care of the tribute missions from the ports of call to the national capital.<sup>14</sup>

Other problems also arose. Lured by the promise of great profit, the coastal merchants still traded with foreigners, thereby breaking the prohibition laws. To do so, they used to bribe the port officials. Countries paying tribute were also dissatisfied with the restricted trade. Besides the tribute trade that benefited only the local officials and powerful households, there was also illegal trade that had begun to flourish on account of the tacit collaboration of the authorized or un-authorized "tribute-bearers", well-connected merchants and port officials. The state regulations existed only on paper.

The Court neither encouraged private trade nor did it relax its strict control of maritime affairs, even during the Yongle Reign in which the unprecedented Zheng He expeditions were initiated, when it could have expected this Emperor's inclination would have been more favorably inclined toward a maritime approach. In fact, it was not the case. One of the first actions taken by the Emperor in 1404 was the reinstatement of the ban on the building of seagoing vessels. Zheng He's fleet is known to have relentlessly suppressed the Chinese pirates-cum-traders in Southeast Asia in a successful attempt to restore law and order on behalf of the local regimes.<sup>15</sup> The upshot was that royal control of trade was more rigid, but nonetheless more effective, than ever. The fly in the ointment was that it worked only when state power was strong. Once the power of the dynasty waned, the coastal people immediately took advantage of the situation and managed to get around the prohibitive laws. They organized numerous bands to trade overseas. This is precisely what happened in the Jiajing reign (1522–66),<sup>16</sup> during which the rich provided

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14. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–5.

16. Zhang Xie, *Tong xi yang kao*, 7: 1a.

the capital and the poor risked their lives in seagoing ventures.<sup>17</sup> Even the royal envoys to foreign countries brought merchants along with them or personally engaged in private trade.<sup>18</sup> The most notorious transactions were those supported by the eunuchs who seized control of the *shibo* administration.<sup>19</sup>

Certainly to some extent this situation can be attributed to the state's awareness of its own limitations to exert full control over the maritime situation, compounded by the fact that there were signs of a readiness on the part of the government to relax the prohibition even before the Jiajing Emperor's accession to the throne. Unfortunately, two concurrent incidents frustrated the prospective change in policy. The first was the breakdown in Sino-Portuguese relations. Earlier, Wu Tingju, then the Provincial Administration Commissioner of Guangdong, had suggested the relaxation of the prohibition for two reasons: cogently the shortage of spice supplies had become serious as a direct consequence of the prohibition policy; second, port revenue had dropped considerably since the restriction discouraged the visits by foreign vessels. One serious consequence was that the military rations that had been drawn from this source were badly affected. In response, the Court issued approval of Wu's suggestions,<sup>20</sup> and consequently the Portuguese mission under Fernando d'Andrada's command was well received by the Guangdong authorities and their embassy was allowed to proceed to the capital to seek an audience with the Emperor.<sup>21</sup> However, while the embassy was still in the capital, news that threw a different light on the newcomers reached the Court. It concerned Simon d'Andrada, the commander's brother, who had committed acts of piracy near the port of Guangzhou. The increasing violence and aggressive conduct of his men had led to open hostilities in this southern port. Subsequently, the local officials resorted to military measures and drove the Portuguese ships out of the Pearl River by force.<sup>22</sup> Thereafter they were forbidden to enter Chinese ports. When Alphonso

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17. *Ibid.*, 7:1b.

18. Ch'en Wen-shih, *Ming hongwu jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, p. 101.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 101–2.

20. *Ming shilu: Wuzong chao* 明實錄：武宗朝 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: Wuzong Reign], 149: 9 (hereafter *MSL: WZ*).

21. Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514 to 1644* (Leiden: E.J. Brill Ltd., 1934), pp. 48–9.

22. Chang Wei-hua 張維華, "Mingshi Folanji Lusong Helan Yidali zhuan zhushi" 明史佛朗機呂宋荷蘭意大利傳註釋 [A commentary on the four chapters on Portugal, Spain, Holland and Italy in the Standard dynastic history of the Ming], in *Yenching Journal of Chinese Studies*: monograph series No. 7 (Peiping: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1934), p. 12. Also under a new title, see Chang Wei-hua, *Ming shi Ouzhou siguo zhuan zhushi* 明史歐洲四國傳注釋 [A commentary



de Mello appeared off Guangzhou in 1522, he was promptly attacked by a Chinese naval force and defeated. Certain members of the Portuguese crew were captured and executed as pirates.<sup>23</sup>

In that same period, the resumption of the “Japanese tribute mission” came to a disastrous conclusion in 1523 because its “tribute-bearers” launched a raid in the vicinity of Ningbo. The area was severely devastated, and even the Chinese coastal commander-in-chief was killed.<sup>24</sup> This incident greatly shocked the Ming government, as an official commented:

The responsibility for the Wo’s notorious behavior should be laid at the door of the local officials. They were at a loss to know how to tackle the outbreak and failed to suppress them as the violence burst loose. Their incompetence allowed the dwarves (the Japanese) to succeed in bringing calamities upon the innocent people, occupying cities, plundering treasuries, burning government offices and killing officials. What a national humiliation it was! My investigation has shown that, in an effort to evade responsibility, the officials involved tried to cover up the facts.... Moreover,... the number of Wo who successfully devastated the whole region of the Ning and the Shao sub-prefectures where the population is no fewer than a million was no more than a hundred.<sup>25</sup>

These two incidents suffocated the short-lived attempt to relax the maritime restriction. The Ming government slammed the door on the Portuguese and on other southeastern countries as well. Subsequently, the Portuguese and the southeastern countries skipped Guangzhou and went north along the coast where they found a way to trade illicitly with the friendly South Fukienese people. Twenty years later (1542), the Portuguese even made an appearance in Ningbo. Here they were initially permitted to trade, perhaps partly because the port officials

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on the chapters on four European nations in the Standard dynastic history of the Ming] (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1982).

23. *Ming shilu: shizong chao* 明實錄：世宗朝 [Veritable records of the Ming Dynasty: Shizong Reign], 24: 8 (hereafter *MSL: SZ*).
24. Li Chengxun 李承勛, “Kanchu wokou shiqing yi shen guowei shu” 勘處倭寇事情以伸國威疏 [Investigate the Wokou incidents to strengthen the national prestige], in *Ming jingshi wenbian* 皇明經世文編 [Collected essays on statecraft from the Ming Dynasty] (hereafter *MJSWB*), comp. Chen Zilong, Xu Fuyuan, et al. 陳子龍 (1608–47), 徐孚遠 (1599–1665) 等選輯 (Orig. 1638; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 109: 19b–26a; references to the disturbances are also found in *MSL: SZ*, 227: 2b; 234: 4b; and 349: 4a.
25. *Ibid.* Consequently, strict regulations against contacts with foreigners were re-enforced; see *MSL: SZ*, 38: 4b–5a.

chose to overlook the previous, unpleasant event in order to profit from their arrival, but the old story repeated itself. Assaults on and murders of people in and around the city became common. The audacity of the Portuguese reached such heights that they began to construct a fort on land. Their boldness alarmed the Chinese officials who had hitherto condoned them for the sake of the personal profits they made from the trade. The Portuguese establishment in Ningbo soon met an abrupt and violent end.<sup>26</sup> The experience in Ningbo was repeated in Quanzhou in 1549. Here too, the Portuguese, having been well received at first, soon proved intolerably aggressive and were expelled by force. It was at this time that the Westerners earned the derogatory nickname of *fanguai* (foreign devils).<sup>27</sup>

The disturbances that were erupting along the southeast coast in the 1540s stirred up heated discussions both at the Court and in the locality. For the first time, government officials and scholars began to pay serious attention to issues related to coastal defense. On the basis of the attitude they adopted toward maritime affairs, the gentry circles of Ming society can be divided into two opinion groups: the defenders of law and order, stressing the importance of enforcing the Sea Prohibition, and the supporters of trade, especially found among the local vested interests.

The law-and-order defenders upheld the existing maritime prohibition as the best way to restore peace and stability in the coastal regions. They treated the maritime turmoil as part of the larger frontier problem, believing that the best solution was to follow the traditional frontier policy that had been a general practice during the previous dynasties and followed by the Ming state in the past. Prior to the Ming, outside threats had been posed, almost without exception, along the inland borders. The vast ocean to the east and southeast was considered an impassable natural barrier. Therefore national defense was principally conceived as finding a means to repel the nomads along the long inland frontiers. As an agricultural society, China imported furs, skins and hides from the nomads, but the most important item of trade was horses. In their turn, the nomads had to import agricultural and handicraft products, notably grain, silk, cloth and tea from China. As pastoral products were not essential to the maintenance of daily life in the sense that grain and cloth were, the Chinese had the economic upper hand at the expense of

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26. For the causes of the Sino-Portuguese clashes, see Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514 to 1644* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), pp. 63–8, 75–80.

27. *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. C.R. Boxer (reproduced from the Hakluyt Society; Nendeln: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1967), p. xxi.

the nomads. Since it was geographically impossible for the nomads to produce these products in their own land, they had no option but to trade with China to obtain them, although, to some extent this demand was met by gifts from Chinese governments through the time-honored tribute system. Chinese governments never hesitated to use economic weapons, either by withholding subsidies or forbidding trade so as to “punish the barbarians for their misdeeds or appalling behavior”, that is to say, for their occasional raids and unauthorized incursions into China proper.<sup>28</sup>

A study of Ming-nomad relations will throw light on the basic idea of traditional Chinese frontier policy. The following mid-fifteenth-century memorial by a Ming official represents the standard observation:

Once there were officials appointed by the government to take charge of the border transactions. Military and civil officials all observed ... the strict regulations [laid down] and dared not engage in private trade with the barbarians.... Therefore those barbarians ... did not venture to commit evil deeds. In later periods, these ignorant military and civil officials along the frontier ... frequently ... traded with the barbarians.... Consequently, the barbarians made use of the iron pans and cotton damasks they received to manufacture weapons, military jackets and the like and began to assume an aggressive attitude. Sometimes they argued about the prices in transactions, and even killed the Chinese merchants who traded with them. Since these were illicit transactions, the survivors dared not take the chance of reporting these matters to the higher authorities. Being afraid of retaliation, the barbarians no longer ventured to trade. Hence they resorted instead to plundering. This was the situation which gave rise to the troubles. Being covetous of gifts, people who remained near the frontier and had marital relationships or frequent contacts with the barbarians, even sent false tribute instead of the barbarians. Their intimacy with the barbarians prompted them to spy out border intelligence and reported it to the foreigners. As a result, the government's pacification policy became more ineffective toward the frontier barbarians. The disturbances turned out to be more serious and frequent plundering and killing occurred. Without severe restrictions, probably all other frontier troops [in

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28. Dun J. Li makes a good point on this topic; see *The Ageless Chinese*, pp. 198–9. For a typical example of the Court discussion in 1551 in this respect, refer to *MSL: SZ*, 376: 1a–3a, 4b–5a; and 378: 3a.

the immediate future] will act in the same way and engage in trade with barbarians.<sup>29</sup>

Predictably, the law-and-order defenders among the government officials and gentry scholars proceeded to apply the frontier defense tradition to the maritime situation. They used the same tactics in their handling of the Wokou (Japanese pirates) problem, maintaining that China needed no important products from them, but instead they had to depend on China for the supply of their daily necessities. China was in a superior position and could trifle with its antagonist. In the eyes of the Chinese, trade was a political weapon rather than a matter of economic significance. “Frontier” people were granted permission to trade only when they had satisfied the Chinese of their “proper behavior”. If they did not, China would have no hesitation in imposing an embargo on them.<sup>30</sup> The law-and-order proponents regarded smuggling and piracy along the southeast coast in exactly the same light as they did the nomad menace. In the first place, it was a direct threat to Jinling (Nanjing), the southern and founding capital of the dynasty. Secondly, the Yangzi Valley and the area to the southeast were the richest regions in the nation. The government could not tolerate any activities that would jeopardize the security of the national economy.<sup>31</sup>

## Law and Order *versus* Local Interests

Among the law-and-order defenders, Zhu Wan (1492–1549) stood out as the most outstanding anti-smuggling and anti-foreign trade champion. His appointment as Governor of Zhejiang and concurrently Inspector-General of the Zhejiang-Fujian Maritime Defense in 1547<sup>32</sup> gave him a

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29. Ma Wensheng 馬文升, “Jin tong fan yi jue bianhuan shu” 禁通番以絕邊患疏 [Prohibit contacts with foreigners to prevent border problems], in *MJSWB*, 62: 18a–19b.

30. Such an assertion is made in *Chouhai tubian* 籌海圖編 [Sea strategy illustrated: A work on coastal defense], comp. Hu Zongxian, Zheng Ruozeng, et al. 胡宗宪 (1510–65), 鄭若曾 (1503–70) 等編撰 (1624 ed.; 1st printing, 1562), 2: 33b.

31. This theory can be found in Hu Zongxian’s memorial. The author was a famous anti-piracy commander during the Jiajing Reign (1522–66). See *MJSWB* (Taipei, 1964), Vol. 17, p. 112.

32. Following a suggestion in 1529 by the then Military Minister (兵部尚書), Li Chengxun, a high-ranking official was appointed Itinerant Inspector-General (*xunshi* 巡視) for safeguarding the maritime security of Zhejiang and Fujian Provinces. When Zhu Wan 朱纨 (also pronounced Zhu Huan) took the office

challenging job and placed him in quite a precarious situation. Two powerful groups that had vested interests in maritime trade were anxious to know what his next step would be. One group was the eunuch clique. When the Ming Dynasty was founded, eunuchs were assigned to take charge of the *shibo* administration, but in most cases they were notoriously corrupt. Throughout the Ming period, they intervened in governmental functions and sought to expand their sphere of influence by grasping such lucrative posts as those that would give them control of the tribute trade. In 1509, for instance, Eunuch-Superintendent Pi Zhen asked for the Court's permission to take charge of the *shibo*. Although the Board of Rites had turned down the request, Liu Jin, the most influential eunuch at Court, granted this permission. Despite the nominal, and temporary, termination of their *shibo* control during the Jiajing Reign, they represented the actual power in the bureaucracy, not to mention the re-enforcement of their status in the financial sphere in the late sixteenth century. The local *shihao* (powerful people) were the other group and they soon found Zhu Wan an intolerable nuisance who barred their way. Since they had a stake in the seafaring business, they naturally opposed any severe restrictions. As Zhu Wan stated in one of his memorials to the Court:

It is easy to exterminate robbers from foreign lands, but it is difficult to get rid of those from our own country. It is comparatively easy to extirpate the robbers on our coast, but it is indeed difficult to eliminate those robbers in disguise who belong to the gentry class in our country.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, he listed five damaging factors aggravating the maritime problem: the lack of rations for the army, the absence of a well-trained defense force, the neglect of city defense, low morale and the reluctance to eliminate malpractices. Influential and wealthy people always stood in the way of any reforms. Fearing to offend these people, the defense

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with the title in 1547, his power was very much strengthened because of the deteriorating situation on the coast. See Zhu Wan 朱纨, *Piyu zaji* 芻餘雜集 [A collection of miscellaneous writings, 1587 ed.], 2: 10a. The collection contains 12 chapters of Zhu Wan's memorials and other writings. Refer also to *MSL: SZ*, 104: 14a-b, 324: 7a-b; and 325: 2a.

33. Zhu Wan accused this gentry group as "bandits who are wearing gentry-style hats and gown" (*yiguan zhi dao* 衣冠之盜). See *Ming shi* 明史 [Standard dynastic history of the Ming Dynasty], in *Ershiwu shi* 二十五史 [Twenty-five standard dynastic histories] (reprinted from *Qianlong wuyingdian kanpen* edition 乾隆武英殿刊本 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1965), 205: 2b. See also Foreword by Wen Zhenmeng 文震孟, to Zhu Wan, *Piyu zaji*.

troops could do nothing to improve the situation. Should they have done so, their commanding officers would have been in a precarious position.<sup>34</sup> In his memorial to the Court, Zhu wrote:

Your humble servant personally ... inspected the maritime defense conditions in Zhangzhou and was greatly shocked by and worried about the distressing situation there.... The office-bearers follow the routine mindlessly and do their duties in a perfunctory manner to avoid trouble.... The local public opinion (among the gentry) has become the only decisive and influential power.... For example, the anti-dwarf commanding officer, Li Xiu,... could not even answer my questions about the number of soldiers and vessels [under his command].... The government troops stationed in the capital city of Zhangzhou *wei* (a military unit) and Zhangzhou *fu* (prefecture) had not been paid for three months and, in some other places like Tongshan, for twenty months.... Re the number of naval vessels, only one ship was available in the Tongshan camp out of the twenty officially recorded, four out of twenty in Xuenzhong Bay, thirteen out of forty in Wuyu camp, and most of these vessels need immediate repair before we can put them into service.... Along the coastal area of Zhangzhou ..., I could find only three hundred and seventy-six archers out of the original nine hundred and fifty,... and in Quanzhou,... six hundred and seventy-three out of one thousand five hundred and sixty. Maritime defense depends solely on troops, rations and vessels.... We cannot now count on them for anything.<sup>35</sup>

Zhu Wan greatly resented the South Fujianese local scholar-gentry. He denigrated them as *jianhao* (treacherous bullies)<sup>36</sup> for having dealings with the intrusive foreigners and supplying (*jieji*) the bandits with daily necessities. For this reason, he firmly believed that, once the authorities had got rid of these people, there would be no more foreign intruders. What troubled him most was the local scholar-gentry's influence at the Imperial Court and that no one dared to do anything to offend them. The local authorities even ignored the instructions from the higher authorities because, as Zhu Wan put it, "the real authoritative power had already shifted to local public opinion".<sup>37</sup> With the local scholar-gentry's support, pirates and foreigners entered the port openly without the slightest fear.

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34. Zhu Wan, "Yueshi haifang shu" 閱視海防疏 [Inspecting the coastal defense], in *MJSWB*, 205: 5a–10a.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Zhu Wan, *Piyu zaji*, 2: 15a–16b; see also *MSL: SZ*, 347: 5a–6a and 350: 1a–2a.

37. Zhu Wan's memorial, in *MJSWB*, 205: 5a–10a.

Zhu was especially irritated by two outrageous incidents. In the first case, the pirates held a big party and grand entertainment to celebrate the marriage between one of their members and a local girl against her own will just a few miles away from the government headquarters. In another case, the Portuguese had their two ships repaired in the locality after they had completed their transactions, as if the local authorities did not exist at all.<sup>38</sup> In the same memorial, Zhu Wan ruthlessly attacked the local scholar-gentry by name. Among them was Xu Fuxian who held the highest imperial *jinshi* degree. He had become rich through the marital relationship between his sister and a pirate.

Zhu also placed the blame for the local lawlessness on Lin Xiyuan, a prominent South Fujianese Confucian scholar. Lin was accused of blackmailing the local authorities. It was said that Lin used to send incoming new officials biographies of their predecessors written by him, implying that such officials' reputations, even their careers, depended to a large degree on what he thought of them. He was also found guilty of interfering in official duties by lynching the accused sent to him and making public instructions about local affairs without due authority. Above all, Lin built forbidden vessels to transport contraband and booty, to assist him in his shady transactions with foreigners.<sup>39</sup>

What was Lin Xiyuan's side of the story? During the contest between the two perceptions of law and order and maritime trade, Lin ruthlessly criticized Zhu Wan's heavy-handed tactics in his dealings with maritime traders. He also expressed his resentment at the anti-Portuguese action. He argued that the Portuguese were well-behaved traders who engaged in legitimate business activities to which their presence in the past five years bore witness. They imported spices and all sorts of Nanhai products and conducted trade fairly and squarely. The coastal people benefited from their presence by supplying them with articles of everyday use including foodstuffs. Was the nature of their activities not similar to those of the frontier people who sold their horses in the northwest or the southern foreigners who dealt in spices in Guangzhou? As these two latter categories of traders had never had any obstacles placed in their way, why were the Portuguese not treated the same way? Moreover, it was an exercise in futility for the authorities to try to stop them because this goal would be beyond their capacity to achieve. Although the Portuguese numbered only five or six hundred, the authorities would suffer great losses of life if they were to attack them. Even if they took this

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38. Zhu Wan, *Piyu zaji*, 2: 19a.

39. Zhu Wan's memorial, in *MJSWB*, 205: 5a–10a. Refer also to Zhu Wan, *Piyu zaji*, 2: 20b.

step, there would be no guarantee of victory for the government troops. Lin also pointed out that on several occasions the Portuguese had helped the government suppress the coastal pirates. Finally, he felt totally at a loss about the accusation of his collaboration with the Portuguese leveled at him by Zhu Wan, but he did not proceed to explain why he thought so.<sup>40</sup>

Being a staunch supporter of trade relations with the Portuguese, Lin was also in favor of government suppression of the rampant piracy on the Fujian coast. He proposed dispatching troops to eliminate the pirate bands,<sup>41</sup> bearing in mind that members of pirate bands were mostly desperate *xiaomin* who looked to the sea as an avenue from which to seek a livelihood. If one accepts Zhu Wan's accusation, Lin Xiyuan was an interested party personally involved in the maritime trade. This probably explains his reasons for defending what he believed to be legitimate business contacts with the Portuguese. Were this indeed the case, there was no contradiction in the hostile position he adopted toward the pirate bands, given that they were likely one of the many competing groups that inflicted harm on his own trading interests. Unfortunately, at this distance in time the information available precludes getting to the bottom of the matter and verifying their respective accusations.

Meanwhile, a propitious time for Zhu Wan to act presented itself when a quarrel broke out between the Portuguese and the Chinese near Ningbo, leading to a killing and growing disorder. The incident was of such a proportion as to draw the Court's attention. Zhu Wan grasped the opportunity and requested the Court for absolute power independent of the Inspecting Censor (*xun'an yushi*) in order to avoid conflict between the two authorities in dealing with the maritime matters.<sup>42</sup> The Court's approval paved the way for a strict observation of the existing prohibition regulations and vindicated the validity of the standing order of the Court to interdict foreign trade as well as to warn those who were engaged in smuggling. He soon revealed himself to be the bitter and uncompromising enemy of the *gueiguan* (high-ranking officials), *shijia* (prominent families) and *shihao* (rich and powerful people of the locality). These people had personally profited considerably from trade. Among the measures taken

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40. Lin defended himself and justified his viewpoint in writing; see Lin Xiyuan 林希元 (1482–1567), *Tong'an Lin Xiyuan xiansheng wenji shiba juan* 同安林希元先生文集十八卷 [Collection of writings in eighteen chapters by Lin Xiyuan of Tong'an], in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 [A collection of books listed in the complete library of the four treasures] (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1997), *ji bu* 集部 [Fourth section: Collections of literature], 5: 30b–34b (*ji* 75, pp. 538–40).

41. *Ibid.*, 5: 31a–b, (*p. ji* 75: 539), 12: 5a–b (*p. ji* 75: 665).

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 677–81; also *MSL: SZ*, 335: 7a.



under his orders was the destruction of all seagoing vessels with two or more masts, the re-establishment of the *baojia* (household surveillance) system, the re-training of troops and, above all, severe punishment of any breach of the prohibition law.<sup>43</sup> By his actions, Zhu Wan publicly and relentlessly challenged the people in power.

However, those who had a stake in the seagoing business were waiting for the right time to strike back. Lobbying at the Court was rife, leading to Inspecting Censor Zhou Liang and Supervising Censor (*jishizhong*) Ye Tang, both Fujianese, to commence preparing a counter-attack on Zhu. In a bid to reduce Zhu's power, the two high-ranking officials convinced the Court that holding the offices of the Governor of Zhejiang and the Commander-in-Chief of the Zhe-Min (Zhejiang and Fujian) Maritime Defense simultaneously was too great a responsibility for Zhu. They took the opportunity to suggest that Zhu's existing official title be suspended and, in its place, the old title of Itinerant Inspector-General be restored. His power to supervise local granaries, revenue, military affairs, local administration, justice and punishment should likewise be abrogated. This leaves little room to doubt that it was Court politics that explains the Emperor's consent to the suggestion.<sup>44</sup> Before long, they delivered the final blow. In 1549, when 96 smugglers led by a pirate leader, Li Guangtou, were executed by order of Zhu Wan, several high-ranking officials at the Court immediately turned against the dutiful Zhu Wan and impeached him for the excessive use of his authority in putting to death the prisoners without having obtained imperial approval. The clash ended in tragedy. Zhu Wan realized, even if the Emperor were to show him mercy, the ministers would still demand his death. Even if the ministers did not venture as far, then the Zhejiang and Fujian people were still those who would like to take away his life. Eventually, in 1550 he committed suicide to avoid humiliating punishment.<sup>45</sup>

Before proceeding further, one question remains to be tackled. As mentioned, Zhu Wan pointed the finger at "powerful and evil individuals" (*shihao* or *jianhao*) as well as at the local scholar-gentry who were actually, in Zhu Wan's words, "robbers" in disguise on account of their involvement in maritime businesses. The question is how best to explain who these powerful local people actually were. Taking a different perspective, they might be viewed as a rising group of local people who

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43. Zhu Wan's memorial, in *MJSWB*, 205: 5a–10a.

44. Regarding the arguments of both sides, see *MSL: SZ*, 338: 1; 346: 1; and 347: 5b.

45. *Ibid.*, 347: 5a–6a; 363: 6; and also *Ming shi*, 322: 12. For Zhu Wan's career, heavy-handed tactics and confrontation with his political antagonists, see Zhu Wan, *Piyu zaji*, especially 2: 15a; 2: 16b; 2: 19a–22a; 5: 11b–12b; and 5: 41a–43b relating to the above events.

were in the position to make substantial capital investments in maritime businesses, even though they did not personally go to sea. They were in contrast to another group of small investors who did travel abroad, the ordinary *xiaomin* who provided manpower and worked as seamen on board the trading junks. This interpretation ties in with the development of the Chinese junk trade in the following two to three centuries.

## Toward a Regulated Maritime Environment

How should the triumph of Zhou Liang and his collaborators be interpreted? Is it indicative of a total defeat of the traditional approach to maritime affairs on the one hand, and an overwhelming victory of the local interests on the other? The answer might be something in-between. In the first place, the outcome illustrates the precarious position of a high-ranking official who might find himself in the midst of a political conspiracy. This was simply part of Court politics all along in Chinese imperial history. In the present case, corrupt officials and influential eunuchs paved the way for the powerful and wealthy families of South Fujian and those people who indulged in power struggles to bring down a high-profile official whose actions threatened their self-interest in maritime trade. Importantly, the unfolding of events should be looked at from a broader perspective. There were three concurrent developments during the late Ming that ushered in a changing social and economic environment, namely: the development of the commodity economy that was gaining momentum, the surge in the private shipping trade and the appearance of large quantities of writings centering on the big question of how to develop the country and save the people. The last category was also known as the statecraft scholarship (*jingshi wen*) during Ming-Qing times.

Returning to Zhu's tragic fate, in the later years of the dynasty, he was generally recognized as a conscientious defender of the status quo and an upright official. He was loyal, firm, incorruptible and, above all, one of the few who dared to fight face-to-face battles against power and wealth. As a responsible and caring official, he had undergone a thorough investigation and possessed an understanding of the circumstances that were responsible for the chaotic situation on the coast. He realized that if the Fujianese people were to feed themselves they had to go to sea and that they were resentful of official restrictions.<sup>46</sup> However, his

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46. Zhu Wan, "Haiyang zeichuan chumo shi" 海洋賊船出沒事 [On piracy], in *MJSWB*, 205: 13a-15b.

survey revealed that only a handful of powerful and wealthy families were actually in control of all the seagoing activities. He argued that the shipbuilding prohibition did not affect the *xiaomin* adversely because they obviously could not afford to build seagoing vessels of the size specified (with two or more masts).<sup>47</sup> From the bottom of his heart he showed great pity toward these people whose daily lives were disrupted by the turmoil caused by pirates. He took it as his duty to save his people. While he was aware that the prohibition would mean that these humble people would lose their livelihood, he contended that only after piracy had been eliminated would these people be able to enjoy a peaceful life. However, had he asked why “even small kids (*sanchi tongzi*) look upon those pirates as if they were parents who feed them”,<sup>48</sup> he would have had second thoughts on the matter.

After Zhu’s death, the prohibition on the seafaring trade was relaxed and the Folangji (Portuguese) subsequently sailed the seas with nothing to fear.<sup>49</sup> Meanwhile, the prohibition issue remained a topic of heated discussion at the Court; the voices of the proponents of prohibition lingered on. Opposing the relaxation of the prohibition in 1551, for instance, Feng Zhang, the Deputy Commanding Officer of the Fujian Sea Patrol (*Fujian haidao fushi*), made his critical comments claiming that the “reprehensible customs” (*e su*) of the Zhang-Quan people stemmed from their involvement in seagoing businesses and admiration of the well-to-do families. He said:

They even mortgage small children<sup>50</sup> for foreign cargo,... or ... submit themselves to being sons-in-law and live with their wives’ families.<sup>51</sup>

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47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. *Ming shi*, 325: 22a.

50. This is confirmed in a letter written by Lin Xiyuan 林希元. Lin defended the Portuguese behavior but he had to admit that they had done wrong to buy children (quoted in Chang Wei-hua’s commentary, fn. 22). Apparently, the Portuguese kept or sold these children as slaves. However, the contemporary Chinese reasoned differently. They thought the newcomers were cannibals who had a special taste for eating small children (see *Ming shi*, 325: 19a). This might have been mixed up with their belief that there were certain evil people who gained extra stamina by eating the essence of unmarried youths.

51. In Chinese custom, a son-in-law was not supposed to live with his wife’s family. If he did so, others would think his behavior parasitical and be contemptuous of him. See memorial by Feng Zhang 馮璋, “Tong fanbo yi” 通蕃舶議 [On allowing visits by foreign trading ships], in *MJSWB*, 280: 18b.

Another memorial reviewed the 40 years of devastation caused by Japanese pirates since 1552 when the restrictive maritime laws had been relieved. The piece firmly opposed the prospective resumption of Japanese tribute missions. It says:

The dwarves devastated ... our coastal area of some ten thousand li (Chinese measure of distance)... Half of the nation's territory was thrown into turmoil.... It took twenty years to eradicate the trouble.... The reasons were as follows: Their tribute missions had come so frequently since the Yongle Reign (1403–1424) ... and they went around our country as if it were their native land.... They used to collect all our charts and books and, therefore, were well informed about our military secrets.... We should no longer discuss tribute-and-trade. Once it is resumed, your humble servant is certain that within several decades Ningbo will vanish. ... If we welcome them with open arms, trouble will break out again. If we let them in with precautions, this will damage our reputation for treating guests [from afar].... [Furthermore], they might come with a few hundred well-selected men and launch a sudden attack; if so our tens of thousands of soldiers will be put in an awful situation and be defeated.... In the last forty years we have successfully eliminated the roots of turmoil and cut off the contacts between our people and the dwarves. Once the tribute-and-trade is resumed, the worst things will occur again. ...<sup>52</sup>

During this period an increasing number of statecraft writings appeared, showing Ming scholars' great concern with the practical application of knowledge to the national affairs. Many of them understood that inept and doltish dogmatism could only endanger the already precarious situation of the nation even more. In such a field, amazing works of a utilitarian nature were written on sea defense, agriculture, technology, medicine as well as socio-political well-being. Discussing the maritime problem, some scholars were convinced that the issue could only be resolved by adopting a more practical and flexible policy, rather than by retaining the strictly orthodox and traditional approach.

In answer to whether the government should accept the surrender of the notorious pirate leader Wang Zhi, a Ming official, Tang Shu, stated that the re-opening of foreign trade was the only way to make inroads on piracy. Ever since the government had enforced the restrictions around 1526–27, merchants had been deprived of their livelihoods and

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52. Memorial by Shen Yiguan 沈一贯, "Lun wo gongshi buke xu shu" 論倭貢市不可許疏 [Tribute trade should not open to Japan], in *MJSWB*, 435: 1a–4a.

had subsequently teamed up with pirates. When the restrictions were strengthened, the situation only worsened. He went on to state that, since the prohibition benefited only illicit traders, the government made itself master of the profit by opening trade and collecting customs duties. Control of this revenue would mean that the poor people could be relieved of heavy taxes and levies. No matter how hard it tried, the government had never made the restrictions effective. Finally, he concluded that, even if the government decided not to accept Wang's surrender, it should not extend the trade prohibition.<sup>53</sup>

In 1567, 17 years after Zhu Wan's death, Tu Zemin, Governor of Fujian, successfully obtained the approval of the Court to lift the sea prohibition. People were allowed to trade in both the Eastern and the Western Oceans. He stressed the point that China was only on its guard against Japan but not against its vassal states such as Luzon, Sulu, Jiaozhi, Champa and Siam, that had never given China any trouble.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the imperial ban was relaxed.

The seagoing trade was suspended again in 1572. When Xu Fuyuan was Governor of Fujian (1592–94), he appealed to the Court on behalf of the Fujianese people for a reconsideration of the decision to reinstate the prohibition. In his memorial he wrote that:

Recently, after the outbreak of the dwarves' attack on Chaoxian (Korea), the trade prohibition has once again been enforced. The purpose of the ban is to cut off the saltpeter and sulfur supplies to the attackers by our evil people,<sup>55</sup> Haicheng merchants suffer the most as a result. Hundreds of vessels and incalculable [amounts of] cargo are not allowed to move out of the port. Merchants are bankrupted and their employees are starving.... In my humble opinion, local turmoil will inevitably erupt for four reasons resulting from the resumption of the prohibition. First,... the prohibition will

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53. Tang Shu 唐枢, "Fu Hu Meilin lunchu Wang Zhi shu" 復胡梅林論處王直疏 [Reply to Hu Meilin (Hu Zongxian 胡宗憲) regarding Wang Zhi's (王直) case], 270: 3a–9b. Tang, who received his *jinshi* degree in 1526 and was later promoted to take charge of the Office of the Board of Justice and Punishment (刑部主事), supported, in implicit language, the acceptance of Wang Zhi's surrender. The government finally did so, and gave its firm guarantee of Wang's safety in 1557. Wang Zhi also promised to serve the government by safeguarding the coast. Unfortunately, the authorities broke their promise and executed Wang Zhi instead. Consequently, the maritime situation then deteriorated on account of this unwise act. For the whole story, see *Tongxi yang kao*, 6: 8a–9a.

54. *Tongxi yang kao*, 7: 1b–2a.

55. Saltpeter and sulfur were among the main articles strictly banned for export because they were constituents in the making of gunpowder.

encourage unlawful activities.... Second, ... Zhangzhou people are used to trading in Luzon.... If they are not allowed to return, the foreigners will make use of them for their own ends.... Third,... we shall no longer be able to collect information about the foreigners from our merchants who also act as good informers.... Fourth, there are regular troops consisting of several thousand men stationed along the coastal area south of Zhangzhou. Military spending amounts to as much as fifty-eight thousand *liang* (taels). Twenty thousand of this comes from commercial taxes. Without this revenue, not only will there be a shortage of military supplies, but we shall also have to levy taxes more heavily on the people.... My predecessor, Governor Tu Zemin,... was granted approval to open the *shibo*.... In the past thirty years, fortunately we have not heard of any serious piracy.... During my investigation, I noticed that evil people from Tong'an (in Quanzhou prefecture), Haicheng, Longxi, Zhangpu and Shaoan (in Zhangzhou prefecture) put to sea during April–May ... to Funing (in North Fujian), under the pretext of carrying fish or trading in Jilong and Danshui (in Taiwan), but frequently they are transporting forbidden cargo ... to Japan.... Some others, on the pretext of going south to Chao, Hui, Guangzhou and Gaozhou to ship back grain, actually set their course for Japan.... Since it is impossible to stop them ... a better option is to reopen the *shibo* in order to recover the revenue.... Otherwise, we are alienating all the other foreign countries, causing damage to our own merchants and making way for plunderers, only to help Chaoxian guard against Japan.<sup>56</sup>

Governor Xu Fuyuan's management of maritime affairs is a good example of administrative flexibility. When the restoration of the seafaring prohibition in 1592 caused people a great deal of distress, Governor Xu not only promptly memorialized and appealed to the Court for a re-consideration of its reinstatement of the prohibition law, he also took immediate measures to relieve the hardship of the people affected. He issued a special permit to allow people who were still trading overseas or had been spending the winters in foreign lands to come back without punishment or discrimination. Subsequently, several merchants sailed back with 24 vessels and reported to the authorities. They were duly taxed at the customs. This extraordinary measure helped the seafaring people enormously and in 1594 earned the local authority

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56. Xu Fuyuan 許孚遠 (1535–1604), "Shu tong haijin shu" 疏通海禁疏 [Lifting the Sea Prohibition], in *MJSWB*, 400: 1a–6b.

additional revenue amounting to almost one-third of the total income collected the preceding year.<sup>57</sup>

Xu Guangqi (1562–1633) was another outstanding statecraft scholar. His name is often associated with Father Matthew Ricci, a Jesuit missionary. As a far-sighted statesman and an agriculturist and an economist, he explicitly expressed his views in favor of the tribute-and-trade system. He did not regard the *shibo* trade as illicit and hence implicitly criticized Zhu Wan for his rigidity in the handling of affairs and his inability to resolve the maritime problem. His formula for the elimination of seafaring outlaws was simply to legalize the trade. He firmly stated that:

Only after legalizing the trade, we can pacify the dwarves; only after legalizing the trade, shall we be able to get to know them better; only after legalizing the trade, can we subdue them; only after legalizing the trade, can we plot against them.

He even said he regretted not approving a request to send an expeditionary fleet from Fujian to reinforce Satsuma, a feudatory state in southern Japan, against the menace posed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi.<sup>58</sup> This non-traditional expansionistic view is truly unorthodox.

On the other hand, Xu Xueju, the Governor of Fujian in the early seventeenth century, proposed a differentiated policy toward the maritime foreigners. Unquestionably, he was highly resentful of the Dutch presence in the Penghu Islands,<sup>59</sup> located in the Taiwan Straits, because they maintained close relations with Japan but he was definitely not anti-trade, as seen from his attitude toward Spanish Manila. He evidently had no objection to trading with Manila because this destination was perceived to be less dangerous to the country's maritime defense. The trade with it also contributed to the customs revenue in Haicheng in Zhangzhou prefecture. If the trade were banned, he said, the revenue would be lost to the Dutch who had occupied the contiguous and strategic islands off the Fujian coast.<sup>60</sup> In other words, he made a distinction between the violent aggressors, namely the Japanese and the Dutch, and the non-threatening trading counterpart, the Spanish in

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57. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, pp. 100–1.

58. For the whole passage, see the writing by Xu Guangqi 徐光启, "Haifang yu shuo – zhi Wo" 海防迂說: 制倭 [Subduing the Wo], in *MJSWB*, 491: 29b–47a.

59. The Dutch first arrived in Guangzhou in 1601. Three years later (1604), they landed on and occupied Penghu. See *Tongxi yang kao*, 6: 20b–22a.

60. Memorial by Xu Xueju 徐学聚, "Chu bao Hongmaofan shu" 初報紅毛番疏 [On the Dutch as a threat to the country], in *MJSWB*, 433: 1a–4a. Xu Xueju was Governor of Fujian in 1603–07.

Manila. More importantly, his lenient view must also be attributed to the fact that the Haicheng-Manila trade was the largest in volume and value in the contemporary maritime world, contributing to one major source of influx of silver into China.

The topic of maritime affairs continued to attract the attention of the memorialists in the final years of the dynasty. For instance, in 1639, shortly before the fall of the Ming, a memorial sent by the Supervising Censor Fu Yuanchu reached the Court. In it, this official argued that:

Your humble servant is himself a Fujianese.... During the Wanli reign, foreign trade was resumed in Yuegang, in Haicheng district in Zhangzhou prefecture. The annual revenue derived from the port was more than twenty thousand *liang*.... But this practice was abandoned later.... To the Fujianese, the sea is the same as cultivated land. Once the imperial ban came into force, their livelihood was cut off and they have had no other option but to resort to piracy... They often go out to trade with the red-haired barbarians (the Dutch).... If foreign trade is legalized,... the revenue ... will be recovered, ... poor people in the coastal area will be relieved of starvation and poverty ... and will no longer participate in piracy... The military and other officials will not indulge themselves by profiting from it illicitly.... These are not your humble servant's original thoughts, but rather public opinion throughout the whole province of Fujian.<sup>61</sup>

Commenting on the prohibition laws that were decreed by the founding emperor was tantamount to embarking on treacherous waters and this analogy might explain why when the issue was brought up in statecraft scholarship, it was generally presented along more nuanced lines. One example is a tactful presentation of a view about managing maritime affairs summed up by a statecraft commentator Gu Yanwu (1613–82). His presentation said that the task would likely be confronted by three scenarios: the best policy would be prohibition, provided it could be implemented successfully; the second in order of importance was national control of the profit through management of trade, if the first goal could not be effectively achieved; and thirdly, prohibition in name but ineffectual in effect was the worst of the three.<sup>62</sup> In the third case, the government would not only be unable to benefit from maritime income but, on the contrary, it would allow the seafaring outlaws to swallow all

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61. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, pp. 33–34a.

62. Gu Yanwu's summary of the views is the most representative in this regard. See *ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 104.



the profit that should have belonged to the state. This was the root cause of all kinds of maritime troubles.<sup>63</sup> The commentator also pointed out the inappropriate measure of abolishing the *shibo* system simply because of the “Japanese tribute mission” incident in 1523. The proposal contended that the government should root out only the corrupt *shibo* eunuchs, not the whole system.<sup>64</sup>

Writing during the Ming-Qing transition, Gu Yanwu put the *shibo* management into perspective, asserting that even the first Ming Emperor had only instructed his successors not to trade with Japan, but to maintain the *shibo* system for other countries as usual. He justifies the continuation of a regulated trading environment for several reasons: firstly, the *shibo* system could provide special agents with a chance to attain a better understanding of the barbarians; secondly, China and foreign countries benefited mutually from the exchange of their products (it was considered an effective method of tempering the frontier people); thirdly, the government would get hold of the profit from the customs revenue; fourthly, the *shibo* income could cover a large part of local military expenditure; and lastly, a successful *shibo* system was certainly the best way to root out illegal maritime trade at long last, suppress evil merchants and monopolize the trading profit by the state.<sup>65</sup> The proposition neatly skirted around the sensitive issue of advocating private trade (*shangbo*).

## A Test Case Reflecting the Ming State’s Attitudes Toward Its Maritime Merchants

The first recorded encounter between the Spaniards and the Chinese took place in 1570 when a Spanish fleet on course for Luzon clashed with a Chinese trading fleet off Mindoro. The Chinese were defeated.<sup>66</sup> Four years later, Manila miraculously escaped an attack by Chinese pirates led by Limahong.<sup>67</sup> In 1593, relations between the Spaniards and the Chinese were again strained when Gomez Perez Dasmariñas, Governor

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63. Ibid., Vol. 26, p. 99.

64. Ibid., Vol. 26, p. 19; see also *MJSWB* (Taipei, 1964), Vol. 14, p. 251.

65. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 19. The respective terms in Chinese used in the passage to show the benefits of the *shibo* are: 通夷狄之情, 遷有無之貨, 收徵稅之利, 減戍守之費, 禁商賈, 抑奸商 and 使利權在上.

66. Milagros C. Guerrero, “The Chinese in the Philippines 1570–1770”, in *The Chinese in the Philippines 1570–1770*, Vol. 1, ed. Alfonso Felix, Jr. (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1966), p. 16.

67. Ibid., p. 17.

of Manila, was slain by the Chinese oarsmen of his galley. At the time, the Governor was on an expedition to the Moluccas and he had taken 250 Manila Chinese as laborers. To speed up the voyage, these Chinese had been forced to row without respite and were freely tortured by the infliction of various punishments. Driven to desperation, the Chinese mutinied and the Governor and his men were killed. The following year the Fujian officials received a complaint about the Chinese migrants from the Manila authorities, and consequently, sent several junks to bring the Chinese in Manila home.<sup>68</sup>

The growth of the Chinese population in Manila continued to be regarded as a great threat to the Spanish population of that city. This suspicion was strengthened in 1602 when two Chinese officials arrived in Manila. Their visit was a consequence of information passed on to the Wanli Emperor by a man called Zhang Yi who claimed that in Mount Jiye (Keit or Cavite) in Luzon, the ground was made of gold nuggets as big as chick peas. Two officials were sent with Zhang Yi to verify the report. The mission returned and reported that the information given by Zhang Yi was false. The Court was so furious, Zhang Yi was beheaded.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, mutual hate and suspicion were brewing in Manila; both Spaniards and Chinese feared each other and consequently each prepared themselves for hostilities. There were more than 30,000 Chinese settlers in the city, whereas the Spaniards numbered less than a thousand. A massacre of the Chinese broke out in 1603, when Spaniards, Filipinos and Japanese joined in a concerted action and killed more than 25,000 Chinese.<sup>70</sup> When the killing ceased, the Spaniards had to face possible reprisals by the Ming state, faced not merely with an imminent attack by Chinese troops but also the likelihood that Chinese junks would no longer trade with Manila. Governor Acuna considered this last possibility the gravest eventuality that might occur. So when Chinese junks again appeared in Manila the following year, he wrote to King Philip III, saying: "We have been greatly pleased to see that the Chinese have come back to trade with us, a thing of which we were highly doubtful." To ensure the continuity of trade, Acuna sent an embassy to China.<sup>71</sup>

In Fujian, the massacre aroused great anger, especially among the seafaring population, either because their relatives and friends had been among the victims or they feared they would have to face a similar fate in

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68. Zhang Xie, *Tongxi yang kao*, 5: 1b–2b.

69. *Ibid.*, 5: 3b–4b.

70. For the event, see *ibid.*, 5: 4b–5a.

71. Rafael Bernal, "The Chinese Colony in Manila", in *The Chinese in the Philippines*, ed. Alfonso Felix, Jr., p. 53.

the future. Hard-pressed by popular opinion on the one hand, and enraged by the insult to imperial prestige on the other, even the high-ranking officials in Fujian petitioned the Court for retaliation.<sup>72</sup> However, two considerations prevented the Court from taking action against Manila: first, uncertainty about the fate of the proposed sea-expedition and memory of the failed expeditions of the Yuan dynasty against Japan and Java; second, it was considered not worth risking another humiliation for the maritime merchants, who were described as “worthless, ungrateful scum”. Governor Xu Xueju later reported to the Court about the contents of a letter he had sent to Manila and also the safe return of merchants who had survived the slaughter. The memorial is a good illustration of the Chinese government’s apathy toward its own seafaring population in general and the massacre of their countrymen in particular. As a most interesting diplomatic document, the memorial is worth quoting at length:

Since Luzon never made trouble with China, trade was permitted.... Suddenly and unexpectedly, tens of thousands of Chinese were massacred. Laws should never tolerate such happenings. However, the slaughter was originally caused by the false information made by Zhang Yi and the killing of their chief committed by our evil merchants the year before. Their pent up anger made them commence the incident. It seems there is reason to pardon them. We are not certain about the outcome of the war if we send troops across the sea. It is a matter of the nation’s dignity; we should not do so hastily.... Your humble servant has informed the chieftain of the Folangji (here refers to the Spaniards) and the tribes of Luzon about our legitimacy over all ... the places under Heaven. For instance,... three times we had sent troops to restore Korea’s sovereignty after Japanese attacks.... Last year, on account of Zhang Yi’s lies,... we found out that tens of thousands of our Zhang-Quan people had been killed in Luzon. Our local authorities were so irritated that they requested the Emperor to avenge their deaths by sending troops over there ... and they told the Emperor that Luzon was a poor land of little consequence,... it had acquired some importance only because the Chinese had come to trade with the people.... Despite all, they had killed tens of thousands of our people. ... The local authorities wrote three times to the Emperor [and urged him to take action] and the Emperor answered that it was best not to take revenge or to make war on Luzon, for the people had been our friends for a long time and we were still not

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72. *Fujian tongzhi* 福建通志 [A general gazetteer of Fujian] (1871 ed.), 278: 37b, under the heading “the 31st year (1603) of the Wanli Emperor”.

sure who the real trouble-maker was. Furthermore, merchants were the least worthy of the four social strata. How could we make war for such insignificant people? They are scum, ungrateful to China, their land, their parents and ancestors, because they failed to return to China for the New Year. Such people are to be deemed of little worth, therefore the Emperor has not accepted the advice of the local authorities and ordered us to inform you that if you were sensible and regretted it, the Emperor would not punish you ... and the trade with you might continue.... If this is not so, the Emperor would forbid future trade [with you] and send warships with soldiers, with the relatives of the dead and with men from the tributary kingdoms, and they will wage war ... so that Luzon might be given to the vassals of China.... Thanks to Your Majesty's concern, Luzon has let the merchants who had survived the incident return freely with their goods...<sup>73</sup>

As recorded in a Chinese gazetteer, most of the victims of the slaughter came from the Haicheng district of Zhangzhou prefecture.<sup>74</sup> This was only one of a series of disasters that overcame the South Fujianese during their overseas adventures. Without the slightest concern from their home government, not to mention any government protection during their struggle to survive abroad, those Fujianese had no choice but to resign themselves to the will of Heaven. In 1639, a second ghastly massacre was perpetrated in Manila, in which it was estimated that another 23,000 Chinese were killed.<sup>75</sup>

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73. Xu Xueju 徐學聚, "Bao chuhui Lusong qiushang shu – fuchu Lusong" 報取回呂宋囚商疏 – 撫處呂宋 [Reporting on the return of the merchants from Luzon], in *MJSWB*, 433: 4a–7a. Morga's version is quoted in Rafael Bernal's article, with the exception of a few minor points, the two texts are almost identical. In his article cited above, Rafael Bernal says that he is not certain about the accuracy of the letter translated by Morga. However, he assumes that the degree of accuracy of the translation at that time was rather high by giving several examples. See Rafael Bernal's article in Felix's book, pp. 53–5. Should Rafael Bernal have a chance to read Governor Xu's memorial available in Chinese, his uncertainty would be needless.

74. *Zhangzhou fuzhi* 漳州府志 [Gazetteer of Zhangzhou Prefecture] (1877 supplement ed.; reprint, Tainan: Teng-wen, 1965), 47: 27b.

75. Milagros C. Guerrero, "The Chinese in the Philippines", in *The Chinese in the Philippines*, ed. Alfonso Felix, Jr., Vol. 1, p. 25.

## Concluding Remarks

In the early sixteenth century, two concurrent developments occurred on China's southeast coast as a whole and coastal southern Fujian in particular. One was the growth of a bustling domestic trade with other provinces. The other was expansion of the maritime trade on the coast and overseas. The surge in trading activities presented the South Fujianese people with extensive opportunities that linked the coastal and inland regions to each other. The linkages were extended farther into the Nanhai (maritime Southeast Asia), a process that greatly boosted the Chinese junk trade in the following three centuries. South Fujian was the first major area to play a prominent role in the new pattern of economic activities and emerged to become the maritime center of China.

While the littoral people endeavored to promote maritime activities, the state remained obsessed with its self-centered tradition and was reluctant to abandon the sea prohibition laws. The authorities were always suspicious of those involved in maritime trade, denigrating them as "scum and ungrateful". Nevertheless, people capable of putting up capital investment were able to find ways of evading restrictions and controlling lucrative seafaring businesses from afar by sending their men to sea or to engage in trade in foreign lands. The "little people" also enthusiastically entered the fold provided by the new opportunities. Being in the forefront of the activity, they understandably encountered greater hardships and harassment than did the wealthy and influential business investors. Whether they joined the pirate bands or sailed to strange lands, they inevitably suffered. At home, in the name of maintaining law and order they were slaughtered as "*jianmin*" (evil people) by the authorities. In sailing forth, many perished on the high seas or on remote islands without any hope of getting assistance or protection from their government. When such tragic incidents as the Manila massacres occurred, only their families would mourn the loss of their loved ones.

Gradually, the government resistance to change became more untenable and it had to face the reality of the new environment. Since maritime trade could no longer be suppressed, the state retreated from its rigid, orthodox position of banning what it perceived to be illicit trade and smuggling activities. At the time, in the time-honored *shibo* concept, the government found an effective mechanism to exercise control of the booming private trade. Consequently, the *shibo* system that managed the tribute or state trade gave the state an idea for reigning in the uncontrollable maritime situation.

Private trade was termed *shangbo* in the writings of late Ming times. The *shibo* and *shangbo* represented the two modes of trading operations. Simply put, when foreign vessels, whether they were tribute-bearers or

merchants or both, approached the designated Chinese ports and traded with the Chinese people through the customs system, the trade was called *shibo*. If Chinese people built their own vessels and traded in foreign lands, their activity was regarded as *shangbo*,<sup>76</sup> mercantile or private trade that involved both the capital investors and numerous participants among the seagoing population. Such activities were subject to persecution under the prohibition laws. Here was the rub. The prohibition policy only served to put constraints on and cause frustration among the maritime community, deterring a smooth transition to legally accepted private trade. It failed to prevent the maritime population from going to sea in ever greater numbers.

Concerns about the maritime problem lingered on and inspired serious discussions in the statecraft scholarship. When maritime conditions became chaotic in the first half of the sixteenth century, the prohibition defenders indiscriminately opposed not only private trade, but also the *shibo* trade. In contrast, the statecraft approach was in favor of the resumption of trade, including the *shangbo*, by creatively applying the control mechanism of the *shibo* concept, that offered ideas of supervising foreign contacts and managing the limited state trade, in order to allow an orderly and controllable maritime trading environment.

After 1567, the authorities finally worked out a *modus operandi* that was a compromise between strict prohibition and uncontrolled trade. It allowed the operation of private trade for the purpose of regularizing the movement, especially of the private junks sailing overseas, while benefiting from the handsome receipts of customs duties. The policy adjustment came at an opportune time to welcome the impending opening of Manila for trade after the Spanish occupation. The shipping route between Haicheng and Manila that was part of the trans-Pacific shipping route became the most lucrative of all in the maritime world of the time.

There should be little hesitation in crediting the policy change in 1567 for having ushered in a golden age of Chinese overseas shipping trade that would last until the early decades of the nineteenth century, despite the intermittent disruption caused by the state re-imposition of the maritime ban during the Ming-Qing transition.

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76. Gu Yanwu, *TXJGLBS*, Vol. 26, p. 99.

## CHAPTER 10

# Liturgical Services and Business Fortunes: Chinese Maritime Merchants in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

### The Elevated Place of Commerce and Merchants

Discussions about Chinese merchants often begin with the familiar image of their low status in the Confucian social hierarchy that ranked them after scholars, farmers and artisans. In traditional China, the Confucian purists held merchants in low esteem because they believed that the latter:

... tended to be cunning and crooked and interested only in profit. Their speculation and manipulation of prices and hoarding of commodities or currency were ... harmful not only to consumers (especially the helpless peasants) but also to the whole economy. Such activities were contrary to the principles of justice and stability and had to be controlled.<sup>1</sup>

This perception of merchants has led many scholars to assume that trade conflicted with Confucian values and a profession in commerce was disdained in traditional China as dishonorable, even detrimental.

However, the theoretical social hierarchy, as Yang Lien-sheng asserts, “is at best an over-simplification”.<sup>2</sup> In late imperial China, the attitude toward merchants was ambivalent and “a policy combining restriction, taxation, and utilization of merchants was consciously adopted”.<sup>3</sup>

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1. As explained in Yang Lien-sheng, “Government Control of Urban Merchants in Traditional China”, *Tsing-hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, new series (Taipei), 8 (1/2) (1970): 187.
  2. *Ibid.*
  3. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Although the fate of merchants might have been rather uncertain in the past, their contributions were certainly better appreciated by both the government and society at large during Ming-Qing times (1368–1911). A case in point is the 1683 Qing policy objectives dealing with maritime trade that were economic and political rather than ideological. The Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662–1722) was fully aware of the heavy dependence of the coastal population on maritime trade for their livelihood and the great contribution made by the maritime traders to the economic well-being of the region.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, maritime trade was considered a key factor in social stability. Therefore the image of merchants in the High Qing era was a positive one.

During late imperial times, Confucian scholars began to adopt a more appreciative attitude toward commerce that was viewed as facilitating the proper functioning of the agrarian economy. These scholars called for a greater emphasis on commerce and better treatment for merchants. As Yü Ying-shih puts it, this view points to a significant development in the social thinking of neo-Confucianism.<sup>5</sup>

In reality, since the supposedly valued profession of farming did not offer as good an opportunity as trade to increase income and wealth, society showed no contempt for those who engaged in the latter activity. Ho Ping-ti and others have noted that there were few legal and social obstacles to prevent merchants from improving their status. Merchants could purchase certain official titles should they wish to enjoy social prestige, or educate their talented sons to become scholars and bureaucrats. In fact, their wealth gave their children better access to education that led to successes in imperial examinations.<sup>6</sup> As Yang Lien-sheng concludes, in a relatively fluid society, “not only did the wealthy merchants become influential and prestigious, even the ordinary merchants found their status improved”.<sup>7</sup> The improved status of merchants became even more conspicuous in Qing times when, in Ho Ping-ti’s words, “the social distinction between officials and rich

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4. Jane Kate Leonard, *Wei Yüan and China's Discovery of the Maritime World* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984), p. 64.
  5. Yü Ying-shih 余英时, *Chung-kuo chin-shih tsung-chiao lun-li yü shang-jen ching-shen* 中國近世宗教倫理與商人精神 [Religious ethics and the spirit of merchants from T'ang to Ch'ing times] (Taipei: Lien-ching 1987), p. 104.
  6. Ho Ping-ti, *The Ladder of Success in Imperial China: Aspects of Social Mobility* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), Chapters 2 and 7.
  7. Yang, “Government Control”, p. 191.



merchants was more blurred than at any other time in Chinese history except for the Mongol Yuan period".<sup>8</sup>

The change in attitude of the literati and the state is not difficult to understand. With the increase in population density during the Ming and Qing periods, the traditional mode of agricultural production and the economy as a whole had to undergo some adjustments. In Dwight Perkins' estimates, the population grew about six-fold between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries,<sup>9</sup> and by 1850 the population probably exceeded four hundred and ten million. The population pressure compelled rural households to engage in the production of non-agricultural goods for the market. Another response as interregional trade expanded was the conversion to commercial agriculture. For the coastal communities in Fujian and Guangdong, the engagement in maritime activities had become an essential part of their socioeconomic traditions. They looked to the sea as their "paddy-field", in the words of a sixteenth-century analogy.

Commercialization during late imperial times was one important factor that effected a change in the Confucian concept of trade and the traditional image of merchants. The period brought expanding interregional and overseas trade. The demand for agricultural and handicraft products stimulated substantial commercialization and regional specialization. The commercial boom "created new layers of rural markets that linked villages more firmly than ever before to the commercial economy".<sup>10</sup> Trade in such bulk consumer goods as grain, tea, cotton and silk increased. Chinese merchants from the southeast coast travelled to ports in Southeast Asia and Japan on junks, taking with them ceramics, cotton, silk, textiles, medicines and copper cash that they exchanged for Mexican silver, scented woods, pepper and rice.<sup>11</sup> All these ventures enlarged the scope of commercial activities and capital accumulation among the merchants.<sup>12</sup> These dynamic changes in late imperial China stimulated the imagination of mainland Chinese scholars who, beginning in the mid-1950s, made commendable efforts to document the spread of commerce in Ming-Qing China and contribute

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8. Ho Ping-ti, *Ladder of Success*, p. 82.

9. Dwight Perkins, *Agricultural Development in China, 1368–1969* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1969), p. 37.

10. Susan Naquin and Evelyn Rawsky, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 101.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

12. Fu Yiling 傅衣凌, *Ming Qing shidai shangren ji shangye zibenm* 明清時代商人及商業資本 [Merchants and mercantile capital in Ming and Qing times] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1956), p. 4.

to the scholarship on what they viewed as the development of “incipient capitalism”.<sup>13</sup> The commercial expansion led to the rise of prominent regional merchant groups in such places as Anhui, Shansi, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong.<sup>14</sup>

The rub was that commercialization might also have been seen by the literati class as a challenge or even a threat to the Confucian social order and therefore would have strengthened their ideological resistance to it. As a matter of fact, the merchants were able to justify their need for profit-making by using their wealth for public welfare. In so doing, they played an indispensable role in a society that was still compatible with the Confucian values. The following discussion will examine this aspect of the merchants’ role in order to arrive at an understanding of how the merchants were able to reconcile the conflict between profit maximization and the Confucian concept of benevolent economic and proper social behavior. The Hong (*hang*) merchants who involved themselves in coastal or foreign trade in one way or another in Amoy, Taiwan and Guangzhou during the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries will be mentioned as examples.

## Government and Merchants: Toward a Modus Operandi

Private maritime trade, both coastal and overseas, burgeoned in southeastern China during the sixteenth century<sup>15</sup> and, despite the

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13. See, for example, *Zhongguo ziben zahuyi mengya wenti taolun ji* 中国资本主义萌芽问题讨论集 [A collection of essays on the question of the budding of capitalism in China], ed. Zhongguo renmin daxue lishi jiaoyan shi 中国人民大学历史教研室编 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1957); and *Zhongguo ziben zahuyi mengya wenti taolun ji xubian* 中国资本主义萌芽问题讨论集续编 [A collection of essays on the question of the budding of capitalism in China, supplementary compilation], ed. Nanjing daxue lishi xi zhongguo gudai shi jiaoyan shi 南京大学历史系中国古代史教研室编 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1960). A review of the discussion in its early stages is given by Albert Feuerwerker in “From ‘Feudalism’ to ‘Capitalism’ in Recent Historical Writing from Mainland China”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 18 (Nov. 1958): 107–16; and “China’s Modern Economic History in Communist Chinese Historiography”, in *Chinese Communist Studies of Modern Chinese History*, ed. Albert Feuerwerker and Harold Kahn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 216–46.
  14. Some of these groups are described in Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren*; see also Chang Pin-tsun, “Chinese Maritime Trade: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Fuchien (Fukien)”, PhD diss., Princeton University, 1983.
  15. This topic is discussed best in Chang Pin-tsun, “Chinese Maritime Trade”.

imposition of prohibitory laws from time to time, continued to thrive throughout the following three centuries. By the eighteenth century, China's coast had witnessed expansion in several maritime sectors. Sino-British trade illustrates the more regular and intensified activity of European traders in China. Guangzhou was their preferred port of call, not only because of the port's long experience with foreign trade, but also because of the presence of reliable, trustworthy merchants there.<sup>16</sup> The Sino-Siamese junk trade was another important branch of Chinese maritime trade in the Eastern Seas. The import of Siamese rice to the grain-deficient southeast coast was especially welcomed and encouraged by the Chinese authorities. The Sino-Siamese junk trade reached its apogee in the late eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries.<sup>17</sup> In Fujian, Amoy emerged as the most flourishing home-port for the Chinese junks trading with Taiwan and Southeast Asia.<sup>18</sup> Even more striking was the rapid expansion of Amoy's coastal trade during the eighteenth century. Several major sea-routes extended from Amoy to various points along the China coast. The major stimulus to this bustling maritime activity was the rapid development of frontier land in Taiwan and the highly commercialized economy in the island that bolstered the high volume of trade on the coast. Most families of the merchants and landowners in Taiwan had come from the two southern Fujian prefectures of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou. Quan-Zhang migrants also provided the bulk of the labor force for both agricultural and commercial developments.<sup>19</sup>

Profitability served as the main motivation for expansionist activities. Lin Renchuan estimates that smuggling activities during the sixteenth century when the maritime ban was in force yielded a "ten-fold" profit. In coastal Fujian, the poor depended on fishing and salt production for their livelihood. However, as the profits were meager, only "the weak" depended on these activities. More enterprising people boarded seagoing

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16. Earl H. Pritchard, *Anglo-Chinese Relations during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (reprint; New York, 1970; orig. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1927), p. 80.
  17. For the Sino-Siamese junk trade, see Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade 1652-1853* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977); and Jennifer W. Cushman, "Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth Century and Early Nineteenth Century", PhD diss., Cornell University, 1975; published by South East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1993.
  18. See Ng Chin-keong, "The South Fukienese Junk Trade at Amoy from the 17th to Early 19th Centuries", in *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, ed. E.B. Vermeer (Leiden: Brill, 1990), pp. 297-316.
  19. *Ibid.*

junks and made ten times as much profit in foreign countries.<sup>20</sup> In the seventeenth century, prior to the pacification of Taiwan, the profit in the overseas trade between Taiwan and Japan in commodities such as sugar, deerskins, raw silk and the like is estimated to have been around 250 per cent on average. The export of raw silk to the Spanish Philippines and Dutch Batavia yielded a 100 per cent profit. Another source indicates that the profit from sugar shipped from Taiwan to Batavia in 1682 was around 210 per cent.<sup>21</sup> Overseas trade remained highly profitable during the pre-Opium War period. In the early nineteenth century, for instance, a hundred per cent gross profit was the norm in the Sino-Siamese trade; and in the Sulu trade, profits were “three times” greater.<sup>22</sup> Amoy’s junk trade with Luzon, Sulu, Singapore and Batavia was also highly lucrative.<sup>23</sup> Responsiveness to new opportunities, willingness to take risks and an interest in profit-seeking all indicate the existence of an entrepreneurial spirit among the maritime merchants.

The Qing authorities did not bother to interfere in the level of profit that the merchants could make in overseas trade, apparently because it only affected foreign buyers. However, any attempt at profit-maximization in domestic trade was a different matter. The authorities considered it their responsibility to control the prices of daily necessities because profiteering in such essential items would affect the livelihood of the general populace and stir up social disorder. When the grain price soared, it certainly alarmed the local authorities who could intervene using mechanisms such as the sale of “price-stabilization rice” from the public granaries at less than the market price.

The rice trade between Taiwan and Fujian in the 1720s is a case in point. During most of this period, the price level for rice in Taiwan remained relatively stable and lower than that in southern Fujian, indicating the availability of abundant supplies in Taiwan. Differences in price levels between the two places normally yielded merchants a gross profit of no more than 30 per cent, although at times they just broke even, at other times severe shortages on the mainland pushed up the gross profit margin to more than 50 per cent. The price margin between Taiwan and Fujian, even when it remained narrow, was still commercially profitable,

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20. Lin Ren-chuan 林仁川, *Mingmo Qingchu siren haishang maoyi* 明末清初私人海上贸易 [Private maritime trade during the Late Ming and Early Qing] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue, 1987), pp. 267–8.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 271.

22. Chen Xiyu 陈希育, *Zhongguo fanchuan yu haiwai maoyi* 中国帆船与海上贸易 [Chinese junks and overseas trade] (Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1991), p. 309.

23. *Xiamen zhi* 厦门志 [Gazetteer of Amoy] (Preface 1832; reprint, Taipei: Ch’eng-wen ch’u-pan-she, 1967), 15: 5b.

given the volume of the rice trade. The trade would have been even more lucrative if shipments had gone directly to Amoy from the areas of production, where prices were much lower than the urban market rates.<sup>24</sup> Supply, demand and price differentiation allowed room for manipulation. Owing to shipments from Taiwan, Amoy had abundant supplies, and the rice merchants there could reap handsome profits without being accused of profiteering when there were shortages in other provinces. On the contrary, the authorities appreciated their efforts in preventing famine by shipping rice to the mainland. For example, when Taizhou in southern Zhejiang, which was normally a surplus area, suffered a bad year in 1733, the Fujian merchants secured special official permits to transport rice from Amoy to sell in Taizhou.<sup>25</sup> Another example is that in May 1727, where rice prices in Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong rose as high as four *taels* per *tan* but were only 1.9 to 2.1 *taels* in Quanzhou and 2½ *taels* in Zhangzhou. The prices in Amoy, that was a central rice market, were even lower. Therefore, moving south from Amoy and Chaozhou, the price levels became progressively higher. The rice merchants were able to make a profit from the price variation because there was always a large stock of rice in Amoy for them to trade in the southern areas.

In the frontier region of Taiwan, where government control was less effective, the local rice merchants were not slow to manipulate prices. The majority of these merchants lived either in administrative seats or coastal towns. Many were landowners. They controlled much of the harvest and were in a good position to hoard it while awaiting higher prices. Another group of rice dealers consisted of millers who resided on the coast. In fact, the distinction between landowners and millers was not always clear-cut. Often, a landowner was simultaneously both a miller and a grain dealer. The millers organized themselves effectively as a professional group, at least on the local level. They often hoarded stocks until they were able to obtain good offers. In 1727 this led Fujian Governor Mao Wenquan to propose moving all the millers to the prefectural capital in order to break their power-base and allow the authorities to exert tighter control over them. However, this proposal was deemed impracticable because the removal of the millers would have resulted in higher rice prices as the grain would then have to pass through more middlemen before reaching its final destination. Governor Changlai, who succeeded Mao as the Governor in 1727, considered that

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24. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1683–1735* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), p. 116 and Appendix A.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

the presence of rice dealers on the coast near the areas of production in fact facilitated shipments, thereby benefiting the customers and the travelling merchants who served them.<sup>26</sup> Apparently, Governor Changlai preferred to view the issue in a broader context and allow a certain amount of profit-seeking in the hope that, as rice was abundant in Taiwan, competition would eventually bring prices down.

As Yang Lien-sheng indicates, another mechanism of government control applied to merchants during the Qing period relied on the traditional concept of “guaranty of no failure”.<sup>27</sup> For example, guilds established under the auspices of the local authorities supervised the trade and decided on regulations to facilitate trade and prevent illicit practices. Licensed *hang* merchants were appointed to control trade on behalf of the government, guarantee fair dealing and ensure proper conduct in the matter of prices, weights and measures and quality. Wealth, business acumen and good official connections were three prerequisites for these appointments. The head merchants or security merchants (who served as guarantors in trade affairs) appointed were held accountable for many things in connection with the administration of the trade. In Guangzhou, the latter were better known as Cohong merchants and were responsible for foreign trade in the port.

However, it would be wrong to see the *hang* system solely as a control mechanism and nothing more. Such an approach underestimates the government’s reliance on the professional services provided by the merchant. On the basis of his study of Hankow city, William T. Rowe concludes that although officials continued to take an interest in commerce for purposes of revenue, private enrichment and the benefit of the populace they governed, they increasingly restricted their own roles to formulating general policy in consultation with the guilds, appointing overseers, prosecuting flagrant offenders and reaping what the administration considered its fair share of the profits.<sup>28</sup> Citing Ramon Myers, Rowe also points out the long-term government policy of transferring mercantile functions from the public to the private sector in late imperial times.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, as Susan Mann explains, whereas markets bred competition and conflict, the state simply lacked the manpower and financial means to check irregularities and abuses, or to regulate markets bureaucratically. As a result, “the government delegated responsibility for market regulation to leading merchants or

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26. *Ibid.*, pp. 163–4.

27. Yang Lien-sheng, “Government Control of Urban Merchants”, p. 188.

28. William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796–1889* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 177.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

their organizations” and “[b]ureaucrats were to act only to regulate and restrict the profitability of trade to a reasonable or just level”.<sup>30</sup>

## Confucianization of Merchant Culture and the Responsive Mercantile Community

In response to their new roles in society, Chinese merchants adjusted their cultural characteristics to conform to the mainstream Confucian value system. Generally, merchant culture embraced the merchants’ shared beliefs about how they should conduct themselves in relation to the society at large and how they should run their businesses. These beliefs had a major impact on their thoughts and actions.<sup>31</sup> As Wang Gungwu observes, such a culture in traditional China, although “elusive and hard to define”, is still identifiable. Referring to merchants, he says that, “attitudes towards profit-seeking and risk-taking, towards business organizations like occupational guilds, native-place associations and trade coalitions ... marked them off most notably from the literati and the peasantry”.<sup>32</sup> Since late Ming times, merchants had increasingly identified themselves with the traditional Confucian culture and value system.<sup>33</sup> In other words, Confucian ethics and teachings were influencing the social and economic behavioral norms of merchants.<sup>34</sup>

Merchants made efforts to reconcile profit-seeking (*li*) with selfless righteousness (*yi*), or the common good. Merchant associations and guilds served not only mercantile interests, but also those of the community, and merchants shed their profiteering image through philanthropy and community service, efforts that “were grounded in the Confucian moral imperative of paternalist social responsibility”.<sup>35</sup> These activities allied them with the scholar-gentry and the officials in a common effort to care for the general populace. On account of their wealth, merchants were

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30. Susan Mann, *Local Merchants and the Chinese Bureaucracy, 1750–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp. 12, 20.

31. This idea is drawn from R. Eric Reidenbach, *Ethics and Profits: A Convergence of Corporate America’s Economic and Social Responsibilities* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), p. 91.

32. Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1991), pp. 182, 186.

33. See Liu Kuang-ching’s preface to Yü Ying-shih, *Chung-kuo ching-shih tsung-jiao lun-li*, p. 30; see also p. 131.

34. Yü Ying-shih, *Chung-kuo ching-shih tsung-jiao lun-li*, p. 59.

35. William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796–1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 91.

able to provide the urban community with indispensable leadership. In practice, they took over the traditional role of the scholar-gentry in providing social amenities and community services and performed these more effectively. All this benevolence helped to blur the cultural stigma attached to trade and gained merchants social and official acceptance, and merchants who wished to obtain gentry (*shen*) status through the purchase of official titles encountered remarkably few obstacles. They bought land and adopted the same lifestyle as the scholar-gentry.<sup>36</sup> Not surprisingly, merchants and gentry (*shenshang*) were often mentioned together in social activities during Qing times and the line between the two groups became blurred.<sup>37</sup>

“Merchants”, in Susan Mann’s words, “thus became key members of what Max Weber termed the informal ‘liturgical’ structures of local governance”, that meant local elites were called upon by the authorities to perform important “liturgical” (or “public”) services on the state’s behalf at their own expense.<sup>38</sup> Guilds or merchant associations formed part of the liturgical constituency, “drawing strength from the government’s sanction of their liturgical functions”.<sup>39</sup> The *hang* merchants in Amoy, the *jiao* merchants in Taiwan and the Cohong merchants in Guangzhou provide good examples of the liturgical services that were performed.

### ***Hang Merchants in Amoy***

The late fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries witnessed the rise of such South Fujian seaports as Anping, Yuegang (Haicheng) and Amoy. This period was characterized by social upheavals and political turmoil. Significantly, maritime bans, the invasion of Japanese pirates and the struggle led by the Zheng family against the incoming Manchu regime had not prevented the entrepreneurial Fujianese merchants from responding to new opportunities with marked consequences for the development of maritime trade. When peace was restored after the Qing conquest of

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36. Wang Gungwu, *China and the Chinese Overseas*, p. 183.

37. Yü Ying-shih. *Chung-kuo ching-shih tsung-jiao lun-li*, p. 161; and Susan Mann, *Local Merchants*, pp. 22–3.

38. Susan Mann, *Local Merchants*, pp. 12–3. The author provides a most illuminating discussion on the subject of liturgical governance and the merchant class. See Chapter 2. The area of urban services as well as of social welfare is termed “an extra bureaucratic ‘civic’ or ‘public’ sphere” by William Rowe. See Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community*, p. 183. In the same work, Rowe has also contributed an excellent description of merchant roles in providing “popular welfare”, “public goods” and “public services”. See Part II.

39. Susan Mann, *Local Merchants*, pp. 13, 24.



Taiwan in 1683, Amoy expanded its coastal and overseas trade at an even faster pace.

In Amoy, *hang* merchants represented the most important group of resident businessmen. They were appointed from among the registered merchant households. Both the *hang* merchants and other wealthy merchant households engaged in import-export businesses linking the overseas and coastal trading networks. The rapid growth in overseas and coastal trade led to specialization among the merchants. Overseas trade was placed under the management of the *yanghang* (authorized “ocean firms”) and the movement of coastal junks was assigned to the *shanghang* (authorized “merchant firms”). In 1796, there were eight ocean firms, a smaller number than a few decades earlier, and more than 30 merchant firms in Amoy. Among other activities, the *hang* merchants served as security merchants in maritime businesses. Ships and all the seafaring merchants leaving Amoy were required to be guaranteed by security merchants. A guarantor was held responsible for any breach of the law by his clients. As Amoy was not a usual port of call for foreign ships, whenever one did come to trade, the authorities appointed a merchant or selected an ad hoc group from the existing *hang* merchants or other registered merchant households to deal with the foreign traders.

The *hang* merchants also performed other bureaucratized functions. Some became tax-farmers for customs administration. Their duties included the collection of a fixed quota of maritime revenue. From time to time, the authorities also used their professional expertise and their trading facilities. On one occasion in 1733, for example, the officials sought the assistance of the *hang* merchants in an attempt to estimate the value of a confiscated cargo shipment. And, when a tributary mission arrived in Amoy from Sulu in 1742 bringing a variety of Nanyang products, the officials let the envoy use a warehouse owned by a *hang* merchant, who had also been instructed to sell the goods for the envoy at market prices. The *hang* merchants were already wealthy and successful businessmen before their appointments and their *hang* status put them in an even more advantageous and privileged position in maritime trade. The income derived from their collection of fees was considerable. In addition to charges for brokerage and standing guarantor, they also collected commissions on consignments, cargo ordering and ship chartering. A five per cent commission based on the cargo value in each case would have yielded a large sum, considering the density, volume and value of trade in the Amoy network.<sup>40</sup>

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40. For details of the *hang* merchants in Amoy, see Ng, *Trade and Society*, pp. 167–77.

On account of their wealth and commercial expertise, the *hang* merchants were also made responsible for supplying provincial tribute items to the Court. Each year the provincial military authorities required them to procure more than 40,000 *catties* of graphite, for which the provincial treasury paid three *taels* per *catty*. Whenever the government needed emergency funding, it looked to the *yanghang* for subscriptions. In 1764, for example, the *yanghang* contributed 7,000 foreign dollars to the construction of war-junks. Their other contributions included customary fees from which 20,000 *taels* were set aside in 1796 to cover the cost of sea patrols.<sup>41</sup>

Besides these efforts, the *hang* merchants contributed to relief funds and the building and management of charity granaries. The Amoy Charity Granary (*Xiamen yicang*) was established in 1826 at the behest of the local authorities. Officials, gentry and merchants jointly donated more than 20,000 silver dollars to the project. The regulations of this institution stipulated that the managing director should be a man of integrity and wealth. He was to be assisted by two deputies who would be chosen from the sitting board members and *hang* merchants. Another clause stated that the private sector should be given charge of the charity granary and all official personnel were prohibited from intervening in its affairs.<sup>42</sup> On other occasions, the local officials required merchants to make financial contributions to public projects such as the erection of government buildings.<sup>43</sup>

The involvement of merchants in socio-cultural affairs deserves special attention because such activities offer further insights into their active role in local culture. In market towns, in which merchants were conspicuously present, temple activities represented one prominent feature of popular culture. These activities centered on the temples, but the religious element formed only part of a broader socioeconomic context. Although temples and temple activities were a fundamental aspect of local culture, the more far-reaching social implications of religious activities should not be underestimated. On the one hand, temples were centers of communal solidarity. The festive activities served as “rallying points in the communal divisions of society”, as Stephan Feuchtwang observes when discussing a similar social environment in nineteenth-century

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41. *Xiamen zhi*, 5: 4a–b and 29b–30a.

42. *Ibid.*, 2: 41b–45b.

43. See Ng, *Trade and Society*, pp. 88–94, for the details concerning the roles of merchants in the local affairs in Amoy.

Taipei.<sup>44</sup> Through such activities, the temple also promoted community organizations, fostered self-governance and cultivated leadership. On the other hand, “the temple was in the central place of the marketing system, with a periodic market or row of permanent shops in front of it.”<sup>45</sup> Naturally, merchants played a major role in the temple-cum-market activities and provided leadership as well as financial support for the community.

One of the most popular neighborhood cult figures was Tudigong, the Lord of the Earth, who manifests the ideal of the great equality. His main function is to divide the riches of the Earth among the people.<sup>46</sup> There were also native-place cult figures such as Wuzhenren, Wu the Holy Man and Qingshui the Great Lord. The commercial guilds honored their professional deities, among them Yaowang, the Holy King of Medicinal Herbs, who was worshipped by the medical profession. Although Guandi was the Holy Patron of Merchants, this deity was also popular among all classes of people. Tianhou, the Holy Queen of Heaven, was another popular deity whose stature was comparable to Guandi. Tianhou, popularly known as Mazu, was the Protectress of Seafarers and, therefore, most widely worshipped by the maritime trading communities along the coast. Both Guandi and Mazu also enjoyed imperial patronage and were revered at official sacrifices and offerings. Since the official cults for such deities as Guandi and Mazu involved the nominal participation of the local scholar-gentry and the officials, temple activities contributed to the tripartite co-operation in the running of communal affairs. Merchants organized religious activities and were the principal financial donors. During religious celebrations, extravagant processions and theatrical performances that depicted popular culture were held.

### ***Jiao Merchants in Taiwan***

As rice and sugar formed the bulk of exports from Taiwan, merchants who were involved in trading these two commodities represented the most powerful business groups on the island. As explained, many of the rice merchants were landowners and millers as well. The sugar trade appears to have been structured along similar lines.

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44. Stephan Feuchtwang, “City Temples in Taipei under Three Regimes”, in *The Chinese City between Two Worlds*, ed. Mark Elvin and G. William Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 263.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

46. Kristofer M. Schipper, “Neighborhood Cult Associations in Traditional Taiwan”, in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), p. 663.

The shipping connections of the wholesale dealers in rice and sugar enabled them to act as the major exporters and importers of other native products as well. In Taiwanfu (present-day Tainan), the seat of Taiwan prefecture, three major guilds (known as the Sanjiao) were formed sometime during the eighteenth century by merchants from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou in mainland Fujian. The lesser *jiao* were subordinate to them. The three major *jiao* were respectively called: the North Guild (Bei Jiao), the South Guild (Nan Jiao) and the Native Guild (Gang Jiao). The North Guild mainly exported sugar through Amoy to Ningbo, Suzhou and Tianjin in the north. The return shipments included cloth, silk and other native products from the mainland. The South Guild exported rice, sesame, beans, sugar and other local products to Amoy and other ports in Guangdong and shipped back such commodities as tobacco, cotton cloth, paper products, chinaware and goods from overseas. The Native Guild conducted trade along the Taiwan coast. According to Fang Hau, however, the Native Guild was in fact called the Sugar Guild (Tang Jiao).<sup>47</sup> Membership of a *jiao* organization was not compulsory, and the government seldom intervened to press people to join.

Understandably, as they lived in a frontier region, the authorities in Taiwan were deprived of adequate administrative support. Their rather awkward situation served to strengthen the autonomy of the immigrant settlements. As in Amoy, temples in Taiwan functioned as centers of community activities and their leaders were most probably the *jiao* merchants. Each community in Taiwan had a temple as its focus and each profession also had its own professional cult. For example, as the *jiao* merchants were principally involved in maritime trade with the mainland, they naturally worshipped Mazu, the protectress of their safety at sea.

Cho K'o-hua has categorized the functions of the *jiao* into five areas: economic, religious, cultural, political and social.<sup>48</sup> He states that the overall objectives in establishing *jiao* were to facilitate assistance and cooperation amongst those in the same trade, solve problems, mediate in disputes, avoid ill-natured competition and maintain understanding. When members encountered business problems, they could go through the *jiao* to seek assistance from the authorities, thereby realizing mutual interests and the further development of business. The economic functions of *jiao* organizations included supervising business ethics and

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47. Fang Hao, "T'ai-nan chih chiao" 台南之郊 [The *chiao* in Tainan], *Ta-lu tsa-chih* 大陸雜誌 (Taipei), 44 (4) (April 1962): 177-99.

48. Cho K'o-hua 卓克華 *Ch'ing-tai T'ai-wan te shang-chan chi-t'uan* 清代台灣的商戰集團 [The commercial groupings in Ch'ing Taiwan] (Taipei: Tai-yuan chubanshe, 1990), Chapter 5.

merchant behavior, maintaining a sound commercial reputation and unity within the same trade group and operating price controls and monopolies in the market. Besides what Cho has mentioned, the *jiao* organizations also contributed substantially to the establishment and maintenance of local academies, charity schools and community schools. These expenses were derived from the common funds that the organizations received as levies exacted on commercial transactions.

During the Lin Shuangwen uprising in 1787–88, the three major *jiao* supported the government military campaigns with financial contributions. They also organized local militias to help suppress the rebels. The pirate invasion led by Cai Qian (Ts'ai Ch'ien) in 1807 once again saw officials seeking assistance from the three major *jiao* organizations, that responded by organizing militia forces and assisting the government to repel the attack. They were rewarded with official titles and the episode helped to enhance their influence and power in urban society.<sup>49</sup>

In 1746, when it was decided that each junk returning to the mainland from Taiwan had to bring with it a certain amount of grain for storage in public granaries for relief purposes, the burden of the financial cost of these so-called Taiwan Shipments (*taiyun*) was borne by the *jiao* organizations. Depending on her size, each junk was required to carry from 80 to 360 *dan* (5.6 to 25 tons) of grain. The government paid a nominal freightage that was only between 11 to 29 per cent of the commercial rate.<sup>50</sup> The *jiao* merchants also took the initiative in funding and supervising the construction of city walls. For example, at the request of the gentry and merchants, between 1827 and 1829 the city walls of Danshui were rebuilt using stone. The city walls of Tainan also underwent major repairs during 1833–36 and the external walls were rebuilt in brick. All expenses were shouldered by the three *jiao*.

The most important of their contributions was to public amenities and social welfare, including bridge construction, road repairs, improvement to drainage systems, provision of ferry services, disaster relief and maintenance of charity cemeteries for the poor. The *jiao* organizations also provided aid for widows, orphans and the destitute.

In conclusion, the *jiao* organizations had a crucial role to play in all areas of community life. In fulfilling this role they worked together with the officials and the scholar-gentry. Matters pertaining to local law and order were often referred to the *jiao* organizations. In this way, the

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49. Kristofer Schipper, "Neighborhood Cult Associations", p. 668.

50. *Xiamen zhi*, 6: 4b–8b.

authorities were able to convert this informal branch of administration into an effective form of government.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Cohong Merchants in Guangzhou***

In the early eighteenth century, attracted by the lucrative European trade, Chinese merchants from other ports converged on Guangzhou. During the period from 1759 to the Opium War, all legal European trade was confined to Guangzhou and conducted under what was known as the “Canton System”.

The maritime customs office in Guangzhou was headed by a superintendent, known to Westerners as the “Hoppo”, but he was required to make his report to the Board of Revenue jointly with the Governor-General of Liang-Guang (Guangdong and Guangxi) after 1750. Four decades later, in 1792, the Governor-General and the Governor of Guangdong had to submit separate reports to the board as part of a deliberate system of checks and balances.<sup>52</sup>

The officials used a group of government-licensed Chinese merchants as their agents to take charge of the day-to-day affairs and management. They were known as the Hong (Cantonese pronunciation of *hang*) merchants and the mercantile body was collectively known as the Cohong. As the imperial officials in Guangzhou refused to have any direct contact with Westerners, they transmitted their orders to and received petitions from them via the Hong merchants.

While in Guangzhou, the British East India Company (EIC) merchants were allowed to trade only with the government-licensed Hong. On the whole, the British merchants cooperated well with the Cohong merchants and over the years a symbiotic relationship grew up between them. The Cohong merchants acted as middlemen between the producers and the company and saw to it that the quality of tea was maintained, while the Company provided the Cohong merchants with advances to allow them to procure tea from the producers. These Chinese merchants earned

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51. For details of the functions performed by the *jiao*, see Cho K'o-hua, *Ch'ing-tai Tai-wan te shang-chan*, Ch. 5.

52. John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842–1854* (One-volume ed.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964; orig. 1953), p. 49.

huge profits from selling tea and textiles to their British counterparts,<sup>53</sup> and they were the envy of the nation.<sup>54</sup>

The functions of the Hong merchant are succinctly summed up by John K. Fairbank as follows:

In the period of Canton trade's best days, 1760–1834, the *hong* merchants assumed more and more duties. They not only settled prices, sold goods, guaranteed duties, restrained the foreigners, negotiated with them, controlled smuggling, and leased the factories to them; they also had to manage all the aspects of a banking business, act as interpreting agencies, support the militia and educational institutions, and make all manner of presents and contributions to the authorities far and near.<sup>55</sup>

From 1745, the Guangdong authorities appointed a group of trustworthy, financially solid Hong security merchants (*baoshang*) and entrusted them with the collection of import duties.<sup>56</sup> During the golden age of the Canton System, the Hong merchants would readily donate tens of thousands of *taels* whenever the government made financial appeals.<sup>57</sup> Between 1773 and 1838, they contributed millions of *taels* to various military campaigns, the building of war-junks, the construction of dykes and drainage systems and the repair of granaries.<sup>58</sup>

## The Passing of the Best Days

During the period between the 1780s and 1830s, although Sino-Siamese and Sino-British trade continued to expand, Chinese overseas and coastal trade entered a period of difficulties. New groups challenged the monopoly and the privileged status of the Hong merchants, and the old trading institutions were shaken by such factors as illicit trading activities, the rise of rival ports and new trading patterns. These developments jeopardized the fortunes of the established *hang* merchants in the three places, although their rates of decline differed.

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53. Frederick Wakeman, Jr., "The Canton Trade and the Opium War", in *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 164.

54. Liang Jiabin 梁嘉彬, *Guangdong shisan hang kao* 廣東十三行考 [An examination of the Thirteen Hong in Guangdong] (Shanghai, 1937), p. 9.

55. John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, p. 51.

56. Liang Jiabin, *Guangdong shisan hang kao*, p. 87.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

58. *Ibid.*, pp. 404–13.

In Amoy, the *hang* merchants faced severe competition from non-authorized firms. Amoy's prosperity was waning. Since the last two decades of the eighteenth century, it had gradually lost its privileged, near-monopoly position as the only designated port for trade with Taiwan and the Nanyang. The multi-port policy adopted for Fujian-Taiwan trade gave official recognition to the new realities of trade across the strait. This measure threw open the Fujian coast and gave rise to new opportunities for other merchant groups, and the *hang* merchants in Amoy were so used to their protective shell they found it difficult to compete with their new rivals. Piracy around the turn of the century only aggravated the situation.<sup>59</sup> The fact that Amoy began to feel the pinch of burdensome liturgical services should be viewed from this broader perspective. Suffice it to say that the problem for the *hang* merchants and Amoy itself was multifaceted.<sup>60</sup>

The most deadly blow to Amoy's prosperity was probably a ban on its tea export. From 1728, Amoy was allowed to export tea overseas using its ocean-going junks. After 1810, its position as exporter of Fujian tea was given a further boost when overland shipments to Guangzhou began to be sent by sea via Amoy following the successful suppression of the piracy that had disrupted coastal trade around the turn of the century. However, a ban was imposed on the export of tea from Amoy in 1817. This development probably reflected rivalry between Guangzhou and Amoy, because the diversion of trade routes affected Guangdong's profit from the tea trade, and was detrimental to vested interests connected with the overland trade. This situation was what led Governor-General Jiang Yuxian of Liang-Guang to seek the Court's imposition of the ban.

The prohibition was damaging to Amoy as the export of large quantities of tea to foreign countries on Chinese junks had substantially contributed to its fortunes. The *yanghang* merchant Jiang Yuanheng and others in Amoy appealed to the authorities and pointed out that the ban requested by the Guangdong government was designed to stop the diversion of the overland shipments to Amoy, not the direct export from Amoy to the Nanyang on its ocean-going junks. However, their solicitation was unsuccessful, and the total ban on tea exports via Amoy was reaffirmed. Consequently, the Amoy exporters lost their most valuable

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59. For coastal piracy, see Thomas C.S. Chang, "Ts'ai Ch'ien, the Pirate King Who Dominates the Seas: A Study of Coastal Piracy in China, 1795-1810", PhD diss., The University of Arizona, 1983; and Dian H. Murray, *Pirates of the South China Coast* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

60. For the declining fortunes of the *hang* merchants in Amoy, see *Xiamen zhi*, 5: 18b-21a and 30a-32a; 6: 7a-10a; Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren*, pp. 209-12; and Ng, "South Fukienese Junk Trade", pp. 309-16.



cargo and for the most part their ocean-going junks had to be loaded with such low-value goods as earthenware, umbrellas and the like. The compiler of the *Gazetteer of Amoy* lamented that “business in Amoy was therefore at a low ebb”.<sup>61</sup> Chances of recovery vanished when more than 70 Amoy junks, over half of its merchant fleet, were sunk in a typhoon off the Zhejiang coast in 1831, causing an irreparable loss of more than a million *taels* in capital investment.<sup>62</sup>

Owing to the close commercial link between Taiwan and Amoy, the deterioration in trade on either side of the Taiwan Strait affected both parties. The following remarks made by a contemporary observer are illuminating:

There used to be more than a thousand merchant junks from Amoy plying between Amoy and Lu’ermen [in Taiwanfu]. In the past, they helped the government transport military grain supplies, timber for the Taiwan shipyard, military horses for Taiwan camps and soldiers’ rations. Officials and convicts from either side also travelled on board the merchant junks. During the military campaigns in Taiwan, the demands on them were even greater. The maritime merchants made their contributions enthusiastically. In recent years [the 1820s], however, the soaring prices of local products in Taiwan, the opening of five ports on each side for the crossings of the Strait and the silting of Lu’ermen have all affected adversely the profit of the merchant junks [plying between Amoy and Lu’ermen]. Their numbers were reduced to only forty to fifty.<sup>63</sup>

Another passage records this:

The land in Taiwan has become exhausted after the long period of exploitation. Smuggling to Guangdong also runs rampant. All this has contributed to the rise in grain prices that has substantially reduced the profit margin of the merchant junks. They even suffer losses.<sup>64</sup>

During the boom period of the eighteenth century, the profit from each shipment of commercial rice was several thousand *taels*. Therefore, the rice merchants saw the official Taiwan Shipments not so much as a financial burden, but as a public service that helped bolster a good relationship with the authorities. By the 1820s and 1830s, however, the

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61. For this episode, see *Xiamen zhi*, 5: 31b–32a.

62. *Ibid.*, 5: 21a.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, 6: 9a.

shippers began to find the official assignments insupportable owing to the downturn in business. During this time, they were also adversely affected by what they considered to be irregularities and unfair competition from rival groups that registered their vessels as fishing boats and bypassed the designated ports to avoid the assigned shipments. By their chicanery, these latter groups were able to “double their profit” in comparison to law-abiding merchants. Consequently, “the fortunes of the *hang* merchants withered away”.<sup>65</sup>

Nor were the decades between 1780 and 1810 conducive to trade in Taiwan. Social conditions on the island were highly volatile. The first sign of trouble was the large-scale rebellion led by Lin Shuangwen. Because of rampant piracy the Taiwan Strait was also no longer safe for the junk traders. Cai Qian (Ts'ai Ch'ien) even launched a series of attacks on the island. He raided the junks and held them for ransom. The turmoil caused by Cai Qian lasted for 14 years. The *jiao* merchants suffered great financial losses during the upheaval, although they were compensated with enhanced social prestige after they had aided the government in military campaigns.<sup>66</sup>

In Guangzhou, the problems faced by the Cohong merchants were equally complex. Over the decades, Sino-British trade had grown enormously and the country enjoyed a huge trade surplus.<sup>67</sup> The Cohong members also accumulated great wealth. The Court and provincial high officials both cast covetous eyes at the riches of the merchants and demanded “contributions” from them. Around the end of the eighteenth century, “this kind of private corruption grew apace”.<sup>68</sup> At this time, cases of insolvency of individual Cohong merchants increased in frequency

65. Ibid., 6: 7b–9a.

66. To explain the decline of the *jiao* merchants, Cho K'o-hua mentions multifaceted factors, including silting of the Taiwan ports, the loss of their competitive edge to the imperialist powers, feuding, piracy, shipwrecks, mismanagement and official exactions. See his *Ch'ing-tai T'ai-wan te shang-chan*, Ch. 6.

67. The Chinese trade surplus in the first decade of the nineteenth century amounted to about \$26,000,000. See Frederick Wakeman, “Canton Trade”, p. 173.

68. Ibid., p. 164. In a recent case study of Hong merchant Pan Youdu (P'an Yu-tu), Ch'en Kuo-tung points to official exactions as the worst predicament of the Hong merchants. See Ch'en Kuo-tung 陳國棟, “P'an Yu-tu (P'an Ch'i-kuan erh-shih): I-wei ch'eng-kung te yang-hang shang-jen” 潘有度 (潘啟官二世): 一位成功的洋行商人 [Puankehequa II: A successful Hong merchant], in *Chung-kuo hai-yang shih lun-wen chi* 中國海洋史論文集 [Essays in Chinese Maritime History], ed. Pin-tsun Chang and Shih-chi Liu, Vol. 5 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1993), pp. 245–300.

and the EIC found it necessary to provide them with advances to prevent bankruptcies and bolster the monopoly trading mechanism. This shows the willingness of the EIC Select Committee in Guangzhou to continue to link its fortunes to the Cohong merchants and their trading institution.<sup>69</sup>

It is tempting to see official exactions and the public roles of the Cohong merchants as the root causes of their problem; but it is also necessary to ponder the suggestions made by contemporary observers that the insolvency of individual merchants resulted from their lack of business acumen and a deficiency in personal integrity.<sup>70</sup>

Whatever the case, the Canton System proved too rigid to adapt itself to the changing environment. The damage had become irretrievable by the 1820s when the trading mechanism was challenged by interlopers. The latter were British private traders and Chinese “shopmen” who operated outside the authorized monopoly framework and encroached on the privileges of the EIC and the Hong merchants. “[F]ree trade outside the Cohong flourished with time”,<sup>71</sup> but the Cohong’s profits were depleted. The progressive breakdown in the system affected China’s customs revenues, but even more disastrous for China’s balance of trade was the import of opium in increasing quantities: “From 1826 to 1836, \$38,000,000 flowed out of the Middle Kingdom. It was opium that turned the balance.”<sup>72</sup>

There is yet another aspect to the situation. As mentioned, the eighteenth-century boom was boosted to a considerable extent by favorable trade balances. Payments for Chinese tea and silk were made in silver. According to H.B. Morse’s estimate, the silver inflow into Guangzhou alone between 1700 and 1830 amounted to nearly a hundred

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69. Frederick Wakeman, “Canton Trade”, p. 166.

70. See Liang Tingnan 梁廷柵, *Yuehai guan zhi* 粵海關志 [Gazetteer of the maritime customs of Guangdong] (orig. publ. 1838), 25: 2b and 18b, for the remarks. In “P’an Yu-tu”, pp. 278–85, Ch’en Kuo-tung also mentions business acumen and personal integrity among the factors that contributed to business success. As Ch’en comments, subscriptions were paid through the Consoo Fund, into which each Hong member paid a tenth of his profits to be used to meet the official exactions. Therefore, these expenses did not significantly drain them of their wealth. See Ch’en Kuo-tung, “Lun Ch’ing-tai chung-yeh Kuang-tung hang-shang ching-ying pu-shan te yüan-yin” 論清代中葉廣東行商經營不善的原因 [The insolvency of the Chinese Hong merchants, 1760–1843], *Hsin shih-hsueh* 新史學 [New history] (Taipei) 1 (4) (1990): 23.

71. Hao Yen-p’ing, *The Commercial Revolution in Nineteenth-Century China: The Rise of Sino-Western Mercantile Capitalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 19.

72. Frederick Wakeman, “Canton Trade”, p. 173.

million pounds.<sup>73</sup> Around 1800, “about 75% of China’s monetary exchange (in terms of value) was made with silver.”<sup>74</sup> One significant consequence of this money supply was upward fluctuations in prices that had enlarged both mercantile capital and profit margins during the boom period.<sup>75</sup> The inflow of silver and economic prosperity also contributed to the flourishing trade of the maritime provinces during the eighteenth century.

However, the upward movement of prices was not always a blessing. If overall trade conditions happened to be worsening, such a change could cause business fortunes to decline. One result of the long period of stability and prosperity had been rapid population growth. Ch’üan Han-sheng suggests that the disturbances toward the end of the eighteenth century could have been caused by the price increases, that had become intolerable to the people of lower social strata.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, any substantial decrease in the silver supply would have shaken the foundations of the boom. Unfortunately, this indeed happened. From the 1810s, China began to suffer from a growing trade deficit and the import of opium caused an outflow of silver. More importantly, the worldwide production of silver declined from the 1810s, causing a world recession. Hence China’s economy suffered a double blow.<sup>77</sup> Under such circumstances, the high prices of commodities became inflationary and reduced profit margins.

### Concluding Remarks: “Benevolent” Self-interest

There is no single major factor to explain the decline of the *hang* merchants. Unquestionably, the performance of liturgical services was not the direct cause of their difficulties. The contributions became too burdensome only when the merchants’ fortunes were waning. During boom times, their public functions had facilitated rather than retarded their business transactions.

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73. Cited in Ch’üan Han-sheng 全漢昇, *Chung-kuo ching-chi shih lun-ts’ung* 中國經濟史論叢 [Collected essays on Chinese economic history] (Hong Kong, 1972), p. 508.

74. Lin Man-houng, “World Recession, Indian Opium, and China’s Opium War”, a paper presented at the Second International Symposium on Maritime Studies, December 16–20, 1991, Pondicherry University, India, p. 22.

75. Ch’üan Han-sheng, *Chung-kuo ching-chi shih lun-ts’ung*, p. 507.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 507–8.

77. Lin Man-houng, “World Recession”, p. 20.

In the case of Amoy, the claim of the high-ranking authorities that the subscriptions to the public funds reflected the selfless spirit of the *yanghang* merchants rather than official coercion<sup>78</sup> is not totally unfounded. Indeed, political stability and cordial relations with the government had brought prosperity to business circles. Therefore, financial contributions by the merchants might be seen as an investment cost or business overhead that went toward enhancing their own commercial interests. The fact that the *yanghang* merchants enjoyed almost a century of prosperity attests to the fact that such subscriptions were not detrimental to their fortunes.

Examining the case of the Cohong merchants, Frederick Wakeman also argues that the Guangzhou trade was highly valued even by the Qing Emperors, if not for any other reason, at least as an important source of personal profit. The Hoppo's performance as Superintendent of Maritime Customs "was judged according to his ability to fulfil the Emperor's private quota, and therefore depended to some degree upon keeping the Guangzhou trade open".<sup>79</sup> Consequently, "the bankruptcy of Cohong merchants by 'squeezing' more money from them than they could afford also went against the Hoppo's best interests, because the Cohong alone possessed enough trading capital to finance the trade".<sup>80</sup>

Moreover, the dependence of the state on merchants in matters of governance was more a necessity rather than a design to squeeze money out of them. Susan Mann observes: "Agrarian states historically have not expanded their bureaucratic capabilities without compromising, along the way, with tax farmers and other types of local intermediaries who build their own power on structures provided by the government."<sup>81</sup> Therefore, liturgical governance should be seen as "a direct response to the limits of bureaucratic control".<sup>82</sup> It mutually benefited both sides.

More importantly, liturgical services elevated the status of merchants and made trade more respectable in the confines of Confucian culture. The Qing state "offered merchants ideological sanctions and organizational roles that legitimized their status, incorporating them fully into the workings of the body politic".<sup>83</sup> Merchants were able to use their liturgical role in agrarian and gentry society to promote commercialization and maximize benefits derived from their close

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78. *Xiamen zhi*, 5: 4a–b.

79. Frederick Wakeman, "Canton Trade", p. 164.

80. *Ibid.*

81. Susan Mann, *Local Merchants*, p. 1.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

relationships with the scholar-gentry and the officials under the cloak of Confucian benevolence.<sup>84</sup> They had earned respect in Confucian society not solely because of their wealth, but also because of their willingness to play down profit-seeking, their ability to create wealth and use it for the common good, and their orientation toward the service of others. In this way, profit maximization was reconciled to Confucian ethics.

As merchants were endowed with resources and a capacity to get things done, it was only natural that they should have assumed a leadership role in setting and fulfilling social goals.<sup>85</sup> All this worked to strike a balance between a Confucian culture that stressed ethics and a merchant culture that emphasized profit-maximization. It also allowed the merchants to move comfortably between the two cultural zones.

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84. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

85. A paraphrase of A.B. Trowbridge's remarks in Leonard Silk and David Vogel, *Ethics and Profits: The Crisis of Confidence in American Business* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), p. 12.

## CHAPTER 11

# The Amoy Riots of 1852: Coolie Emigration and Sino-British Relations

### Introduction

Large-scale shipments of Chinese coolies to foreign lands under contract began soon after the opening of five ports (Guangzhou, Amoy, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Shanghai) to foreign trade under the terms of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842. The first shipment was sent from Amoy to Îsle de Bourbon (Reunion Island) aboard a French vessel in 1845. Thereafter Amoy supplied the largest portion of contract emigrants until this flourishing human trade shifted to other locations in the early 1850s.

Despite the illegality of such an activity under Chinese law, the export of Chinese laborers from Amoy was openly operated with the connivance of local Chinese and British consular officials until the outbreak of riots against the abuses of the trade in 1852. The coolie trade in Amoy declined drastically after this incident. Until then, Chinese emigration from Amoy had generally been conducted by local British agencies. Up to August 1852, 73 per cent of the emigrants were shipped on board British vessels, and the rest on ships flying Spanish, French, American and Peruvian colours.<sup>1</sup>

The public outburst of fury in 1852 has been touched upon in a number of Chinese and English writings. In 1957 Tien Ju-k'ang wrote about the Amoy riots, seeing this event as another example of an injustice imposed on Qing China by the western imperialists. He was critical of both Westerners and the corrupt and incompetent Chinese officials. Consequently he viewed the riots as a righteous and heroic response by the Amoy people to exploitation and repression. On the other hand, in his

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1. Note prepared by Dr Charles Winchester, in FO 663/9, Enclosure 3 in no. 127, 26.8.1852.

work Yen Ch'ing-hwang reconfirmed the conventional image of Chinese officials as being timid and self-preserving. The organizational aspect of the Chinese coolie trade and the abuses in general were described by Wang Singwu in his book published in 1978.<sup>2</sup>

Drawing its sources mainly from the British Foreign Office documents, including the seldom-used Amoy consular records that also contain correspondence in Chinese, the purpose of this chapter is to reconstruct the event from the local and treaty-port perspectives and re-examine the stereotyped images of the Chinese and British officials in their handling of the matter.

## Emigration and Abuses

Dr Charles Winchester, First Assistant to the British Consulate in Amoy, provided an 1852 eyewitness account<sup>3</sup> of the emigration from this locality during this specific period. He states that the Chinese emigration from this port was conducted under both native and foreign contract systems. In his estimate, the annual exodus from Fujian province involved some 50,000 able-bodied men. The vast majority of them left under arrangements they had made themselves, that were either voluntary or by contract. In both cases, the emigrants would work overseas under prosperous Chinese who had established themselves in the Malay Archipelago. The native system had been in existence long before foreign engagement in the export of Chinese laborers and had facilitated the commencement of emigration under foreign contracts. Until August 1852, the total number of emigrants who had left under foreign contracts was estimated to be 6,255. They were shipped to Havana, Demerara, Île

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2. See T'ien Ju-k'ang, "Yibawuer nian Xiamen renmin dui Yingguo shanghang luemai huagong de fankang yundong" 1852 年厦门人民对英国商行掠卖华工的反抗运动 [The opposition movement of the Amoy people to the seizing and selling of Chinese laborers by the English commercial firms in 1852], in T'ien Ju-k'ang, *Zhongguo fanchuan maoyi he duiwai guanxi shi lunji* 中国帆船贸易和对外关系史研究 [Collected papers on the history of China's junk trade and foreign relations] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1987), pp. 214–21; Yen Ching-hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch'ing Period, 1851–1911* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985); and Sing-wu Wang, *The Organization of Chinese Emigration, 1848–1888: With Special Reference to Chinese Emigration to Australia* (San Francisco: Chinese Material Center, 1978).

3. See fn. 1.



de Bourbon (Réunion), Australia, the Sandwich Islands, Batanhas in the Philippines, California and Peru.

Both push and pull factors affected the emigration. The first and foremost reason was that the average wages of all labor in the city and the surrounding countryside were very low. They amounted to less than one hundred copper cash per day, or less than two Spanish dollars per month for an able-bodied man. The wages of a skilled artisan or agricultural laborer might be double this amount. If food were provided, the wages would be reduced by five-eighths. Furthermore, even at these low rates, jobs were not always available. In the rural sector, as the landholdings were fragmented, they were usually taken care of by the owner or his family members. Under such difficult circumstances, many job-seekers fell easy prey to native "crimps" (coolie-brokers) employed by foreign agents. The attraction was that a foreign contract guaranteed them a fixed income. For example, a Cuba contract offered three dollars per month, in addition to the provision of food. The wages under a Sydney contract were two-and-a-half dollars with rations. Moreover, the prospective emigrants cherished the dream of getting rich in foreign lands. One illustration was given by Dr John Bowring, the Acting Superintendent of British Trade in China, when pointing to the representations of the boundless wealth of the Golden Mountain (California) that, "have almost fanaticized the people".<sup>4</sup>

Overseas demands for coolies gave a number of crimps employment. It was a general practice for a European merchant who was engaged in coolie export to employ one or two of them. These crimps controlled their subordinate agents, who in turn acted as touts and sent out their own scouts to go around the towns and villages in the neighborhood to induce the poor and the idle. The reputation of the Chinese coolie-brokers was very low. The local community accused them of engaging in the trade of "selling men" to English merchants. They practised all sorts of techniques in their recruitment tactics and were paid 50 copper cash daily for each man mustered. They also demanded a usurious interest for the money they lent. Their remuneration on each coolie ultimately shipped was one dollar.

The shipment of Chinese coolies was mainly in the hands of British businessmen, whose main concern was profit; consequently they did their best to keep the cost of transportation low. The inevitable upshot was that the welfare of the emigrants on board was neglected and the mortality rate as the result of disease was high. Conditions could worsen as the result of the cruel and despotic conduct of a ship's commander.

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4. FO 228/153, no.2, Bowring to Malmesbury, 17.5.1852.

This explains the rather frequent mutinies among the Chinese passengers during their voyages. One such notorious case was the *Robert Bowne* incident. This American ship left Amoy for San Francisco on 20 March 1852, loaded with 410 Chinese emigrants. After ten days at sea, the Chinese mutinied and killed the captain, two officers and four seamen. They then took possession of the ship. The surviving crewmen later regained control of the vessel and sailed her back to Amoy.<sup>5</sup> A great number of coolies who escaped from the *Robert Bowne* and other vessels brought back news of the ill-treatment and cruelties to which they had been subjected. This stirred up great resentment in the community toward the emigration agents.<sup>6</sup>

Despite their awareness of the illegality of organized emigration, the staff of the British Consulate in Amoy connived in the involvement of their subjects in such activities either because they felt powerless to do anything about it or were unwilling to interfere. For instance, when James Tait, an English merchant and the principal shipper of coolies, applied to the Consulate for a license to export coolies, Officiating-Consul John Backhouse replied that he had no orders from Her Majesty's Government to issue such a document and therefore, he did not intend to have anything to do with the transaction.<sup>7</sup> Backhouse's response was based on a dispatch from John Bowring in which he said, "I have had no instructions [from the Foreign Office] either to assist or in any way to interfere with these vast Plans of Emigration."<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, the abuses of the foreign contract system and the cupidity of the shippers of coolies had drawn the attention of the British Foreign Office. A dispatch to John Bowring from the Earl of Malmesbury, the Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, dated July 21, 1852, stated that, "Her Majesty's Government are not ignorant of great irregularities having been committed in the transport of coolies from China in British ships."<sup>9</sup> This letter made special mention of two notorious cases involving the British vessels, the *Lady Montague* and the *Susannah*. In 1850, the mortality rate on the *Lady Montague* reached a shocking 66.66 per cent.<sup>10</sup> However, the Foreign Office decided that the existing state of the British

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5. Ibid.; also FO 663/9, Abbott Laurence, US Minister in London, to Malmesbury, 9.9.1852. On mortality and mutiny, see Sing-wu Wang, *Organization of Chinese Emigration*, Ch. 6.

6. FO 228/153, no.4, Bowring to Malmesbury, 16.7.1852; also no. 9, Bowring to Malmesbury, 1.10.1852.

7. FO 663/54, no.14, Backhouse to Tait & Co., 25.8.1852.

8. FO 663/9, no.36, Bowring to Sullivan, 3.8.1852.

9. FO 228/153, no.3, Malmesbury to Bowring, 21.7.1852.

10. Sing-wu Wang, *Organization of Chinese Emigration*, p. 212.

law “unfortunately precludes any effectual interference with transactions of this kind”.<sup>11</sup> The British government did consider framing some kind of enactment to cover such cases, and it expressed the wish that, “the British authorities in China should pay close attention to the proceedings of British ships engaged in transporting coolies, and should adopt all legal means in their power to check abuses”.<sup>12</sup> In response, Bowring pessimistically foresaw great difficulty in introducing such legislative enactments. As no aid or co-operation could be relied on from the Chinese authorities and as the embarkation ports were spread along the coast, where there was no consular representative, he was afraid little could be effected to check the frauds and irregularities. Furthermore, the British authorities had no control over other foreign ships.<sup>13</sup>

John Bowring expressed his anxiety in his dispatches to John Backhouse dated October 22 and November 22. It had come to his notice that Amoy was full of vessels that had arrived from different parts of the world and were loading emigrants destined for the Spanish and British West Indian colonies. Several ships had also arrived from Australia in search of agricultural laborers. This was an indication of the rise of Amoy as one principal source of the supply of Chinese coolies. He was alarmed by the many abuses that existed in the way in which coolies, particularly young men, had been seduced away from their families. Coercion could also certainly not be ruled out and great desertions had taken place after coolies had been hired.<sup>14</sup> Some of the outrage caused by the recruitment system could be attributed to the insensitivity of the British agents. They were so notorious and paid such little respect to the local authorities that they erected their barracoons (rough barracks) right alongside the Amoy Customs House. Bowring personally witnessed the arrangements for the shipment of coolies in Amoy. He reported that there were “hundreds of them gathered together in barracoons, stripped naked, and stamped or painted with the letter C (California), P (Peru), or S (Sandwich Islands), on their breasts, according to the destination for which they were intended”.<sup>15</sup> All this insolence was offense to the local community. The abuses, in Bowring’s words, “are not far from placing the coolie emigration in the category of another Slave Trade”.<sup>16</sup> However, he

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11. FO 228/153, no. 3, Malmesbury to Bowring, 21.7.1852.

12. *Ibid.*

13. FO 228/153, no. 8, Bowring to Malmesbury, 25.9.1852.

14. FO 663/9, Bowring to Backhouse, 22.10.1852 and 22.11.1852; also FO 663/58, no. 59, Backhouse to Bowring, 20.11.1852.

15. FO 228/153, no. 2, Bowring to Malmesbury, 17.5.1852; and no. 5, 3.8.1852.

16. FO 228/153, no. 13, Bowring to Malmesbury, 24.12.1852.

lamented, "the authority possessed or exercised by the Consuls had been wholly inoperative to check such abuses".<sup>17</sup>

## Outbreak of Riots and the Anglo-Chinese Contentions

The irregularities and abuses that were connected with coolie emigration eventually resulted in the outbreak of a riot in Amoy on November 21, 1852. Perhaps because of the chaotic and confusing situation, it took almost a week for the man on the spot, Acting-Consul John Backhouse, to send his first report to John Bowring. Even when he did, this official did not seem to have grasped the severity of the actual occurrence at the time of his writing.<sup>18</sup> He described the disturbance and disorder as "an atrocious outrage" committed by an armed party of Chinese soldiers. He claimed that, on that evening when a clerk, E.J. Mackay, in the house of Tait and Co., was passing by the street in front of a police court, he had been attacked with stones flung by a group of soldiers. Some of the missiles struck him on the head. They allowed him to leave only after giving him a blow to the head with the sharp edge of a spear, that inflicted a wound about two inches in length. Soon afterward, the chief mate of the English ship the *Australia*, Richard Vallancey, happened to be passing by the same place in the company of a friend. They too were attacked by the soldiers. The friend managed to escape, but Vallancey received cuts over each temple, one spear was thrust in the upper part of his left arm and he had five or six wounds in his thigh, one in the abdomen and some other places, besides sustaining a severe injury from the blows inflicted to his head by sticks or stones. In a nutshell, he was seriously wounded. The next day, news of the disturbance had spread all over town. All the shops were closed. Just at the same time, the town was flooded with vagabonds from the neighborhood, who, teaming up with the local bad characters, were soon determined to plunder the Hongs of the foreign community, not to mention robbing their own countrymen whenever and wherever they could. Backhouse requested Commander J.S. Ellman of HMS steam-sloop the *Salamander* to bring the ship into the harbor as close to the Hongs as possible to protect the lives and property of British subjects. Furthermore, a request was made for a party of 15 to 20 men to be sent ashore to act as guards.<sup>19</sup> In the forenoon of the 24th, the atmosphere was so threatening that, upon Backhouse's request, a very strong party

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17. FO 228/153, no. 12, Bowring to Malmesbury, 20.12.1852.

18. For the report, see FO 663/58, no. 60, Backhouse to Bowring, 27.11.1852.

19. FO 663/55, no. 34, Backhouse to Ellman, 22.11.1852.

of men landed from the steamer.<sup>20</sup> By this time, the crowd was rapidly increasing and the landing party was pelted with stones by the mob. After a while, Lieutenant Smith, who was in command of the marines and seamen, gave orders to fire. Four in the crowd were killed and five wounded. Backhouse said that the local authorities fully approved of what had been done by the British and considered that it would be highly imprudent for the marines to be withdrawn from the Hongs. He also said the Chinese authorities made no attempt to deny the culpability of their soldiers.

These cast no more than a cursory glance at John Backhouse's early perception of the incident as written in the dispatch of November 27. However, Backhouse added further information in a private letter accompanying the dispatch and stated that he believed "the riots were attributable to an attempt made by [Francis Darby] Syme ... to rescue a coolie broker from the hands of the Chinese authorities".<sup>21</sup>

Two days after the first riot, John Backhouse officially lodged with Daotai (Circuit Intendant) Zhao Lin, the most senior Chinese civil official in Amoy, a formal complaint about the assaults and a demand for the latter's immediate action. On the same day, he again communicated with this official, citing Article I of the Peace Treaty that stated that British subjects should enjoy full security and protection for their persons and property in China. Now there was unrest in the locality and the authorities were unable to suppress the mob. He had no choice but to request the landing of the British marines from the steamer to provide protection.<sup>22</sup>

However, Daotai Chao had a different story to tell. According to his own source of information, three Englishmen had been walking in the street that evening. One of them, under the influence of liquor, had been quarrelling with some soldiers and the crowd outside a police court about some Chinese coolies "whom the English had purchased". He had also commenced bullying them and a scuffle ensued. To substantiate his analysis of the outbreak, the Daotai cited a joint petition presented to him by the gentry, elders and businessmen immediately after the outbreak of disturbance. The petitioners blamed the abusive system of emigration for the outrage and said peace could only be secured for the community when the root cause had been removed. As long as the villainy was

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20. FO 663/55, no. 36, Backhouse to Ellman, 24.11.1852. Lieutenant Smith landed with an armed party of officers, 8 marines and 37 seamen to protect the house of Syme, Muir & Co. and English merchants. See FO 228/153, Appendix F in Enclosure 8 of no. 14, Smith to Commander Ellman, 25.11.1852.

21. FO 228/153, no. 14, Bowring to Malmesbury, 27.12.1852.

22. FO 663/57A, nos. 20 and 21, Backhouse to Chao, 23.11.1852.

tolerated, awful disasters would be the result. They went on to allude in particular to the vile impositions that were practised daily on the people by a class of reprobates, who, under false pretences and delusive offers, had succeeded in enticing them from their homes and sold them to the English. The petitioners mentioned a recent case. It had happened a day or two earlier when one of the *ketou* (brokers in these transactions) called Lin Huan had violently kidnapped an unfortunate man and taken him to sell to the English. Lin Huan was a notorious figure in the local community. He paraded the streets accompanied by bands of armed ruffians who were kidnapers by profession. Murder and plunder had been the order of the day. The people were enraged by this atrocious way of behaving. They seized this infamous broker and sent him to the Marine Magistrate (*haifang tongzhi*) as a prisoner to be tried and punished. The petitioners regretted that their authorities had not yet imposed a punishment on him. They were convinced that the mandarins had an undoubted right to judge Chinese offenses and punish crimes committed by their own people. Unless the authorities condemned the offender to severe punishment, the streets of Amoy, the resort of business and trade, would be made unsafe and the interests of the community would be seriously affected. Upon receipt of the petition, the Daotai immediately sent orders to the Marine Magistrate to cooperate with the military and seize the offenders.

On the basis of this information, Daotai Chao accused John Backhouse of having distorted the picture. He said Backhouse was vague on several key points and demanded the latter's explanation. He asked, "What induced that Englishman to go out on a dark night and in a drunken fit to assault the soldiers and others, what was the subject of their quarrel, who was wounded, and by whom and where?" He requested Backhouse to obtain these various particulars as accurately as possible to enable him to proceed with the investigation of the case and deal with it accordingly. Finally, he observed that:

... a party of troops was landed from the steamer. As this is the first time on record that this has occurred at Amoy, I shall make no comment upon it at present until I have reported the subject officially to Their Excellencies the Governor-General and Governor of the province, who will bring it officially to the notice of the plenipotentiary of your honourable country.<sup>23</sup>

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23. FO 663/51, Zhao to Backhouse, 24.11.1852. The translation of this Chinese dispatch can be found in FO 663/5, Zhao to Backhouse, 24.11.1852.

While Zhao was engaging in the debate with John Backhouse, he received a report from Acting Marine Magistrate Wang telling him of the violent clashes between local people and Englishmen on the 24th. Wang said three Chinese were shot dead by the English and two others were wounded in the affray. He requested his superior to write officially to the British Consul for a joint inquest on the bodies. He also claimed that, having been informed of the clash, he proceeded in person to the spot and succeeded in quelling the row and dispersing the mob.<sup>24</sup>

On the 27th, John Backhouse wrote to the Chinese officials to convey the fears of the British merchants about the safety of their Hongs and he charged the local authorities with the responsibility for the protection of their property. The Marine Magistrate and the colonel in charge of the local garrison immediately consented to place about six or eight men under petty officers at each of the outlying Hongs. These measures apparently did not please the Daotai who, in a dispatch sent two days later, was highly critical of the improper wording of the Acting Consul's letter. He reprimanded the latter for shifting the entire responsibility on to the Chinese authorities. He thought that the local authorities and their people should collaborate with the British officers and their merchants to render each other assistance for the preservation of peace and the maintenance of good will between the two parties.<sup>25</sup>

Daotai Zhao's tough stance on the issue did not show any signs of softening when he again communicated with John Backhouse on December 2. Coming straight to the point, he directed the Consul's attention to the abuses practised by the English Hong merchants in their recruitment of coolies through the crimps. "These proceedings", he said, "have given rise to considerable general discontent, and are undoubtedly the origin of the affray in which life has been lost." He warned the Consul that the minds of the people were far from being pacified, and that he should not be deceived by the apparent tranquility. As the English merchants had not stopped the fateful commerce, there was no telling when a similar affray, such as the last, might break out again. On the part of the Chinese authorities, the Marine Magistrate had issued orders to seize all the crimps and punish them with a degree of severity. This would "effectually dig out the soil at its root". He simultaneously requested the

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24. FO 663/51, Zhao to Backhouse, 25.11.1852. The English translation is in FO 663/5, Zhao to Backhouse, 25.11.1852.

25. FO 663/55, no. 39, Backhouse to the British merchants, 27.11.1852; FO 663/57A, no. 24, Backhouse to Zhao, 27.11.1852; FO 663/56, no. 19, Zhao to Backhouse, 29.11.1852; and the translation of Zhao's reply in FO 663/5, Chao to Backhouse, 29.11.1852.

Consul to issue strict injunctions to these Hong merchants and others, prohibiting them from entering into arrangements with any agents or contractors for the kidnapping or hiring of coolies.<sup>26</sup>

In reply, John Backhouse proposed discussions on the drafting of preventive regulations be held between the two parties; but he asserted that this step could be taken only after the Chinese authorities had complied with his request to conduct an investigation into the disturbance and punish the instigators of the riots.<sup>27</sup> To this Daotai Zhao responded on December 10, saying that a joint inquest had been conducted on the bodies of the four deceased and the wounds sustained by Vallancey and a Chinese. Steps were also being taken for the apprehension and punishment of the guilty parties who wounded Vallancey. On the other hand, he demanded orders be issued by the Consul to bring those Englishmen, who had unjustifiably fired upon the people, to justice. Referring to the coolie traffic, the Daotai said there was a positive law against the emigration of Chinese. Should any natives be found guilty of infringing this law, the authorities would subject them to the extreme penalty of the law. There was no need to formulate new regulations.<sup>28</sup>

In Hong Kong, John Bowring had received the report from John Backhouse as well as other information from unofficial quarters. He sensed the gravity of the affair and knew that the exportation of Chinese laborers and the felonious actions of the agents had adversely affected what he considered the amicable relations between the British and Chinese subjects. He thought it desirable to send the Secretary and Registrar in the Superintendency of Trade, Frederick Harvey, to investigate the causes of the outbreak and the manner in which coolie emigration had been carried out in Amoy. The latter sailed on board HMS steam-sloop *Hermes*, commanded by Captain E. Gardiner Fishbourne, and arrived in Amoy on December 12. While in Amoy, Harvey visited the Acting Marine Magistrate twice, the second time accompanied by Captain Fishbourne. The mandarin expressed his indignation about the coolie emigration in general and coolie-brokers in particular. As a man-of-war had been sent, he thought the present occasion propitious for putting an end to the illegal traffic in Chinese coolies that was being carried out by British merchants. On the Chinese side, they had been actively and severely prosecuting the nefarious brokers.

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26. FO 663/56, no. 20, Zhao to Backhouse, 2.12.1852.

27. FO 663/57A, no. 28, Backhouse to Zhao, 3.12.1852.

28. FO 663/56, no. 21, Zhao to Backhouse, 10.12.1852.



Turning to the marines who had fired on the people, the Marine Magistrate demanded their punishment by the British authorities. When he was told that the mob had gathered at the gate of the English Hong for plunder and that the English soldiers were justified in protecting British life and property, the Magistrate denied that people went there to plunder. Their hatred was directed toward the coolie-broker who had done so much harm and had ensconced himself inside the Hong. Pertinently, these people were unarmed. Others were at a great distance from the crowd; some on their boats, others on their balconies, and in particular a babe still in arms, had been innocently involved. He said it was the intention of the Chinese authorities to punish the men who speared and wounded the English mate; but he required from the British government the trial and punishment of the individuals who had killed the Chinese subjects.

During the interview Captain Fishbourne, RN expressed to the Marine Magistrate the British government's desire to right certain abuses that had crept into the system of emigration and its wish for the cooperation of the Chinese authorities in effecting their purpose. The mandarin said he would proceed against all the coolie-brokers with unmitigated rigor, but he bitterly complained about those wicked coolie-brokers who were protected by the English Hong. He then strongly protested against the interference of the English merchants, naming Francis Darby Syme and James Tait, who on every occasion an arrest was made, either sent in their cards with messages for the release of such brokers or came themselves to effect their release. This, he said, had lowered the mandarins' position and dignity in the eyes of their own people. Harvey later commented in his report on this practice adopted by the English merchants, saying he considered such a custom an "unauthorised and irregular mode of proceeding unheard of at any other port". He trusted means would be found to put a stop to it as soon as possible.

To the proposal about whether a petty officer might be appointed by the Chinese authorities to inspect each emigrant ship as it left, for the purpose of satisfying himself that no coolies were being carried out of the country against their will, the Magistrate smiled at the idea and said, certainly not. He stated that there was a general prohibition in the code of the laws against the emigration of Chinese subjects. To regulate would be to recognize the propriety of emigration and be contrary to Chinese laws. He counter-proposed that the English merchants should be prevented from encouraging more to emigrate. In his reply, Fishbourne said what they could do would be to prevent English subjects from sending Chinese subjects out of their country against their will. If they were to do

this effectively, they must be informed of any such circumstances by the Chinese authorities.<sup>29</sup>

## **The Queen *versus* Syme: British Judicial Inquiry**

When John Bowring sent Harvey to investigate the affair, he also instructed Acting Consul John Backhouse to hold a formal judicial investigation into what had occurred.<sup>30</sup> After Harvey's arrival in Amoy, a Consular Court of Inquiry was held from December 13 to 17. It was presided over by Backhouse, Harvey and Commander Fishbourne. During the sessions, the whole of the small British mercantile community was summoned to testify in court. Other witnesses included English and American missionaries and several Chinese. The procedure was recorded in the minutes of evidence at the Court of Inquiry that shed interesting light on several obscure aspects of the riots.<sup>31</sup>

The causes of the riots were closely examined by the court. In his testimony, Francis Darby Syme's assistant, William Cornabe, admitted that the excitement was not the usual manner in which Europeans were treated at Amoy and that there must have been something wrong with the way the Chinese broker conducted his business. Rev. William Chalmers Burns, an English missionary, believed that they had broken out because of the disturbance in the public mind aroused by the exportation of coolies. There was a general impression in the Chinese community that the coolies were being carried away against their will. To substantiate his observation, the reverend gentleman cited a government proclamation that had appeared several months earlier. It had been issued by Acting Marine Magistrate Wang, stating that coolie-brokers were deceiving and selling poor people. In doing so they had committed a serious breach of law. The proclamation declared that strict orders had been given to the police for the apprehension and severe punishment of these guilty persons.<sup>32</sup>

In his testimony Reverend Burns mentioned two placards that appeared on November 23. One was written in the name of the scholars and merchants. It made a general reference to the "buying and selling of

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29. For the interviews, see FO 228/153, Enclosures 9 and 10 in no. 14. See also FO 228/149, Enclosure 1 in no. 3, Fishbourne to Captain Massie, 15.12.1852.

30. *Ibid.*; and Enclosure 3 in above, Bowring to Harvey. See also FO 663/9, no. 61, Bowring to Backhouse, 9.12.1852.

31. For the Minutes, see FO 228/153, Enclosure 8 in no. 14.

32. Wang's proclamation is in FO 228/903, p. 149 with a translation in FO 228/153, Enclosure 12 in no. 14.

men” that had been carried on in this port for a number of years. It went on to complain that of late several scores of native people had joined together for the purpose of obtaining persons to be exported and that they had several hundred in their employ who were going in all directions, using every pretext by which they might get hold of persons to suit their purpose. The placard then strongly warned the people against being imposed upon by such persons. The other placard, written in the name of the 18 wards of the town, was of a more violent character. It reacted strongly to what it called the human trade and specifically targeted the Hongs of Syme, Muir & Co. and Tait & Co. These placards were posted up throughout the town and had apparently caused a huge stir among the people.<sup>33</sup>

Answering charges of forced detention, Francis Darby Syme denied them and argued that the coolies in the sheds were most decidedly free agents and at liberty to go in and out at pleasure. However, several other witnesses testified to the contrary. Reverend Burns mentioned a specific case about a fortnight before the disturbance arose, in which his Chinese servant begged him to do what he could to have a young man released. His servant told him that he had gone to the shed in front of Syme’s Hong, in the company of the young man’s relatives from his village who wished to have him released. These relatives claimed that the young man had been deceived and was confined against his will. When summoned to testify before the court, the servant described the shed as being “a very bad place”. The men had nothing but the damp ground, with mats spread upon it, to lie down on. They were all found wearing trousers, but otherwise naked. He was positive that the coolies so kept were not at liberty to leave, or in his words, “they could go in, but they could not come out”. A similar case was raised by another English missionary, Dr J.H. Young, during his testimony. It was about how his Chinese teacher was asked by a female relative from the countryside to help in seeking the release of her nephew from the coolie ship.

During the inquiry, six coolies from Syme’s emigrant depot were brought to testify and they all said they had been promised work in Amoy, but on arriving at Syme’s Hongs, they were pushed into the coolie sheds and not allowed to leave. Seven other witnesses from Tait & Co.’s coolie depot also testified to the same effect. Other witnesses recollected occasions of personal violence being committed by Syme, who seemed to be fond of carrying a stick and using it to strike at the coolies in the sheds.

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33. For the two placards, see FO 228/903, pp. 146–7, the English translations of which are in FO 228/153, Appendices A and B of Enclosure 8 in no. 14.

A couple of eyewitnesses said they had seen the coolies bleeding from the mouth after being beaten by Syme.

As the court hearing proceeded, some missing links of the affair on November 21 also fell into place. It became clear that, in the evening of the 21st, Francis Darby Syme, accompanied by Cornabe as his interpreter, made a visit to a police court with the intention of ascertaining whether one of the men belonging to his Hong was being detained. If so, they had planned to liberate him. After the mandarin told them the detainee was not their broker, they subsequently left, but were told by someone that this official had deceived them. Syme and Cornabe went back for the second time. It was during this second visit that, upon recognizing Syme, people made the assault upon him and his clerk, Cornabe. The broker they were looking for was Lin Huan. Lin had entrapped a man in Amoy and was seized by the people, who turned him in to the police court. Both Syme and Cornabe, as did Lin, managed to escape the scene amid the confusion and under cover of twilight. Lin took refuge in Syme's Hong.<sup>34</sup>

Now the anger of the people was aroused and exercised upon Mackay, a clerk with Tait & Co., who arrived at the place shortly after. In his deposition, Lin Huan said the Hongs of both Syme and Tait came to claim him. Mackay explained his presence differently in his testimony. He said he visited the place wanting to find out what had happened and that he could have been mistaken for Syme by the mob. After Mackay's departure, Vallancey and his companion, Arthur Malthew, both from the coolie ship the *Australia*, appeared on the scene. In their testimonies they did not explain why they went there and what caused their involvement in the fight.

Francis Darby Syme's coming to the rescue of Lin Huan had greatly antagonized the local people. The placard issued on the 23rd in the name of the whole community was the outcome of their anger. In it they expressed their determination not to transact business with the Hongs of Syme, Muir & Co. and Tait & Co. They threatened that, if people among themselves should happen to trade with these Hongs, their houses would be pulled down, their goods plundered and their lives taken. Trade would be resumed only after the escaped coolie-broker had been surrendered to their authorities for punishment.

It seems that after the outbreak of the 21st, the mandarin of the police court was disciplined for the incident. This action caused more

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34. FO 228/153, Enclosure 8 in no. 14, the minutes of Syme's and Cornabe's testimonies; for Lin Huan's deposition made to the Chinese police court, see FO 228/903, p. 148b. The translation of this Chinese document was presented to the Consular Court of Inquiry. See FO 663/9, Enclosure 15 in no. 177 of 1852.

disaffection among the people and led to the closing of their shops from the 22nd until the dispersion of the mob. The act was taken to exonerate this mandarin from blame for the circumstances that occurred between him and Francis Darby Syme. These people, said to be between three and six thousand, petitioned the Daotai requesting that this official should not be demoted. They were resolved to keep their shops closed until the official had been restored to his former position, and until the coolie-broker had been given up to the authorities.

During the examination, the Court of Inquiry also shed light on the obscure elements in the second outbreak on the 24th and the mob's motivation. That morning, about 1,500 men, mainly Amoy people, assembled in front of the foreign Hongs. Consequent on the shootings by the British marines and sailors, as later estimated by Harvey, seven or eight were killed and between 12 and 16 wounded. Besides the casualties among the rioters, four others who had nothing to do with the rabble were accidentally killed by stray bullets, among them a babe at her mother's breast.<sup>35</sup>

One witness, the acting-mate of HM's steam-sloop the *Salamander*, William Hugh Nurse, told the Court that the mob had plundered the outhouses in front of Syme's Hong. When he was asked to describe what these outhouses contained, he said there were household utensils for the use of the coolies. Then the Court reminded him of the fact that these outhouses were only the coolie sheds. Nurse agreed that no direct attempt was made to break open the dwelling-houses and godowns in order to plunder them.

Commenting on the intention of the mob, the British merchant Robert Jackson considered their object to be twofold: vengeance for the outrage committed by the foreigners; and plunder. But, on being questioned by the Court, he agreed that the mob did not at all appear near other Hongs, such as those owned by Captain McMurdo and Captain Helm. Other witnesses also admitted that the reason for the original gathering of the mob was to obtain delivery of the coolie-broker, certainly not for plunder. The crowd's feelings seemed to have been centered on Syme's Hong only; therefore, general plunder could not have been their objective.<sup>36</sup>

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35. FO 228/153, Enclosure 7 in no. 14, Harvey to Bowring, 22.12.1852.

36. Jackson was also involved in the exportation of coolies, but he had not become a target of attack. According to his explanation, he used only fair means to procure his coolies. He took only those who were perfectly willing to emigrate. However, a Chinese called Lin San, who was brought from Jackson's coolie depot in the town by Harvey and Commander Fishbourne, stated to the Court his unwillingness to emigrate. He said he did not ask to be let go because he saw others being beaten when they asked to leave.

The question of motivation was also addressed to Francis Darby Syme. He was asked to explain why his house had become the target of the attack. Syme said it was for plunder. He was then questioned how he would reconcile his claim with the message brought to him by an American missionary, Rev. John V.N. Talmage, that, if the coolie-broker was given up to the authorities and no future decoying of men by brokers were to be practised, the people would be satisfied and the affair would come to an end. On this occasion, Talmage was deputed by a group of respectable Amoy residents to call on Syme about the matter. In his response, Syme did not fully agree with the Court's view that the placards, the situation and the exasperation of the people against the coolie-broker were sufficient to identify the riots with the recent coolie emigration. He insisted that the crowd who gathered in front of his Hong were there merely for plunder. He could not account for the fact that only his Hong and that of Tait & Co. were named in the hostile placard.

After the inquiry had ended and sufficient evidence collected, John Backhouse held a Consular Court on December 18 to try Francis Darby Syme and his clerk for offences committed on November 21. Syme continued to be defiant at the trial and did not plead guilty. Nevertheless, the Court found that, in contravention to the Treaty existing between Britain and China, Syme had visited a police court on the subject of a coolie-broker, with a view to obtaining his release, and that he had been therefore guilty of a breach of the Treaty. He was fined 200 dollars. Cornabe was also charged with the same offenses that caused a riot, in which two British subjects were assaulted. He pleaded guilty. He was fined the smaller sum of 20 dollars because he had acted upon the instructions of his employer. A summons had likewise been served on Connolly, a partner in the firm of Tait & Co. He was to have been tried for "misprision" in allowing coolies to be confined against their will on board the emigrant depot ship; but, as the coolies who would have been the witnesses in this case had made their escape from the consular jail, the Court could only give him a warning as to his future actions to do with the shipment of coolies.<sup>37</sup>

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37. FO 228/153, Enclosure 7 in no. 14, Harvey to Bowring, 22.12.1852; and Enclosures 5 and 6 in no.14, minutes of Consular Court at Amoy, 18.12.1852.

## Vallancey *versus* the Chinese Authorities: Claims and Chinese Counter-claims

Vallancey's case was brought up during Captain Fishbourne's interview with Marine Magistrate Wang in December 1852. The former told the Chinese official that, by the custom of England, this English victim claimed an indemnity of 5,000 dollars. Wang said it was not the practice in China to pay money as compensation for wounds inflicted, but that by law the case should be thoroughly investigated and the offenders punished. He also reminded his British visitor of the cases in which innocent Chinese had been shot or wounded, even though these persons were at some distance away from the crowd. He said their relatives had not yet claimed compensation for the tragedies.<sup>38</sup> Harvey later conveyed to John Bowring that it would be very difficult to obtain the compensation for Vallancey.<sup>39</sup>

By late December, John Bowring had received four petitions from Amoy, two from the brothers, one from the widow and the fourth from the mother of persons shot, calling on his intervention on behalf of innocent persons who lost their lives when the marines opened fire. Bowring asked John Backhouse for a formal report and suggested the fines levied on Syme and Cornabe be distributed among the families of the victims. So far, Backhouse had not reported Vallancey's claim to Bowring and was, therefore, asked by the latter to send his advice.<sup>40</sup> Bowring reported to Malmesbury on Vallancey's claim and the Chinese petitions on December 27. In the latter case, he stated that under Chinese law such claims were rigidly enforced against Chinese who were the cause of the accidental death of others.<sup>41</sup>

John Backhouse replied in mid-February 1853. He said he had informed the petitioners that Her Majesty's Government could in no way be held responsible. He was far from convinced of the innocence of those who had fallen victim. The marines only fired when it became absolutely necessary to protect their own lives as well as the property that they were stationed there to guard. If the victims had joined in the disturbance, their own temerity and that alone was to blame. Even if they had been spectators of an affray in which armed parties were opposed to each other, they should have been sensible to the danger that they

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38. For the minutes of the two interviews, see FO 228/153, Enclosures 9 and 10 in no. 14. See also FO 228/149, Enclosure 1 in no. 3, Fishbourne to Captain Massie, 15.12.1852.

39. FO 228/153, Enclosure 7 in no. 14, Harvey to Bowring, 22.12.1852.

40. For the petitions, see FO 228/903, pp. 149–50. The English translations are in FO 228/153, Enclosures 5–8 in no. 17.

41. FO 228/153, no. 14, Bowring to Malmesbury, 27.12.1852.

incurred. The Acting Consul believed his decision was supported by the laws of his own country under similar circumstances. In the matter of the distribution of the amount of the fines among the relatives of the victims, he requested the cooperation of the Chinese authorities, but had not yet received any reply. Regarding Vallancey's claim, Backhouse considered it to be exorbitant. He would be willing to support a more reasonable demand.<sup>42</sup>

The final decision on the case was not made immediately pending instructions from London and also because of the unstable local condition that in the latter part of the year led to an uprising and the six-month occupation of Amoy by a body of local rebels. In the dispatch of February 20, 1854 the Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon, inquired of John Bowring about developments in the case. In his dispatch of April 13, 1854, the latter directed the Consul in Amoy, D.B. Robertson, to investigate the facts of the case thoroughly, ascertain whether the injuries had been inflicted by Chinese soldiers, and how far Vallancey had exercised the necessary prudence in the situation. Having satisfied himself on these particulars, he might suggest the payment of a sum not exceeding 1,000 dollars as compensation. The Consul was empowered to threaten recovery of the sum by levying on the customs dues controlled by the Consulate.

In his reply, Consul Robertson cast some doubts on the claim. To determine who was responsible for the damage incurred, he found it necessary to examine the attendant circumstances. He said Vallancey had unfortunately ventured into the streets of the town at a moment at which there was great excitement among the people, arising from a general belief that British merchants had been engaged in kidnapping Chinese coolies to fill their ships. The visit was also made within an hour or so of a similar attack made on the persons of certain British merchants. Moreover, earlier in the same evening, Francis Darby Syme had rescued his coolie-broker from the hands of the Chinese authorities and had hence been indisputably involved in a fight. The situation made it dangerous for foreigners to go into the streets.

Having examined the records, Robertson found every witness cognisant of and admitting to their knowledge of the state of public excitement that existed at the time of and previous to the attack made on Vallancey, but in the voluminous documents he had not come across any inquiries being directed to the claimant asking whether he had been aware of it. His own statement led to the supposition that he landed and entered the town in complete ignorance of the troubled state of

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42. FO 228/153, Enclosure in no. 22, Backhouse to Bowring, 16.2.1853.



affairs. Robertson found this statement rather improbable, taking into consideration the excitement that existed and that Vallancey was an officer on board one of the coolie ships, "which were shipping the cause of the dissatisfaction viz. the coolies". If a person persisted in placing himself in danger, it must be upon his own responsibility, as neither Her Majesty's Government nor the Chinese could guarantee security to life or property unless the person himself did all in his power to avoid or prevent danger to either.

Moreover, Vallancey appeared to found his claim on the assumptions that the injuries had been inflicted by Chinese soldiers. According to Robertson, "this may or may not have been the case". Knowing the facility with which a Chinese mob could arm itself, the members might have been mistaken for military men by a stranger, but Robertson inclined to the belief that they were not so. Certainly, in the records, there was no evidence provided by any witness except by the claimant and his companion to prove or establish that fact. Even their own depositions did not throw much light on the subject.

Consul Robertson also thought that the timing of lodging the claim might not be appropriate. Since the local uprising in the past months, the Amoy authorities had been suffering a shortage of funds. On account of the stagnation of trade, no native customs duties had been received and the mandarins were greatly distressed. He feared that pressing the claim under such circumstances would be considered unfriendly by the mandarins. This would be very injurious to British permanent interests. Finally, he said, of the mandarins holding office at the time of the attack on Vallancey, only one was still in Amoy. He was the *Hackwan* (Customs Superintendent), whose duties were unconnected with the military or civil administration of the place.<sup>43</sup>

John Bowring concurred with Robertson's observations and gave the latter directions not to put forward Vallancey's claim for the present. The Foreign Secretary later also approved of Bowring's suspension of the demand. Nevertheless, Clarendon asserted that the claim should not be abandoned, and it might perhaps be advisable to lodge it, but not to press it on the Chinese authorities.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, at the end of the year, the case was brought up again with the Daotai by the British Consular authorities in Amoy for the purpose of "carrying out the spirit of the Earl of Clarendon's directions".<sup>45</sup>

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43. FO 663/58, no. 29, Robertson to Bowring, 8.5.1854.

44. FO 228/164, no. 35, Bowring to Clarendon, 18.5.1854; and FO 228/ 169, no. 103, Clarendon to Bowring, 5.8.1854.

45. FO 663/58, no. 89, Parkes to Bowring, 30.12.1854.

## **British Self-appraisals**

After his on-the-spot investigation, Harvey was able to piece together the picture and gave his appraisal of the affair.<sup>46</sup> He began by responding to the causes of the riots. His report confirmed that the outbreak was attributable to Francis Darby Syme's "unauthorized and irregular proceedings" and that some of the English merchants at Amoy were greatly to blame for the reckless manner in which coolies had been obtained. These merchants employed men of the lowest possible character to supply emigrants. Abuses, fraud, deception and, in some instances, kidnapping were the natural consequences of the premium paid for every man obtained. Harvey was also critical of what he thought "a disgusting and obnoxious shed", or rather "barracoon", in front of Syme's Hong, built for the reception of coolies, or "what Mr. Syme calls 'Applicants for Emigration'". He saw this as a disgrace to the name and character of Britain in Amoy and impressed on John Bowring that he should apply every legal means to ensure its removal.

Another appraisal, that was even more sympathetic toward the Chinese, came from Captain Fishbourne. He said that, for some few months, the public mind had been festering under the accumulated wrongs perpetrated by savage Chinese brokers, with whom their employers were associated in the people's thinking. The illegal interference of Francis Darby Syme to stay the course of justice undertaken by the authorities eventually sparked off a revolt at the instance of an indignant and outraged people. The people felt defeated in their legal remedy by the rescue of the broker. When they found out that the broker had hidden himself on Symes' premises, they determined to take the law into their own hands.

Fishbourne also revealed that various meetings had been held by respectable citizens, at which attacking the English Hong, the ships and other extreme measures were proposed. Significantly, such proposals were all rejected, as people were well aware that their triumph would only be short-lived, as steamers would be up from Hong Kong to avenge any attack upon persons or property. Eventually, they expressed their detestation of the prevailing coolie system by selecting the coolie shed as their target of attack. They partially demolished it and liberated its inmates.

In the Commander's view, Francis Darby Syme "ought to be tried for misprision, if he were not prosecuted under the 2nd Clause of 6 & 7 Victoria, Cap. 98, of the Slave Act". He found the moral perception of so many in the coolie trade to be so much impaired they were unable to see

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46. FO 228/153, Enclosure 7 in no. 14, Harvey to Bowring, 22.12.1852.

they were violating the law as well as the commonest moralities. It was a forlorn hope to try to enlighten these coolie merchants. He personally saw a man escaping from Syme's shed and being "chased by a set of barbarous harpies who seized him by the tail, arms, and legs, as if he had been a wild animal". Fishbourne was especially critical of Syme's defiant bearing in the Consular Court, saying that the latter showed no remorse at the thought of the deaths that had occurred. The captain continued, "if he (Syme) did not eventually embroil the two countries, he would eventually destroy all friendly relations between our people and the Chinese at Amoy".<sup>47</sup>

Now, John Bowring was ready to make his first report on the affair of the Amoy riots to the Foreign Office. Bowring observed in his dispatch of December 27 that, "the public peace was seriously compromised, large amounts of property placed in jeopardy, and the amicable relations between the subjects of Great Britain and China likely to be interrupted by the misdoings of the instruments and agents engaged in the collection and exportation of Chinese labourers". With reference to the barracoon in front of the foreign Hongs, he completely concurred with Harvey's opinion that it must be demolished. He had desired a "private intimation to be given to Mr. Syme that he had better quietly remove this cause of offence, and I hope that this may be effectual".<sup>48</sup>

On December 29, John Bowring stated his view to John Backhouse, saying that their merchants had been in the habit of disregarding and suspending the Consul's authority, and had established direct intercourse with the mandarins independently of the Consulate. He saw this as one of the primary sources of mischief and one of the abuses that had taken place. Therefore, he instructed the Acting Consul to call the attention of the British community to the provisions of Article XIII of the General Regulations of Trade that stated:

(w)henever a British subject has reason to complain of a Chinese, he must first proceed to the Consulate and state his grievance....  
If an English merchant has occasion to address the Chinese authorities, he shall send such address through the Consul, who will see that the language is becoming....

He required John Backhouse to enforce this regulation strictly by punishing any infraction. As to assaults, sometimes of a brutal character, being committed on Chinese subjects by British subjects, Bowring told Backhouse that:

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47. FO 228/149, Enclosure 1 in no. 3, Fishbourne to Captain Massie, 21.12.1852.  
48. FO 228/153, no. 14, Bowring to Malmesbury, 27.12.1852.

if, on the one hand, we call upon the Chinese authorities to punish their people for their offences against British persons and property, it is equally our duty to see that no outrages committed upon the subjects of China go unpunished.

The latter was then reminded of the power of summary jurisdiction, whereby the consular authorities had the means of enforcing the obligations of Treaties in this particular, and causing the law to be respected.<sup>49</sup>

It was also on this occasion that John Bowring commented on a protest note sent to the Chinese authorities by John Backhouse. On the morning of November 24, Backhouse found out that the broker, Lin Huan, was hiding in Syme's Hong. He demanded Syme deliver the broker to him. On his way to the Consulate, Lin was intercepted and taken away by officials sent by the Marine Magistrate. Backhouse communicated a strong protest to Daotai Zhao against what he considered to be an act of great insult to the British government.<sup>50</sup> Bowring, however, reminded the Acting Consul of the existing guidelines about the right of the British to abstract Chinese subjects from their own authorities and the authority of their own tribunals. He said it had been decided before by the Crown lawyers that they had no right to interfere in the legal authority that the Chinese government exercised over its subjects.<sup>51</sup>

In January 1853, John Backhouse reported to John Bowring from Amoy that, "affairs at this port have entirely resumed their former peaceful aspect, and that the foreign residents can, as heretofore, move amongst the native population without danger of molestation or insult". He attributed the restoration of peace partly to "the inoffensive disposition of the inhabitants, who were aroused to a display of anger and indignation at the hardships to which they were undoubtedly submitted". On account of the abuses of the coolie system, "even the most peaceful and forbearing will be excited to resistance and the endeavor to right their own wrongs".<sup>52</sup>

The calmness of the situation was also attributed by John Backhouse to the disappearance of the main cause of excitement. From the outbreak of riots to the end of the year, only three vessels left Amoy with coolies. Other ships had proceeded to Nan'ao, another opium station, in the Shantou (Swatow) region, to pick up this cargo. By early January 1853, scarcely a single coolie was obtainable at Amoy. The local authorities had

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49. FO 663/9, Bowring to Backhouse, 29.12.1852.

50. FO 663/57A, no. 23, Backhouse to Zhao, 25.11.1852.

51. FO 663/9, Bowring to Backhouse, 29.12.1852.

52. FO 683/10, no. 5, Backhouse to Bowring, 11.1.1853.

taken action to deter the brokers. The latter were forced to discontinue their malpractices under pain of severe punishment. However, voluntary emigrants to Singapore and Sydney still embarked from this port.

## **The Limits of Local Diplomacy**

In analyzing the Amoy affair, the imperialism-versus-patriotism approach does not do much more than scratch the surface. Nevertheless, the image of the Chinese officials as being timid and incompetent in their conduct of local diplomacy is shown to be more a distortion than the whole truth. The event has to be seen both in its local context and in a broader perspective to convey a fuller picture.

The coolie emigration was conducted as a private enterprise that involved both Chinese and English parties. These agents were acting on their own initiative without permission from or the sponsorship of their respective authorities. The English merchants treated the emigrants as human cargo and conducted the business with unbridled entrepreneurship. Profit maximization, not ethics, governed their business policy and management.

Although Chinese law prohibited the outright emigration of its subjects to foreign countries, there was a practical limit to the arbitrary authority of the local government. In the first place, the officials did not have authority to negotiate for amendments to be made to the existing laws or treaties; on the contrary, they were bound and were required to abide by both. Nevertheless, when they encountered their British counterparts, they were able to stand on their dignity and argued firmly against the latter to insist upon the upholding of Chinese rights under the Treaty. Viewed from this angle, these officials performed their function reasonably and fairly. Moreover, as Winchester observes, in years of scarcity the population pressure occasioned great anxiety among the local authorities and often led to their disgrace; any disturbances that arose from famine were almost certainly attributed to their neglect or mismanagement. The mandarins were very well aware that emigration relieved the pressure of the surplus population on the supplies of food and hence took the opportunity to deport wild and lawless vagabonds to foreign lands; not to speak of the pecuniary interest that some Chinese officials always contrived to find in the continuance of a forbidden practice.<sup>53</sup> The local authorities were also realistic enough to understand their limited capacity to stop such trade. Their duty and concern was the

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53. See fn. 1, note prepared by Winchester.

maintenance of law and order. They did intervene when crimes connected with the system persisted and then made arrests of the subordinate Chinese crimps and agents.

Realizing the practical constraints with which they were confronted, both the officials and the Amoy community acted with restraint and had no wish to let anti-foreignism influence their actions and excite further disturbances. A case in point was the occasion on November 25 when Acting Marine Magistrate Wang issued a proclamation "to reassure the native population, to calm all foreign merchants, and rigorously to prohibit ill-disposed persons from seeking occasion to foment disturbances". He informed the general public that the broker, Lin Huan, had now been delivered up to justice and punished, hence all animosities were at an end and trade would proceed as before. Wang issued another proclamation two days later, prohibiting the unauthorized publication of placards, with a view of putting an end to "the circulation of fabricated tales, and the inflaming of men's minds thereby", so that "natives and foreigners reside together in Amoy in mutual peace and harmony".<sup>54</sup> As to the Amoy community, despite their great fury, the citizens made an effort to impose self-restraint on themselves and declared in their proclamation issued on November 23 that they did not want any dispute with the whole foreign community. Even the mob during the riots had its justified grievances and accordingly found its target in the persons who were thought to have connections with the abusive system.

On the British side, the consular authorities were fully aware of the illegality of the emigration being carried out. As John Bowring himself had pointed out to them, they as the Treaty enforcer in the port enjoyed the power of summary jurisdiction and had the means of enforcing the obligations set out in the Treaties and causing the law to be respected. Nevertheless, they did not have jurisdiction over other foreign vessels in the ports. Even the control of their own subjects often entangled them in diplomatic complications. For example, James Tait had "all the advantages and influence which his being Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese Consul gives him".<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the British officials could not take arbitrary initiatives to ease the appalling abuses of the coolie exportation and even thought it inadvisable to do anything about it without instructions from their superiors. Not surprisingly, they chose to connive in the ongoing situation, although they felt strongly about the evils being perpetrated.

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54. Wang's two proclamations are in FO 220/903, pp. 146-7. The English translations of these documents are provided in FO 228/153, Enclosures 13 and 14 in no. 14.

55. FO 228/153, no. 5, Bowring to Malmesbury, 3.8.1852.

The British authorities in Hong Kong were also faced with the dilemma occasioned between suppressing and condoning the abuses of the coolie system. Their initial reaction had been sluggish until the outbreak of the riots that they could no longer ignore.

The moral sentiments and tenets held by the British officials on the China coast in this incident were genuine and admirable, but they eventually had to give way to considerations of broader British interests. While the British authorities in Hong Kong and Amoy were carrying out a post-mortem on the Amoy affair and indulging in an earnest self-examination, John Bowring was required to ponder upon the policy implications of a dispatch, dated October 20, from the Earl of Malmesbury on the subject of promoting the immigration of Chinese laborers to British Guiana and Trinidad or other West Indian colonies. At this juncture, the Colonial and Foreign Offices decided to appoint a government emigration officer to superintend the procedure and ensure the best selection of laborers.

To justify their engagement in the exportation of coolies, the British government argued that a very extensive emigration had been taking place from China for some time and that the Chinese government had not taken steps to enforce the law or to intervene in the emigration that was actually taking place. The British government had not forgotten its principles that no official agent should organize a system in opposition to the laws of the land within the territory of a friendly state but, in the question of emigration from China, the British government justified an exception to the general rule by arguing that the Chinese prohibition law was dormant, or at the very least a tacit consent was given to its violation. Under such circumstances, the British government viewed it to be its duty to place the emigration system on a healthy footing and the Chinese authorities could not consider themselves justified in raising objections to a measure that was to the advantage of the Chinese emigrants and to prevent the recurrence of the lamentable conditions on board emigrant vessels.

Still, even at this point in time, the British government hoped to avoid a head-on clash with its Chinese counterpart, not to speak of the undesirability of having the coolie issue as the source of conflict. Therefore, it imposed the guideline that, should the Chinese government resolve to adopt a new course and enforce its then inoperative law against emigration from the ports to which the British had access by Treaty, the British Consuls at such ports were bound to act in strict conformity with the Treaty and not in any way aid or abet the shipment of Chinese subjects destined for British colonies. In such a case, the operations of the agent must be restricted to the British territory of Hong Kong. Nevertheless, the

Foreign Office was quick to add if Chinese subjects should, of their own free will, risk the penalty and embark, without the aid of the Consul or of the agent, for any place within the British dominions, the Consul was not bound either to prevent, or even to be ostensibly cognizant of such acts for it was the duty of the Chinese government to enforce its own laws.<sup>56</sup> This situation had certainly created a difficult dilemma for John Bowring to do with the shipment of coolies from ports and places, principally the opium stations, in which, under Article IV of the Supplementary Treaty, the British were prohibited from trading. He saw the Treaties as part and parcel of the law of England. Therefore, it became a matter how far they might be authorized to allow or sanction the violation of their own engagements.<sup>57</sup>

However, there was not the slightest doubt that, whatever the rhetorical or moral and legalistic concerns were, when the different considerations clashed, morals and legality gave way to national interests. At this point, inconsistencies, double standards and hypocrisy crept into the actions of the British authorities. The British government and its officials stationed in China always stood firm throughout on the question of protecting their subjects and interests. They were never slow to show force and use threats to achieve their purposes. Hence their actions were no longer guided merely by morals and legality. Understandably, in the eyes of the Chinese officials and the citizens in Amoy, this was clear evidence that the British authorities were interested only in protecting their "crooked" coolie traders and the abusive system and showed no respect for the Chinese laws.

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56. For the British policy directives as explained above, see FO 228/139, no. 67, Malmesbury to Bowring, 20.10.1852. For Bowring's responses, see FO 228/153, no. 12, Bowring to Malmesbury, 20.12.1852 and Enclosure in the above, circular to Her Majesty's Consuls in China, 16.12.1852.

57. FO 228/153, no. 13, Bowring to Malmesbury, 24.12.1852.





## PART FOUR

### Transcending Borders

*The three chapters in this part enter the arena of transnational mobility.*

*Chapter 12 recounts the fortunes of the seafarers from southern Fujian and eastern Guangdong. The two groups created the great maritime enterprise of the coastal and overseas junk trade in the eighteenth through the early decades of the nineteenth centuries. Their boundary-crossing trading networks and predominant position in the shipping trade in the South China Sea have led scholars to describe the eighteenth century as “the Chinese century”.*

*Chapter 13 is a case study of a successful South Fujianese merchant in Batavia and Semarang. In 1749, he decided to retire from his business and return to his homeland bringing with him a large fortune. Upon arrival he was arrested for having broken the law governing border crossing and remaining abroad for too long. The chapter argues that his arrest can be attributed to a complex situation, but cannot simply be said to be a case of the Qing government’s hostility toward a seafaring merchant as some tend to believe.*

*Chapter 14 presents a controversial case about the status of a local-born Straits Chinese from Penang who was arrested by the local Chinese authorities in Amoy. The issue caused a diplomatic row between the British Consulate and Chinese officials about the question of whether the person was a British or Chinese subject.*



## CHAPTER 12

# Expanding Possibilities: Revisiting the Min-Yue Junk-trade Enterprise on the China Coast and in the Nanyang during the Eighteenth to the Mid-Nineteenth Centuries<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

#### *Scope of Discussion*

The maritime expansion of the Min (Fujian) and Yue (Guangdong) people is a broad topic, which numerous researchers have examined from a variety of angles over the last few decades. It often requires meticulous, painstaking efforts on the part of researchers to assemble scattered information about the Min-Yue people's seafaring activities in general and their junk trade in particular. The main goal of the present discussion is to take stock of the existing literature, re-read some oft-cited research materials and examine the topic from a longer and broader perspective. Often, the seafaring activities have been perceived to be the achievements of Chinese in general, rather than more specifically focused on particular ethnic groups, namely the Min and Yue people, who played the most important role in these processes. The geographical areas covered in the discussion are the Guangdong-Fujian region on the southeastern coast of China, other stretches of the China coast and the Nanyang (Southeast Asia). Setting the events against their historical backdrop, the discussion

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1. This is a revamped, enlarged version of a paper written in Chinese for the "Symposium on Ocean Cultures" held at the National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, on October 9–10, 2010. The Chinese version is published in *Haigang-hainan-haidao: Haiyang wenhua lunji* 海港·海难·海盜：海洋文化论集 [Ports, Shipwrecks, Pirates: A Collection of Essays on Ocean Cultures], ed. Cheng Wing-sheung 鄭永常主編 (Tainan: Center for Humanities and Social Sciences of the National Cheng Kung University, 2012), pp. 25–70.

highlights the peak period of the Min-Yue people's seaborne activities from the eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. The narrative will go beyond the descriptions of ships, cargoes and ports and will focus the spotlight on the human actors. By taking a panoramic view of the omnipresence of the seafarers and their contributions to the formation of mercantile communities at home and abroad, the scattered pieces of information will be assembled to form a coherent picture. It is hoped that this endeavor will bridge some missing links in the existing scholarship.

Fujian and Guangdong provinces on China's southeastern coast are also known by their respective abbreviated names of "Min" and "Yue", but in this chapter, the two geographical terms will principally denote the four coastal prefectural units of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou in southern Fujian, and Chaozhou and Canton (Guangzhou) in Guangdong. Since the seventeenth century, the three ports of Amoy (Xiamen), Changlim (Zhanglin) and Canton in the Min-Yue region had been playing an increasingly important role in the Chinese junk trade. A good start would be to look at the term "Min people". In this chapter it denotes the Quan-Zhang people of southern Fujian, also known as the South Fujianese (Minnan, or Hokkien) people. The term "Yue people" denotes the Chaozhou (Teochiu/Teochew) people when it refers to the major group of seafarers who fitted out the trading junks from Changlim in eastern Guangdong. Although Canton was a transshipment and operation base for the South Fujianese and Chaozhou people, the native Cantonese did not personally engage in maritime trade in significant numbers during the period in question. By the early nineteenth century, another group that became involved in coasting trade with Vietnam and Siam had emerged. They came from Qiongzhou prefecture in Hainan Island, then part of Guangdong province.

From the source materials, it is not always possible in all cases to identify the native-place origins of the ship-owners, shippers and merchants connected to the junk trade. Complicating the matter even further is the fact that it was not uncommon for the Min-Yue merchants to operate their maritime businesses in ports that were not their hometowns. In their eyes, this was a sound strategy that enabled them to manage the businesses in which they had the greatest stake personally. The upshot was that this practice created double or multiple identities for them in the sense that it cannot be said for certain whether these settlers should be regarded as locals or expatriates who had come from other districts or provinces. However, all is not lost, since from the sources it is still possible to puzzle out the predominant role of the Min-Yue people in the junk trade enterprise.

In the maritime history of China, the Min-Yue region stands out from that of other coastal areas. A glimpse at the rise of seaports in domestic and international trade on the China coast cogently illustrates this point. Since the Qin-Han periods (221 BC–AD 220) Canton had been a prominent port city. Quanzhou (also known to foreigners as Zaytun) in southern Fujian was another seaport that established its reputation in the maritime world between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries. During this period, Quanzhou attracted the attention of foreigners, especially Muslims from the Middle East, and its reputation as a bustling seaport practically eclipsed that of Canton. When the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta arrived in China by sea around 1347, Quanzhou was the first city he visited. He was greatly impressed by its grandeur and remarked that, “Zaytun is an immense city.... The port of Zaytun is one of the largest in the world, or perhaps the very largest. I saw in it about a hundred large junks; as for small junks, they could not be counted for multitude.”<sup>2</sup>

The mid-fifteenth century, during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), saw the emergence of Yuegang in southern Fujian as a rendezvous for seafarers. Contemporary observers compared its flourishing trade and economic prosperity to the two wealthy cities of Suzhou and Hangzhou in the Lower Yangzi region. Owing to its increasing importance and to rein in the notorious smuggling activities in its vicinity more effectively, in 1567 the Ming Court decided to elevate what was then a non-administrative town to the status of Haicheng district. As the maritime trade with Manila, founded by the Spanish in 1571, increased tremendously, hundreds of trading junks embarked from Haicheng to trade with this new colonial settlement.

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, a new phase in maritime expansion was dawning with the rise of Amoy in southern Fujian and Changlim in eastern Guangdong. As a consequence, the seaborne trade carried by the Min-Yue people began to gain momentum and soared to new heights. The rapid growth ushered in a golden age of inter-port trade on the China coast and in the Nanyang in terms of trade volume, the value of cargoes, mass participation and the geographical extent of their activities from the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth centuries. It was the entrepreneurial and resourceful merchants hailing from Amoy and Changlim who created and dominated this maritime enterprise. Canton, that had already been a major port for some two thousand years, now became a crucial operations and transshipment base for the Min-Yue people, especially those who engaged in foreign trade. Together,

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2. Ibn Battuta, *Ibn Battuta Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325–1354*, trans. H.A.R. Gibb (London: Darf Publishers Ltd., 1983), pp. 287–8.

these trading ports had inherited and brought skillfully into play their long tradition of seafaring activities. They became embarkation points and windows on the maritime world for the Min-Yue merchants and emigrants.

A few words are necessary to define “port city” as a conceptual term used in this discussion. A seaport means more than a harbor in which ships lie at anchor; it also comprises the surrounding land space in which a trading community resides in order to conduct their transactions. A port also functions as a node of business networks connecting it to the interior and other seaports along trade routes.

### ***Main Aspects***

Adopting a macro-approach to the junk-shipping enterprise during the period in question, this chapter covers a cluster of four research blocks as follows:

- (a) the socioeconomic factors that led to the development of seafaring enterprises;
- (b) the formation of commercial and information networks that contributed to the expansion of coastal trade and inter-port shipping on the China coast;
- (c) the golden age of the Min-Yue overseas junk trade in the Nanyang; and
- (d) the participatory roles of the Min-Yue merchants in the port cities at home and abroad.

Investigating these broad areas of kaleidoscopic development that led to the expansion of maritime trade provides the tools from which to build a coherent picture of the shipping and inter-port trade in which the Min-Yue people played a key role.

### ***Sources of Information***

Scattered but crucial information about the Chinese junk trade is buried in the huge Chinese and western archives waiting to be unearthed in the future. Also valuable are the contemporary accounts and reports in various western languages. Owing to the nature of the sources, anyone attempting to work on the topic will face the often insuperable obstacle of having to acquire knowledge of multiple languages. For information on the socioeconomic and historical background, researchers will find the Chinese archival and printed primary sources most useful.

They are often official compilations that offer only scattered, but nonetheless indispensable information about the junk trade. In the matter of the Chinese junk trade in the Nanyang in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, western eyewitness accounts or reports are the most informative materials because they were recorded by officials or observers who had first-hand contacts with the traders in the markets. Those who can cross the language barrier and afford the time will want to consult the various archives of western trading companies that were present in Southeast Asia and trading to Canton in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These company records also contain original Chinese correspondence relating to the trade transactions in Canton.

For the first half of the nineteenth century, contemporary western accounts given by observers on the spot provide valuable information. Writings often cited in the past are the works by John Crawfurd that offer glimpses of the Chinese junk trade during this period. Crawfurd published two books in 1820 and 1828. He also left behind important official documents relating to his mission to Siam in 1822. Born in 1783, John Crawfurd became a medical doctor. During the British occupation of Java from 1811 to 1816, he served as British Resident at the Court of the Sultan of Yogyakarta. Upon his return to England in 1817, he penned his three-volume work, *History of the Indian Archipelago* that he published in 1820.<sup>3</sup> The book recorded his investigation into the affairs of the Malay Archipelago during his service in Java. In 1821 he was appointed envoy on a mission to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China. His journal on the mission appeared in book form in 1828 and 1830.<sup>4</sup> The documents relating to his mission to Siam were published in Bangkok in 1915.<sup>5</sup> Crawfurd took up another official appointment as Resident to Singapore from 1823 to 1826.<sup>6</sup> Being a keen observer, in some parts of his two books and papers he is able to reveal valuable sources of information about the Chinese junk trade in Southeast Asia. As a highly qualified expert on eastern affairs, John Crawfurd was called in for consultation by the Select

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3. John Crawfurd, *History of the Indian Archipelago* (3 vols.; orig., 1820; reprint, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1967).
  4. John Crawfurd, *Journal of the Embassy to the Courts of Siam and Cochin China* (orig., 1828; reprint, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967).
  5. John Crawfurd, *The Crawfurd Papers: A Collection of Official Records relating to the Mission of Dr. John Crawfurd sent to Siam by the Government of India in the Year 1821* (Bangkok: National Library, 1915).
  6. For John Crawfurd's bio-data, see David Wyatt, "'Introduction' to John Crawfurd", *Journal of the Embassy* (1967 ed.).



Committee of the House of Commons in 1830, an occasion on which he presented updated information on the subject.<sup>7</sup>

Among other oft-used contemporary accounts are the works by John Phipps, Edmund Roberts and an anonymous author that were published in 1835, 1837 and 1838 respectively. The information that they collected about commerce in China and the junk trade is valuable for research purposes. Excited by the emerging opportunity to open up the China trade and intensely interested in the British mercantile communities, John Phipps endeavored to collect and compile information that would benefit British merchants engaged in shipping as well as others connected with the trade of China and India.<sup>8</sup> Edmund Roberts was America's first envoy to the Far East, a post to which he was appointed by President Andrew Jackson. He led an American embassy to the eastern courts of Cochin China, Siam and Muscat in the US sloop-of-war *Peacock* during the years 1832–34. His voyage was an effort to make up for the neglected state of American commerce in the regions from the Cape of Good Hope to Japan. The intention of the mission was, whenever practicable, to establish treaty relations with the respective countries, "which would place American commerce on a surer basis and on equality with that of the most favored nations trading to those kingdoms".<sup>9</sup> The third account was written by one of the Englishmen residing in Canton on the eve of the first Sino-British war generally known as the [First] Opium War (1840–42). The author had a dream of the China market with "an immense population of eager traders, hard workers, and willing buyers".<sup>10</sup>

Documents and records collected as British Parliamentary Papers or scattered among the bulky Foreign Office files are extremely relevant,

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7. John Crawford's testimony given on 25 March 1830; see "Third Report", *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Affairs of the East-India Company, 1830*, pp. 446–73, copy from the University of California at Los Angeles Digitized Library. I thank the kind assistance of Shengqi Shu in tracing the depository of the document.
  8. John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade: Comprising Commerce of Great Britain and India, particularly Bengal and Singapore, with China and the Eastern Islands* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1835), in "The Nineteenth Century Books on China" (Microfilm; Cambridge, 1995), "Preface".
  9. Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the Eastern Courts of Cochin China, Siam, and Muscat* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1837), in "The Nineteenth Century Books on China", "Introduction", pp. 5–6.
  10. Anon., "A Dissertation upon the Commerce of China", in *Nineteenth Century China: Five Imperialist Perspectives*, ed. Rhoads Murphey (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies, no.13, 1972), "Introduction", pp. iii–iv.

especially in seeking trading and shipping information around the first half of the nineteenth century. The only disappointment that might befall readers is that the related documents have a strong bias toward British trade with China and betray British determination to establish formal trade relations with the Qing authorities. The question of the junk trade only arose in their minds now and then, when the magnitude of the Chinese carrying trade was thought to be a threat to British trade interests. By and large, the western trading companies in Canton, the British country traders on the China coast or the company personnel in Southeast Asia were all likely to have been more intent on establishing contacts with private Chinese traders.

Around the mid-nineteenth century, which is also the cut-off point of the time period of this chapter, the fate of the junk trade seemed to be at a crossroads. Four contemporary documents that specifically describe the state of the Chinese junk trade during the time will be referred to. In May 1852, John Bowring, the then British Consul in Canton and Chief Superintendent of Trade in China, was seeking information on the foreign trade carried by Chinese junks that traded with the British consular ports in China, his intention being to look into the prospect of transferring the more valuable portion of this trade to foreign vessels. Some six months later, Bowring received three reports on the matter from his consular officers in Canton, Shanghai and Foochow (Fuzhou).<sup>11</sup> One great disappointment was the absence of a response from the British Consulate in Amoy, which was the home port of so many Chinese junks. Probably this gap can be attributed to the ill-health of John Blackhouse, the officiating Consul, and the lack of consular personnel to conduct an adequate investigation.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, three comprehensive and very informative surveys compiled by the Officiating Consul Adam W. Elmslie, Consular Interpreter Harry S. Parkes, both in Canton, and Consul Rutherford Alcock in Shanghai made up to some extent for the seemingly

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11. Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 228/136, no. 151, Bowring to The Earl of Malmesbury, 2.11.1852, and Enclosures. The author has published a preliminary study of these documents; see Ng Chin-keong, "Challenge and Persistence: Chinese Junk Trade Around 1850", in *Ajia Taiheyō Sekai to Chūgoku, Chūgoku Ryōiki Kenkyū*, no. 10 中国領域研究, 第10号, アジア太平洋世界と中国 [The Asia-Pacific and China, *China Area Studies Series*, no. 10], ed. Murata Yujiro and Okamoto Masataka (Tokyo: Ministry of Education Specified Area Studies 113, 1998), pp. 7–23.

12. John Blackhouse had officiated as Consul in Amoy since Consul G.G. Sullivan's death. "No extra Vice Consul was appointed ... to assist Blackhouse." See FO 228/149, "List of all Persons on the Fixed Establishments of the Superintendency and Consulates in China on the First day of January 1853."

missed opportunity to gain a more complete view of the Chinese junk trade. In his covering letter to the Foreign Office, John Bowring also offered his own observations. Taken as a whole, the documents provide us with rare glimpses into one of the most amazing activities of Chinese seafarers. Among these observers, Rutherford Alcock had for some years been casting his eye on the Chinese carrying trade. Before giving his response to John Bowring's instruction, he had penned a report on the matter in 1848.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, his earlier essay might have piqued Bowring's interest in the subject.

Overall, on account of my linguistic limitations, I much regret not being able to consult the non-English western archival or contemporary materials. Certainly, the amount of sources consulted for the present discussion represents only the tip of the iceberg. This language inadequacy has greatly limited the depth of the survey, which is barely able to touch on the colorful aspects of the trading operations and the operators. I sincerely admire J.C. van Leur for his accomplished discussion of the Asian trade around the first half of the seventeenth century. By using the contemporary Dutch accounts, Van Leur was able to describe some aspects of the trade and the role of Chinese players in meticulous and exciting detail.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, a few selected important works from the large body of modern scholarship on related topics will be highlighted. The first that immediately springs to my mind are the works by T'ien Ju-k'ang, who engaged in the investigation of the Chinese junk trade in his two publications of 1956 and 1957.<sup>15</sup> Although the two works treat the

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13. Rutherford Alcock, "Report on the Maritime Trade of China, and the Prospects of the More Valuable Portion being Transferred to Foreign Bottoms", in FO 17/142, no. 16, Governor Samuel George Bonham to the Viscount Palmerston, April 14, 1848, Enclosure; the printed version is in *British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), China, 40, Statistical Returns, Accounts and Other Papers Respecting the Trade between Great Britain and China, 1802-88* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972), pp. 635-9; also reprinted in *North-China Herald (NCH)*, 1: 23 (4.1.1851), pp. 90-1.
  14. Van Leur wrote his essays, that were published some years after his premature death during WWII, more than 70 years ago. See J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Ltd., 1955).
  15. T'ien Ju-k'ang 田汝康, "Shiqi shiji zhi shijiu shiji zhongye zhongguo fanchuan zai dongnanya zhou hangyun he shangye de diwei" 十七世纪至十九世纪中叶中国帆船在东南亚航运和商业的地位 [The position of Chinese junks in Southeast Asian shipping and commerce from the 17th to the mid-19th centuries], in *Lishi yanjiu* 历史研究 [Historical research], 8 (1956): 1-21; it appeared in the following year as a monograph entitled *17-19 shiji zhongye zhongguo fanchuan*

seafaring activities in more general terms as “Chinese” affairs, rather than a contribution by the key group, namely the Min-Yue seafarers, his writings have opened up an exciting field of research in a very illuminating way. The two works have not only provided a clear framework that enables later researchers to follow in his footsteps, but they also present a long view of the Chinese seafaring enterprise. They have inspired researchers of later generations to review the topic, re-read the source materials that the author had consulted and unearth more archival and contemporary materials to enhance an understanding of the events.

It would be an injustice not to mention a most prolific writer in the field, Akira Matsuura, who has been publishing on Chinese shipping since the 1960s. His solid scholarship is revealed in his meticulous research and powerful observations. He has unearthed scattered information from the huge quantities of often obscure Chinese sources.<sup>16</sup> I also wish to salute Paul A. Van Dyke for his great work on the Canton trade in the eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth centuries. He might be the only person who has made the painstaking effort to consult the major relevant western archives, including the Dutch, Danish, and Swedish archives in continental Europe, that have seldom been consulted for similar research. Through what he has unearthed from the archives, readers are able to gain rare insights into the “hidden world” of those commercial operations. Extremely useful to the present discussion is the

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*zai dongnanya zhou* 17–19 世纪中叶中国帆船在东南亚 [The Chinese junks in Southeast Asia from the 17th to the 19th centuries] (Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1957), with only slight editing. The same year he published, “Zailun shiqi zhi shijiu shiji zhongye zhongguo fanchuan de fazhan” 再论十七至十九世纪中叶中国帆船业的发展 [A re-examination of the development of the Chinese junk trade from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries], *Lishi yanjiu* 历史研究 [Historical research], 12 (1957): 1–11. Later the two works were included in *Zhongguo fanchuan maoyi yu duiwai guanxi shi lunji* 中国帆船贸易与对外关系史论集 [A Collection of Essays on the Chinese Junk Trade and Foreign Relations] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1987).

16. Cited in this essay are Akira Matsuura 松浦章, *Shindai hansen engan kōunshi no kenkyū* 清代帆船沿海航運史の研究 [A study of coastal junk shipping during the Qing period] (Suita, Osaka: Kansai University Press, 2010); *Qingdai neihe shuiyun shi yanjiu* 清代内河水运史研究 (Studies on river shipping during the Qing), trans. Dong Ke 董科 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2010); *Qingdai fanchuan dongya hangyun yu zhongguo haishang haidao yanjiu* 清代帆船东亚航运与中国海商海盗研究 [Studies on junk shipping, maritime merchants and pirates in East Asia during the Qing period] (Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2009); and *Dongya haiyu yu Taiwan de haidao* 東亞海域與臺灣的海盜 [The East Asian waters and Taiwan piracy], trans. Bian Fengkui 卞鳳奎 (Taipei: Boyang wenhua, 2008).

information he provides on the Canton junk trade in and around the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Last but not least the works of two scholars, namely: Sarasin Virapol and Jennifer W. Cushman,<sup>18</sup> have provided very useful information about a very important branch of the Chinese overseas junk trade centering on Siam.

## Marching Toward the Ocean in Perspective

This section will follow the maritime development against the backdrop of socioeconomic changes during late imperial times and take a look at how peasants were transformed into seafarers in large numbers.

In explaining the peasant exodus from rural China, not infrequently the push factor of the mountainous terrain and barren soil resulting in the scarcity of cultivable land and subsequent rural poverty is stressed. Among the three regions of southern Fujian, the Pearl River Delta and the Chaozhou-Shantou Plain, southern Fujian has the smallest area of land suitable for agriculture, but both Fujian and Guangdong provinces were in fact facing similar overpopulation and a resultant scarcity of cultivable land. The following population figures for the two provinces for the years 1393, 1749 and 1851, as shown by Dwight H. Perkins, are self-explanatory. In Fujian, the population increased from 3,917,000 to 7,620,000 and 20,099,000 respectively during the three time periods. The population pressure in Guangdong was just as severe, with increases from 3,008,000 to 6,461,000 and 28,389,000.<sup>19</sup> Although this reason seems very feasible, researchers on the socioeconomic conditions in late imperial China generally concur that the land scarcity and population pressure should be treated in relative terms. Most of them in fact view the eighteenth century as an age of prosperity. This period saw the establishment of a solid economic foundation that benefited from the development of a commodity economy that had become more widespread in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This can be attributed to the dynamic response of the population to the unfavorable man-land ratio. In order

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17. See Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700–1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).
  18. Sarasin Virapol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652–1853* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977); Jennifer W. Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), originated from her PhD dissertation at Cornell in 1975.
  19. Dwight H. Perkins, *Agricultural Development in China (1368–1968)* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), p.207.

to survive, the rural communities that formed the bulk of the population chose to meet the challenges head-on. Instead of being contented with the old modes of production and living in isolation from the outside world, they made the necessary adjustments in their socioeconomic life and involved themselves in extra-village activities. Exodus from the native villages was not just an escape from desperation, but also a way to seek new opportunities.

### ***Rural Society in Flux***<sup>20</sup>

To understand traditional Chinese society, the most convenient place to begin is with kinship relationships at the grass-roots level. In terms of the foundation of kinship, the family as the basic, core unit is formed and extended to become a common descent group known as a lineage. The lineage members are traced to a single ancestry and settled in a given locality.<sup>21</sup> In the rural society of the Min-Yue region, the lineage played an important role as an economic, political, social, religious, educational and military entity.<sup>22</sup> For purposes of survival, the social structure of rural society tended to be highly disciplinary and collectivized. Individuals were subject to the constraints of their lineage and the wishes of the communal leaders. Consequently, lineage functioned as a stabilizing factor and the leaders were often drawn from among the local gentry-scholars. The lineage leaders were also bona fide managers of the rural communities, representing a form of informal government.

The formal administration in a province consisted of three levels, namely: province, prefecture and district or department; no officials were appointed below the district level to the townships, villages or hamlets. The rural areas beyond the district city-walls covered an extensive zone and a large population, but were not subject to direct governance. This administrative practice made it necessary for the government to rely on the local gentry, mostly *shengyuan* or the first-degree holders of the

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20. See Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1683–1735* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), Ch. 1; and “The Cultural Horizon of South China’s Emigrants in the Nineteenth Century: Change and Persistence”, in *Asian Traditions and Modernization: Perspectives from Singapore*, ed. Yong Mun Cheong (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1992), pp. 1–30.

21. Feng Erkang 冯尔康, *Zhongguo shehui jiegou de yanbian* 中国社会结构的演变 [The social structure of China and its evolution] (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe, 1994), pp. 392–3.

22. Maurice Freedman, *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China* (London: Athlone Press, 1958), pp. 35–6.

imperial examinations, for surveillance and social control. Therefore the local gentry served as mediators between the local district authorities and the rural people, and played the participatory role of assisting the formal administration in the management of local society. The local officials and the rural leaders were interdependent and both had a stake in maintaining social stability.<sup>23</sup> As commented by Zheng Zhenman, the governing institution of traditional China was made up of a two-track system consisting of the “public” and the “private”. It was a dual administrative structure composed of the state and rural lineages. To some extent, the governing institution created a condition of indirect rule and rural autonomy.<sup>24</sup> He goes on to observe:

The development of lineage organization in Ming-Qing times had gone beyond the barrier of traditional lineage relationships and added the [complementary] principles of lineage organization that could adapt adequately to other social relationships. Lineage organization had, therefore, become more inclusive and flexible. It created more possibilities for traditional society to develop. ... The lineage organization during the Ming-Qing periods can be said to have encompassed kin, locality and interest-driven relationships. Characteristically it embodied the plurality of traditional social structure in China.<sup>25</sup>

In short, the political ecology of rural society bred elastic cultural traits in social and political relationships.

Owing to the shortages of production resources, rural society was also a highly competitive living environment that contributed to violent clashes between lineages. It was not uncommon for small lineages to be bullied by the larger, more powerful lineages. For self-protection, the small lineages would adopt a strategy of forming alliances in their relations with the larger lineages. In Fujian and Guangdong, to strengthen their bargaining power, small lineages sharing the same surname could form themselves into a large lineage by fictitiously declaring that they shared common ancestry.<sup>26</sup> As reported in some contemporary sources,

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23. Regarding the roles of local gentry, refer to T'ung-tsu Ch'u, *Local Government in China Under the Ch'ing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), ch. 10.

24. Zheng Zhenman 郑振满, *Ming-Qing Fujian jiazhu zuzhi yu shehui bianqian* 明清福建家族组织与社会变迁 [Lineage Structure and Social Change in Ming-Qing Fujian] (Beijing: Sanlian shuju, 2009), p. 4.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 208–9.

26. Hu Hsien-chin, *The Common Descent Group in China and Its Functions* (New York: Viking Fund, Inc., 1948), p. 10.

“large surname aggregates” and “small surname aggregates” were putatively taken to be “large lineages” and “small lineages”. Often, small lineages with different surnames found it expedient to form alliances, or pseudo-lineages. In 1727, the Governor of Fujian, Gao Qizhuo, memorialized the Qing Court:

My observation is that in the Quanzhou and Zhangzhou prefectures in Fujian larger surname aggregates tended to bully smaller surname aggregates. To defend themselves, the smaller aggregates often take up arms. It is indeed a most evil practice in that they confront and kill each other.... At the moment, a mob in Tong'an consisting of a strong group of the Bao lineage and a weak group of the Qi lineage have gathered bearing arms and are causing deadly violence.<sup>27</sup>

The following year Gao gave more information about the formation of the two surname groups through a merger:

In Tong'an, the large surname groups of Li, Chen, Su, Zhuang and Ke have allied themselves to form the Bao surname-group. Other small surname-groups have merged to adopt the common surname of Qi.<sup>28</sup>

It is interesting to note what the two Chinese characters “Bao” and “Qi” imply and reveal. The former has the meaning of “all-embracing” and the latter “unison”. The fact that the high-ranking officials did not show disapproval of the practice of forming pseudo-lineages in their memorials is amazing, given that it contravened the Confucian principle of how a lineage should be properly organized.

In 1729, the prevailing practice of forming fictitious surname groups and the inherent social violence involved were elaborated upon by Liu Shishu, Inspector of Local Practices and Customs of Fujian:

Initially, the larger surname groups bullied the weaker surname groups. Hence the latter merged to form a new group adopting the surname Qi. Recently, there have been similar cases such as those of the Tongs, the Hais and the Wans.... The Shi surname group of Jinjiang, to which Shi Shilun and Shi Shibiao belong, is a large lineage. Its members have been notorious for their involvement

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27. *Gong zhong dang Yongzheng chao zouzhe* 宮中檔雍正朝奏摺 [Secret Palace Memorials of the Yongzheng Reign], Vol. 9 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1978), p. 311.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 571.



in smuggling, harboring bandits and its extremely tyrannical behavior.<sup>29</sup>

The formation of lineages, or alliances in the guise of a traditional lineage in the Confucian sense, provides evidence of a process of social development among the rural population. The traits of adaptability and flexibility in the process of forming fictitious groups had been internalized to become part and parcel of rural culture. These cultural traits provided the rural emigrants with an invaluable social experience when they had to adapt to the new environment of an outside world that was even more complex and competitive than their own in the native village. Under these circumstances, they would simply apply the social practice used in the native village of forming social organizations to the challenges of survival in strange countries.

### ***Agricultural Innovations and Commercialization***

As the rural economy was faced with the tremendous challenge of a growing population, adjustments were duly made in traditional agriculture to increase land productivity. New innovations included using improved seeds, changing cropping patterns and planting new crops, as well as applying advanced traditional farming techniques such as investing in farm implements, water control and fertilizer. These methods all contributed to raising farm output and yields per unit of land.<sup>30</sup> The problem was that the labor-intensive techniques required the input of even greater manpower, and in its turn this stimulated greater population growth that consequently lowered per-capita income. To raise the standard of livelihood, the rural population took up handicraft production, converted to commercial agriculture or became peasant peddlers<sup>31</sup> to supplement farm income. Such developments in the peasant economy became more visible after the Ming period (1368–1644). Driven by the commercialized economy, the peasants increasingly moved away from subsistence farming and involved themselves in some form of market activity.

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29. *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, p. 717. These surnames all have a meaning of encompassing.

30. Dwight H. Perkins, *Agricultural Development*, Chs. III and IV; also Chao Kang, *Man and Land in Chinese History: An Economic Analysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 228.

31. J.C. van Leur uses this conceptual term “peddlers”, when he mentions the two groups of traders in the markets, namely “the peddlers” and “the merchant gentlemen”. See, for example, J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, pp. 197–204.

### ***Formation of Rural-Urban Systems***

The process of commercialization at work in rural areas since the sixteenth century had paved the way for a lively economy in the economically central places and their hinterlands. In his enlightening regional-systems model, G. William Skinner classifies the central places in an eight-level hierarchy, beginning with the low-level market places, “which met the week-to-week marketing needs of peasant households”, moving to upper-level towns and cities of different sizes and importance.<sup>32</sup> The peasants learned about the outside world from the market places serving the village settlements. Here they built up their social contacts and accumulated information capital. Local and regional networks provided the information and economic linkages between the village and the local township and further with their nearest large city or seaport.

### ***Production and Maritime Trade***

The commercialization of agriculture and the handicraft industry had the effect of connecting the village, town and port city in an economic chain. It also functioned as a dynamic force that propelled the development of the port city. Together the village, town and port city formed a regional economic entity that linked production and market. Thanks to the development of the commodity economy from the sixteenth century and the expanding coastal shipping from the late seventeenth century, agricultural and handicraft products were streaming in bulk to other provinces. The increasingly bustling international trade in Canton and the outward-bound junks sailing to the Nanyang from southern Fujian and eastern Guangdong took the products to foreign markets.

Since late Ming times, the Canton and the Chaozhou subregions and southern Fujian had already been developing large-scale sugar production.<sup>33</sup> Taiwan followed suit to become another important sugar-producing region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As early as the sixteenth century, sugar from Guangdong and Fujian was known to have attracted the great interest of the Portuguese. In the seventeenth century, English merchants reaped great profit by exporting sugar

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32. G. William Skinner, “Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems”, in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), pp. 285–7. For more information, refer to G. William Skinner, “Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 24, 1 (Nov. 1964): 3–34; 24, 2 (Feb. 1965): 195–228; and 24, 3 (May 1965): 363–99.

33. In his travel accounts, Ibn Battuta mentions that “there is abundant sugar-cane [in the land of China], equal, nay superior, in quality to that of Egypt”. See *Ibn Battuta Travels in Asia and Africa*, p. 282.

from South China to Europe. Besides exporting sugar to India, Dutch and other European merchants also shipped it from Canton to their own countries.<sup>34</sup> During the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1271–1368) dynasties, ceramics from Fujian had been exported in large quantities stimulating the spread of the industry all over the province. The Dutch in Batavia also showed great interest in importing various kinds of dishes in large quantities in the 1620s.<sup>35</sup> Fujian was also known for its tea production that reached its peak during the Qing period (1644–1911). Keeping pace, the silk industry in Guangdong had greatly expanded. Fujian exported its silk products to Southeast Asia as early as the Song period. In the early seventeenth century, as J.C. van Leur indicates,

[t]he amount of raw silk brought to Bantam per year was three or four hundred picul.... [Large] quantities of it were also carried to Malacca and Manila, from whence it was shipped to the Middle East and Europe by the Portuguese and Spanish.... A few thousand pieces of silk, damask, and satin cloth were shipped by the Dutch.<sup>36</sup>

As the demand for Chinese raw silk rose rapidly in foreign trade from the eighteenth century, the silk industry in the Pearl River Delta region expanded; many of its products were shipped to Europe.<sup>37</sup>

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34. Sucheta Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society in China: Peasants, Technology, and the World Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998), pp. 60, 71, 106–7; J.C. van Leur also mentions exports of sugar and rock candy to Bantam in the early seventeenth century, albeit in small quantities. See *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p. 126.
35. Ibn Battuta inaccurately attributes the production areas of porcelain in China only to Zaytun and Sin-kalan (?) in southern Fujian. However, he does provide a piece of useful information, namely that porcelain was exported to India and Yemen. See p. 289. For the Dutch import, see J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p. 126.
36. J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p. 126.
37. *Fujian jingji fazhan jian shi* 福建经济发展简史 [A concise history of the development of the Fujian economy], ed. Xiamen daxue lishi yanjiu suo [yu] Zhongguo shehui jingji yanjiu suo 厦门大学历史研究所、中国社会经济研究所 [Institute of Historical Studies of Amoy University and Institute of Social and Economic Research of China] (Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1989), p. 304; Zhou Hongwei 周宏伟, *Qingdai liang guang nongye dili* 清代两广农业地理 [The Agricultural Geography in the Two-Guang during Qing Times] (Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), pp. 206–7; and Alvin Y. So, *The South China Silk District* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 79–82. Chen Zhiping 陈支平, *Jin 500 nian lai Fujian de jiazou shehui yu wenhua* 近 500 年来福建的家族社会与文化 [Lineage and culture of Fujian in the last five hundred years]

By the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, the development of regional systems had reached adulthood. Through the by now extensive merchant networks, the producers in Fujian and Guangdong were connected with domestic and foreign markets. It was a time in which the China coast and the Nanyang were engaged in one of the most intensive and prosperous maritime trades in the world.

From the village to central places, port cities and thence venturing out to sea, peasant peddlers, merchants and emigrants had risen to the challenge. Hailing from the countryside, they had now undergone a transformation process of engagement in extra-village activities. They were no longer peasants living in quiet rural backwaters, isolated from and ignorant of the outside world. Their agricultural and handicraft products were transported via the regional and overseas networks. The movement of their commodities was accompanied by regular human mobility, geographical or upward.

The discussion will now turn to the core areas of the study, namely the port cities, coastal trade and inter-port trade with the Nanyang.

## **Building a Multiport Junk-Trade Enterprise on the China Coast**

### ***Ports and Trading Networks***

A port city is an intersection in an extensive and complex network system. It is like the nodes of networks that grow, extend themselves, blossom and eventually bear fruit in a similar manner to tree branches. Adam McKeown describes the connotation and functions of networks in the following words:

Networks are the transnational institutions, organizations, and personal connections that make migration into a viable economic strategy and stable system for the circulation of goods, people, information, and profit.<sup>38</sup>

Hence, a port city is also a center for the convergence and circulation of information. Merchants are the driving force behind its development. They congregate in the port not only to seize new trading opportunities, but

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(Shanghai: Sanlian chubanshe, 1991), also discusses the rapid development of commodity economy in China since mid-Ming times. See pp. 23, 25, 30.

38. Adam McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diaspora, 1842–1949", *Journal of Asian Studies* 58, 2 (May 1999): 317.

also to construct functional networks connecting the sea and the interior, other port cities and the different regions. Networks complement and overlap one another. They perform a role of information superhighway radiating from the nodes of networks.

Although the Min-Yue people were renowned for being superb seafarers who looked to the sea as if it was their “rice-fields”, they also ventured overland into the interior. A good example is the overland trade routes used by the Hong merchants for their tea purchases. Nevertheless, seaborne activities remained their greatest achievement in maximizing their coastal geographical advantage. For a long time, in their eyes the ocean was like a network of highways for their seaborne activities and expansion.

### ***Expanding Coastal Shipping in the Eighteenth Century***

After peace was restored following the pacification of Taiwan in 1683, the maritime ban of the early Qing was rescinded the following year. The imperial Court chose to convince itself that, despite its distrust of the seafarers, people’s livelihood should be its uppermost concern and the authorities should refrain from setting up barriers to their fortune-seeking activities. The upshot was that the once suppressed coastal shipping was revitalized and its bounds swiftly extended by the Min-Yue people. By the early eighteenth century, the merchant junks trading southward to the surrounding area of Canton and northward along the coast to Ningbo, Zhapu, Shanghai, Jiaozhou, Tianjin, and Jinzhou all hailed from Fujian and Guangdong. “It was an annual event”, as T’ien Ju-k’ang puts it.<sup>39</sup>

After the lifting of the maritime ban, South Fujian fitted out trading junks to sail not only to other coastal ports but also to venture to the Nanyang. By 1685, there were already numerous vessels leaving from southern Fujian in search of overseas trade.<sup>40</sup> At this time, vessels of different tonnage, departing from several seaports in Fujian, engaged in the foreign trade.<sup>41</sup> In order to ease management and control, in 1727 Governor-General Gao Qizhuo memorialized the Court and his petition resulted in a decree that made Amoy the only designated port (*zheng kou*)

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39. T’ien Ju-kang, “Zailun shiqi zhi shijiu shiji zhongye zhongguo fanchuan de fazhan”, p. 5.

40. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*, p. 56.

41. Liao Dake 廖大珂, *Fujian haiwai jiaotong shi* 福建海外交通史 [A history of Fujian overseas communications] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2002), p. 327.

for the Nanyang trade in Fujian.<sup>42</sup> This also led to a distinction between two types of vessels in Fujian, namely: the ocean junks (*yang chuan*) and the merchant junks (*shang chuan*). The former had a larger tonnage and were permitted to trade to the Nanyang, whereas the latter were restricted to the coastal trade. The two branches of trade were placed under the supervision and management of ocean firms (*yang hang*) and merchant firms (*shang hang*) respectively.

Playing a role that did not differ from that of Yuegang (Haicheng) in the past, Amoy became the gateway for the Quan-Zhang people venturing out into the maritime world. Many of those arriving in Amoy were sojourners, but more and more settled there and became Amoy men. As the port city had established itself as a node in the trading networks, it functioned as the operational base for maritime merchants and a transshipment center for domestic products from all over the country as well as for foreign imports.

The coastal trade centering in Amoy benefited enormously from the economic growth of Taiwan. Migrants from the Quan-Zhang subregion of South Fujian had pioneered the agricultural and trading developments in the island. Prior to the founding of the Zheng regime in 1662, the Dutch had been there and had developed rice and sugar planting. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, people from eastern Guangdong also joined the earlier migrants in agricultural production. Besides rice and sugar, the two major exports from Taiwan, other daily necessities and a great variety of native produce were transported to the island from the mainland.

Plying between Amoy and Luermen in Taiwan were the merchant junks known as the “straits-crossing ships” (*hengyang chuan*). Of these, the sugar ships (*tang chuan*) had greater carrying capacity. They made long-distance voyages from Taiwan to Tianjin with only sugar on board.<sup>43</sup> The 1720 edition of the *Taiwan District Gazetteer* noted thousands of merchant junks making annual voyages between Taiwan and Amoy,<sup>44</sup> evidence of a coastal shipping network extending outward from its center in Amoy. The type of vessel sailing southward was known as a

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42. Zhou Kai 周凯, *Xiamen zhi* 厦门志 [Gazetteer of Amoy] (Preface, 1832), in *Taiwan wenxian congkan* 台湾文献丛刊 [A Collection of Literature on Taiwan] (Taipei: Bank of Taiwan Research Unit, 1961), Vol. 95, *juan* 5, p. 179.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

44. Ng Chin-keong, “The South Fukienese Junk Trade at Amoy from the 17th to Early 19th Centuries”, in *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, ed. E.B. Vermeer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), p. 305, citing *Taiwan xian zhi* 臺灣縣志 [The Gazetteer of Taiwan District] (1720 ed.), in *Taiwan wenxian congkan* (1961), Vol. 103, p. 67.

south-bound junk (*nan cao*). They shipped goods to Zhangzhou, Nan'ao and places in Guangdong. The north-bound junks (*bei cao*) headed to Wenzhou, Ningbo, Shanghai, Jiaozhou, Tianjin, Jinzhou and other ports in the north. Akira Matsuura cites a contemporary author, Lan Dingyuan, who observed that the Fujianese saw “the Jiang-Zhe provinces, Denglai, Guandong [Manchuria] and Tianjin as their courtyards”. He goes on,

... sailing from Amoy on the favorable trade wind [southeast monsoon] took only slightly more than ten days to arrive in Tianjin. Farther north they went to Guandong [Manchuria], or southward from Tianjin to Jiaozhou, Shanghai, Zhapu and Ningbo. All these seaports were destinations of the trading junks from Fujian and Guangdong.<sup>45</sup>

The figures given for the years 1731 and 1732 indicate that there were respectively 53 and 45 merchant junks arriving in Tianjin in each year. These vessels were all manned by Quan-Zhang seafarers.<sup>46</sup> The *Amoy Gazetteer* also records that the ocean-going junks and the coastal merchant junks anchored in Amoy in the year 1796 numbered more than a thousand.<sup>47</sup> The wealth of Amoy at this juncture had earned it a reputation as the “Silver City” (*yincheng*).<sup>48</sup>

Another port was soon to contest Amoy's leading position in shipping. It was Changlim in the Chaozhou region. It rose to become the largest thriving seaport in eastern Guangdong in the early decades of the seventeenth century and its maritime trade scaled the heights from the early eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries.<sup>49</sup> As the contemporary Qing scholar, Lan Dingyuan, remarks, the Chaozhou people sailed to the north taking advantage of the south wind at the juncture of the spring and summer seasons. They visited Fujian, Ningbo, Shanghai, Denglai and the ports between Tianjin and Guandong. The whole journey took only 15 days. During the autumn and winter, they followed the seasonal wind [northeast monsoon] sailing from their home port to Jieshe, Dapeng, Xiangshan, Yashan, Gaozhou, Lezhou, Qiongzhou and other ports on the

45. Akira Matsuura, *Qingdai fanchuan dongya hangyun*, pp. 188–9.

46. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*, pp. 144–5; see also Zhou Kai, *Xiamen zhi*, juan 5, p. 166.

47. Zhou Kai, *Xiamen zhi*, juan 5, p. 180.

48. Zhou Kai, *Xiamen zhi*, juan 15, pp. 639–40.

49. Song Zuanyou 宋钻友, *Guangdong ren zai Shanghai (1843–1949)* 广东人在上海 (1843–1949) [The Guangdong People in Shanghai, 1843–1949] (Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2007), p. 47.

Guangdong coast and in Hainan Island. They could visit all these places in three days' sail.<sup>50</sup>

Aside from Amoy and Changlim, Canton was another major port in coastal shipping. During the Tang era (618–907), Canton was the largest port in China. In Ming times, it was designated the port of entry for the tribute envoys arriving from the Nanhai (known as Nanyang during the Qing, namely: Southeast Asia). It was reported in the 1580s that, "There are always more ships and barks [barques], th[a]n are in the whole countr[y] of Spain."<sup>51</sup>

In 1686, the Office of the Superintendent of Maritime Customs (known to westerners as the Hoppo) was first established in Canton. Shortly afterward, the management and supervision of maritime trade was divided into three government-designated organizations, namely the Waiyang Hang (authorized firms taking charge of the commerce of western nations, better known to the Europeans as Hong merchants), the Bengang Hang (authorized firms taking charge of Canton junks) and the Fu Chao Hang (authorized firms taking charge of Fujian and Chaozhou junks). Merchants were assigned the duties of managing and supervising the three branches of maritime trade respectively. The first group was almost wholly composed of Fujian merchants, who had arrived in Canton in response to the trading opportunities and soon established themselves in maritime businesses there. Merchants of Fujian origin continued to be the leading men of the Waiyang Hang until its failure in 1827–29. The second group was composed of Canton merchants, but very probably of Fujian or Chaozhou origins. The third group represented the wealthy Fujian and Chaozhou merchants who were actively engaged in trade with the Indian [Indonesian/Malay] Archipelago.

Overall, the rapid development of native maritime trade in Canton can be attributed to the Fujian merchants. As Harry Parkes has commented, "It is to their industry and enterprise, more than to that of the native townsmen, that the ulterior prosperity of the port is chiefly due." Therefore it should come as no surprise that the Fujianese conducted the long-distance junk trade and were the sole suppliers of the produce of the Archipelago along the whole extent of the China coast.<sup>52</sup>

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50. Akira Matsuura, *Shindai hansen engan kōunshi no kenkyū*, p. 586. In his work, Akira Matsuura also provides a detailed account of the shipping activities operated by the Chaozhou merchants. See Section 5, Ch. 1.

51. Quoted in J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, p.161.

52. The information and the quote are cited from Harry Parkes in FO 228/136, no. 15, John Bowring to The Earl of Malmesbury, 2.11.1852, Encl. 10, pp. 52b–55b.



In 1757 (22nd year of the Qianlong Emperor, r. 1736–95), the Qing Court designated Canton the only port of call for the vessels of British East India Company as well as all other European ships. All transactions with Europeans were required to go through the Thirteen Hong (Shisan Hang, the 13 authorized dealers) in Canton. Therefore, whereas Amoy was the designated port for the overseas junk trade, the Hong merchants in Canton were assigned the task of dealing with the visiting European traders. In fact, Chinese shipping and trade had progressed at such a fast pace, their actual operations did not comply with the prescribed policy guidelines. Canton was constantly involved in both the coastal and overseas junk trades that were not officially within its purview.

The main concern of the Governor-General and Hoppo in Canton was to ensure the smooth operation of the trade system. As Paul A. Van Dyke observes, they were assigning responsibilities for the control of foreigners who traded to Canton downward to the actual operators, including the Hong merchants, linguists, compradors and pilots. The so-called Canton System, to cite Paul A. Van Dyke, “was like a huge machine, with thousands of little parts that worked independently of, but in concert with, each other to move trade forward”.<sup>53</sup> Unquestionably, in the operation of the trading system, the Hong merchants were the most indispensable contributors. They played the main role of mediating between the authorities and foreign merchants.

### ***Sustaining the Network Power, 1800–43***

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the native shipping enterprise had become diversified with more junks being fitted out in other coastal ports.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, Amoy remained an active maritime player in the early decades of the nineteenth century. As Zhou Kai records in the *Amoy Gazetteer*, by the early nineteenth century, junks departing from Amoy continued to sail southward to Qiongzhou in Hainan Island, or northward to Tianjin, Jinzhou and other places.<sup>55</sup> Recording what he saw during his visit to Amoy in the early 1830s, the words of the German missionary Charles Gutzlaff (1803–51) were full of praise for the vitality and

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53. Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, p. 165.

54. Concerning the declining position of Amoy as a shipping center, see Chen Kuo-tung 陳國棟, “Qingdai zhongye xiamen de haishang maoyi” 清代中葉廈門的海上貿易 (1727–1833) [The Maritime Trade of Amoy in the Mid-Qing Era, 1727–1833], in Chen Kuo-tung, *Dongya haiyu yi qian nian* 東亞海域一千年 [A thousand years of the East Asian maritime world] (Taipei: Yuanliu chubanshe, 2005), pp. 467–505.

55. Zhou Kai, *Xiamen zhi*, Vol. 95, *juan* 4, pp. 140, 150.

prosperity of the port city. He describes Amoy and its inhabitants in the following words:

Its excellent harbour has made it ... one of the greatest emporiums of the empire, and one of the most important markets of Asia.... Endowed with an enterprising spirit and unwearied in the pursuits of gain ..., they ... visited and settled in the Indian Archipelago, Cochin-China, and Siam.... The natives of this district seem to be born traders and sailors....<sup>56</sup>

Another great emporium along the China coast was Canton, where all sorts of products were available. Although the native Cantonese were not active in the seafaring activities, their local industries allowed them to conduct very extensive trade in the inland provinces. As Harry Parkes comments, “the people of Canton are fully alive to the advantages of commerce, but ... prefer to invest their speculations in inland, rather than in maritime channels. They are to be met with at Soochow [Suzhou], at Peking [Beijing], or at the chief entrepots of the centre and west.”<sup>57</sup> The city sent large quantities of inexpensive local manufactured goods and foreign imports to these places. The most constant import from India was low-cost cotton that offered low-rate raw materials to thousands of local handicraft manufacturers. Their products were sold all over the country. The local lapidary industry that cut all sorts of precious stones, including cornelian, agate, topaz, and worked in pearls, making beads and other trinkets especially bracelets, enjoyed the highest reputation in the country. Its annual sales amounted to several million dollars. Moreover, Canton glass also found its way throughout the country and this branch of industry engaged thousands of producers. The Canton manufacturers even exported their elegant furniture to other countries.<sup>58</sup> Just as extensive was the silk industry that, as Edmund Roberts reported, had a workforce of 17,000.<sup>59</sup>

Besides the goods they exported to the interior, they also brought in all sorts of commodities. Large quantities of rice from Guangxi were transported via the tributaries of the Pearl River. Cassia was another item fetched from there. The imports from Yunnan included such metals as copper, lead, zinc, and tin, as well as precious stones and betel-nut.

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56. Charles Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832, 1833* (orig., 1834; reprint, Taipei: Cheng Wen chubanshe, 1968), pp. 173–4, 192–3.

57. Harry Parkes in FO 228/136, no. 151, John Bowring to The Earl of Malmesbury, 2.11.1852, Encl. 10, pp. 54b–55a.

58. Anon., “A Dissertation”, pp. 30–1.

59. Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the Eastern Courts*, pp. 119–21.

Commodities from Guizhou were composed of metals, medical herbs, tobacco and musk. From Sichuan came gold, brass, iron, tin, musk and drugs. A large volume of trade was carried on with Fujian by both land and sea. Besides black teas that traveled overland to Canton, commodities such as earthenware, lacquerware, umbrellas, tobacco, indigo, paper and grass cloth arriving by sea were all brought in on the Fujian junks that also transported sugar and camphor from Taiwan. Zhejiang, including Ningbo and Hangzhou, sent the best of silks, embroidery, ham and the very costly Longjing tea. There was an influential group of Ningbo merchants who resided in Canton. Items including cotton, silks and nankeens were among the imports from Jiangsu. The principal articles from Jiangsu and Anhui were green teas and silks. The trade with Anhui focused on green teas that had an annual value of several million dollars. There was a considerable number of Anhui merchants present in Canton. The finest porcelain came from Jiangxi. Hunan, Hubei and Honan sent in their musk, rhubarb and other medicinal drugs. Brought in down the coast from Shandong to Canton were fruits, vegetables, drugs, wines and hides. Merchants and bankers from Shanxi returned to Canton with their capital and they also brought with them musk, rhubarb, medical herbs and fans. Likewise, several merchants and rich bankers from Shanxi showed up in Canton and conducted a similar trade there. Gansu sent gold, quicksilver, musk and tobacco.<sup>60</sup> As Edmund Roberts sums up, "Here the productions of every part of China are found, and a very brisk and lucrative commerce is carried on by merchants and factors from all the provinces."<sup>61</sup>

Despite their active role in inter-provincial trade, it is amazing to find such a lack of interest in seafaring trading activities among the native Cantonese. In fact, they and their coastal neighbors did not have any qualms about sailing activities, as can be seen from their notorious role in coastal piracy in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, the presence of entrepreneurial merchants from outside Canton was enough to uphold the position of Canton as a major port city.

Large numbers of trading junks, mostly from Amoy and Chaozhou, anchored in the harbor. These expatriates also maintained large commercial establishments in Canton. The Fujianese settlers numbered some four thousand. They controlled the largest amount of the floating capital in the city and successfully established a complex network of businesses there. In their capacity as brokers and agents, they undertook

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60. Anon., "A Dissertation", pp. 32–4; and Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the Eastern Courts*, pp. 119–21.

61. Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the Eastern Courts*, p. 118.

extensive trade into the interior. A European resident in Canton was amazed by the considerable amount of foreign cotton re-exported in their vessels.<sup>62</sup>

From the information he gathered in 1831, John Phipps calculated that a total of 846 junks put in at Macao and Jiangmen in the neighborhood of Canton. Among them, 80 had arrived from Amoy and 150 from Zhangzhou, both in southern Fujian. The vessels from Huizhou and Chaozhou in Guangdong numbered 300. Another 300 junks were plying between Jiangmen and the ports in Fujian. A total of 16 junks sailed to Tianjin and the Liaodong (Guandong / Manchuria) coast from Canton. The carrying capacity of junks undertaking short-distance voyages was below 200 tons. The 16 junks in the long-distance trade to the northern ports were large junks owned by Fujianese. They left Canton when the semi-annual southeast monsoon began to blow and returned at the end of the year. The commodities exported to the north were medicines, dried fruits, sugar, piece-goods, glassware and embroidery. Returning junks brought pears, apples, peaches, dates, raisins, figs, vegetables, peas, wines, cured mutton and venison. The smaller junks brought back silk, alum, white lead, betel-nut, ceramics, oil and numerous miscellaneous articles. The exports from Macao were composed of tin and pepper, plus other Portuguese imports.<sup>63</sup>

The Min-Yue merchants also frequented another coastal port, Shanghai, that was on its way to becoming a major shipping center in the late eighteenth century. The majority of the maritime merchants in Shanghai originated from Fujian, Canton and Chaozhou which is a good indication of the eagerness and responsiveness of these people to chase new opportunities.<sup>64</sup> By the 1830s, Shanghai had established itself as a prominent meeting place for merchant junks plying between the north and south. One could see hundreds of ships anchoring at its harbor. Every day there were some 30 to 40 Fujian junks arriving from Taiwan, Guangdong, the Indian Archipelago, Cochinchina, Siam and other places.<sup>65</sup> Rhoads Murphey refers to a contemporary source about the Shanghai shipping as follows:

H.H. Lindsay made one of the few foreign efforts to guess at the volume of Chinese trade on the eve of the treaty port system. His report enumerates 400 junks, averaging between 100 and 400 tons, entering the port of Shanghai weekly during July of 1832.

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62. Anon., "A Dissertation", p. 32.

63. John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, pp. 201–2.

64. Ng Chin-keong, "The South Fukienese Junk Trade at Amoy", p. 312.

65. John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, p. li.

If this was broadly typically of the year as a whole, Shanghai was already one of the leading ports of the world, with a volume of shipping equal to or greater than London's.<sup>66</sup>

Farther north lay the port of Tianjin. It became a commercial node for the Min-Yue merchants no later than the early eighteenth century. In 1797, as a record shows, "a large portion of the levies received by the Tianjin customs derives from the Min-Yue merchants, who arrive here to trade. The two provinces dispatch several score or even around one hundred junks each to trade to Tianjin."<sup>67</sup> The Chaozhou group formed the majority of the Guangdong merchants.<sup>68</sup> The third and fourth months (April to June) of the year saw the arrival of the Min-Yue merchants in Tianjin on board their junks loaded with sugar, ceramics, preserved fruits and other items from the south, as well as spices and drugs, pepper, shark's fins and other produce from foreign countries. They made the return voyage after the onset of autumn, carrying on board such northern specialties as cotton and piece-goods. An increasing number of trading junks were to arrive here in the following decades. Increasing numbers of Min-Yue merchants decided to remain and settled in, founding hundreds of business firms. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were more than five thousand Guangdong merchants in Tianjin.<sup>69</sup>

## Scaling the Heights in the Nanyang Trade

### *The Nanyang Trade Prior to 1800*

While the Min-Yue people became the most active maritime group in China's coastal trade, their trading junks were also making their presence felt in the Nanyang. As early as the Qin-Han periods (221 BC–AD 220), China had established contacts with this part of the maritime world. During the Tang-Song era (618 BC–AD 1279), thousands of Muslim traders from the Middle East congregated in such Chinese port cities as Canton,

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66. Rhoads Murphey, "The Treaty Ports and China's Modernization", in *The Chinese City between Two Worlds*, ed. Mark Elvin and G. William Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 40.
67. Akira Matsuura, *Qingdai fanchuan dongya hang yun*, p. 102.
68. Liu Zhenggang 刘正刚, *Guangdong huiguan lun gao* 广东会馆论稿 [A Preliminary Study of the Guangdong Guild Halls] (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), p. 6.
69. Pang Yujie 庞玉洁, *Kaibu tongshang yu jindai Tianjin shangren* 开埠通商与近代天津商人 [Opening up for Trade and the Tianjin Merchants in Modern Times] (Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2004), p. 43.

Quanzhou, Hangzhou and Yangzhou. Chinese overseas trade prospered in the Song dynasty (AD 960–1279).<sup>70</sup> The coastal ports were the gateway through which the handicraft products from the interior were exported overseas. In return, China also received foreign goods that were imported in large quantities. A Song source of 1141 records some 333 items from the foreign countries, the bulk of them consisting generally of spices and drugs.<sup>71</sup>

During Song-Yuan times (960–1368), Chinese junks and maritime merchants appeared in the Nanhai (Nanyang). They even put in an appearance in the faraway countries west of Southeast Asia. During the renowned seven maritime expeditions (1403–33) led by Admiral Zheng He in the early Ming, Chinese officials came across Chinese settlements in several parts of the Indonesian Archipelago. When western explorers and missionaries arrived on the southeastern coast of China in the early sixteenth century, Chinese junks were already present in the Nanhai in increasing numbers. Two centuries later, the ocean junks fitted out from the Min-Yue region entered a vigorous stage of development. As a report from the 1740s shows, there were more than 110 ocean-going junks worth five to six million *taels* of silver. The cargoes kept in the Amoy and Canton warehouses were estimated to amount to several million *taels* in value.<sup>72</sup>

Apace with the development of seaborne trade, extended trading networks were built in both the eastern part of the Nanhai, consisting of the Philippines and the eastern islands of present-day Indonesia, and the region west of it, including Siam, the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago.

Ever since the founding by the Spanish of a settlement in Manila in 1571, a new era of the junk trade had commenced between Manila and Haicheng (Yuegang), from where an increasing number of junks were fitted out to trade to Manila and thence connected to places as far away as Acapulco in Mexico via the trans-Pacific shipping provided by the Spanish galleons. For purposes of control, the Ming government initially

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70. Wang Gungwu, "The Nanhai Trade: A Study of the History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea", *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 31, 2 (1958): 135.

71. Paul Wheatley, "Geographical Notes on Some Commodities Involved in Sung Maritime Trade", *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 32, 2 (1959): 31.

72. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*, p. 212, citing *Zhangzhou fu zhi* 漳州府志 [Gazetteer of Zhangzhou Prefecture], 1877 ed., 33: 64a–65a; and *Fujian tongzhi* 福建通志 [General Gazetteer of Fujian], 1871 ed., 230: 21b–26b, "Biography of Cai Xin".

restricted the number of junks going to Manila to 88 a year, but raised the figure to 110 soon after. The bustling trade between Haicheng and Manila led to a large influx of Mexican silver into Fujian that “stimulate[d] silver monetization in Southeast China”.<sup>73</sup> However, Fujian-Manila trade entered a period of stagnation caused by the restrictive exclusion policy adopted by colonial authorities in 1736. T’ien Ju-kang notes that the number of junks arriving in Manila in 1818 had been reduced to a mere ten, with a total tonnage of around 5,000 or more.<sup>74</sup> John Crawford’s figures were even lower. He said only four or five ships of 400 to 500 tons each were arriving in Manila.<sup>75</sup> At this point in time, two junks averaging 800 tons were plying between Amoy and Sulu. Another two vessels of 500 tons each, or one large ship of 1,000, visited Makassar. Sailing to Ambon was a ship of 500 tons.<sup>76</sup>

In the western sphere of the Nanhai, J.C. van Leur offers plenty of information about the Chinese trade with the Indian Archipelago. He mentions pepper as the largest export to China from the region in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By the early seventeenth century, the amount of pepper traded to China might be approximately 2,000 tons per year, or five-sixths of the total local production. Sandalwood was the next most important export. The annual amount of this wood exported was around 240 to 300 tons. Chinese junks were trading with Bantam in western Java at this time. Van Leur reckons that the number of Chinese junks arriving could be eight to ten large ships of 200 to 400 tons each. The pepper trade in Bantam was mainly in the hands of Chinese junk traders. The Chinese merchants made up a large proportion of the local rich people and owned luxury houses, warehouses and ships.<sup>77</sup> Five junks, each of 600 to 800 tons, traded with Batavia. In 1625, says Van Leur, the total tonnage of the Chinese fleet visiting Batavia was “as large as or larger than that of the whole return fleet of the Dutch Company”.<sup>78</sup>

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73. Evelyn S. Rawski, *Agricultural Change and the Peasant Economy of South China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 76.

74. T’ien Ju-kang, “Shiqi shiji zhi shijiu shiji zhongye zhongguo fanchuan”, p. 16.

75. John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. 3, p. 184.

76. *Ibid.*

77. J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society*, pp. 124–5, 130, 134. Van Leur offers enlightening insights into Chinese trading activities, as well as the general trade conditions in the Indian Archipelago in the first half of the seventeenth century.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 198; Leonard Blussé, *Badaweiyā huaren yu zhong He maoyi* 巴达维亚华人与中荷贸易 [The Chinese in Batavia and Sino-Dutch Trade], trans. Zhuang Guotu 庄国土 (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1997), pp. 120–1; Leonard Blussé and Wu Fengbin 吴凤斌, *Bacheng gongguan dang’an yanjiu: 18 shiji mo Badaweiyā tangren shehui* 吧城公馆档案研究: 18世纪末巴达维亚唐人社会

The trade peaked in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the arriving junks numbered between 10 and 20. How the Dutch authorities in Batavia felt about the impact of the trading junks is vividly reflected in their deliberations in the late seventeenth century about whether there was still a need for the Dutch East Indian Company (VOC) to dispatch its own ships to China.

As in Manila, most of the Chinese business investments in Batavia came from Amoy, but trading junks also came from other Chinese ports. In the 40 years between 1715 and 1754, for example, a total of 437 Chinese junks visited Batavia, or 88 per cent of the incoming vessels in the port. Among them, 272 ships came from Amoy, or an average of seven annually, 81 from Canton, 73 from Ningbo and 11 from Shanghai. Departing from Batavia during the same period were 244 ships heading to Amoy, 75 to Canton, 81 to Ningbo and 15 to Shanghai, a total of 418 ships, or 90 per cent of the departing vessels.<sup>79</sup>

As the Quan-Zhang people formed the majority of the Chinese residents in Batavia, the Dutch authorities granted the green-prow Amoy junks preferential tax rates, tantamount to an open invitation to trade in

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[A study of the Chinese Council of Batavia Archives: The Chinese community of Batavia at the end of the eighteenth century] (The Xiamen University Press, 2002), p. 45; Leonard Blussé, “No Boats to China. The Dutch East India Company and the Changing Pattern of the China Sea Trade, 1635–1690”, *Modern Asian Studies* 30, 1 (1996): 51–76; Chang Pin-tsun 張彬村, “Shiqi shiji mo Helan dong yindo gongshi weisheme buzai pai chuan dao Zhongguo lai?” 十七世紀末荷蘭東印度公司為什麼不再派船到中國來? [Why did the Dutch East India Company stop sending ships to China], in *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan shi lunwen ji* 中國海洋發展史論文集 [Essays in Chinese Maritime History], Vol. 9, ed. Shih-Feng Liu 劉序楓 (Taipei: The Research Center for the Studies on Maritime History, Academia Sinica, 2005), pp. 169–90; Chang Pin-tsun, “Helan dong yindo gongshi shidai huaren de shangye shili fazhan” 荷蘭東印度公司時代華人的商業勢力發展 [The development of Chinese businesses during the era of the Dutch East India Company], in *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan shi lunwen ji*, Vol. 10 (2008), ed. Shi-yeoung Tang 湯熙勇, pp. 329–60; and Chin Kong James 錢江, “Merchants and Other Sojourners: The Hokkiens Overseas, 1570–1760”, PhD thesis, University of Hong Kong, 1998, pp. 254–6.

79. George Bryan Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630–1754* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 140–1; also cited in Akira Matsuura 松浦章, “Shindai Hukken no kaisengyō nitsuite” 清代福建の海船業について [The Shipping Business of Fujian Province in the Qing Dynasty], *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 東洋史研究 [The Journal of Oriental Researches] 47, 3 (1988): 482; and Akira Matsuura, *Qingdai fanchuan dongya hang yun*, p. 196.



Batavia.<sup>80</sup> The Amoy junks of 1,000 to 1,200 tons each were larger than the other Chinese junks. In comparison, the vessels from Changlim in Chaozhou were of 500 tons each. Each of the junks arriving in Batavia from the Chinese ports also carried 400 to 500 migrants. Most of them became laborers in the locality. Some moved on to other places around the Indian Archipelago, while others might set up small businesses and often functioned as middlemen in the lower-end of the procuring and distributing networks stretching into the interior or other remote regions.

The good times were not to last. The Dutch authorities began to resort to stringent monopolistic laws in the hope of barring the Chinese junks from trading in the outer islands of the Indian Archipelago. Although the Company was able to reduce the number of incoming junks to Batavia, it soon realized that the sustainability and the resilience of the Chinese trading networks were hard nuts to crack totally.<sup>81</sup>

Turning to the Malay Peninsula, a 1730 Chinese record notes the presence of Chinese seafarers in several regional ports including Chaiya (Xiezai), Ligor (Liukun), Songkla (Songka) and Pattani (Danian), all under Siamese jurisdiction; Kelantan (Jilandan), Trengganu (Dingjianu) and Pahang (Pengheng) on the east coast, Johor (Roufo) in the south and Malacca (Melaka/Maliujia) on the west coast.<sup>82</sup>

Also frequented by the Chinese trading junks was Annam (Vietnam), which had a population of approximately 23 million.<sup>83</sup> Since the seventeenth century, the Vietnamese ports had become popular among the Chinese shippers in the entrepôt trade.<sup>84</sup>

Ever since the mid-seventeenth century, Siam's position had been rising steadily, making it one of the major destinations of the trading junks from China. Although a maritime ban was imposed by the Qing Court in 1656, the smuggling junks of the Min-Yue seafarers, with the South Fujianese in the majority, continued to make their voyages to Ayudhya, Bangkok

80. Blussé and Wu, *Bacheng gongguan dang'an yanjiu*, pp. 46, 53.

81. Leonard Blussé, "Chinese Trade to Batavia", *Archipel* 18 (1979): 210–1.

82. Chen Lunjong 陳倫炯, *Haiguo wenjian lu* 海國聞見錄 [Record of matters seen and heard in the maritime countries] (Preface, 1730; edition, 1793), first section, 25b–26a; see also Jennifer W. Cushman and A.C. Milner, "Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Chinese Accounts of the Malay Peninsula", *Journal of Malaysian Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 52, 1 (1979): 9–12.

83. John Crawford, *Journal of the Embassy*, p. 526.

84. Chin Kong James 錢江, "Shiqi zhi shijiu shiji chu Yuenan yanhai de zhongguo fanchuan maoyi" 十七至十九世紀初越南沿海的中國帆船貿易 [The Chinese junk trade along the Vietnam coast in the 17th to 19th centuries], in *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan shih lunwen ji*, Vol. 9, ed. Shih-Feng Liu, pp. 169–90.

and the southern ports by the Gulf of Siam, such as Songkla, Ligor and Pattani.<sup>85</sup> The trade with China centering on Bangkok represented the most important branch of Siam's foreign trade. It expanded rapidly after the Siamese expulsion of the Burmese forces of occupation in 1769.<sup>86</sup>

Among the Chinese home ports trading to the Nanyang, Amoy is the one which immediately strikes the eye. Wherever they went, the South Fujianese merchants, embarking from their home port in Amoy, retained their predominant position in the Nanyang trade for a lengthy period of time.<sup>87</sup> Highlighting its leading role in the maritime trade in the early eighteenth century, the contemporary Qing scholar Lan Dingyuan says that the Fujianese looked on Ryukyu (Liuqiu), Luzon, Sulu, Batavia, Siam and Annam "as if they were ... offspring playing around their knees".<sup>88</sup> Some scattered information tells of about 21 junks departing from Amoy on voyages to the Nanyang at this time. In 1733, another Qing document gives the figures of 28 to 30 ocean junks leaving to trade abroad with a cargo worth 60 to 70 thousand foreign silver dollars each, or at times with much more than 100 thousand foreign silver dollars on each ship. Homeward bound, they brought back goods worth two to three million foreign silver dollars.<sup>89</sup> The number of returning junks soon increased to more than 50. In 1752 there were 65 junks sailing back from abroad. The figures two years later were even more impressive, with 70 leaving and 68 returning.<sup>90</sup> A year later, 74 junks returned to Amoy from the Nanyang.<sup>91</sup> Since smuggling activities were always present, these figures reflect only the recorded trade shown in the official documents.

In the 1730s, the cargo carried by each ocean junk trading to the Nanyang was often worth a hundred thousand *taels* and a profit of 100 to 200 per cent could be expected. In 1786, as a contemporary author recalled, Amoy was crowded with ocean junks. Another source recorded that in 1796 more than one thousand ocean junks and merchant junks originated from Amoy.<sup>92</sup>

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85. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 47.

86. John Crawford, *Journal of the Embassy*, pp. 408–9. Refer to Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, for a detailed account of the Siamese-Chinese trade.

87. Chen Kuo-tung, "Qingdai zhongye xiamen de haishang maoyi", pp. 481, 504. For the late seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, refer to Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*.

88. Cited in Akira Matsuura, *Qingdai fanchuan dongya hang yun*, p. 188.

89. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 7.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 30–1.

91. Zhou Kai, *Xiamen zhi*, *juan* 5, p. 180.

92. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*, pp. 56, 60–1.

Canton was an equally important embarkation point. In the 1760s, there were around 37 junks of various types that weighed anchor in Canton. Not all of the vessels belonged to Canton merchants.<sup>93</sup> The junks also consigned cargo space to foreigners. For example, on top of their own cargoes, the junks plying between Canton and Batavia accepted Dutch consignments of goods aboard Canton junks. The Hong owned their own fleets and employed agents in the Nanyang as purchasers of the goods for import, including local produce and tin. They also appointed agents to penetrate China's interior to procure such goods as tea, porcelain and silk for export. These agents took charge concurrently of selling the imported goods in the interior.<sup>94</sup>

The foreign trade in Canton was often financed by several parties. Paul A. Van Dyke furnishes his readers with some rare and most valuable information about how the Canton junks were managed and financed in the 1760s. He says:

At least 9 trading houses (factories) and 13 Chinese merchants in Canton sponsored the 37 junks [as shown] in the Swedish records. Additionally, seven Chinese individuals have been clearly identified as the managers of 31 of the 37 junks. Thus, together with the merchants above, there were no less than 20 Chinese from Macao and Canton who managed, financed and serviced the junk trade to Southeast Asia. These Chinese junk traders were often connected in some fashion to the *hong* merchants themselves, who were licensed by the customs superintendent ... to trade with the foreigners.... At least 24 of the 37 junks ... were financed by foreigners....<sup>95</sup>

There was one significant change in the Chinese junk shipping in the Nanyang from the latter part of the eighteenth century. Despite the long-standing predominance of Amoy, the Chaozhou seafarers from Changlim were catching up fast. On top of their active participation in coastal trade, the Chaozhou maritime traders also sailed to foreign countries including Champa, Siam, Batavia, Luzon, Ryukyu, Japan and other places.<sup>96</sup>

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93. Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, p. 145.

94. *Ibid.*, pp. 145–60 and Chart 12.

95. Paul A. Van Dyke, "A Reassessment of the China Trade: The Canton Junk Trade as Revealed in Dutch and Swedish Records of the 1750s to the 1770s", in *Maritime China in Transition 1750–1850*, ed. Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-keong (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), pp. 152–3, 158; also Paul A. Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade*, Ch. 8.

96. Akira Matsuura, *Shindai hansen engan kōunshi no kenkyū*, p. 586.

Alongside the outgoing trade, an increasing number of the Chaozhou people had decided to stay on in Siam. The Jiaqing edition of the *Daqing yitong zhi* (The unitary gazetteer of the Great Qing) in the early nineteenth century describes the trend as follows:

To supplement the grain supply, the Chenghai [Chaozhou] merchants were licensed by the local authorities to ship rice back from Siam. This measure has been implemented for more than 40 years. However, it is said that only 50 to 60 per cent of those going to Siam have returned with their rice junks.<sup>97</sup>

This is an indication of a trend of more maritime merchants moving their bases of operation overseas.

### ***The Nanyang Trade, 1800 to 1843***

By around 1820, there were still seven junks heading to Java from Amoy and Changlim. From Amoy there were three junks of 1,000 to 1,200 tons each and another four from Changlim of about 500 tons. Their total tonnage was 5,300 tons. Six of these junks sailed to Batavia and one to Semarang. The Chinese junks also visited other ports of the Archipelago that were under Dutch control. Two from Amoy of 800 tons and one from Changlim of 500 tons traded to Lingen in eastern Sumatra. Three junks of 500 tons sailed to Borneo Proper (Brunei, at that time including Sarawak), two Changlim junks of 500 tons to Sambas, three junks of the same size to Pontianak, two junks of 500 tons to Mempawah, and one of about 600 tons to Banjarmasin, amounting in all to about 5,600 tons.<sup>98</sup>

Another Chinese text printed in 1820 mentions a large Chinese population in Kelantan and a few hundred more arriving every year. Some ten thousand Chinese resided in Penang. The majority of the Fujianese in Kelantan were engaged in pepper planting or trade, while those from Guangdong took up mining activities. The text also mentions the presence of Chinese in Malacca, Selangor and Kedah. In Kedah, the Min-Yue people came to trade.<sup>99</sup> John Crawford notes that one Amoy junk of 800 tons and another Amoy junk of the same tonnage visited Trengganu and Kelantan respectively. Prior to 1820, a junk of 1,000 tons was trading

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97. Cited in Song Zuanyou, *Guangdong ren zai Shanghai*, p. 48.

98. John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. 3, pp. 182–4.

99. Cushman and Milner, "Chinese Accounts", pp. 5, 33, citing Xie Qinggao 謝清高, *Hai lu* 海錄 [Records of maritime affairs].

to Malacca but ceased operations owing to the strong competition from the Indian traders from British India.<sup>100</sup>

The trade with Vietnam<sup>101</sup> reached its peak in the early nineteenth century. As John Crawford observes, although trade between the European countries and Vietnam was minimal, the Chinese maintained an active presence on the Vietnam coast.<sup>102</sup>

Thanks to John Crawford's detailed account written around 1820, we are able to get an overview of the trade on the Vietnam coast. The China ports on the trade route included Canton, Chaozhou, Hainan, Amoy, Ningbo and Soochow. On the Vietnam side, Saigon and Cachao were the principal ports. The voyages to Saigon were made by 15 to 25 junks of 120 to 150 tons from Hainan, two junks of 300 to 500 tons from Canton, one from Amoy weighing about 400 tons and six of about 400 tons from Soochow. These Chinese ports also traded to Fai-fo, which was "almost entirely a Chinese establishment".<sup>103</sup> Three junks of 150 tons sailed from Hainan, six of 180 tons from Canton, four of 180 tons from Amoy and three of 150 tons from Soochow. In total, there were 16 junks weighing nearly 3,000 tons. Sailing to Hue, the capital, from the Chinese ports were about 12 junks of 150 to 240 tons. Trading to Tonkin were 18 junks of 120 tons from Hainan, six of 120 to 150 tons from Canton, seven of similar tonnage from Amoy, and seven from Soochow with an average tonnage of 150. There were some 20 junks of below 120 tons trading with the minor ports of Vietnam. The total number of Chinese junks visiting Vietnam amounted to 116 with a total tonnage of about 20,000 tons. From the information provided by John Crawford, it is possible to infer that the trade route from these ports extended to the smaller ports on the Vietnam coast, and beyond that to Siam and the British Straits Settlements.<sup>104</sup>

A few words might be necessary about the port of Soochow that is mentioned in the account. Soochow is not a seaport, but lies on an inland

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100. John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. 3, p. 182.

101. The name Vietnam was officially adopted in 1804. Prior to that, the kingdom was known to the natives and to the Chinese by the commonly-used name of Annam. The name Cochin China used by John Crawford and in European sources for the country was somewhat vague. It referred generally to the southern and central parts to the south of Tonkin. After the French had annexed Vietnam, the country was divided into Cochin China in the south, Annam in the center and Tonkin in the north, under the control of the French Governor-General of Cochin China.

102. John Crawford, *Journal of the Embassy*, p. 514.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

104. The shipping information is cited from *ibid.*, pp. 510–3.

waterway at the southern end of the Jing-Hang Grand Canal. By the early eighteenth century, there were already some ten thousand Quan-Zhang people engaged in the rice trade in the commercial section of the city by the Chang Gate in the vicinity of Fengqiao, the major rice market of Soochow. It was an important node in the Quan-Zhang business networks in the Lower Yangzi region.<sup>105</sup> It can safely be assumed that Fujian merchants owned the junks embarking from Soochow. There were two possible routes to reach the sea; one headed north to enter the Yangzi River, and the other turned to the south to the port Zhapu. No information is available about the route the junks took to enter the sea, but it seems more likely the vessels headed southward.<sup>106</sup>

Turning to the cargoes of the Sino-Vietnamese trade, John Crawford informs us that the most valuable items were “imported from Amoy, consisting principally of wrought silks and teas; and the least valuable, from Hainan”. Exports from Vietnam consisted of cardamoms, areca-nuts, sugar, luxury woods, eagle-wood, ebony, cotton, rice, stic-lac, ivory, furs, hides, horns, deer sinews, ornamental items particularly those obtained from a species of king-fisher, cinnamon, salt-fish, salt, varnish, dyes, gold and silver bullion. The Chinese junks were in fact prohibited from entering the ports of the country without a special license, but they anchored off the coast and smuggled their cargoes on board.<sup>107</sup> The bulk of the trade between the minor ports of both Hainan and Vietnam can be described as “peddlers’ trade” in nature, carried out by a multitude of seafaring adventurers.

Despite its lively trade with China, the total amount was said to have been less than one-half of that between Siam and China.<sup>108</sup> When compiling his information, John Crawford’s main interest was in fact not so much in the volume of trade, but the penetrating power of the Chinese junk trade on the basis of what he had seen in Siam and Vietnam. He therefore suggested that the British might well benefit from conducting

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105. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*, pp. 97–8, 122.

106. Regarding the shipping routes, see *ibid.*, pp. 118, 122–3, including maps; also John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, p. li. Akira Matsuura furnishes us in his *Qingdai neihe shuiyun shi yanjiu*, Ch. 4, with a meticulous description of the inland-waterway shipping in Soochow during Qing times. He also accounts for the Min-Yue merchants in Zhapu, as well as the linkages between Zhapu and the coastal and overseas trade. See also Akira Matsuura, *Shindai hansen engan kounshi no kenkyu*, p. 53, and Section 3, Ch. 3.

107. The quotes and other information are cited from John Crawford, *Journal of the Embassy*, pp. 512–3.

108. *Ibid.*, p. 513.

their trade through the Chinese networks, at the very least facilitating British access to China's richest Lower Yangzi region.<sup>109</sup>

As John Crawford recorded in the 1820s, the Chinese ports trading with Siam included Canton, Jiangmen, Changlim, Amoy, Ningbo, Shanghai, Soochow and several ports in Hainan. Assorted cargoes were imported from China, including such items as coarse earthenware, tea, dried fruits, raw silk, nankeens, umbrellas and other minor articles. The Siamese exports also consisted of a multitude of goods including black pepper, sugar, tin, cardamoms, sappanwood, rosewood, ivory, various animal hides and skins, and rice, all of higher value than those from China.<sup>110</sup>

At this time, there were more Siamese than Chinese junks involved in the trade. Three large junks of 600 to 900 tons each and 50—each of 120 to 300 tons—made their voyages to Canton, two of 420 tons each to Changlim, two of 360 tons each to Amoy, eight of 300 to 480 tons each to Ningbo, one of 300 tons to Soochow, and 15 of 300 to 480 tons each to Shanghai, totaling 24,560 tons. A large number of smaller junks from China also traded to Siam, including five junks of 180 to 300 tons each from Jiangmen, one of 300 tons from Changlim, and two of 180 tons each from Amoy. They carried a considerable amount of Siamese goods, but of less value. The various ports in Hainan also sent more than 50 junks of about 120 to 200 tons each. The total number of junks engaged in Sino-Siamese trade was 140, with a total tonnage of around 35,100 tons and carrying cargoes of about 10,530 tons. It is apparent that the more valuable part of the trade was conducted on the Siamese side on larger junks. The most profitable part of the trade was with Shanghai, Ningbo and Soochow; the least was with Canton and Amoy. The Siamese junks were all constructed in Siam under the direction of the Chinese. "With the [major] ports of Canton, Nimpo [Ningbo], and Siang-hai [Shanghai], there is no trade to Siam under the Chinese flag," as John Crawford puts it.<sup>111</sup>

In the meantime, there is no doubt that the rapid development of Changlim shipping allowed it to take over the dominant position of the Fujian merchants in the Sino-Siamese trade. John Crawford noticed that the trading junks from this port had gained a position of prominence in the Indian Archipelago in the early nineteenth century. They were highly competitive in Vietnam, Siam, Singapore and the Indian Archipelago. In Vietnam, the local authorities favored the Chaozhou junks, allowing them to pay lower duties than the others.<sup>112</sup> The red-prow Changlim junks

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109. *Ibid.*, pp. 306, 515–6.

110. *Ibid.*, pp. 408–9.

111. *Ibid.*, pp. 410–1, 413.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 518.

also took over from those owned by the Fujianese to become the most numerous in Siam.<sup>113</sup>

Junks from Zhejiang and Jiangnan (Jiangsu and Anhui) in the Lower-Yangzi subregion were also fitted out in the 1820s. This area produced large quantities of raw silk, teas and nankeens. It had a flourishing trade with the Philippines, the Vietnam coast, Cambodia and Siam. There were 24 junks of considerable size sailing to Siam, 16, likewise of large tonnage, to the Vietnam coast and five to the Philippines. The total number of junks in this branch of trade was 45, and their average total burden did not fall short of 17,000 tons.<sup>114</sup>

Many small junks from Hainan, presumably of Cantonese ownership, made their voyages to the Nanyang in the 1820s. Among them, 50 traded to Siam, and 43 to the Vietnam coast.<sup>115</sup> A note of caution is needed in any discussions about ownership. There is every possibility that the actual investors were originally either residents of Quan-Zhang or Chaozhou, or both. The 50 junks of 120 to 200 tons each sailed for Siam when the northeast monsoon winds began. From Qiongzhou or Haiko in Hainan, they reached the southern Siamese ports earlier than those larger vessels from other places. With this advantage, they were the early birds arriving in Bangkok in January, in advance of the large junks from Fujian and Zhejiang. The latter two would usually show up one to two months later, in late February or early April.<sup>116</sup>

Commenting on the impressive scope of the Chinese junk trade in the Nanyang around the 1820s, T'ien Ju-k'ang has the following to say:

If 1820 (the 25th years of the Jiaqing Emperor) is taken as the year for the tabulation, there were 295 junks sailing to Southeast Asia, with a total tonnage of 85,200 tons around the time. The total tonnage of the British East Indian Company ships sailing between Britain and China during the sixteen years from 1805 to 1820 was 29,572 in 1816, the highest figure, and 16,073, the lowest. The annual average was 21,432 tons. Therefore, the number of Chinese junks engaging in overseas trade was more than four times the British ships coming to trade in China.

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113. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, pp. 195–6.

114. John Phipps was citing the submission by John Crawford to the Select Committee of the House of Commons on 25 March 1830. See *Practical treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, p. 203.

115. Sucheta Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society in China*, pp. 111–2. Refer also to John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, p. 203, for the source of information cited by Sucheta Mazumdar.

116. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 188.



From the viewpoint of the trade value, in a single voyage every 500 ton junk could carry an amount of cargo worth 20,300 Spanish dollars, based on the lowest estimate at this point in time. The total cargo value of a round trip was therefore 40,600 dollars. Going on this calculation, the total trade value of the Chinese junks at this time amounted to 6,918,240 dollars. In 1818 (the 23rd year of the Jiaqing reign), the import value of all the foreign firms [foreign-owned *yang hang*] in Canton was 4,333, 750 dollars, and the export value was 5,945, 603 dollars. The lowest estimate of the trade value for the Chinese trading junks would reach a figure of only slightly below 70 per cent of the total import-export value of all the foreign firms.<sup>117</sup>

Combining the sources of information derived from works by John Crawford and others, Sarasin Viraphol concludes:

In the early 1820s there were about 222 Chinese junks, averaging 200 tons each, from Fukien [Fujian], Kwangtung [Guangdong], and Chekiang [Zhejiang] trading in the Eastern Seas, and 89 of these, or about 40 per cent of the total force, involving over 2,000 crewmen, traded annually to Siam, making it the most important junk port of the period. The remaining junks traded elsewhere were: 8 to Singapore, 20 to Japan, 13 to the Philippines, 4 to Sulu Seas Island, 2 to the Celebes, 13 to Borneo, 7 to Java, 10 to Sumatra, 1 to Rhio [Riau], 6 to the east coastal of the Malay peninsula, 20 to Annam [Vietnam], 9 to Cambodia, and 20 to Tonkin.<sup>118</sup>

A new destination of the Chinese junks in the early nineteenth century was Singapore, which had adopted a free-trade policy after the arrival of the British in 1819. The favorable trading environment attracted the arrival of many merchant ships. In 1820, 20 Chinese junks anchored off the pier. "Three came from China, two from Cochin China [the Vietnam coast], and the remaining fifteen from Siam."<sup>119</sup> In the following years, four large junks, excluding those from Hainan that were usually smaller,

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117. T'ien Ju-k'ang, "Shiqi shiji zhi shijiu shiji zhongye zhongguo fanchuan", pp. 16–7.

118. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 188. The information concerning the number of Chinese junks cited by Sarasin Viraphol originates from John Crawford's testimony delivered before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on March 25, 1830, p. 452.

119. Lim How Seng 林孝胜, *Xinjiapo huashe yu huashang* 新加坡华社与华商 [Singapore Chinese community and entrepreneurs] (Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 1995), p. 6.

arrived from China. The number increased to five in 1822, six in 1823, seven in 1824, seven again in 1825 and ten in 1826.<sup>120</sup>

To lure the Chinese junks, in their town plans of 1822, the colonial authorities set aside a block of land as the residential area for the Quan-Zhang people from Amoy.<sup>121</sup> In its early founding years, Singapore reaped the benefits of the Chinese presence. The contribution of the Canton and Amoy junks to the Singapore trade was second only to that of their European counterparts.<sup>122</sup> Because of their contribution to trade, especially that of Amoy, it was not surprising that Singapore's trade surpassed that of Batavia in 1823.<sup>123</sup> In his book, Akira Matsuura recounts the story of a rich merchant from Amoy, Lin Xing, who came to Singapore in 1828 with a capital of 3,000 *taels*. He bought pepper, birds' nests, nutmeg and cloves and, in three months, had made a profit of 800 *taels*.<sup>124</sup> This story highlights how quickly a profit could be made by merchants involved in the Amoy-Singapore trade.

John Crawfurd describes the Sino-Singapore trade as follows:

The most valuable, but not the largest, of the Chinese junks come from the port of Amoy...; the largest come from several ports of ... [Guangdong], —such as Canton, Changlim, and Ampo [Huangpu?]; and the smallest and least valuable from the island of Hainan....

The articles imported ... are coarse earthenware, flooring-tiles, umbrellas, shoes, paper, incense rods, dried fruits, confectionary, sugar-candy, medicines, nankins [nankeen], gold thread-lace, tea, and a great number of minor articles. The cargo of a Fokien [Fujian] junk is sometimes worth one hundred thousand Spanish dollars: that of a Canton junk will vary from twenty thousand to eighty thousand.... The exports consist of a great variety of articles,—such as the bark of two species of *Rhizophora*, or mangrove; a species of *Alga*, ... eagle-wood, ebony, and some ordinary woods; esculent swallows' nests; the holothurion, or tripang; sharks' fins, tortoise-shell, tin, pepper, areca-nut, cloves and nutmegs, hides and horns, opium, British iron, cottons, and woolens.<sup>125</sup>

The great variety of items reflects the nature of junk trade that involved not just substantial players but also a multitude of small investors, the

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120. John Crawfurd, *Journal of the Embassy*, p. 540.

121. Lim How Seng, *Xingjiapo huashe yu huashang*, p. 6.

122. John Phipps, *Practical treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, pp. 263, 281.

123. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 205.

124. Akira Matsuura, *Dongya haiyu yu Taiwan de haidao*, pp. 46–7.

125. John Crawfurd, *Journal of the Embassy*, pp. 539–40.

peddlers. The former might invest in the more expensive cargoes such as cassia, camphor, nankeen and raw silk, for which Singapore had become a depot.<sup>126</sup> Although the import of tea increased by more than 18 times from 1823 to 1826, the entire quantity was for local consumption.<sup>127</sup>

In 1823, the value of exports carried by six junks was about 928,700 Spanish dollars, in which opium, British piece-goods and woollens amounted to 230,000 dollars. The trade greatly increased in the following years.<sup>128</sup> During the 1833–34 trading season, the Chinese junks brought six to seven thousand chests of teas, including the famous Wuyi and Anxi brands. The bulk of the cargo came from Canton, a portion of it from Amoy.<sup>129</sup> In comparison to the 1820s, more branded teas were being imported, probably more with an eye for re-export than for the local market. In 1835, the total trade between Singapore and China was worth as much as 1,344,236 dollars, nearly half of which was contributed by the junk trade. The rest of the trade was carried in western square-rigged vessels.<sup>130</sup> In 1829–30, 23 junks arrived in Singapore, and this number jumped to 247 in 1841–42.<sup>131</sup> Singapore had an import value of 2,073,232 dollars in its trade with China in 1844, and its exports to China were worth 3,256,260 dollars. Ten years earlier these figures had been respectively 766,955 dollars and 1,213,695 dollars.<sup>132</sup>

John Crawford updated his information when he testified before the Select Committee of the House of Commons. He said that the native foreign trade was run by Canton (including Changlim and Hainan), Amoy, Zhejiang (including Ningbo and Shanghai) and Soochow. There were also a great number of small junks from Hainan. Junks embarking from Ningbo, Shanghai and Soochow sailed to the Philippines, the Vietnam coast, Cambodia and Siam, but some visited the western part of the Indian Archipelago. About 80 to 90 junks traded to Siam. He mentioned that Bangkok was the second largest Asiatic trading place in the East after Canton. The average tonnage of the junks was 300 per junk and the total in the native foreign trade of China was 60,000 to 70,000 tons, exclusive

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126. *Ibid.*, p. 546.

127. *Ibid.*, p. 541.

128. *Ibid.*, p. 540.

129. John Phipps, *Practical treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, p. 78.

130. Wong Lin Ken, "The Trade of Singapore 1819–1869", *Journal of the Malayan Branch Royal Asiatic Society* 22, 4 (1960): 106.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

132. Rutherford Alcock, "Report on Maritime Trade of China" (1848), in FO 17/142, no. 16, Enclosure; *BPP*; and *NCH*.

of Hainan. The smaller junks from Hainan were estimated at 150 tons each, making all in all around 80,000 tons.<sup>133</sup>

The Canton junk trade continued to operate in the Nanyang in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1835, John Phipps reported the arrival in Canton of Fujian junks from the Indonesian Archipelago, Cochin China, Siam and other overseas ports.<sup>134</sup> In his 1837 work another author, Edmund Roberts, also indicates that “[m]erchandise was brought here [Canton] from Tongquin [Tonkin],... Cochin China [the southern and central parts of Vietnam], Camboja, Siam, Malacca, or the Malay peninsula, and the eastern Archipelago”.<sup>135</sup> In other words, the merchants and factors in Canton, including those from other provinces, were heavily involved in the foreign trade.<sup>136</sup> According to a 1838 account, four to five junks from Canton made their annual voyages to Tonkin, largely for smuggling, eight to 12 junks of considerable size set course to Cochin China, 20 to 30 junks to Siam, two to four large junks of 500 to 700 tons each to Borneo, visited the gold-producing areas in Pontianak, Bandjarmasin and Sambas, four to six large vessels to Singapore, as well as several junks headed to Semarang, Riau, Bangka and Palembang. In total, about 40 to 50 junks of 200 to 700 tons each visited these Southeast Asian ports. The total trading capital probably reached five million Spanish dollars.<sup>137</sup> Edmund Roberts gives a much higher estimate of around 100 junks going overseas. Ports visited by these junks included Penang, as well as harbors in Celebes and the Philippines. He mentions that many junks from Fujian and other northern ports visited Canton before embarking on their overseas voyages. Returning from the Nanyang, the junks anchored in Canton before heading back to their coastal home ports.<sup>138</sup>

## Whither the Chinese Junk Trade?

### *State of the Chinese Junk Trade in the Early Years of the Treaty Port*

*The Coastal Trade.* In the early years of the Treaty Ports, the coastal trade remained brisk. There was still a large junk trade in Amoy. The

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133. John Crawford's testimony, 1830, pp. 452–3, 472.

134. John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, p. li.

135. Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the Eastern Courts*, p. 118.

136. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

137. Anon, “A Dissertation upon the Commerce of China”, pp. 34–7.

138. Edmund Roberts, *Embassy to the Eastern Courts*, pp. 121–2.

straits-crossing trade with Taiwan was “very considerable indeed”, as John Bowring put it.<sup>139</sup>

In Canton, the junk trade continued to flourish. According to the investigation conducted by British consular officials in 1852, the annual number of arrivals of trading junks was estimated to be 850.<sup>140</sup> In addition, some three to four hundred salt junks traded with Canton.<sup>141</sup> The smaller junks were 50 to 60 tons each, while the largest were not less than 900 to 1,000 tons. The average tonnage of the junks connected with Canton was estimated to be 150.<sup>142</sup>

The Canton junks continued to be fitted out to sail the entire length of the coast of China. The trade consisted of the exchange of Guangdong products for those of the other regions. In aggregate, it was not of high value. For instance, junks sailing to Tianjin and Liaodong carried bulky articles, including lacquerware, manufactured metals, furniture, earthenware, plus a few foreign goods. The returning junks brought back almost entirely low-value dried fruits and vegetables. The more expensive teas and raw and manufactured silks were taken via the overland routes. Although there was no direct trade between Canton and Taiwan, Zhangzhou junks provided the linkage by bringing in camphor from the island. Chaozhou also had a bustling trade with Taiwan on account of the large numbers of its migrants there.<sup>143</sup>

Hainan, in the vicinity of Canton, contributed to the trade with its specialties such as rattans, timber, pigs, *bêche-de-mer*, shark’s fins, betel-nut and seaweed. The Hainanese fishermen were engaged in the collection of maritime delicacies that yielded considerable returns. They left their homes for a month or longer and visited many of the distant shoals in the South China Sea. Because of its cheaper prices, Hainan sugar competed well against the Taiwan product. It was shipped to Shanghai by 30 Canton vessels, and a larger number of Fujian junks. Even foreign imports such as spices and ivory were transshipped to Canton and other coastal ports as Hainan products to avoid heavier customs duties. The chief ports in the island were Qionghshan on the northern side and Yazhou in the southeast. There were also many other smaller depots. Junks from Hainan to Canton varied from 70 to 150 tons. About 200 of them entered via Jiangmen in the vicinity of Canton. The relatively short distance

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139. FO 228/136, no. 151, John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, November 2, 1852, p. 6b.

140. Adam W. Elmslie in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 9, p. 75a.

141. *Ibid.*, p. 34b.

142. *Ibid.*

143. *Ibid.*, pp. 39a, 40a–42a, 49b–50b; also FO 228/136, no. 151, Harry Parkes in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 10, pp. 75b–76a.

between the island and Jiangmen or Canton allowed the junks to make several voyages annually.<sup>144</sup>

The development of Shanghai escalated after 1843, when it was declared one of the five Treaty Ports after the Opium War. The Min-Yue merchants became even keener to establish themselves in this boom town. Among the keenest of all were the Fujianese merchants who had long set up their operations for the coastal and foreign shipping there. The Fujianese numbered between 50 to 60 thousand and could be “generally classified into four classes, namely, officials, gentry, merchants and laborers, the last of whom were made up of hired hands and seamen on board the ships”.<sup>145</sup> Those arriving from Guangdong were even more numerous. One source suggests a figure of 80 thousand.<sup>146</sup> Among the different merchant groups in Shanghai, the Fujianese were the most financially solid, thanks to their ability to provide effective linkages between the two major networks of the north- and the south-bound coastal trade, not to mention the Nanyang trade.<sup>147</sup>

In his investigation Rutherford Alcock, the British Consul in Shanghai, supported the observation that the junk trade in Shanghai in the early 1850s remained robust. There were more than 3,000 vessels of between 25 to 100 tons to be found in the harbor. Some 1,300 had arrived from the northern ports. They conducted two return trips each year and their cargoes were worth 1,330,000 dollars in total. Around a thousand junks were making two to three trips between the south and Shanghai, carrying sugar and some 12,000 tons of rice. The majority were from Fujian. Taking both the coastal and foreign junk trade into consideration, the imports of the native junk trade in Shanghai for the year 1851 amounted to 9,680,000, while the figure for exports was 4,053,499 dollars, the import being two to three times more than the export trade.<sup>148</sup>

No fewer than 1,500 trading junks of different tonnage were involved in the busy shipping routes between Shanghai and Shandong. The

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144. FO 228/136, no. 151, Harry Parkes in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 10, pp. 73b–74b.

145. Gao Hongxia 高红霞, *Shanghai Fujian ren yanjiu (1843–1953)* 上海福建人研究 (1843–1953) [A study of the Fujianese in Shanghai, 1843–1953] (Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2008), pp. 50–1, 59; and Song Zuanyou, *Guangdong ren zai Shanghai*, pp. 37, 43, 47.

146. Gao Hongxia, *Shanghai Fujian ren yanjiu*, p. 47; and Song Zuanyou, *Guangdong ren zai Shanghai*, p. 30.

147. Gao Hongxia, *Shanghai Fujian ren yanjiu*, p. 108.

148. FO 228/136, no. 151, Rutherford Alcock in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 5, p. 19a, and Encl. 6, p. 31.

majority of these vessels were owned by those who had their residence in Shanghai or the neighboring ports. The junks coming from the south numbered 1,000. Most of them had set sail from Fujian and made two to three return trips each year. The value of their cargoes amounted to 1,664,996 dollars.<sup>149</sup>

Overall, the coastal junk trade was sizable and lively. T'ien Ju-k'ang reckons that, in the first half of the nineteenth century, there were more than 1,200 junks active on the Guangdong coast and 850 of them were trading vessels. The tonnage of these ships averaged 150 tons each, or a total of 180,000 tons. On the Fujian coast, straits-crossing junks bound for Taiwan numbered about a thousand. The average tonnage was 150 tons each and the total was 150,000 tons. There were some 2,000 to 3,600 vessels of all sorts, with an average tonnage of 50 to 150 tons each, in the region of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. The total tonnage could be as high as 350,000. A number of them traded to Fujian, but many of them were local boats. Therefore it is difficult to make an exact calculation of the total number of junks operated by the Min-Yue people. On the basis of T'ien's figures, there could have been more than 5,800 trading junks present along the China coast around 1850, with a carrying capacity of roughly 680 thousand tons. The total value of trade could have been around 26,390,576 Spanish dollars.<sup>150</sup>

*The Nanyang Trade.* Despite the declining fortunes and eventual collapse of the Hong system in the early nineteenth century, the junk trade in and around Canton managed to maintain its presence in the Nanyang for some years after the Opium War. Large numbers of these vessels were junks from Chaozhou. They traded to Vietnam and Cambodia. The large junks set sail from Chaozhou, but not from Canton.<sup>151</sup> This group of junks probably also made voyages to Siam. The branch of foreign trade with Siam was considered by the Chinese to be the most valuable of all their maritime commerce, considering the variety of goods and costs of the imports. Almost the whole of the trade was conducted with Bangkok.

Junks arriving at Canton from Siam numbered some 15 large vessels of 350 to 600 tons each. Two-thirds of them were owned by investors on the Siamese side. Exports to Siam were much fewer than the imports

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149. As reported in "Maritime Junk Trade", in *NCH*, I: 30 (30.2.1851), p. 119; and FO 228/136, no. 151, Rutherford Alcock in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 5, p. 19b.

150. Tien Ju-kang, "Zailun shiqi zhi shijiu shiji zhongye zhongguo fanchuan de fazhan", pp. 6-7.

151. FO 228/136, no. 151, Harry Parkes in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 10, p. 75a.

from there. One reason for the imbalance of trade was an increasingly large amount of opium being shipped to Canton. Since the balance of trade was in favor of the Siamese, Mexican dollars were usually taken to Siam by the outbound junks from Canton to offset the trade deficit. In its turn, this bullion formed a good remittance to Singapore.<sup>152</sup>

Some 15 to 20 small junks of about 100 tons each were fitted out from Canton at the beginning of the 1850s. They were in the hands of small-scale traders or adventurers rather than the Hong merchants, and collected cargoes from port to port. The ports they visited included Kelantan, Trengganu, and Penang in the Malay Peninsula, Singapore, Palembang in Sumatra, Batavia and Semarang in Java, and Banjarmasin, Pontianak and Sambas in Borneo. Their ports of call were uncertain. Their choice was often determined by circumstances. About two-thirds or three-quarters of their voyages seldom went beyond the Malay Peninsula.<sup>153</sup>

No fewer than 57 trading junks also sailed between Canton and many other ports in Vietnam and Cambodia, including Tonkin (five junks), Tsing hwa (one junk), Nge han (one junk), Fai-fo (three junks), Quang Ngai (three to five junks), Sinchew (ten junks), Phu Yen (two junks), Binh Dinh (three junks), Saigon (ten junks), Ha Tien (three to four junks) and Kampot (two junks). Some 60 junks, many of which might have come from the Straits Settlements, were spotted off the Cambodian coast by a European visitor. At Tik Seak in the same area, 40 other junks were seen at anchor loading rice for the various ports of China. Undoubtedly, there was a large trade being conducted between Vietnam and Canton via Hainan, in what was known as "the West Coast boats". Among the junks that set sail from Canton, about 25 to 30 of 250 tons each belonged to the Canton merchants. The Hainan junks might have formed a category of their own. The number of them involved in the trade between Canton and the two destinations of Vietnam and Siam could be as large as the total of the junks in other ports.<sup>154</sup>

Alongside the voyages to the main ports on the Vietnam coast, many junks made their voyages to other smaller harbors to smuggle rice and salt out of the country, or for what was called locally "an outside trade". They usually exchanged ceramics, pottery and coarse chinaware for the contraband goods. These maritime traders were small investors, with the cargo value for two-way voyages amounting to less than ten thousand dollars. These junks sometimes discharged and loaded in one port, but

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152. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

153. *Ibid.*, pp. 75a–86a.

154. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–70.



more often carried on a coasting trade. Although their trade involved mostly coarse produce, its aggregate value equaled or perhaps exceeded that of the exports from Siam, as Rutherford Alcock noted.<sup>155</sup>

One 1846 source says that, excluding the Hainan junks, the trading capital of the Guangdong junks was five million Spanish dollars, amounting to one-sixth of the total value of the junk trade along the coast. One-half of the Guangdong junks were trading to Siam.<sup>156</sup>

In the first few years after Shanghai became a Treaty Port, every year it received a large number of ocean junks returning from overseas voyages. Their operators were mostly the Min-Yue people. The Shanghai shippers made up only 10 to 20 per cent of those participating in the trade.<sup>157</sup> Around 1850, there were 12 to 20 junks involved in the trade, importing chiefly Straits produce, bêche-de-mer, birds' nests, medicines, red and black woods, joss and incense, shirting, glass, opium, deer horn, coconuts, rattan, tobacco and gold. Three of them were large junks of 940 tons that traded to Siam. The kingdom imported goods from Shanghai worth 210,000 dollars. Another three junks of the same tonnage returned from Singapore with an import value of 417,000 dollars. Two small junks, both 75 tons, shipped back goods from Burma worth 112,000 dollars each. Two junks of the same tonnage were back from Batavia and the east coast of the Malay Peninsula carrying cargoes worth 112,000 dollars and 83,000 dollars respectively. Two junks of 75 tons each visited Riau once every two years, shipping back a cargo of 41,000 dollars. Returning from the Vietnam coast was one junk of the same tonnage carrying a cargo worth 112,000 dollars.<sup>158</sup> Rutherford Alcock estimated the total value of this branch of so-called "southern trade" at 8,350,600 dollars. He also put the total value of the import maritime trade in Shanghai at 9,680,000 dollars, and the value of the exports north and south of the native and foreign ports at 4,053,499 dollars.<sup>159</sup>

In short, the Chinese junk trade remained resilient after 1843. At a time in which the number of junks visiting the Dutch and Spanish colonies in Southeast Asia was declining, the volume of trade with Siam and Vietnam seems to have made up for the losses in the Archipelago to some extent.

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155. Ibid.

156. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 197

157. Gao Hongxia, *Shanghai fujian ren yanjiu*, pp. 59–60.

158. FO 228/136, no. 151, Rutherford Alcock in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 5, p. 20a; and Encl. 7, pp. 31a–b.

159. FO 228/136, no. 151, Rutherford Alcock in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 5, p. 21a.

### ***The Beginning of the End?***

As this essay has shown, the decades up to the early 1840s represent a time in which the Min-Yue junk trade was in its heyday. Commenting on the state of Chinese junk trade in 1852, British consular officials in the Treaty Ports were still highly appreciative of the strength of the junk trade in some parts of Southeast Asia. However, its rapid development was not without its problems in the three major trading ports, namely Canton, Amoy and Shanghai, even in the few decades before they were made Treaty Ports in 1843, as the British consular officials had already detected.

In Canton, the weaknesses in the trading system were exposed when the Bengang Hang ended its operations in 1801. As already mentioned, this group had been assigned the task of supervising and managing the local junks of the port. Its downfall was partly caused by the debts it owed the Siamese and other foreigners, leading to its bankruptcy. The supervision of this branch of the trade was transferred to the Hong merchants until the abolition of the Hong system as stipulated in the Treaty of Nanking.<sup>160</sup>

After 1843, the worrying condition of the junk trade emerged even more conspicuously. In what he wrote in 1852 Harry Parkes indicated that the introduction of the treaty system had opened the way to changes and subsequent decline in the junk trade in Canton. With the opening of the northern ports, namely Amoy, Ningbo and Shanghai, the business of the Canton junks was adversely affected. They could no longer collect Straits produce from the markets at low prices as before on account of the competition offered by western shipping. Neither could they dispose of the goods at a profit, except in the ports in the Gulf of Beizhili and the Liaodong Peninsula in north China where western vessels had not yet made their appearance. The profits of the 20 junks that continued to sail to Tianjin and its neighborhood were principally derived from opium and the English piece-goods that they had introduced.<sup>161</sup>

Aware of the superiority of the western vessels sailing under the flags of different European nations, the Chinese merchants chartered them to convey Straits produce to the five Treaty Ports. The transfer to western vessels amounted to more than one-half of the whole trade. Consequently, half of the 14 principal Hongs serving their Straits constituents and two other Hongs conducting business with Manila ceased to employ the native junks. The remaining five Hongs and other smaller establishments were

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160. Harry Parkes in FO 228/136, no. 151, John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 10, 53a-54a.

161. *Ibid.*, pp. 56a-59b.

still engaged in the junk trade, but their main interest was in conducting voyages to Vietnam and Siam.<sup>162</sup>

All along the thriving overseas junk trade had been in the hands of the Fujian men. With the reduction in trade, they often chose to retreat to their native towns in Fujian where those who had become rich could live a luxurious life among their fellow townsmen. For those who were not so well-off, the cost of living in Fujian was just one-third of that in Canton.<sup>163</sup>

Harry Parkes also discovered other reasons for the decline in the junk trade. He points out that Canton society was no longer as thriving as it had been in the past and consequently the consumption of imported goods had shrunk. Formerly, the junk traders had the possibility to make a profit of 200 to 400 per cent, but around 1850 this had shrunk to only one-tenth of the earlier figures because of the competition from foreign shipping. The interest rate on money advancement on bottomry in Canton was about 20 to 25 per cent, just a fraction of the past amount. Owing to the absence of insurance, the returns on investments were insufficient to cover the potential losses of the junk or cargoes during the voyage. As Harry Parkes was informed by one of the largest of the old Hongts continuing in the trade, the transactions had decreased by at least one-half during the preceding ten years. While the business of the five principal Hongts was now worth just above one million dollars, the profits of the small establishments were even lower. In the estimate of Parkes' informant, the total value of trade of all the investors was just above two million dollars. This amount seems to cover only the overseas junk trade, and was quite close to Harry Parkes' own estimate. Writing about the overseas junk trade, Harry Parkes reckoned that, around 1850, the junks entering Canton from Vietnam numbered 30, contributing to a trade value of 240,000 dollars. There were 15 junks from Siam with a value of 300,000 dollars. Twenty junks had come from the Straits with a total value of 120,000 dollars each. In other words, this branch of trade was worth 660,000 dollars. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that the export trade from Canton to foreign countries was one-half of the value of the imports. Therefore, the total value of the import and export trade for Canton amounted to 990,000 dollars. If combined with the Hainan trade, the amount would double the sum given above.<sup>164</sup> On the basis of the consular reports that he had received, John Bowring

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162. *Ibid.*, pp. 56a–57b.

163. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

164. *Ibid.*, pp. 59b–61a, 85a.

put the overall capital of the Canton junk trade at between 14,000,000 and 18,800,000 dollars.<sup>165</sup>

With their income depleted, the merchants felt the pinch of having to meet the government demand for public contributions and other forms of exaction. The richer echelons among the merchants withdrew their investments and kept their capital or property hidden from public view. Trade had also been hard hit by the prevalent attacks by pirates on the coast. After the destruction of the water force during the Opium War, the government was left without adequate means for the suppression of the marauders.<sup>166</sup>

The general deterioration in the junk trade was not confined to Canton. In Amoy, the battle to persist in the junk trade also lingered on. In fact, there had been signs of problems brewing since around the turn of the nineteenth century. As recorded in the 1832 edition of the *Amoy Gazetteer*, the junk trade of this port city had suffered from a decline in profits, if not in the amount of business. Having been the foremost shipping center for both the coastal and overseas junk trades in the eighteenth century, its loss of the leading position in native shipping is often seen as the epitome of overall decline in the Chinese junk trade.

A multitude of problems confronted Amoy. First and foremost, it was facing stiff competition from growing numbers of merchant junks that were transgressing the designated spheres of trade. Under the guise of being engaged in the coastal trade, the latter transported their cargoes to Canton so as to enjoy the much lower levies, but actually sneaked out from there to the Nanyang. Their tactics dealt the Ocean Firms in Amoy a heavy blow and led to the closing down of their businesses in the early nineteenth century. The consequence was a void in the management of ocean junks. In 1821, the authorities found it necessary to appoint Merchant Firms to take over the responsibility of the defunct Ocean Firms.

Several new developments occurred concurrently after that. Firstly, the merchant junks were at last officially allowed to engage in the Nanyang trade. Therefore, the demise of the ocean junks did not denote the end of the Nanyang-bound voyages. Secondly, ocean junks from other provinces conducted direct trade with the Nanyang and bypassed the designated port of Amoy, but the decreasing number of ocean junks being fitted out from Amoy was probably the result of their loss of the edge in competitiveness to the merchant junks. Thirdly, the trading junks avoided the port of Amoy and set sail for overseas trade from the less-supervised

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165. FO 228/136, no. 151, John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, 11b.

166. Harry Parkes in *ibid.*, Encl. 10, p. 60.

minor ports in the vicinity. Eventually, these shipping irregularities even threatened the survival of the merchant firms.

The problems of the merchant firms in Amoy were aggravated by the loss of their authorized position in the lucrative straits-crossing trade with Taiwan after the opening of five rival ports on the Fujian coast between 1784 and 1824. The logical consequence was that merchant junks bound for Amoy for the straits-crossing trade decreased in number during this period. Equally fateful were the disastrous shipwrecks in 1831 that seemed to spell the end to the good fortune of the merchant junks. In that tragic incident, more than 70 merchant junks from Amoy were sunk in a typhoon near Putuoshan on the Zhejiang coast, resulting in the destruction of half of the strength of the merchant junks in the port in one fell swoop. It also caused the loss of more than a million *taels* of trading capital. By this time, the business of the merchant firms had almost come to an end.<sup>167</sup>

Amoy lost its competitiveness as a leading trading port to other harbors in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Maladministration was the principal reason for its deterioration. It poured far more than was wise of its mercantile capital into non-productive areas and the consequence was the loss of confidence among traders in doing business in Amoy.

One early example of government impositions on the mercantile community in Amoy occurred during the prosperous era of the Qianlong reign. In 1764, the Ocean Firms were invited to make contributions to fund war-junk construction. Subsequently, each Ocean Firm was said to have “voluntarily” donated 7,000 Mexican dollars to the project.<sup>168</sup>

Other impositions were likewise implemented in different years and it had become a common practice for the authorities in search of funds to tap the resources of the shipping community. Commencing in 1746, for example, the merchant junks in the straits-crossing shipping were each instructed to transport 6 to 18 tons (100–300 *piculs*) of government rice from Taiwan for relief purposes in Fujian. In 1811, 20 large merchant junks were requisitioned to transport six thousand tons (100,000 *piculs*) of government rice. The meager amount of government compensation offered for these transportations was never enough to cover expenses and the *hang* merchants had to find money to make up for the great losses on the shipments.

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167. The interpretations are based on the information from Zhou Kai, *Xiamen zhi*, *juan* 5, sections on “*shang chuan*” and “*yang chuan*”.

168. *Ibid.*, *juan* 5, p. 154.

During the prosperous years, the government impositions were considered tolerable, and might even be seen as a service to win the goodwill of the officials. However, as said, the trading environment deteriorated after the turn of the century. The non-business costs had become a burden on the business community. In their straits-crossing shipping the merchants used every means they could find to bypass the customs checkpoint in Amoy. They even built smaller junks to meet the lower quota set for the government shipments.

Equally damaging was the banning of the shipment of Fujian teas to Canton on merchant junks, following the request of the Liang-Guang Governor-General in 1817, despite a strong appeal to lift the ban made by the only surviving Ocean-Firm merchant Jiang Yuanheng. Such non-conventional transportation by sea instead of the traditional overland route had harmed the interests of the other merchants and inland customs officials in the interior. This move by the Amoy merchants, if successful, would certainly have had negative consequences for the Canton Hoppo. The whole incident casts illumination on the infighting between different provincial authorities who had great interests in protecting the “clients” on their own turfs. Be that as it may, the ban effectively killed the business initiative of shipping a valuable Fujian product in the foreign trade from Amoy. The compiler of the *Amoy Gazetteer* lamented that as a result of the ban, “the ocean junks [from Amoy] trading to foreign countries carried only the coarse goods like bowls and umbrellas”.<sup>169</sup>

What the *Amoy Gazetteer* has recorded is a gloomy picture of Amoy’s maritime trade. Government mismanagement had created a disruptive and chaotic business environment in which the Amoy junk trade had to struggle to stay afloat.

To what extent had the business conditions in Amoy affected the junk trade in general and the fortune of the maritime merchants in the port city in particular? First and foremost, Charles Gutzlaff’s eyewitness account mentioned earlier seems to give a contrasting picture of the fortunes of the Amoy merchants. His journal entry written on 7 April 1832 says that, “a large amount of Chinese shipping belongs to Amoy merchants, and that the greater part of capital employed in the coasting trade is their Property”.<sup>170</sup> He happened to be present in Amoy about eight months after the fateful typhoon that had sunk half of its merchant fleet. From the overall context of this account, it would seem that the

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169. The comments in this paragraph are based on the information derived from *ibid.*, *juan* 5, pp. 185, 190–1 and the quote from p. 181.

170. Charles Gutzlaff, *Journal of Three Voyages*, p. 193.

Amoy merchants had made their fortunes in the extended shipping networks or business operations outside Amoy. The losses in Amoy itself had not significantly depleted their fortunes or jeopardized their leading position in the junk trade enterprise.<sup>171</sup> Indeed, the highly fragmentary and disjointed information collected in the *Amoy Gazetteer* makes painful reading. As said before, Amoy continued to fit out junks to trade to other coastal cities and the Nanyang. Until the 1840s, its junks were arriving in Singapore in increasing numbers and they remained active in the coastal trade. Nevertheless, after the turn of the century Amoy gradually passed its peak as a shipping center.<sup>172</sup> In 1853, the native maritime trade in Amoy came to a standstill during the Small-Sword rebellion, during which Amoy suffered nine months of destructive occupation.<sup>173</sup> Leaving this aside, as a Treaty Port, its role in shipping had inevitably undergone changes that linked it to international trade with the coming of foreign vessels. In the ensuing one hundred years, it was also a favorite port of call for the Nanyang Fujianese, above all the Straits Chinese.

As Amoy battled, what had happened to the junk trade of the prosperous port of Shanghai? It had also been showing signs of difficulties in the latter part of the 1840s. Rutherford Alcock noted, "(t)he junk trade by all account(s) appears to be on the decrease". He listed a few serious obstacles to the healthy development of the trade. The worst grievance was that very frequently the authorities took up the whole of the tonnage to convey the government's tribute rice to Tianjin. Secondly, the shippers were incurring great losses from piracy on the high seas and from fresh-water thieves in the interior. Thirdly, when the Treaty Ports were the destinations of their shipments the merchants opted for

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171. Commenting on conditions in Amoy in the early 1830s, Murakami Ei rightly observes that, "the decline of Amoy does not necessarily reflect the decline of the South Fujianese trading activities". See Murakami Ei 村上衛, "Binetsu engaimin no katsudō to shintyō: zyūkyū seiki zenhan no ahen bōeki katsudō wo tyūshin ni" 閩粵沿海民の活動と清朝—一九世紀前半のアヘソ貿易活動を中心に [The Coastal Activities of the Min-Yue people and the Qing Dynasty as Seen from the Opium Trade before the Opium War], *Tōhō gakuhō* 東方學報 (Journal of Oriental Studies), no. 75 (Kyoto, 2003): 209. A rewritten Chinese version of his essay was published in *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan shi lunwen ji*, Vol. 10, ed. Shi-yeoung Tang (2008), pp. 361–417.

172. Liao Dake, *Fujian haiwai jiaotong shi*, p. 329.

173. Compare the different readings of the *Amoy Gazetteer* offered by Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, pp. 108–9; Chen Kuo-tung, "Qing tai zhongye xiamen de haishang maoyi", pp. 500–1; and Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*, pp. 59–61.

foreign vessels that offered greater protection. Fourthly, the Shanghai Daotai (Circuit Intendant), being a Cantonese, allowed teas and silks to find their way into the hands of the Canton brokers. The monopoly and the excessive duties raised on transporting foreign goods to the northern ports hampered the business of the local traders. Ironically, while the export trade conducted by foreign vessels increased, the junk trade was languishing.<sup>174</sup>

Toward the mid-point of the nineteenth century, China's coastal and overseas trades were both in a state of flux. At this point in time, as shown earlier, at first glance the Chinese carrying trade along the coast seems to have remained robust. In 1848, Rutherford Alcock reports that the junk trade along the coast "is very great". Turning to China's overseas junk trade, he observes that, "there is also a large though decreasing trade".<sup>175</sup> By and large, Alcock thought that the maritime trade of China was on the decline, although it did remain substantial. The foreign trade carried in Chinese junks was clearly heavily affected, especially in the Straits, as a consequence of the diversion of the Chinese carrying trade to foreign vessels. In the Archipelago and the Philippines, the decline was caused by the restrictions and monopolies imposed by the respective colonial authorities. Rutherford Alcock also seems to be suggesting another more damaging factor for the decline: the risk and losses incurred by the rampant piracy on the coast. There was a notorious incident in which for several weeks the fleet of the piratical junks blockaded the free passage of Chinese vessels near Shanghai in broad daylight. Alcock also reports two other cases, namely the capture of a large Siamese junk and of a Fujian junk from Taiwan by pirates.<sup>176</sup>

For a lengthy period of time, the long-haul interregional carrying trade to the Nanyang had been within the purview of the Chinese junks. Nevertheless, since the late 1760s, the British country traders who made their appearance in Canton around this time, had had their eyes fixed on the lucrative carrying trade between Southeast Asia and China. As a result, the growth of British private trade "increasingly and directly competed with the Chinese junk trade".<sup>177</sup>

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174. Rutherford Alcock in FO 228/136, no. 151, John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 6, pp. 25a-29a.

175. Rutherford Alcock, "Report on Maritime Trade of China" (1848), in FO 17/142, no. 16, Encl.; *BPP*; and *NCH*.

176. *Ibid.*

177. John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953; 2nd printing, 1969), p. 60.



The deteriorating native shipping on the China coast provided an opportunity for the British vessels to take over the lucrative carrying trade from the Chinese. They had begun to lay their hands on the inter-treaty-port shipping ever since the opening of the five Treaty Ports. The British were dissatisfied with a situation in which their carrying trade between the China coast and the British Straits Settlements was merely an auxiliary to the direct European and Indian trade.

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the British officials in Asia as well as the House of Commons continued to show an interest in the prosperous carrying trade operated by the Chinese junks. Rutherford Alcock had been particularly keen on the matter, as revealed in his 1848 report to Governor Bonham in Hong Kong. John Bowring in Canton was so excited about the potential of the British involvement in the carrying trade that in 1852 he ordered the officials in the five consular ports to investigate the state of the Chinese junk trade. In his response, Rutherford Alcock repeated his earlier observations and confidently foresaw the substitution of advanced British vessels for the Chinese junks of a "primitive character". John Bowring was very pleased with Alcock's remarks and took the view that "the foreign civilization" that was pressing upon the China coast would soon work to change the shipping modes in this part of the world. He said, "[T]he time is probably not distant when the whole of the foreign trade and a large portion of the coasting trade now carried on by the junks, will be transferred to ships of European or American construction."<sup>178</sup>

Although John Bowring's euphoric vision that modern shipping would soon transform the Chinese carrying trade might have been premature, he and Alcock were right about the great challenge posed to traditional Chinese shipping by western shipping since the opening of the Treaty Ports. The predominant position of Amoy, Changlim and Canton in the longer-haul coastal trade, for instance, was disrupted by western inter-Treaty Port shipping. Nevertheless, modern shipping had never been able to replace fully the low-cost labor-intensive junk trade, as in the case of the Chinese coastal shipping that was still in great demand in China's traditional commercial sector.<sup>179</sup> Although the junk trade was losing ground in the inter-treaty-port shipping, it did survive in the arena beyond the Treaty Ports. The junks also continued to provide the crucial

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178. FO 228/136, no. 151, Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, pp. 7a, 8a.

179. Rhoads Murphey points to the limited transformative power of modern technology in bringing about innovations. See Rhoads Murphey, "The Treaty Ports and China's Modernization", pp. 17-71.

linkage between the Treaty Ports and the non-Treaty Ports. These were the spheres that western shipping had never been able to penetrate.

Nevertheless, unquestionably the Chinese outbound overseas junk trade lost its shine around 1850, compared to its earlier state of predominance and omnipresence in the Southeast Asian waters as described by John Crawford, John Phipps, Edmund Roberts and other contemporary observers only two or three decades earlier. The decline in the long-distance junk trade to Batavia, Manila or more generally in the Indian Archipelago was especially obvious.<sup>180</sup> Facing the severe competition posed by the western vessels in this sector, the Chinese junks arriving from their Chinese home ports were reduced to a mere 87. This number of vessels was only one-third of those during the earlier peak. The total number of junks arriving in Singapore, which had emerged as one of the major destinations of the Chinese junks from China, fluctuated greatly from the late 1840s and indeed the junks were soon to disappear from the scene after 1863.<sup>181</sup> In the Sino-Siamese trade, as mentioned earlier, only the outbound junks from Bangkok were involved in the trade.

Although the time around 1850 was a turning point, the declining native junk trade of China should not be seen as a defeat for its main players, the Min-Yue merchants, who were not pushed out of the picture immediately. Despite the challenges, interest in the junk trade remained large.<sup>182</sup> Adam W. Elmslie observes, "Notwithstanding that the Canton junk trade has fallen off considerably within the last few years, it is still of importance."<sup>183</sup> The uncertainties in their hometown Amoy did not seem to have depleted the fortunes of the Fujianese thus far. As Harry Parkes notes, the junk trade of Canton was developed by Fujian merchants in the first instance and it remained for the most part "in their hands at the present day".<sup>184</sup> He went on to comment that many cargoes, although imported in the foreign vessels, were still shipped on account of Chinese consignees, who again were "for the most part Fukien men".<sup>185</sup> The Fujian and Chaozhou junk merchants, who were engrossed in the trade to the Nanyang and who were put under the management and supervision of

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180. Anthony Reid, "Flows and Seepages in the Long-term Chinese Interaction with Southeast Asia", in *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, ed. Anthony Reid (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996), p. 46.

181. Wong Lin Ken, "The Trade of Singapore 1819–1869", pp. 123–4.

182. FO 228/136, no. 151, John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, p. 6b.

183. Adam W. Elmslie in FO 228/136, no. 151, John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 9, pp. 48b–49a.

184. Harry Parkes in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 10, p. 55b.

185. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

the Fu Chao Hang in Canton, had “always continued [to be] a wealthy class”.<sup>186</sup> As shown in a declaration issued by the Liang-Guang Governor-General, Ye Minchen, in 1856, the Fu Chao Hang, originally representing the Fujian and Chaozhou Hongs engaged in the coastal and Nanyang trade in Canton, had assumed the role of the former Thirteen Hongs that supervised the European trade in Canton.<sup>187</sup> Therefore there are many reasons that the word “decline” is inadequate to reflect the actual development of affairs around 1850.

Viewing the Min-Yue maritime enterprise in a broader perspective, the reduction or stoppage in fitting out trading junks from the Chinese home ports did not necessarily mean the end of the junk shipping they organized. One salient feature of their junk trade was its state of fluidity and elasticity, reflected in the multi-port and border-crossing nature of their activities. Its *modus operandi* was characterized by the continuous movement to wherever there were new business opportunities. Keeping pace with the development of the junk trade, the Min-Yue merchants had created multi-centered enterprises on the China coast and in the Nanyang.<sup>188</sup> The growing Chinese migrant communities abroad facilitated the branching out of their activities into new areas. Successful Chinese settlers or local-born Chinese merchants were able to play a decisive role, independent of their native home ports, in the local and regional trade on the China coast and in Southeast Asia. As for the Southeast Asian region, with several centuries of their presence under their belts, it was a familiar ground for trade. In that time, the merchant-settlers had built up well-connected networks in the local and regional trade. The fact that the Min-Yue merchants had established themselves so well in Siam and Singapore, for example, can be attributed to the conducive trading environment offered by the local regimes. All this led to their being ready to step into the breach after the withdrawal of the Chinese junks from the centuries-old playing field of the Nanyang-bound carrying trade. The junk traders simply established their operational headquarters overseas, and junk shipping embarkations from Siam to trade in China were in full swing. Concurrently, the intraregional junk trade of the Nanyang region was expanding.

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186. *Ibid.*, p. 54b.

187. Enclosure in FO 228/198, Bowring to Lord Clarendon, no. 50, February 5, 1856.

188. In Murakami Ei's words, it became clear that, by the early 1830s, the South Fujianese merchants had left Amoy for other port cities. See Murakami Ei, “Binetsu engaimin no katsudō to shintyō”, p. 208.

In a nutshell, the power of sustainability and adaptability greatly enabled Chinese junk traders to overcome the various challenges, as the following sections will elaborate in more detail.

## **Fluidity and Adaptability of the Min-Yue Enterprise** *Irregularities as a Form of Sustainability*

Fluidity and irregularities went in tandem with maritime activities as a means of ensuring survival. A trader would always attempt to create a favorable trade environment and accommodate especially to the wishes of the law enforcers. Even while doing so, he would also instinctively evade restrictive regulations, or circumnavigate constraints. Evasion might also be used simply as an additional means of enhancing his profit margins and often co-existed with accommodation.

Given the existence of numerous customs houses or checkpoints along the coast, evasions were common. The customs duties and trading environment differed between the checkpoints and between provinces. They were highest in Amoy and lowest in Hainan. John Crawford was informed by the Chinese traders in Siam that they were subject to the fewest restrictions at the ports of Ningbo, Shanghai and Soochow. To protect their profits, the maritime merchants would exercise great dexterity in evading duties. Since the duties for native coastal junks were low, it is little wonder that merchants took advantage of the duty disparities by clearing their junks out for the west coast of Guangdong or Hainan, when in reality they planned to proceed overseas to Vietnam or Siam. When a junk returned from abroad, it would anchor off the port of Hainan for a few days, allowing the captain time to strike a deal with the customs officials. If they did not comply, he would threaten to leave for another port, thereby depriving the officials of their usual perquisites.<sup>189</sup>

Another such illustration is provided by Harry Parkes. Counting only the smaller towns or depots along the coast, he says:

[There were] no less than seventy customs house stations, through which cargoes can be smuggled, or rather passed, at a lower rate of compromise than that which is required to satisfy the larger staff of employees at the Canton headquarters.... [F]oreign-going junks often discharge the more valuable portion of their cargo outside, and enter only with coarse goods, shipped as they state, at Haenan [Hainan] or some southern harbour of the province, at which they

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189. John Crawford's testimony, 1830, p. 455.

have probably called, on their way up, for the purpose of obtaining a port clearance.<sup>190</sup>

Call it “irregularities” or by any other name, their survival tactics do have to be admired.

### ***Migrating to Greener Pastures***

When the Nanyang-bound junk trade was running out of steam around the mid-nineteenth century, intra-regional junk trade in Southeast Asia was at its prime. This regionalized trading mode did not arise at a certain turning point. It was the outcome of a gradual development in tandem with the Chinese overseas junk trade and large-scale migration over several centuries. John Crawford aptly describes the creation of the Chinese regional junk trade as follows:

[T]here is another numerous class, which may be denominated the colonial shipping of the Chinese. Wherever the Chinese are settled in any number, junks of this description are to be found, such as Java, Sumatra, the Straits of Malacca &c., but the largest commerce of this description is conducted from the Cochin China dominions ... [and] especially from Siam....<sup>191</sup>

The trading ports in Southeast Asia were closely connected with the junk trade that in turn contributed to regionalization of the trade. The transfer of business from home ports to those abroad testified to the merchants’ continuous search for greener pastures, especially when the trading conditions at home had become uncertain in comparison to those abroad. Siam is a case in point. For a couple of centuries, it had been a major destination of the Chinese junks sailing from China and had attracted Chinese migrants. A considerable number of Chinese settlers not only participated in the China trade, but also branched out to invest in the local shipbuilding industry. The strong support of the Siamese Court and the availability of abundant construction materials meant that an increasing number of junks were being constructed in Bangkok. It was a cost-effective measure for the junk investors, as John Crawford’s investigation revealed. The costs of building per ton in the early 1820s in Siam, Cochin China, Canton and Fujian were respectively 15 dollars, 16.66 dollars and 30.58 dollars.<sup>192</sup> John Phipps also observed that the

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190. FO 228/136, no. 151, Harry Parkes in John Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, Encl. 10, pp. 61b–62a.

191. John Crawford’s testimony, 1830, p. 453.

192. John Crawford, *Journal of the Embassy to the Courts*, p. 49.

cost of ship construction was highest at the port of Amoy and lowest in Siam. A 476-ton junk built in Amoy, Changlim or in Siam cost 21,000 dollars, 16,000 dollars and 7,400 dollars respectively.<sup>193</sup> Moreover, “[the] junks built in Siam are a superior class of vessels, the planks and upper works being invariably of teak”.<sup>194</sup> As a matter of course, not only did the shipping industry of Siam beat its competitors in China, it also triggered the migration to Siam of the Chinese junk construction industry, bringing with it its skilled workers. As early as the late eighteenth century, “[v]irtually all the ships in the [Sino-Siamese] trade including a large number of vessels engaged in China’s external trade were built in Siam”.<sup>195</sup>

On shipbuilding in Siam, T’ien Ju-k’ang makes the following remarks:

Around 1821, there were already one hundred and thirty-six junks being constructed with capital put up by the overseas Chinese in Siam. Eighty-two of these junks engaged in trade between Siam and China, and another fifty-four traded between Siam and other Southeast Asian ports in Vietnam, Malaya and Java.... The eighty-two vessels trading to China were nearly all manned by overseas Chinese sailors. With the exception of a few ships that employed both the Chinese and Siamese seamen, the crews of the rest of the fifty-four junks trading in the Malay waters were all overseas Chinese seamen.<sup>196</sup>

Of the Bangkok junks around 1820, the Siamese king and local dignitaries owned about 20 of them. The Siamese kings also possessed junks of their own in the southern ports. In Bangkok, at this moment the Teochiu (Chaozhou) people were already in a controlling position in trade and shipping, although the Fujianese still had a role to play in the southern ports outside Bangkok, such as Songkla and Ligor. The majority of the latter merchant group traded to Amoy.<sup>197</sup>

The rapid development of the regionalized shipping can be attributed to the Fujianese and Chaozhou settlers.<sup>198</sup> By the early nineteenth century, trading junks, especially those in the Sino-Siamese trade, increasingly set sail from the home ports in the region rather than in China. Among the 20 junks anchored in Singapore harbor in 1820, two

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193. John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, p. 205.

194. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

195. Sarasin Viraphoy, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 180.

196. T’ien Ju-k’ang, “Shiqi shiji zhi shijiu shiji zhongye zhongguo fanchuan”, p. 15.

197. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, pp. 186–7.

198. Anthony Reid and Radin Fernando, “Shipping in Melaka and Singapore as an Index of Growth, 1760–1840”, *South Asia* 195, suppl. 1 (1966): 59–84.

hailed from Cochin China and 15 from Siam,<sup>199</sup> indicating the increasing strength of the regionalized Chinese shipping. The largest portion of this shipping category, or what John Crawford terms “the colonial shipping”, was operated from the Siamese and Cochin China ports. In the former case, about 200 junks were fitted out from there. Several of them, with a tonnage of 300 to 400 tons each, sailed to Singapore annually. At least 81 of the 89 junks trading to China from Siam were constructed in the local shipyards and were owned by the Chinese settlers. In the trading season of 1830–32, approximately 35 junks arrived in Singapore from Cochin China. These junks were owned by Guangdong migrants.<sup>200</sup>

Nevertheless, the presence of western vessels in the region had introduced a new mode of shipping operation by the mid-nineteenth century, one that gave the European shippers a seemingly unbeatable advantage. The wooden junks with structural limitations simply could not compete with the well-constructed and well-navigated European or American vessels. John Crawford particularly mentions the vulnerability of the Chinese junks that were prone to frequent shipwrecks. To compare the two, a western ship could perform three voyages a year between Batavia and China, whereas a Chinese junk could make the round trip only once a year. Western vessels had the advantage of modern machinery, but Chinese junks, relying on favorable monsoon winds, were operated manually and by a crew ten times larger than that on a western vessel.<sup>201</sup> When more advantages, such as maritime insurance, sailing security, prevention of pirate attacks, speed and protection offered by the western vessels in the Chinese Treaty Ports are taken into account, it is not hard to explain why an increasing number of Chinese shippers, for purely rational business calculations, opted for western vessels.

Although Chinese junks seemed to be losing their competitive edge against the western vessels in the long-distance shipping between Southeast Asia and China, these “primitive” wooden junks were still playing an important role in intraregional shipping, in a scenario similar to what had happened on the China coast after 1843. Their presence in the smaller ports that were beyond the westerners’ purview was irreplaceable. They provided the indispensable feeder shipping services

199. Lim How Seng, *Xinjiapo huashe yu huashang*, p. 6.

200. John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, pp. 204, 286–8.

201. John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. 3, pp. 176, 178. However, Crawford contradicted himself when he was describing the features of Chinese junks in 1830. He says that, notwithstanding their weaknesses, “their pilots are expert.... During the thirteen year’ acquaintance with this branch of trade, I can recollect hearing of but four shipwrecks; and in all these instances the crew were saved.” See John Crawford’s testimony, 1830, p. 454.

in the broader commercial networks. The westerners needed them to connect to the local networks for the procurement of local produce and the distribution of imported goods. That is to say, the two modes of shipping coexisted, playing their roles separately yet inter-connectedly.

In creating new business opportunities, the Chinese shippers also had the advantage of their familiarity with the commercial environment. John Crawford reckoned that “[the] Chinese have an intimate knowledge of the markets, and a skill in assorting and laying in their cargoes, which no European ... can acquire”.<sup>202</sup> The Europeans, in comparison, were virtually outsiders in the region. They were no match for the Chinese merchants who could penetrate local markets. This disparity offers an explanation of why the Chinese junk traders not only took on the challenge, but also expanded their operations in regional shipping. Moreover, providing the numerous Chinese migrants in Siam, Cochin China, the Straits Settlements and the Indian Archipelago with their daily necessities, and procuring local produce from the Chinese merchants spread all over the region, gave them great business opportunities that were beyond the reach of the western traders.<sup>203</sup> John Bowring agreed and went on to comment that the numerous Chinese migrants were very likely to have boosted the rapid development of the Chinese “colonial shipping” so as to meet their demands.<sup>204</sup>

The Min-Yue shippers continued to be involved in the long-distance shipping between the Nanyang and China, by adopting a different mode of operation and jumping on the bandwagon of modern vessels. A glimpse of the maritime trade in Singapore is sufficient to appreciate the preference of Chinese shippers for the western vessels. Those who were engaged in the consignment trade opted for western ships whenever they dispatched their cargoes to China. From 1850, the Chinese shippers in the Straits Settlements also consigned most of their cargoes from Amoy to Spanish-registered steamships.<sup>205</sup> The Fujianese Straits Chinese were the pioneers among the local Chinese in adopting the new shipping mode. In a few cases, the Straits Chinese (Anglo-Chinese) even owned some western vessels flying European flags. Their identity as British protected subjects also cut down the extent of harassment by the Chinese customs officials in the Treaty Ports.

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202. John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. 3, p. 178.

203. Rutherford Alcock, “Report on Maritime Trade of China” (1848), in FO 17/142, no. 16, Encl.; *BPP*; and *NCH*; see also John Crawford, *The Crawford Papers*, p. 8a.

204. FO 228/136, no. 151, John Bowring to The Earl of Malmesbury, pp. 7b–8a.

205. Wong Lin Ken, “The Trade of Singapore”, pp. 123–4.



In sum, the resident Chinese merchants found it more fruitful to operate from their bases overseas. They gained from the growth of the regional trade and from playing a role in connecting the intraregional junk trade with the long-distance carrying trade conducted by western vessels.

### ***Integrating into Local Societies***

The southeastern coast of China and Southeast Asia formed parts of the interlocking networks of a trans-regional maritime trade that was simultaneously in the process of establishing linkages to the greater maritime world. The Min-Yue people injected an enterprising spirit into their trade activities and developed lively, bustling trading communities in the port cities on the China coast and in the Nanyang.

In the port cities at home and abroad the Min-Yue merchants endeavored to create a favorable trade environment and accumulate their social capital. They were not just sojourners looking for quick profit in the port city, but were making an effort to build social networks and integrate themselves into the local community to facilitate their trade activities.

Amoy provides an example to illustrate the workings of such social networks. Like other port cities, it was a developing migrant society. It had a population of "several tens of thousands" on the eve of the Qing conquest of Taiwan. Owing to the influx of migrants from the interior, the population had increased to 144,893 by 1830.<sup>206</sup> In the port city, commercial wealth was the basis for the establishment of social status. The wealthy merchants undertook the financial sponsorship of public works and local events. They built close relationships with the officials and members of the gentry. The latter two groups did not shy away from making clandestine investments in businesses through the merchants, even though Confucian ethics despised profit making. The merchant involvement in community affairs could be seen in the temple activities that represented one salient feature of local popular culture. As organizers of religious processions during temple festivals, the merchants would invite the officials and the gentry members to the events. Such occasions provided them with the opportunity to build a tripartite relationship. For the officials, participation in these social events demonstrated their care for the subjects and helped to suppress any potential public ill-feeling toward the local authorities. Undoubtedly, their wealth enhanced the merchants' social influence, attained through their role as social

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206. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*, p. 84.

facilitators. They even acted as mediators between the officials and the common people in the local community.<sup>207</sup>

In Canton, the Hong merchants could trace their connection with the Fujianese merchants back to at least around 1700, when the Amoy and other Quan-Zhang merchants began to establish themselves in the city. The South Fujianese merchants built a functional coastal network of commerce in major seaports such as Canton, Amoy, Hangzhou, Dinghai and others. By the early eighteenth century, they had also established themselves as the most influential Hong merchants in Canton, whose business activities spanned Canton, Macao and Amoy. Their successful integration into the Canton mercantile community did not weaken their Fujian identity. The first generation merchant migrants would eventually opt to retire to their native town. In their business expansion, their double identities as both Fujian and Canton men were extremely helpful in their commercial undertakings.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the resident status of the Fujian merchants in Canton had begun to evolve from that of sojourners to settlers as more Fujianese merchants chose to settle in Canton and become Canton men.<sup>208</sup> The decision made by the prominent Hong merchant Phuankhequa (Pan Qiguan, 1714–88), who was also the leading merchant of the Thirteen Hong, is illustrative. Pan was born into a poor family in the Tong'an district of South Fujian and at a young age took up manual work as a boatman. He arrived in Guangdong when he was nearly 30 years of age and had thrice traveled to Luzon to trade. After these ventures, he had been able to accumulate enough capital to commence his own merchant firm, the Tongwen Hong. Initially, he made annual visits to his ancestral homeland, but later decided to take up permanent residence in Canton in order to manage his expanding transactions with the British East India Company. His eldest son, You Neng, was born in Canton in 1742.<sup>209</sup> At that time, the Hong merchants most likely also assumed the leadership positions at the Quan-Zhang Guild Hall (the Quan-Zhang Hui Guan), a clear indication of their multiple identities. They were Canton men, Quan-Zhang men, Fujian men and even more at the same time when, for instance, their native-district identity was taken into consideration. The multiple identities allowed them to move freely

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207. Ibid., pp. 88–94.

208. Weng Eang Cheong, *The Hong Merchants of Canton: Chinese Merchants in Sino-Western Trade* (London: Curzon Press, 1997), pp. 26–66.

209. Pan Gang'er, Huang Qichen and Chen Kuo-tung 潘剛兒、黃啟臣、陳國棟, *Guangdong shisan hang zhi yi: Pan Tongwen (fu) hang* 廣州十三行之一：潘同文（孚）行 [The Pang Tongwen Hong, one of the Thirteen Hong] (Guangzhou: Huanan ligong daxue chubanshe, 2006), pp. 1–3.

between the Canton community and the broader regional commercial networks along the coast.

The Fujianese merchants had also been active in Shanghai prior to the eighteenth century and they had founded the Quan-Zhang Guild Hall there in the late Ming period. The native-place-based association functioned as an umbrella organization that strengthened the cohesiveness among the merchants from the different districts of the two prefectures. The organization broadened its membership by combining the strength of two subregions and drawing together the sea merchants from the districts of Longxi, Tong'an and Haicheng. A public burial ground was established for deceased fellow residents from the districts of Quan-Zhang prefectures.<sup>210</sup> Those hailing from Guangdong were mainly Chaozhou and Canton people. The former founded the Chaozhou Guild Hall in 1759. After the Opium War, the presence of the compradors from the district of Xiangshan in the neighborhood of Canton became a very conspicuous feature of Shanghai and hence enhanced the position of the Canton merchants.<sup>211</sup> As has been noted earlier, the Canton natives did not actively involve themselves in maritime trade. Therefore, the "Canton men" were mostly of Fujian or Chaozhou origins.

Whenever deemed necessary, merchants would cast their net wider to form a united association by breaking down the geographical boundaries even farther. One such example was the Min-Yue Guild Hall in Tianjin.<sup>212</sup> It was an alliance of the merchants from Quan-Zhang and Chaozhou, crossing the provincial lines. With enhanced strength and influence, the united guild hall enjoyed a stronger voice and greater mediating power in the local community. The sojourners and settlers took the flexibility in organization for granted since they were accustomed to forming alliances in their native villages as a survival strategy. The Min-Yue Guild Hall was founded during the prosperous Qianlong reign, at which time there was an upsurge in coastal trade. The guild hall leadership rotated between the three merchant groups. As was the common practice in Chinese migrant communities at home or abroad, the guild hall owned a common burial ground, known as the "Min-Yue Shanzhuang" (literally, the Mountain Villa of the Min-Yue People) for their compatriots from the two provinces.<sup>213</sup> The Min-Yue merchants were active members in the local community.

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210. Gao Hongxia, *Shanghai Fujian ren yanjiu*, p. 187.

211. Liu Zhenggang, *Guangdong huiguan lun gao*, p. 77.

212. The Min-Yue Guild Hall in Tianjin was founded in 1739 by the sugar merchants from Amoy and Chaozhou. See Murakami Ei, "Binetsu engaimin no katsudō to shintyō", p. 261fn110, citing *Chong xiu Tianjin fuzhi* 重修天津府志 [Revised Edition of the Gazetteer of Tianjin Prefecture], *juan* 24 (1899, 1900).

213. Pang Yujie, *Kaibu tongshang yu jindai Tianjin shangren*, p. 45.

They held temple festivals to celebrate the birthdays of the Protectress of the Sea, Mazu (or Tian Hou, the Heavenly Queen) and the God of Fortune, enlivened by processions and banquets. Besides strengthening the comradeship among the members, these social functions provided good occasions for building close-knit tripartite relationships, as in Amoy and other cities, among the merchants, officials and members of the gentry.<sup>214</sup>

In the Nanyang, the Chinese migrant population had been increasing throughout several centuries of contacts. John Crawford estimated the Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia around 1830 to be 800,000. Some 7,000 came to Siam annually while he was there.<sup>215</sup> Although there is no way to verify the accuracy of the figures, the numbers must have been large. In Bangkok, the population composition resembled that of Manila and Batavia, all three having a large Chinese community. The Chinese population in Bangkok was 31,000 in 1822. In 1849, it had increased to 81,000 out of a total population of 160,000.<sup>216</sup> By the early nineteenth century, the Chinese of Chaozhou origins had formed the majority among their Chinese compatriots. In the economic arena, the Chinese were granted preferential treatment by the Siamese authorities. John Crawford acknowledged his envy of the privileged position of the Chinese:

[The Chinese] were allowed to buy and sell without any inconvenient restriction. However, [an] American ship sailed about this time, after being detained near six weeks; and the commander, although he required but a small quantity of sugar to make up his cargo, and had paid for it in ready money, was subjected to much vexation, and imposition. The English vessel from Calcutta was treated in the same manner.<sup>217</sup>

John Crawford also remarked that the Siamese shipping amounted to about 24,562 tons and employed 4,912 Chinese. It was an average of 20 hands to each hundred ton.<sup>218</sup> In their capacity as investors, executives or managers, the Chinese were also the business partners of royalty and the nobility. The reason for the Chinese success in often being trusted by the local regime could be ascribed to what Crawford depicts, just like elsewhere in the region, that “[t]he peaceful, unambitious, and supple character of the Chinese, and the conviction of their exclusive devotion to commercial pursuits” had disarmed the native governments of their

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214. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society*, pp. 178–83.

215. John Crawford’s testimony, 1830, pp. 448, 451.

216. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 213.

217. John Crawford, *Journal of the Embassy*, p. 175.

218. Cited in Sarasin Viraphoy, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 187.

jealousy. Not surprisingly, they were accepted as welcome guests.<sup>219</sup> In the case of Siam, the Chinese and the nobility formed a symbiotic relationship that, in its turn, greatly encouraged the Chinese to integrate themselves willingly into local society.

The localization of the Min-Yue merchants can also be seen elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Immediately after its opening to trade by the British, Singapore, a port city with a large concentration of Chinese population, had attracted the arrival of the business-smart Amoy merchants from China as well as the Quan-Zhang merchants from Malacca. There were also Teochiu (Chaozhou), Canton, Hainan and Hakka (Kejia) migrants arriving in this colonial outpost. The Chinese population in Singapore between 1821 and 1830 increased from 1,159 to 6,555.<sup>220</sup> Four years later it was 10,767.<sup>221</sup> The Quan-Zhang people built a common burial ground, known as the Hengshan Ting (the Hengshan Pavilion) in 1827 and founded the Thian Hok Kiong (Tian Fu Gong) Temple devoted to the worship of Goddess Mazu in 1850. The latter was also the location of the principal organization of the Quan-Zhang community, the predecessor of the Hokkien Huay Kuay (Fujian Hui Guan, The Fujian/Hokkien Guild Hall). The organization was financially solid and therefore influential in local Chinese society thanks partly to the contributions of funds from the rich Amoy junks visiting the port. Naturally, the colonial government also attached great importance to it and saw it as the leading organization for the whole Chinese community. It was in the colonial government's interest to have the community leaders play a role in assisting the government to maintain social order and help manage the restless and often violent labor migrants.<sup>222</sup>

Each of the other same-dialect-based communities, whether they were Cantonese, Teochiu, Hainan or Hakka, had its own temple and community organization, the guild hall (hui guan). This does not mean that native-place ties formed the only basis for organizations. The smaller, less powerful native-place associations might bind themselves together to form an umbrella organization. This allowed them to be more effective in vying with the stronger, more powerful associations. Competing for economic or social space could have been another factor in the

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219. The description of the Chinese nature is found in John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. 3, pp. 185–6.

220. Lim How Seng, *Xinjiapo huashe yu huashang*, p. 19.

221. John Phipps, *Practical Treatise on the China and Eastern Trade*, p. 280.

222. David K.Y. Chng 庄钦永, *Xinjiapo huaren shi luncong* 新加坡华人史论丛 [Collected essays on the Chinese in nineteenth-century Singapore] (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1986), pp. 16–7, 20.

formation of associations.<sup>223</sup> There were also same-surname associations representing a form of alliance in early Singapore, whose organizing principle was similar to that of the fictitious lineage organizations in the native villages.<sup>224</sup>

It was not all plain sailing. Clashes might occur now and then between the local authorities and the Chinese communities. In the fallout from the “Batavia Fury” in 1740, for example, when most of the Chinese population of Batavia had either been killed by the Dutch authorities or had fled, the junk trade to Batavia was in jeopardy. Neither party thought the situation desirable. To remedy the situation, in 1742 the Dutch government ordered the setting up of the Chinese Council of Batavia to manage Chinese affairs and mediate between the authorities and the Chinese community. The Chinese leadership of the Council was made up mainly of the local Hokkien (South Fujianese) commercial elite who were major tax-farmers.<sup>225</sup> Despite the Dutch monopoly on trade, the government still found it expedient to work with the Chinese merchants for their mutual benefit, as both sides needed to find ways to accommodate each other’s economic interests. Consequently, as pointed out by Leonard Blussé, Amoy did not stop dispatching its junks to Batavia. Blussé also mentions the faraway Ocean Firm (*yanghang*) in Amoy that continued to send friendly letters to and exchange gifts with the Batavian authorities in the early nineteenth century. Obviously, close relationships established through mutual accommodation would better serve their respective business interests.<sup>226</sup> The Chinese merchants in the Nanyang did exactly what their counterparts on the China coast had been doing all along. The situation in the Spanish Philippines was similar. The expulsion of migrant Chinese by the Spanish colonial government in 1755 and 1766, for instance, did not result in the withdrawal of Chinese

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223. For the organizing principle of community associations, see Chen Ching-Ho 陳荊和 and Tan Yeok Seong 陳育崧 (eds.), *Xinjiapo huawen beimin jilu* 新加坡華文碑銘集錄 [A Collection of Chinese inscriptions in Singapore] (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1970), pp. 3–29; also Lim How Seng, *Xinjiapo huashe yu huashang*, Chs. 1, 2, & 4.

224. C.F. Yong 扬进发, *Zhanqian xinhua shehui jiegou yu lingdao ceng chutan* 战前星华社会结构与领导层初探 [A preliminary survey of Chinese community structure and leadership in prewar Singapore] (Singapore: South Seas Society, 1977), p. 7.

225. Leonard Blussé and Wu Fengbin, *Bacheng gongguan dang’an yanjiu*, pp. 4–17; and Chin Kong James, *Merchants and Other Sojourners*, pp. 248–9.

226. Leonard Blussé, “Vicissitudes of Maritime Trade: Letters from the Ocean *Hang* Merchant, Li Kunhe, to the Dutch Authorities in Batavia (1803-09)”, in *Sojourners and Settlers*, ed. Anthony Reid, p. 163.

involvement in local commerce. The Spanish authorities chose to work with the assimilated Chinese, known as the Chinese mestizos. The expelled migrant Chinese soon found sanctuaries from which to continue doing their business on the more remote islands.<sup>227</sup> In other words, accommodation, localization and integration became potent weapons adopted by the Nanyang Chinese merchants to avoid potential trading difficulties.

## **Retrospective Observations**

The prosperous age of the eighteenth century had set in train two effects in Qing China: population growth and a maturing commodity economy. The changing socioeconomic conditions contributed to the waves of outward mobility that in their turn led to the expansion of marketing networks conducive to the rapid development of the coastal and overseas junk trades. The trading ports were hives of activity and witnessed the emergence of an entrepreneurial mercantile community. Each domestic or foreign port functioned as the commercial node of a subregional centre for the distribution of imported commodities and the collection of local specialties for export. By means of inter-port shipping, the trading junks linked up the nodes along the China coast and in the Nanyang to form a vast, vibrant interregional market during a lengthy period of nearly 150 years.

Undoubtedly, it was the spirited and untiring Min-Yue seafarers who had created the panorama of the coastal and overseas junk trade during the period in question. The South Fujianese and the Chaozhou people represented the major contributors to the boundary-transcending trade expansion. The third group of players from the region, namely the Hainanese, fitted out the majority of their junks to sail to the coasts of Vietnam and Siam.

Throughout the period, the Min-Yue junk trade retained the salient feature of being “people’s trade”, involving both substantial merchants and numerous peddlers from the Min-Yue subregions. The narrative would be incomplete if the numerous migrants who joined the voyages of the trading junks were left out of the picture. This category of seafarers would themselves become traders, procurers or simply consumers of imported items from China. Therefore, the strength of the maritime enterprise can be attributed to the collective contributions made by the investors from the home ports, traveling traders and peddlers on board the ships, resident merchants or agents in the trading locations and

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227. Anthony Reid, “Flows and Seepages”, p. 45.

multitudes of migrant settlers. Together they created the functional multi-layered and the multiport enterprise that was born from the junk trade.

This boundary-transcending perspective broadens our horizons by viewing the interconnected regional networks as integral parts of the trade and allows us to appreciate better the *modus operandi* of the Min-Yue businesses. Speaking of Fujian and Guangdong, G. William Skinner posits that the southeastern region, that extended from the southern portion of Zhejiang to Chaozhou in eastern Guangdong with the port city Quanzhou at the center, experienced a more than two-centuries-long maritime “dark age” between the turbulent Ming-Qing transition in the 1600s and the 1840s when five Treaty Ports were opened to trade after the Opium War. He suggests that the economy and coastal trade entered a cycle of decline between these two points in time.<sup>228</sup> In contrast to his claim, this chapter has described an overall upward trend in economic and shipping developments. Although periodically fluctuations and depressions did occur, it was on the whole a period of unmistakable upward swing in the one and a half centuries from the lifting of the maritime ban in 1684 until the golden age of the seafaring trade that might be viewed as the long eighteenth century. The driving force behind the seaborne enterprise came from the southeastern coast covering the subregions of South Fujian, the Chaozhou-Shantou Plain and the Pearl River Delta, with Amoy, Changlim and Canton as the three major interconnected ports. Although G. William Skinner sees Fujian and Guangdong as two different geographical regions in his macro-regions analysis, the growth of domestic and overseas junk trade in the eighteenth through the first half of the nineteenth century had in fact integrated the two in their common pursuit of profit.<sup>229</sup>

In each of the transaction centers, the presence of the Min-Yue merchants boosted the development of a prosperous mercantile culture. By nature the community of a port city was pluralistic and competitive. The lack of social cohesion often led to conflicts among the different interest groups. The mercantile community too often encountered jealousy and oppression on the part of the government, but the local authorities had a stake in maintaining social harmony and avoiding disorder. In this respect, they shared with the mercantile community a strong desire to maintain peace and harmony, and this provided a conducive environment for the economic growth and social stability

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228. G. William Skinner, “Presidential Address: The Structure of Chinese History”, *Journal of Asia Studies* 44, 2 (1985): 276–9.

229. Also refer to Sucheta Mazumdar, *Sugar and Society in China*, p. 113, for similar comments on the issue.



of the locality. The administrators welcomed the participatory and mediating roles of the influential merchants in creating wealth and pacifying the contesting parties in the port city. The Chinese merchants fitted in well in the complex plural society in their role as mediators.<sup>230</sup> Similar in nature to the role of their gentry counterparts in Chinese rural society, the Chinese merchants were facilitators in the building of a functional business and social institution.

Discussing the penetrating power of Chinese junk traders and their extensive trading networks in Southeast Asia during the eighteenth century, Leonard Blussé has coined the term “the Chinese century” to describe the predominant position of the Chinese in maritime trade in the region.<sup>231</sup> In comparatively plain language, T’ien Ju-k’ang had earlier painted a picture of the Chinese seafarers’ outstanding achievements. He adopted a long view that covered the period of the seventeenth to mid-nineteenth centuries to illustrate the trajectory of the Chinese junk trade, although the period might also be extended to include the beginning of the Haicheng-Manila trade in the late sixteenth century. The purpose of the present chapter has been to highlight the golden age of the trade and specifically the “Min-Yue” people, rather than the more generic term, “the Chinese”, in the narrative. Only then can the actual contributors to this maritime achievement regain their rightful place in history.

The Min-Yue people’s enterprise was unprecedented in human history in terms of its extensive scope, mass participation and socioeconomic impact on local societies in the regions. The time period in question can justifiably be called an era of the Min-Yue seafarers on the China coast and in the South China Sea region. Although the Nanyang-bound junk trade of the Min-Yue people had lost its past glories by the mid-nineteenth century, their maritime legacy that was born from the junk trade still remains conspicuous in Southeast Asia even today.

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230. Citing J.S. Furnivall’s concept of plural society in the Southeast Asian colonial context, Leonard Blussé elaborates on the kinds of accommodation and cooperation that had been worked out “to effect a relatively stable society” in colonial Batavia. See Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo, Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht-Holland: Foris Publications, 1986), pp. 4–5.

231. Leonard Blussé, “Chinese Century: The Eighteenth Century in the China Sea Region”, *Archipel* 58, 3 (1999): 107–29.

## CHAPTER 13

# The Case of Chen Yilao: Maritime Trade and Overseas Chinese in Qing Policies, 1717–54

### A Preview of the Case

In 1750 a merchant, Chen Yilao,<sup>1</sup> who returned to Fujian after a long sojourn in Batavia, was arrested, tried and punished by the provincial authorities. This case has often been cited as an indication of the Qing government's hostile attitude toward maritime trade and its overseas subjects, especially those who had gained employment under foreign authorities.<sup>2</sup>

Thanks to the availability of a few relevant documents in the Grand Council Records kept in the National Palace Museum Library in Taipei,<sup>3</sup> more details about Chen Yilao himself as a successful maritime entrepreneur, the trauma that he was subjected to after his return to Fujian and the implications of the case in terms of the Qing government's

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1. His name was Chen Yi, or Tan Yi in the Fujian dialect. In Dutch records he was also called Tan Iko. "Lao" (or "lo") and "ko" (哥) are respectful forms of address attached to personal names. They mean "venerable sir" and "elder brother" respectively. See B. Hoetink, "So Bin Kong. Het eerste hoofd der Chineezten te Batavia (1619–1636)", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie* 73 (1917): 371–2.
  2. See, for example, Tan Yeok Seong (Chen Yusong) 陳育崧, "Chen Yilao an yu Qingdai qianmin zhengce zhi gaibian" 陳怡老案與清代遷民政策之改變 [The Case of Chen Yilao and the Change in Qing Policy on its Emigrants], *Nanyang xuebao* 南洋學報 (*Journal of the South Seas Society*) 12, 1 (June 1956): 17–9; also Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652–1853* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977), p. 163.
  3. I wish to record my appreciation of the kind assistance given by the staff of the National Palace Museum Library, Taipei, during my research there in May 1988 and May 1989. Thanks are also due to Professor Liu Chia-chü 劉家駒 for kindly re-checking a few documents for me after my visit.

policy toward maritime trade and its overseas subjects can now be examined in greater detail. The most immediate question is: Why was Chen Yilao punished?

Chen was a native of Longxi District, Zhangzhou Prefecture, Fujian Province. He had a nephew by the name of Chen Kong who owned a provision shop in Xiangshan, Guangdong Province. In 1736 (the first year of the Qianlong Reign), Chen Yilao, aged 30, paid his nephew a visit. On being told about the trade opportunities in the Nanyang, he made up his mind to try his luck abroad. In December of the same year, he bought trade goods such as tobacco and tea and set sail from Macao, headed for Batavia (Ke-la-pa) on board a Portuguese ship. Trade was lucrative there and he decided to remain.

The following year, Chen “bought” a Makassarese wife for 53 dollars. She bore him two sons and one daughter. During his sojourn in Batavia, Chen not only learnt how to speak the local tongue well, but was also on amicable terms with the Dutch officials. Appreciative of Chen’s business talents, a certain “headman” invested the sum of 30 thousand *taels* in his trade.<sup>4</sup> This investment paved the way for Chen to make a bigger fortune.

In 1739, Chen returned to his native village once to visit his mother, traveling via Macao. At the end of the year, he sailed back again to Batavia from Macao on board a foreign ship, roughly ten months before the massacre of the Chinese settlers in Batavia in October 1740, but he was not on the site when the tragedy occurred since he arrived back in Batavia only in November 1740. B. Hoetink has stated that Chen actually conducted his business in Semarang, where he became an important merchant. After Batavia and its suburbs had been emptied of Chinese in the wake of the massacre, the Dutch authorities in Batavia sent for him to act as an “introducer/mediator” (*introduceur*) of the Chinese who would arrive from outposts of the Archipelago and from China.<sup>5</sup>

On June 28, 1743, Chen was appointed one of the two newly-appointed Chinese Lieutenants.<sup>6</sup> He was put in charge of commercial transactions

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4. The wealthy servants of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) often lent money to the Chinese at high rates of interest or invested in the trade through the Chinese network. See Leonard Blussé, *Strange Company: Chinese Settlers, Mestizo Women and the Dutch in VOC Batavia* (Dordrecht-Holland: Foris Publications, 1986), pp. 83, 124.

5. B. Hoetink, “So Bing Kong”, p. 373.

6. B. Hoetink, “Chineesche officieren te Batavia onder de Compagnie”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie* 78 (1922): 90. In Chen Yilao’s deposition to officials after his arrest, his designation is said to have been a Chinese Captain (*jabidan*). His choice of this title was probably for the sake of convenience because it was better known in China.

between the Chinese and the locals, acting as an interpreter, estimating prices and collecting rents from the itinerant Chinese merchants. This official post turned out to be an additional road to riches.

During his sojourn in Semarang and Batavia, Chen Yilao's business success earned him a fortune of more than one hundred thousand *taels*. In 1748, Chen resigned from his post because he wanted to return to his homeland to fulfill his filial duty of looking after his aging mother. He departed for China in mid-1749, taking with him his Makassarese wife, his three children as well as two male and two female foreign servants. Chen traveled on board a Fujianese junk owned by an acquaintance from the same native district. This junk happened to be passing through Batavia after trading in Banjarmasin. For a passage fee of 90 dollars, Chen was allowed to occupy two cabins. With him he carried some 38,000 dollars worth of foreign silver coins kept in trunks. The goods he invested in on his homeward journey, including pepper, birds' nests, cotton, cotton-seeds, tin, sea-slugs (trepang), putchuck, cloves, sea-wolf (elephant seal?) hides, western wines, beiges and camlets, were worth more than 42,000 dollars. He also consigned an additional quantity of goods to another junk originating from Fuqing district, northern Fujian that also happened to be passing through Batavia after trading in Johor. The goods included 27,900 *catties* of pepper, 46,500 *catties* of tin, 2,790 *catties* of buffalo sinews and 400 buffalo hides. Together these were worth more than 13,000 *taels*. Aside from all these cargoes, he had a total of 11,600 dollars on loan to several Chinese sea merchants. This amount was to be paid back in China.

On August 1, the Longxi junk on which he was a passenger reached Dadan, an offshore island not far from Amoy. Aware of all the legal complications he would encounter at the checkpoint because he had brought his family and foreign servants with him, Chen chartered a fishing junk two days later for ten dollars and sneaked back to his hometown without attracting the attention of the port authorities in Amoy.

In the meantime, Chen had asked the captain of the Longxi junk to see his goods and money through the proper customs procedure in Amoy. A week later, he came to Amoy in person, chartered a boat and retrieved his 12 trunks that contained 15,000 dollars from the ocean junk and also picked up some other miscellaneous goods. He gave a loan of 6,000 dollars to Merchant Chen Yue of the De Shun Firm in Amoy. The goods brought back by the Fuqing junk plus a sum of 17,000 dollars were delivered to De Shun and Mian Xing (another Merchant Firm in Amoy) for sale.

What a tragedy it was that danger was poised to strike him just at this very moment! It was a bustling season and more junks than ever before were returning from abroad. The port officials had been specially

ordered by Governor Pan Siju to be on full alert lest any irregularities occurred. The atmosphere was unusually tense. What Chen was not aware of was that his return, bringing with him such a large fortune, had already become the talk of the town. Not surprisingly, his presence attracted the attention of Xu Fengyuan, Sub-Prefect of Amoy, and Yuan Benlian, Magistrate of Longxi District, who both reported what they knew to Governor-General Ka'erjishan and Governor Pan Siju. On receiving the information, these two high-ranking officials ordered Bai Ying, Circuit Intendant in Amoy, and Jin Yong, Prefect of Zhangzhou, to collaborate with other local officials in making a thorough investigation of the case. All the persons connected with it were arrested and put on trial.

As was normally required, Governor Pan reported the case to the Court. The basis for Pan's prosecution of Chen contained five points: sneaking out to foreign countries; rendering services to foreigners; smuggling into his native district; bringing back foreign nationals; and possessing riches worth "several hundred thousand *taels*". The Qianlong Emperor's response was immediate. This promptness reflected his great concern about the case. In a decree to the Grand Council, he said:

Villains from this country often sneak out to foreign countries. This act is itself an offense, not to mention having been abroad for so many years and offering services to foreigners. Moreover, he married and had children. Who knows whether he had not been using his position to threaten foreigners. There is also the possibility of security leaks to foreigners, an action that could stir up trouble. It is not only an assault on the country's dignity, but is also a matter of maritime security. Even if he had not brought back a large amount of money, this criminal had to be severely punished without clemency... (Governor-General) Ka'erjishan and (Governor) Pan Siju should be ordered to make a thorough investigation into the case and pass sentences in accordance with the law.<sup>7</sup>

In short, the imperial verdict had been delivered even though the trial had only just begun. In the next few months, the Emperor reprimanded the provincial authorities more than once for their delay in bringing the trial to a close. Unfortunately, no hints are found in the sources to explain why it took them so long to round off the case, but this unusual protraction might have been caused by its borderline nature. Whatever

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7. *Qing shilu: Gaozong chao* 清实录：高宗朝 [The Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty: Gaozong/Qianlong Reign] (hereafter *QSL: GZ*), *juan* 346: 14b–15a.

the reason, as said, after the Court's intervention, Chen Yilao's fate was sealed even before judgment had been passed.

In his defense, Chen Yilao argued that the post of "captain" in foreign countries was in fact an official designation. The appointee did not receive any official stipend. His function was to act as a go-between and for remuneration he could charge a small commission after each business transaction. It was similar to the role of a broker or local headman in China. Never had he leaked any security information to foreigners. He might have occasionally charged strangers slightly more, but he had never resorted to extortion or caused trouble with his dealings. All this was of no avail. In late April 1750, Chen Yilao was pronounced guilty of "surreptitious crossings" (*toudu*), overstaying, rendering his services to a foreign government, doing business with it, making loans, cheating others out of their property and creating conflict on the border. This verdict was subsequently approved by the Board of Punishments, although not all these alleged crimes had been substantiated by evidence. He, his Makassarese wife and children were banished to the frontier. The four foreign servants were thought to be too young for repatriation and therefore kept in bondage to the officials who were now their masters.

All of Chen's money and goods were impounded by the government. The owner of the Longxi junk was sentenced to one hundred blows of the bamboo rod and three months' imprisonment, and his junk was confiscated. The owner of the fishing junk who smuggled Chen into his hometown was also given one hundred blows. A number of naval and local officials thought to be responsible for the situation were reprimanded for their "negligence of duty".<sup>8</sup>

This description of the case tends to suggest that the Qing government's negative attitude toward maritime trade and its overseas subjects was the main factor affecting Chen Yilao's punishment. Apparently, the Court also had strong objections to collaboration between its overseas subjects and foreign authorities. However, before we can grasp the implications of Chen Yilao's case, we need to approach it from a broader perspective. Therefore, the following questions will be re-examined in their proper context. First: How exactly did the Qing

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8. For the archival material, refer to Junji dang: Qianlong chao 乾隆朝軍機檔 [The Grand Council Records of the Qianlong Reign] (hereafter GCR: QL), deposited in the National Palace Museum Library, Taipei, nos. 4719, 4819, 4927, 5521, 5691 and 5942, especially Chen's deposition attached to document no. 5521. My special thanks to Professor Chuang Chi-fa 莊吉發 for alerting me to Chen Yilao's deposition. See also *Qing shilu: Gaozong/Qianlong chao* 清實錄: 高宗/乾隆朝 [Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty: Gaozong/Qianlong Reign] (hereafter *QSL: GZ*), *juan* 361: 17 and 364: 3b-4a.

government value its maritime trade? Second: In the eyes of the Court, what was the image of its Chinese subjects abroad? Third: Was the Qing Court prejudiced against its overseas subjects who were serving foreign authorities? The discussion of these aspects revolves around the underlying objectives of the Qing policy on these issues.

## Profit and Local Order

The Court's policy objectives were economic and political rather than ideological. After the pacification by the new dynasty of the Qing of the most stubborn resistance on the southeastern coast in 1683, the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662–1722) showed considerable restraint in not retaliating against the conquered maritime population. Instead, a positive approach was adopted to stabilize conditions in the coastal region. Clearly, he understood the heavy dependence of the littoral population on maritime trade for their livelihood and the positive contribution made to the economic well-being of the region by the sea merchants. In short, maritime trade was not solely an economic issue, but a means to achieve a political end. It was seen by the Court as a key factor in the social stability of the coastal region.<sup>9</sup>

While the Court was appreciative of the benefits to be derived from maritime trade, it was also wary of some detrimental effects the activity might have on internal security. The maritime ban imposed by the Kangxi Emperor in 1717 was a case in point. It was first mooted by the Emperor during his trip to Soochow the previous year, after he had been informed that many of the ocean-going vessels built there were sold overseas and that rice was being smuggled out to foreign countries. Both these acts would deprive the country of badly needed, scarce resources. Moreover, he was informed that Luzon and Batavia had become safe havens for many Chinese outlaws, who might pose a threat to the country's maritime defense (*haifang*). The Emperor expressed his apprehension in two consecutive edicts in early December 1716. He suggested that a ban on the trade with the Nanyang be imposed, although western ships would not be prohibited from arriving. Before a final decision was made, he wished to discuss the matter in person with the Tartar-General of Guangzhou (Canton), Guan Yuanzhong, the Governor-

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9. Ng Chin-keong, *Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), pp. 184–93; also Jane Kate Leonard, *Wei Yuan and China's Rediscovery of the Maritime World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 9, 64.

General of Zhe-Min, Man-pao, and the Governor-General of Liang-Guang, Yang Lin. Understandably, these high officials had no wish to query the Emperor's wisdom and in early March 1717 they formally memorialized him, requesting the imposition of a ban on trade with Luzon and Batavia.<sup>10</sup> Significantly the ban, that lasted until 1727, was intended to restrict only some parts of the Nanyang trade for economic and security rather than ideological reasons.

Kangxi's successors, Yongzheng (r. 1723–35) and Qianlong (r. 1736–95), were even more flexible in their dealing with matters relating to maritime trade, so long as the seafaring activities did not pose any threat to internal security. The first significant measure taken by the Yongzheng Emperor was the lifting of the 1717 ban in 1727. After it was rescinded, it is by no means true that the Court and its provincial officials loosened their strong grip on the traffic, but they certainly did become more appreciative of its economic benefits. By the mid-eighteenth century, maritime customs revenue had grown by leaps and bounds, so much so that both the Court and the provincial governments would have found themselves in troubled waters if they had had to forfeit it.

The two major maritime customs houses were located in Fujian and Guangdong. The trade revenue received in Fujian amounted to 106,656 *taels* in 1724, the second year of the Yongzheng reign.<sup>11</sup> At this time, the maritime ban imposed by the Kangxi Emperor was still in force. In 1728, one year after the ban was rescinded, an increase in revenue to 162,029 *taels* was recorded.<sup>12</sup> The figure passed the 200,000 *taels* mark when the Qianlong Emperor ascended the throne seven years later.<sup>13</sup> An increase of more than 50 per cent from the preceding figure was achieved by 1750, the 15th year of the Qianlong reign, when the amount shot up to 325,989 *taels*.<sup>14</sup>

In Guangdong, the maritime customs revenue totaled 97,294 *taels* in 1724.<sup>15</sup> This figure continued to rise, especially after the abrogation

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10. *Qing shilu: Shizong/Yongzheng chao* 清實錄：世宗/雍正朝 [The veritable records of the Qing Dynasty: Shizong/Yongzheng Reign] (hereafter *QSL: SZ*), *juan* 270: 9a–11b; *juan* 271: 2a, 4a–5a; see also Ng, *Trade and Society*, pp. 186–7.
  11. *Gongzhong dang Yongzheng chao zouzhe* 宮中檔雍正朝奏摺 [Secret Palace Memorials of the Yongzheng Reign] (hereafter *GZD: YZ*) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1977–80), Vol. 3, p. 850.
  12. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 12, pp. 416–7.
  13. GCR: QL, no. 7879.
  14. *Ibid.*
  15. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 3, p. 803.



of the ban in 1727. It increased to well above 300,000 *taels* by 1732.<sup>16</sup> Nearly two decades later, in 1750, the amount stood at 466,700 *taels*<sup>17</sup> and exceeded the 500,000 *tael* mark two years later.<sup>18</sup>

Each revenue receipt was composed of two parts. A fixed regular quota (*zheng e*) went to the Provincial Treasury to cover military expenses. A receipt issued by the Treasury would then be sent to the Board of Revenue with the account books. Another portion, the surplus quota (*yingyu*), was transferred to the imperial household through the Board of Revenue.<sup>19</sup> During the period in question, the regular quota for Fujian was fixed at 66,549 *taels*.<sup>20</sup> The amount for Guangdong was 43,564 *taels*.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the imperial household enjoyed the lion's share of the revenue, since the surplus quota far exceeded the regular quota.

How large was the maritime customs' revenue in proportion to the overall provincial income? Some figures are available for Fujian. These show that in 1726 the total provincial revenue stood at 1,410,000 *taels*, including the fixed regular quota contributed by the maritime customs.<sup>22</sup> Therefore the maritime customs revenue amounted to 4.7 per cent of the total provincial income. However, this percentage has excluded the "surpluses" of the revenue sent to the Court. In the same year, these surpluses amounted to 57,362 *taels*.<sup>23</sup> When this latter portion is incorporated into the total, the percentage rises to 8.4 per cent. It should also be borne in mind that, although the other sources of income, mainly from land and adult male poll tax (*diding yin*), were fairly stable throughout the period in question,<sup>24</sup> the surpluses in the maritime revenue continued to rise. The amount reached 112,156 *taels* in 1729 and 256,063 *taels* in 1750.<sup>25</sup> In this latter year, I estimate the total maritime revenue to have been around 20 per cent of the provincial

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16. *Gongzhong dang Qianlong chao zouzhe* 宮中檔乾隆朝奏摺 [Secret Palace Memorials of the Qianlong Reign] (hereafter *GZD: QL*) (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1977–80), Vol. 20, pp. 24–5.

17. *GCR: QL*, no. 6624.

18. *GZD: QL*, Vol. 6, p. 256.

19. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 3, pp. 803, 850; Vol. 7, p. 879; Vol. 10, p. 538.

20. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 3, p. 850.

21. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 20, pp. 843–4.

22. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 5, p. 835.

23. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 7, p. 879.

24. The land revenue for Fujian amounted to 1,174,445 *taels* in 1724; 1,050,000 *taels* in 1726 and 1,177,899 *taels* in 1753. See *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 5, p. 835; and *Qingchao wenxian tongkao* 清朝文獻通考 [A General Survey of the Qing Dynasty Literature] (reprint, Taipei, 1963), *juan* 3: 4873; *juan* 4: 4888.

25. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 16, p. 509; and *GCR: QL*, no. 7879.

earnings—a substantial proportion indeed, and one the authorities could not have afforded to ignore.

The total expenses for Fujian province in 1726 amounted to 1,470,000 *taels*, of which the military budget took up 1,350,000 *taels*.<sup>26</sup> There was a slight deficit in the balance of payments. Again, as shown, this does not truly reflect the financial status of the province because, when the surplus quota is included, it actually enjoyed a considerable annual surplus.

What were the maritime activities that contributed to the customs revenues of Fujian and Guangdong? In Fujian, the revenue was earned on coastal and overseas trade. Although the exact breakdown is not clear, it seems that the former was the major contributor, especially the contribution from the sugar trade. By comparison, in a prosperous year, the tax on the imported goods brought back from overseas on ocean junks was about 30,000 *taels*. In 1752, when the large number of 65 junks returned to Amoy from overseas, the total tax revenue amounted to around 40,000 *taels*.<sup>27</sup> The same number of junks departed from Amoy the following season but paid a sum of only 5,848 *taels* in tax. This latter figure was already higher than that of the previous year.<sup>28</sup>

The picture in Guangdong was different. It was repeatedly stated in the memorials to the Court that the Guangdong maritime customs revenue substantially depended on foreign ships.<sup>29</sup> The tax collected on each western ship upon its entry and departure was nearing 10,000 *taels*.<sup>30</sup> Western ships rarely visited Amoy, but during the period in question, they called at Huangpu (Whampoa), the anchorage for Canton. Seven ships were reported in the first year after the rescission of 1727.<sup>31</sup> In the following years the trend continued upward. Their number reached 13 in 1746<sup>32</sup> and 26 in 1753.<sup>33</sup>

As maritime earnings were on the rise, both the customs authorities and the Court were careful not to jeopardize this economic activity. To encourage an even more lively trade, from time to time the provincial authorities would make efforts to rectify excesses in official exactions.<sup>34</sup> Edicts to this effect were often issued to the customs authorities, reminding them of their duty to improve the conditions pertaining to the maritime

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26. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 5, pp. 835–6.

27. *GZD: QL*, Vol. 3, pp. 776–7.

28. *GZD: QL*, Vol. 5, p. 8.

29. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 8, pp. 559–60 and *GZD: QL*, Vol. 8, p. 765.

30. *GCR: QL*, no. 5779.

31. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 12, pp. 763–5.

32. *GCR: QL*, no. 3343.

33. *GZD: QL*, Vol. 6, p. 256.

34. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 5, p. 689; Vol. 13, p. 304.

customs. "To enrich the government revenue and facilitate commercial intercourse" (*yuke tongshang*) was among some of the popular phrases frequently appearing in the edicts and memorials.<sup>35</sup>

The composition of the maritime revenue does not adequately highlight the economic role of the Chinese overseas junk trade. Although the provincial authorities were concerned with the direct revenue from maritime trade, including coastal and overseas, native and foreign, they unquestionably also saw the smooth functioning of overseas junk trade as a guarantee of a stable social order in Fujian and Guangdong. Hence the junk traffic became a barometer of regional socioeconomic conditions.

Junks embarking from Amoy numbered from 21 to 30 in the first few years after the lifting of the ban.<sup>36</sup> By 1751, there were 50 to 70-odd junks plying between Amoy and the Nanyang annually.<sup>37</sup> Those trading between Guangdong and the Nanyang numbered 20-odd, 14 and 18 as reported in the memorials for the years 1731, 1733 and 1752 respectively.<sup>38</sup> In a memorial in 1733, Governor-General Hao Yulin estimated that each Fujianese ocean junk carried goods worth from 60,000 to well over 100,000 *taels*. Each year, the Fujianese junks brought back large quantities of foreign silver that totaled two to three million dollars.<sup>39</sup>

The government policy toward maritime trade was put to the test in the aftermath of the 1740 massacre of the Chinese residents in Dutch Batavia. Jennifer Cushman provides an excellent analysis of this event,<sup>40</sup> and therefore a brief summary of it will suffice here. One early response to the incident was made by Zeling, Acting Governor-General of Fujian. His reaction was to impose a total ban on the Nanyang trade to avoid any further trouble. When it received the news, the Court commanded its senior officials to make recommendations. Among the respondents, Censor Li Qingfang was in favor of only a partial ban in retaliation for the massacre because he believed a total ban would lead to a drastic fall in revenue and would also adversely affect the people's livelihood.<sup>41</sup>

Most significant is the well-analyzed memorial submitted by Qingfu, Governor-General of Liang-Guang. His presentation reached the Court

35. GCR: QL, no. 3686.

36. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 12, pp. 751–2; Vol. 21, pp. 353–5.

37. GCR: QL, no. 7414.

38. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 20, pp. 247–8; Vol. 22, p. 489; *GZD: QL*, Vol. 3, pp. 771–2.

39. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 21, pp. 353–4.

40. Jennifer Cushman, "Duke Ch'ing-fu Deliberates: A Mid-Eighteenth Century Reassessment of Sino-Nanyang Commercial Relations," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 17 (March 1978), pp. 137–56.

41. *Shiliao xunkan* 史料旬刊 [A weekly of historical documents] (reprint, Taipei, 1963), Vol. 18, 654a.

in March 1742. In it he strongly supported the continuation of overseas trade. As he argued, from the point of view of Guangdong, the livelihood of several hundred thousand people was at stake because they were dependent on foreign trade. Moreover, the fact that Chinese crew members numbering some ten thousand consumed rice imported from the Nanyang had greatly alleviated local grain shortages. A reinstatement of any trade prohibition would lead to widespread unemployment and impoverish the local economies. The loss of customs revenue might amount to only several hundred thousand *taels* annually, but the long-term effect on the people's livelihood would be immeasurable.<sup>42</sup>

On the basis of the deliberations among the senior officials, in late 1742 the Court accepted the recommendation and allowed foreign trade to continue as usual. As Jennifer Cushman concludes, the Court's decision "was based on a positive recognition of the needs of the maritime border".<sup>43</sup>

## Overstayers in Foreign Lands and Qing Policy

The Qing government's policy toward its seafaring population also sheds light on the case under review. When the maritime ban was imposed in 1717, it was initially handed down in conjunction with a decision that the foreign countries be asked for the repatriation of Chinese sojourners. Upon their return, the latter were to be immediately sentenced to death.<sup>44</sup> It seems that the ambiguity, severity and impracticability of the new ruling on the overseas sojourners had prompted the Court to give the decision further thought. The crux of the matter was the deep-seated apprehension that these people were potential troublemakers and they might sneak back and stir up unrest in local communities. There was no intention on the part of the Court to discriminate against seafaring people who genuinely sought their livelihood abroad, although making the distinction between the good people and the bad was by no means an easy task. In search of a solution to this problem, the Kangxi Emperor ordered the relevant authorities to come up with some suggestions.<sup>45</sup>

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42. Ibid., Vol. 22, 803a–805a.

43. Jennifer Cushman, "Duke Ch'ing-fu", p. 156.

44. *Qing shilu: Shengzu/Kangxi chao* 清實錄：聖祖朝 [The veritable records of the Qing Dynasty: Shengzu/Kangxi Reign], *juan* 271: 5a.

45. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 8, p. 836; Vol. 9, p. 567; also *Qingchao wenxian tongkao*, *juan* 33: 5159.

After deliberations between the Court and the senior officials in Guangdong and Fujian, a proposal was made whereby the Chinese sojourners who had left for the Nanyang before the ban were granted a period of grace of three years to report back to their native districts. Those overstayers who had departed after the ban would be prohibited from returning. The Emperor concurred with this recommendation.<sup>46</sup>

When the maritime ban was rescinded by the Yongzheng Emperor in 1727, the question of overstayers in the Nanyang came to the attention of the Court once again. It was found that, although more than two thousand illegal Chinese emigrants had taken advantage of the period of grace to return, many others still defied the law and remained in the Nanyang.<sup>47</sup> From the point of view of the Emperor, those who did not return showed a total disregard for the law. At this point, he felt that these sojourners should be ordered to come back within a fixed period. If the overstayers still refused to return, they had personally chosen to reside beyond the frontiers of their ancestral country and therefore they could stay put in the Nanyang, but would be permanently prohibited from returning. Yongzheng thought that if the government were to adopt a lenient attitude toward these law-breaking emigrants, this would only encourage the illegal exodus to the Nanyang. The officials in Guangdong and Fujian were once again instructed to make submissions on the matter. They were specifically commanded to prepare regulations and fix a period for the sojourners' return.<sup>48</sup>

In a joint memorial presented on October 23, 1727, Fujian Governor-General Gao Qizhuo, Fujian Governor Chang Lai and Guangdong Governor Yang Wenqian reviewed the situation in great detail. From the information they had gathered, it transpired that in its customs declaration an ocean junk might claim that it had 60 or 80 licensed passengers on board, including the crew and itinerant merchants, but the actual number could be around two to three hundred. Not infrequently, the total might even reach four to five hundred. The additional people were illegal emigrants who, upon their arrival in the Nanyang, would be the most likely to remain behind. Each illegal passenger was charged eight *taels* or more for the passage. More than two-thirds of them originated from Fujian; the rest came from Guangdong and other coastal provinces.

Accordingly, these senior officials stressed the need to stop what they called these "surreptitious crossings" immediately. They recommended the following measures. All seafaring people should seek a guaranty from

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46. *Qingchao wenxian tongkao*, juan 33: 5159.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Qingchao wenxian tongkao*, juan 33; 5159 and *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 8, p. 836.

their neighbors in their native district. A system of mutual responsibility was to be imposed on every three junks. Local officials were to prepare a register containing the particulars and thumbprints of all seafaring people. Only when these were done would they be issued licenses. To facilitate control, junks leaving Fujian for the Nanyang were to take Amoy as their port of embarkation and re-entry. For those leaving Guangdong, Humen was the designated checkpoint. Any person breaking the law was to be severely punished.

Questioned about these long-term sojourners in the Nanyang, the licensed Ocean Firms (*yanghang*) put their numbers in Batavia and Luzon at “tens of thousands”. Some had been appointed Chinese captains by these foreign governments so as to take over responsibility for local Chinese affairs. To verify this information, the provincial officials suggested that investigators be sent overseas. However, they deemed it inappropriate to dispatch officials for this task openly. They preferred to send capable personnel in the guise of merchants. Or, they even toyed with the idea of selecting some trustworthy merchants. It would be the duty of these people to collect information on the accurate number of overstayers in these two places, what they did there and why the foreign authorities were willing to take them in. Only with such intelligence could the provincial authorities tackle the problem of overseas sojourners and work out ways to lure or instruct them to come back.

In his comments, the Yongzheng Emperor agreed with these officials that no formal official missions should be dispatched as this would only arouse unnecessary suspicion among the foreign governments. Even when other personnel or merchants were assigned to perform these duties, their suitability should be thoroughly scrutinized. The Emperor also reprimanded the memorialists for misreading his mind. He said he in fact had no wish to allow the “long-term sojourners” to return. His great fear was that these “treacherous people” would one day sneak back and cause trouble.<sup>49</sup>

The memorialists again failed to understand what the Emperor meant by “long-term sojourners”. In their response to the imperial comments on February 17, 1728, they explained the complication caused by attempting to distinguish between the “long-term sojourners” and “recent emigrants”. This would only create confusion because returnees could claim to have been abroad only in recent years. Even the long-term sojourners would say they had traveled to the Nanyang before the imposition of the 1717 ban and, on these grounds, beg for clemency. To simplify the matter, the memorialists proposed that all sojourners, regardless of the length of the

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49. GZD: YZ, Vol. 8, pp. 836–8.

duration of their residence abroad, be allowed one year to return, failing which they would be deemed to have willingly abandoned their ancestral country, and hence they would be prohibited from ever returning again.<sup>50</sup>

In response, the Yongzheng Emperor stated that, since the ban had only recently been lifted, the regulations had to be strict so as to discourage further illegal emigration. Accordingly, all the unauthorized sojourners should be forbidden to come back.<sup>51</sup>

Despite all the tighter controls and additional restrictions, the problem of overstaying lingered on. People continued to smuggle themselves out of the country, intent on going to the Nanyang. Their numbers had probably even been rising and the provincial officials were particularly sensitive to any signs of restiveness. This apprehension is clearly reflected in a memorial submitted by Fujian Governor-General Hao Yulin in 1733. He reported that there were about 10 to 20 thousand Chinese in Luzon, whereas the local population (that is, the Spanish) numbered only around two to three thousand. Startling rumors that these Chinese sojourners were planning to take over Luzon by force had reached Governor-General Hao. The Yongzheng Emperor was greatly alarmed by the report. He agreed to Hao's proposal to forestall the trouble. They both saw the prevention of surreptitious crossings as an essential method to achieve this purpose.<sup>52</sup>

In early 1734, two cases of surreptitious crossings were reported in a joint memorial to the Court by Hao Yulin and Fujian Governor Zhao Guolin. Two South Fujianese maritime merchants, Chen Wei and Yang Ying, had been caught sneaking back with their families and foreign servants. During the trial, Chen Wei recounted that in 1714 he had taken tea leaves from Guangdong to trade in Batavia. In 1726 and again in 1729, he had returned to restock his trade in Batavia and, before leaving China again, he had managed to purchase an official title of Imperial Studentship from the Qing government. In 1733, Chen decided to return home for good in order to be near his aging mother. Yang Ying had invested 300 *taels* in tea leaves and ceramics and taken them from Guangdong to Batavia in 1728. He came back to obtain more supplies two years later.

Both Hao and Zhao commented on the cases. It was thought that, although Chen had left China before the ban of 1717, his second visit to restock in 1729 was a breach of law, because a year earlier the new regulations had stipulated that those who failed to return within the three-year period of grace for the 1717 ban would be prohibited from

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50. GZD: YZ, Vol. 9, p. 567.

51. *Qingchao wenxian tongkao*, juan 33: 5159.

52. GZD: YZ, Vol. 21, p. 353.

returning. When he did return for good, he did not possess a valid permit to do so. In Yang Ying's case, although he had gone to Batavia after the rescission of 1727, he had also broken the law by not having obtained a re-entry permit. Under the law on surreptitious crossings, both Chen Wei and Yang Ying were subject to punishment by one hundred strokes of a bamboo rod and a three-year banishment to the frontier. In their plea for leniency, they claimed to have always been law-abiding subjects both at home and abroad. Their engagement in maritime trade was but a means of making a living and their long sojourns in foreign lands arose from the exigencies of their businesses. They had not broken the law deliberately. To atone for their guilt, they willingly contributed 13,000 *dan* (picul) of grain out of their trade profit and undertook to build local granaries for famine relief. On account of their voluntary contribution to these charitable activities, Hao and Zhao recommended that they be pardoned. The Emperor readily approved.<sup>53</sup>

Four months before Yongzheng's death in 1735, Governor-General Hao and three other top provincial military and civil officials presented a joint memorial to the throne pleading for a relaxation of the existing maritime regulations relating to Chinese sojourners abroad. Earlier, these high-ranking officials had received petitions advocating this step from overseas Chinese, village elders, junk-owners and merchants of the licensed firms. After careful investigations, they found that most of the sojourners abroad were in fact law-abiding subjects. Their overstaying was caused largely by delays in business transactions. Some failed to return because they had suffered losses; others might have been tied up by landed properties.

These officials thought that in the implementation of the maritime regulations a distinction should be made between well-intentioned and less well-intentioned people. Only the latter should be dealt with severely. Those who had gone abroad before the 1717 ban and had valid reasons for overstaying should be allowed to come back with their families within a three-year period of grace.

In his comments, the Yongzheng Emperor maintained his earlier stance that the regulations must be strict as the government was operating an "open-ocean" (*kaiyang*) policy. Any relaxation of the regulations under these circumstances would only encourage greater disregard of the law.<sup>54</sup>

However, in 1736 the new Qianlong Emperor approved a recommendation by senior Court officials permitting pre-ban sojourners to return provided that they had valid reasons for their length of stay

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53. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 22, pp. 473–7.

54. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 24, pp. 393–6.



and had not broken other laws. After another submission the following year, Governor-General Hao obtained the Court's assent to allow the sojourners' overseas families to return.<sup>55</sup>

Generally speaking, the Qing authorities did make an attempt to distinguish between those whom they saw as bona fide sea merchants and deliberate long-term sojourners. The former were allowed to trade overseas, but had to return when their business was completed. Leniency was granted from time to time if they had overstayed because of the exigencies of business or other difficulties. However, the latter group was generally suspected by the Court to be miscreants who had voluntarily abandoned their ancestral country.

The Qing government's reaction to the 1740 massacre in Batavia offers a clear indication of the Court's reasoning and priorities in handling the affairs of its overseas subjects. Governor-General Qingfu considered those killed in the incident to have been the same people who were supposed to have been put to death in China for failing to heed the government's summons to return. They "made trouble overseas and were killed" and therefore "they deserved their fate". He also believed that, "the foreign headman did not have any intention of disrupting visiting (bona fide) merchants".<sup>56</sup> Governor-General Depei of Liang-Jiang likewise saw these sojourners as belonging to the same category as the local-born in the foreign countries because they had remained there for extended periods and hence, "they were no different to the barbarians".<sup>57</sup> Acting Governor-General Zeling looked upon the affair as highly regrettable, but commented that, "the calamity was brought upon themselves by way of retribution" because they had voluntarily abandoned their ancestral country and failed to react to the government's invitations to return.<sup>58</sup> Not surprisingly, their plight was of no concern to the Qing government.

At this juncture, the question of overstaying resurfaced. Traditionally, seafarers were required to return during the next monsoon and should not "overstay the winter" (*yadong*) in foreign countries. Should they do so, they would be deemed to have broken the law. For centuries this stipulation had caused the trading community great inconvenience and caused them hardships. It was one major source of grievance for the seafaring people. In the aftermath of the 1740 massacre in Batavia, the impracticability of this restriction had already come to the attention

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55. GZD: QL, Vol. 8, p. 138.

56. *Shiliao xunkan*, Vol. 22, 804a.

57. *Ibid.*, Vol. 18, 654b.

58. *Qingchao wenxian tongkao*, juan 297: 7465.

of Fujian Provincial Judge Wang Bilie and Min-Zhe Governor-General Nasutu. Wang proposed that vessels remaining overseas for more than two years should be barred from engaging in maritime trade after their return. Those who overstayed for more than three years should not even be allowed to depart from the seaport.<sup>59</sup> Nasutu considered two years insufficient; he believed that traders should be able to complete their transactions within three years. On November 1, 1742, the Court finally accepted the recommendation that trading junks be given three years' grace, after which the crew would be prohibited from sailing out again once they had returned.<sup>60</sup>

The evolution of Qing policy concerning overseas sojourners provides the legal background to Chen Yilao's case. One crucial point in the matter is the date of Chen's departure for Batavia. If his deposition is anything to go by, 1736 was the year he left Macao, a claim that was not refuted in the memorial that recorded Chen's deposition. However, confusion does arise from other memorials because Chen was said to have lived in Batavia for more than 20 years. In the latter case, he would have left Macao after the imposition of the ban in 1717. This would have put him in the wrong. Even if Chen had left in 1736, as he claimed, under the Qing Code he would still be considered to have committed the offense of having made a "surreptitious crossing" because he had not applied for a license to trade in the Nanyang. It is not clear why he did not obtain this paper as he supposedly would have been entitled to do under the existing regulations. After 1684, the Qing government did not obstruct the junk trade with the Nanyang with the exception of the period of the 1717 ban. Presumably, administrative complexities and hassles caused by rampantly corrupt practices among the officials in home districts and at the port of embarkation might have deterred small-timers from following the proper legal procedure to the letter. They simply could not afford the expense incurred in obtaining a license. In Chen Yilao's situation, a license would not have helped because it would not have allowed overstaying. Therefore, there was no way that he could have returned legally under the existing regulations. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that he could have arrived quietly without being hassled simply by bribing his way through, as many others did at the time. Even worse was to come. There were still precedents such as the two cases of Chen Wei and Yang Ying in 1734 that would have given leeway for his eventual pardon, but unfortunately, he got caught up in a rather "abnormal" situation.

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59. *Shiliao xunkan*, Vol. 18, 654a.

60. *QSL: GZ*, *juan* 176: 7b-8a; *juan* 282: 9a.

Chen Yilao's case had drawn the special attention of the locals and officials because he was a wealthy man and a former Chinese headman abroad. Therefore it tended to overshadow other actions taken by the local authorities against illegal returnees at this time. For instance, another seafarer named Lin Ti of Pinghe District was also detained. Lin had likewise just returned from Batavia, had brought several foreign servants with him and had sneaked into his native district.<sup>61</sup> His fate indicates that, at this particular time, local officials had tightened up the maritime control and were strictly adhering to the regulations.

The rigidity of the rules must have stirred up a great many grievances among the seafarers. This situation might have been what prompted Fujian Governor Chen Hongmou to appeal to the Court for rationalization on May 19, 1754. The fall-out from Chen Yilao's case was evident to the Fujian Governor. He was aware that the harsh verdict on Chen Yilao had already discouraged the Nanyang sojourners from returning. Included among them were those pre-ban seafarers who could have legally applied to come back under the new ruling of 1736, but now hesitated to do so.

Understandably, Governor Chen did not challenge the appropriateness of Chen Yilao's sentence. As he put it, "Chen Yilao willingly offered his services to a foreign government and, hence, could not possibly be a legitimate trader of good character. Sooner or later he would have become a troublemaker. His punishment was justified and necessary to prevent future disasters (presumably referring to the 1740 incident in Batavia) from happening."<sup>62</sup>

However, he argued that, after the ban was lifted in 1727, it was legal to trade in the Nanyang. If the Court were to persist in not allowing all the post-1717 sojourners to return, this would be tantamount to a legal departure but an illegal re-entry for many of them. This situation was not logical, either from a humanitarian or a legal point of view. Those who had remained in the Nanyang since 1717 were numerous and those who continued to travel there might have been held up for business reasons. These people were prevented by the law from coming back. The problem was that foreign merchants were allowed to trade in China and these differences in treatment could not be justified. The present policy would also not help alleviate any potential trouble that might be caused by the returning overseas Chinese.

On these grounds, Chen Hongmou suggested that since the ban had been lifted for more than 20 years, the Court should allow both the pre- and post-ban sojourners, including their families, to return, provided they

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61. GCR: QL, no. 4927.

62. GZD: QL, Vol. 8, p. 138.

were bona fide merchants of good character, and local officials should be warned against extorting any money or valuables from these returnees.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to the 1742 ruling giving trading junks a three-year grace period to return, Governor Chen Hongmou now recommended in unequivocal terms that three years also be allowed for other categories of overseas sojourning. Only those who stayed beyond this time limit should be prohibited from returning.

When Governor Chen's petition reached the Court, the Qianlong Emperor referred it to the Grand Council for comment.<sup>64</sup> In their reply on June 19, the Counselors thought that, since the maritime ban had long been lifted, since 1727 in fact, the Court should not hold fast to the old regulations. They believed that the proposed relaxation would not cause problems for coastal security. On the contrary, this would greatly help the legitimate traders of good character to avoid being stranded in foreign countries, whereas these people might make trouble after remaining overseas for a lengthy period. The Grand Counselors took an even more sympathetic view and remarked that the three-year deadline was unpractical because unforeseen circumstances could have delayed their return. In due course these overstayers would grow more numerous and their cases would have to be taken up again. This would only lead to a great deal of repetitive administrative work. Therefore the Counselors recommended that the authorities in the maritime provinces draw up regulations to facilitate the return of these overstayers. The Emperor granted his permission and the case was referred to the provincial authorities for comments.<sup>65</sup>

Having received the instruction from the Court, in their joint memorial dated September 6, 1754, Governor-General Yang Yingju and Governor Henian, both of Guangdong, gave their full endorsement to the new policy. They agreed that all sojourners with valid reasons, regardless of how long they had remained away, should be allowed to return. The property brought back by the returnees should also be protected against the exactions of the local officials. They noticed that many had been going abroad to trade under the "open-ocean" policy and hoped the proposed measures would facilitate the return of these overseas sojourners.<sup>66</sup>

This joint memorial from Guangdong was in turn referred to Grand Secretary Fu Heng and others for comments. These high-ranking officials

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63. *GZD: QL*, Vol. 8, pp. 138–40.

64. *GZD: QL*, Vol. 8, pp. 139–40.

65. *QLS: GZ*, *juan* 463: 17a–18a.

66. *GZD: QL*, Vol. 9, pp. 210–2.

supported the proposals and recommended that a proclamation to this effect be issued by the provincial authorities concerned.<sup>67</sup>

Could Chen Yilao have escaped his plight had he come back after the 1754 ruling? The overall socio-political atmosphere had indeed greatly improved by then. Nevertheless, the answer would have depended very much on how the authorities viewed his services under a foreign government during his sojourn in Batavia.

## Chinese Employed by Foreign Governments

As said, one of the alleged offenses committed by Chen Yilao was his official employment under a foreign government. This question is somewhat ambiguous in Qing policy toward its overseas subjects. In the first place, the Qing authorities were not consistent on this issue. The Siamese case provides one good example. Siam saw a marked rise in the Chinese population during the early Qing. In Ayudhya alone, there were already three thousand Chinese by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>68</sup> Whereas the Qing Court was often suspicious of Luzon and Batavia as havens for thousands of “treacherous” Chinese, it did not show the same concern about Siam.

In the Siamese tributary trade, it was Chinese who managed the ships and handled the transactions. Chinese individuals “staffed the apparatus at all levels: royal factors, warehousemen, accountants, captains, seamen, and customs officials”.<sup>69</sup> On one occasion, Guangdong Governor Yang Zongren reported to the Court that all the 156 crewmen on board a Siamese tributary ship calling in Canton were natives of either Fujian or Guangdong and, on these grounds, recommended their repatriation to their ancestral villages. However, on the advice of the Board of Rites dated December 13, 1721, the Kangxi Emperor allowed them to return to Siam on the condition that the Siamese king would repatriate them, their families and other Chinese residents to China at a convenient date.<sup>70</sup>

Apparently, this condition had never been fulfilled. The new Emperor, Yongzheng, ascended the throne shortly afterward and he later acquiesced in the Siamese argument that the Chinese in Siam were long-term residents with families there. In 1724, he granted clemency to 96 Chinese crewmen on board a tributary ship, allowing them to

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67. *QSL: GZ, juan 472: 12a–13a.*

68. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, p. 46.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

70. *QSL: SZ, juan 295, 7b.*

return to Siam with their ship. In short, the Emperor did not demand their repatriation. By his act of mercy, Yongzheng had set a precedent for overseas Chinese employed by the Siamese government.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, the ruling did not indicate if the same leniency would also be extended to those in other countries.

However, it is quite clear that, at this juncture, neither the provincial authorities nor the energetic Yongzheng Emperor had any intention of making a fuss about the issue of Chinese being employed by foreign governments. The support for this observation is given by another case involving a tributary mission from the Sulu Sultan. In 1726, Gong Tingcai arrived in China as Sulu's tribute-bearer. Gong, a native of Jinjiang District, Quanzhou Prefecture, Fujian, had first left for Luzon in 1712. Over a decade later, in 1725, he went to Sulu and was employed by the Sultan to be his emissary to China. The employment of a Chinese national as the tribute-bearer was interpreted by the Min-Zhe Governor-General, Gao Qizhuo, as a gesture of respect to China by the Sultan. The mission was well received and the Emperor himself also did not express disapproval of Gong's appointment.<sup>72</sup> Gong came again two years later representing the Sultan to express the latter's gratitude to the Emperor for the privileged treatment granted to the last mission.<sup>73</sup>

In 1742, another tributary mission was sent by Sulu, this time in the charge of Ma Guangming, a native of Tong'an, Fujian. Serving as interpreter was another Chinese named Chen Chaosheng. Both had changed their names during their sojourns overseas. Also included in the mission was a Sulu official, Lao-tu-han-min. Ma and Chen were veteran seafarers. They had arrived in Sulu in 1741 and were dispatched to China by the Sultan as his emissaries the following year. Again, this mission was accorded privileged treatment in China.

What had finally gone wrong was the next mission to Amoy in 1746. This time, the Sultan of Sulu, Ma-han-mo-a-bing-lao-ning, sent a native official named Wu-chu-an-li to accompany the former Chinese tribute-bearer, Ma, and interpreter Chen to lodge a complaint with the Chinese Emperor. In his Chinese-language memorial to Qianlong, the Sultan stated that, on their return to Sulu from the previous China mission two years ago, Ma and other officials were detained in Luzon by a Chinese Captain, Huang Zhan and the latter's two brothers, Huang Ling and Huang Han. Ling and Han were said to have since returned to their native village.

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71. Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit*, pp. 87, 161; also *Qingchao wenxian tongkao*, juan 297, p. 7462.

72. *GZD: YZ*, Vol. 6, pp. 515–6.

73. *GCR: QL*, no. 21.

Most of the imperial gifts, goods and silver money had been seized by the Huangs.<sup>74</sup> This complaint initiated a protracted diplomatic and legal tussle that lasted over the next two years.<sup>75</sup>

The Qing government made clear its outright refusal to intervene in a matter involving two foreign governments, but it felt outraged by the involvement of some Chinese nationals in the altercation. Ma Guangming and several other Chinese connected with the case were eventually brought to trial by the different levels of Fujian authorities. Having been granted privileged treatment as a tribute-bearer, Ma was found to have abused his authority by threatening his countrymen at home and refusing to settle his debts with some merchants in Amoy. In the latter case, Ma and his accomplices apparently calculated that the maritime firms would not want to jeopardize their relations with Sulu and confront the emissaries honored by the Chinese authorities. He also owed Huang Zhan money in Luzon. This let the cat out of the bag by revealing the real reason for the quarrel between the two. Instead of telling the truth, he had misled the Sultan of Sulu and fabricated a story for the Chinese authorities. Ma was found guilty and sent into penal servitude on the frontier. Interpreter Chen was given one hundred strokes of the bamboo rod in addition to a three-year prison term. The Sultan of Sulu was also implicitly reprimanded for trusting the wrong persons.

The provincial authorities were instructed by Qianlong to explain to Sultan Ma-han-mo-a-bing-lao-ning that China was punishing its own subjects and, as a consequence, the Sultan should not have any hard feelings about the matter. One Sulu official, Duan-jan-mo, who was also implicated in the scandal, was repatriated to Sulu to allow the Sultan to deal with him at his discretion. The Sultan later informed the Chinese authorities that Duan-jan-mo had been duly punished by him.

During the trial, it was found that Captain Huang Zhan's clan uncle, Huang Zhao, had been a Chinese captain in Luzon at an earlier date. The latter had gone to Luzon in 1717 and became a Chinese Captain four years later. He returned home for good in 1727, presumably taking advantage of the rescission of the ban. Like many other prosperous merchants of his time, he purchased the official title of Imperial Studentship for three generations.<sup>76</sup> It is unlikely that his overseas activities were not known to the local officials, whose endorsements would have been required for

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74. GCR: QL, Sultan Ma-han-mo-a-bing-lao-ning to the Qianlong Emperor.

75. For details, see GCR: QL, nos. 21, 183, 762, 1256, 1352, 1567, 1924, 2802, 2803 and 9100; *Shiliao xunkan*, Vol. 24, pp. 864–7, 878b–879a; and *CSL, DZ*, Ch. 281, pp. 25–7; Ch. 282, pp. 8–10; Ch. 300, pp. 5–7.

76. *Shiliao xunkan*, Vol. 24, pp. 864–5.

his application to purchase an official title, and yet his former official appointment in Luzon did not seem to have caused him problems.

Huang Zhao was not the only one who had formerly served a foreign government in one of the two supposedly troublesome spots, Luzon and Batavia, and returned to China without being subjected to punishment. Several overseas Chinese who served the Dutch authorities in Batavia also returned safely to their ancestral country. Guo Junguan (or Queeconko in Dutch records) was appointed Chinese Captain in 1685. According to the *Kai ba lidai shiji* (A Chronicle of Batavia), he took leave of absence to return to China for three years. He was back in Batavia in February 1690 and was appointed to the Board of Estate-Executors, a post he probably held until his death in 1694.<sup>77</sup> Another example is He Lianguan (Ho Lienko in Dutch records), a Chinese Lieutenant appointed in 1707. He returned to China after his retirement.<sup>78</sup> The most revealing is the case of Lian Lianguang (Ni Lienkong), who served as a member of the Board of Estate-Executors. His brother, Lian Fuguang (Ni Hoekong), was a Chinese Captain of Batavia at the time of the 1740 tragedy. The two brothers were made the scapegoats for the atrocity and arrested and put on trial by the Dutch authorities. Although the Captain was later banished to Ambon (he had earlier requested to return to China), Lian Lianguang was cleared of the charges and released.<sup>79</sup> The *Kai ba lidai shiji* records his return to his ancestral country in 1742.<sup>80</sup> As far as I can tell from the sources available, his homecoming did not cause a stir among the Chinese officials, even at a very sensitive time when the high-ranking officials were involved in long deliberations on how the Court should react to the tragedy.

## Tightening the Grip

The tribute-bearer incident was just one more addition to many other security problems making themselves felt in Fujian in the later part of the

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77. *Kai ba lidai shiji jiaozhu ben* 開吧歷代史記校注本 [The Early Account of Chinese in Batavia (Revised and annotated edition)], reprint, *Nanyang xuebao* 9, 1 (June 1953): 15, 18, 33–5; see also B. Hoetink, “Chineesche officieren”, p. 8 for Guo’s appointment to the Chinese Captaincy.

78. *Kai ba lidai shiji*, pp. 16, 33; and B. Hoetink, “Chineesche officieren”, p. 88. There is a discrepancy in the two sources. Lieutenant He’s retirement date is recorded as 1685 in the former.

79. The events are fully discussed in B. Hoetink, “Ni Hoekong, Kapitein der Chineezzen te Batavia in 1740”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indie* 74 (1918): 447–518.

80. *Kai ba lidai shiji*, pp. 45, 46.



1740s. Most serious among the latter were the propagation of the Roman Catholic faith by foreign priests and secret-society activities. These problems were exacerbated by the memory of the Batavia massacre that still remained fresh. These developments had undoubtedly contributed to the growing paranoia among the officials.

The “Roman Catholic incident” occurred in mid-1746 when it was reported that several western priests had successfully converted more than 2,600 Chinese natives in Fu’an District, northern Fujian. Their success had indeed greatly alarmed the Fujian authorities. In a retaliatory crackdown, one priest named Bai-duo-lu (Father Pedro) was executed later in the year, and four others were retained on death row. In late 1747, a Spanish ship called in Amoy to trade. Its captain made inquiries about the case, and some Roman Catholic priests spent time contacting the Chinese converts. The officials began to suspect the motives behind the voyage. Consequently, the government decided to carry out the death sentences on the other four and intensify its persecution of the Chinese converts in Fujian in the next two years. In the process, the Court reminded the provincial authorities to be on full alert against contacts between the local people and foreign countries.<sup>81</sup>

In 1748, the Fujian provincial authorities were also repeatedly reprimanded by the Court for their failure to put down secret-society activities. After the arrival of the new Governor, Pan Siju, relentless suppression of these covert organizations began in March.<sup>82</sup>

By early 1749, both Governor-General Ga’erjishan and Governor Pan Siju already had their hands full with security problems. They were also obviously feeling the heavy pressure exerted by the Court. They saw that the root of many of the problems lay in surreptitious crossings and foreign connections. Troubles caused by the Chinese sojourners in the Nanyang had also put the Chinese authorities on high alert. As a result, a set of regulations including the following four aspects was presented to the Court for endorsement. Firstly, local security units (*baojia*) were given the responsibility of preventing surreptitious crossings. Secondly, all those who returned after a long absence had to be reported to the local authorities and were subject to arrest and interrogations. Thirdly, all seafaring people were to be issued licenses that would be closely examined upon their departure and again on their return. Fourthly,

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81. GCR: QL, nos. 1556, 1568, 1992, 2360, 2368, 3142, 3337, 4041 and 5270; also QSL: GZ, *juan* 267: 25; *juan* 269: 24; *juan* 271: 2–3; *juan* 275: 19–20; *juan* 310: 4a; *juan* 315: 8–9.

82. See, for example, GCR: QL, nos. 2261 and 4550; and QSL: GZ, *juan* 311: 9–10.

coastal patrols were to be stepped up.<sup>83</sup> These regulations were merely a redrafting, re-affirmation and elaboration of the existing rules, typical of the bureaucratic approach to problems of this kind. As the Qianlong Emperor once commented in a reproachful tone, instead of implementing existing laws effectively, the officials tended to draw up more regulations.<sup>84</sup>

At this juncture, suffice it to say that the provincial authorities were highly sensitive to any activities that might be perceived to threaten local stability. The steady flow of alarming security reports reminded the provincial authorities and the Court of the need to tighten up surveillance. It was at this tense and unfortunate moment that Chen Yilao happened to return and present himself to scrutiny by local officials. The provincial authorities cited Ma's case, which they considered was similar in nature to that of Chen Yilao. During the trial, the officials might have felt disappointed at failing to uncover concrete evidence to prove their suspicion that Chen had been a troublemaker in Batavia. Since their report is silent about this incident, they must have realized Chen's absence from the scene during the 1740 outbreak. Nevertheless, from the purely legal point of view, the offence of surreptitious crossings was already serious enough to convince the Court that Chen could not possibly be of good character and, therefore, the rest of the alleged crimes, though unproved, were believed to be genuine.<sup>85</sup> Huang Zhao and others who had returned before this turbulent period were not subjected to the same trauma that Chen Yilao had to undergo. I would, therefore, speculate that, had Captain Lian Fuguang also returned, say in 1744, before the security problems had got quite out of hand, he would not have suffered the form of punishment handed down to Chen. The upshot is that one can only lament that Chen Yilao should have chosen such "an inauspicious moment" to make his trip.

The repercussions of the unrest were still being felt during the next few years. In fact, Chen Yilao's plight repeated itself in 1754 when another Fujianese named Yang Dacheng was banished to Heilongjiang for acting as the Deputy Emissary in the Sulu mission.<sup>86</sup> The timing of Yang's case was so close to Chen's that it was difficult for the officials to sidestep it. The Governor of Fujian, Chen Hongmou, who was about to make his appeal to the Court for a further relaxation of the maritime regulations, originally recommended a much lighter sentence, namely: that Yang be

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83. GCR: QL, no. 4013.

84. *QSL: GZ, juan 441*: 3b.

85. GCR: QL, no. 5521.

86. *QSL: GZ, juan 457*: 5b–6b; also Sarasin Viraphol, *Trade and Profit*, p. 163.

repatriated to his native district to be put under the surveillance of the local officials. However, this was overruled by the Board of Rites on March 11, 1754 and the heavier sentence of banishment was proposed instead and approved by the Emperor. The sources reveal that Yang was punished for some other complications rather than for his foreign official function. He had originally been a holder of a second-level military degree, but was dismissed for committing offenses. He then became an overseas trader, using a different name (that heightened the officials' doubts about his character) and was later appointed Deputy Emissary to China by the Sulu Sultan. His post was interpreted as a camouflage for his misdeeds. His record proved to the Chinese authorities that he was an unscrupulous character and consequently a potential troublemaker. Nevertheless, the officials did not link his foreign position to the matter of security leaks.

By this point, the turbulent conditions were nearing their end. One indication of this change is given in the *Kai ba lidai shiji*. It records the return of another former Batavian Chinese Captain, Huang Shi'nao (Oeij Tsjilauw) after his dismissal. Huang had been appointed to the position in 1750. He was later imprisoned and dismissed by the Dutch authorities in 1755 for failing to settle his debt with another Chinese.<sup>87</sup> Despite what he must have heard about Chen Yilao's fate, he seemed to have been confident about his chances of returning safely by taking advantage of the conditions on the China coast returning back to normal in the wake of Governor Chen Hongmou's petition. I assume that he had landed safely because no hints in the sources indicate the contrary.

## Concluding Reflections

Chen Yilao had indeed broken the law on "surreptitious crossings". His official position with a foreign government also implicated him more deeply in treachery on account of the assumption that, in this capacity, he must have leaked his country's security information to foreigners. However, the legality question should be examined in its proper context to understand both its implications and the true picture of the trade environment.

During the reigns of Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianglong, maritime regulations were introduced from time to time, often as expedient measures to deal with problems as they arose. They had become so

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87. *Kai ba lidai shiji*, pp. 16, 49–51. In this source he is said to have been appointed in 1751; but 1750 is given as the date of his appointment in B. Hoetink, "Chineesche officieren", p. 8.

numerous and labyrinthine that to abide by all of them was akin to achieving the impossible. Seafarers would have inevitably felt constrained and could easily have become ensnared in the plethora of Byzantine regulations. Nevertheless, the laws were not as terrifying under “normal” conditions, principally because the implementation of these complex and rigid regulations would certainly have jeopardized the smooth functioning of maritime trade, a consequence the Qing Court wanted to avoid at all costs. As explained by Jane Kate Leonard, the government was preoccupied with internal security on the coast. It recognized that “local order was dependent on the economic well-being of the region” and the junk trade “was the backbone of the coastal economy and essential for the economic and political order of the coastal region”.<sup>88</sup> In addition to the security concern, we should also highlight another factor, namely the substantial amount obtained from maritime revenue. By the 1730s and 1740s, the government had evidently grasped the fact that maritime trade not only contributed to the general well-being of the people, but was also an increasingly important source of revenue for the imperial household as well as the coastal provinces. The benefits of maritime trade were so highly valued that even the upset of the Batavia tragedy had not disrupted the Qing’s “open-ocean” policy. Therefore, despite their legality, the harsh security regulations were somewhat anachronistic. On a practical level, the government also lacked both an effective bureaucracy and a naval patrol to enforce the laws. This complex situation led to the working out of a *modus operandi* between the officials and the trading community. It consequently created a politico-economic environment in which irregularities became normal.

Furthermore, the irregularities were nurtured by the rampant corruption of the government officials. However, the question of corruption is complex and cannot be understood by simply taking the explicit meaning of the word. The best description of this phenomenon is given by Niels Steensgaard in his insightful phrase: “the protection costs”. In the operation of maritime trade, protection costs played an important role in making affairs run smoothly.<sup>89</sup> Falling under this category are numerous “legal”, “semi-legal” and “extra-legal” exactions imposed by local and provincial officials. These constituted some important expenses to be paid by the maritime traders and formed a substantial part of their

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88. Jane Kate Leonard, *Wei Yuan*, pp. 9, 64 and 71.

89. For this aspect, I am indebted to the insights given in Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), Ch. 2.

investment. In return for these “investment costs”, restrictive regulations would be bypassed. A tacit understanding was then reached between the officials and the seafarers as to how maritime affairs should actually be conducted. This *modus operandi* provided the seafarers with a more or less “predictable” trade environment. Despite all its long-term detrimental effects on the development of trade, it was seen by the seafarers as the lesser of two evils and it served their immediate interests well. This was the situation that Chen Yilao and other seafarers had confidently believed they could manipulate.

This leads to the question: Was there a reversal of the Qing policy during Chen Yilao’s case in which the local authorities and the Court seemed to have re-activated all the prohibitive rulings? In fact, there was no such development during the latter part of the 1740s, except that the security concerns and over-sensitiveness on the part of the government temporarily underwent a sort of storm surge and had gone overboard. Therefore, one can say for certain that, unlike the case of the 1717 ban, there was no renewal of maritime prohibition at the time of Chen’s case.

Moreover, Chen Yilao was punished not exactly because of his capacity as a sea merchant. He had been made a scapegoat by the local and provincial officials to cover up their own incompetence to maintain law and order in an emergency situation. Often, whenever there were signs of restiveness on the local scene, the officials would retreat to protect themselves by adhering strictly to the anachronistic regulations. Fearing reprimands from the Emperor or feeling an urgent necessity to show their vigilance and ability to control the situation, they might even propose additional measures to the Court to deal with the irregularities. This was precisely the situation in Fujian at the time of Chen Yilao’s return. A victim of circumstance, he was a “big fish” whom the officials were just waiting to catch for presentation to the Court. In short, the incident occurred not as a result of any change in the Court’s perception of maritime trade or of a shift to a more restrictive trade policy.

The Chen Yilao incident reveals the limitations of Chinese maritime trade and the plight of its seafarers. Obviously the government’s self-restraint and the marginal adjustments in policy had not brought about any institutional change. Control and restrictions remained the main pillars of the maritime policy. Few initiatives had been taken by the government to promote trade or reward entrepreneurship. The trade expansion that occurred in the period in question cannot be seen as the outcome of an active and purposeful policy. Instead, it had been made possible by the dynamic spirit of the maritime population, despite all the constraints imposed by the government. Unquestionably, although the Court could see the benefits of the enterprise, it also harbored fears about

its political side effects. The maritime revenue that the Court valued had lost its power to act as a stimulus. It had not made the Court commit itself firmly to the development of this enterprise. Instead, the Court seemed to be content with a passive approach, competing against its corrupt maritime officials to exact even more profit from the latter's share. What about the seafarers? The Court was aware of their indispensable role in maritime trade, yet it could not shake off its negative image of these people, especially the overseas sojourners, as lawbreakers and potential troublemakers. Not surprisingly, the authorities continued to be suspicious of and apathetic toward their overseas subjects.

The inherent weaknesses in the institution pointed toward a pattern of ad hoc solutions to problems. The government for its part did not venture beyond marginal adjustments within the existing framework, whereas for their part the more successful merchants tended to invest in bribery and often purchased official titles at the expense of productive investment. The latter were simply pawns in the hands of the officials and depended on the mercy of the state. Consequently, both sides became prey to the inertia of the status quo, deprived of the daring initiatives essential to a healthy development of trade policies and organizations.

The seafarers were often complacent and even cherished an illusion about their conditions, tending to ignore the element of unpredictability. Chen Yilao was caught unprepared by the periodic and sudden tightening-up of the rules of the game and fell prey to the system.

## CHAPTER 14

# **“Are These Persons British or Chinese Subjects?”<sup>1</sup>—Legal Principles and Ambiguities Regarding the Status of the Straits Chinese as Revealed in the Lee Shun Fah Affair in Amoy, 1847**

### **Introduction**

An early Chinese settlement had existed in Malacca on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula since the fifteenth century. Together with Penang, founded in 1786, and Singapore, founded in 1819, the British established the Straits Settlements, composed of the three colonies, in 1826. There was a large amount of trade between the Straits Settlements and China. By the 1850s, the most important branch of the trade of Amoy (Xiamen) was with the Straits Settlements.<sup>2</sup>

This commercial development created new business and job opportunities in the Straits Settlements and attracted massive numbers of Chinese migrants, the majority from the Amoy region in Fujian, flocking to these British colonies as traders or laborers. Compared to the earlier generations of migrants, the more recent arrivals retained very close connections with their ancestral country. This advantage enabled them to become the pioneering groups of active agents in the trade with China among the local-born people of Chinese descent. Not surprisingly, while they were in Amoy, they would seize the opportunity to go to the interior to visit their families or native clansmen. The other group of local Chinese was made up of the descendants of earlier migrants from

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1. Consul Layton in Amoy was puzzled by the question of his consular jurisdiction. See Great Britain, Foreign Office, FO 663/54, T.H. Layton to Samuel George Bonham, July 19, 1848.
  2. FO 663/10: Amoy, April 15, 1853.

Malacca. They would soon become prominent merchants among the Chinese in Singapore and substantial investors in the China trade.

The local-born descendants of the Chinese migrants in the Straits Settlements were known as the Straits Chinese. As the British Consul in Amoy, T.H. Layton, explains in 1848:

The [local-born] persons [from the Straits Settlements] ... are the Chinese, or Anglo-Chinese, Natives of the British Colonies, or Settlements, of Singapore, Penang and Malacca ... within the dominions of the Crown of England ....

The Fathers of these people, and in some cases their grand-fathers, migrated from China, chiefly from Amoy to these settlements; and in Singapore alone the number of Chinese is estimated at 20,000 of whom probably one fifth has been born in the Colony, their mothers usually being Malay women.

Of these persons, and their sons, many by their enterprise and industry, have acquired wealth and influence in these colonies. They are owners of land and houses, they are ship-owners and capitalists, and some on the grand and petty juries.

Their ships are constantly freighted to, and numbers of them annually visit Amoy, between which place and the Straits of Malacca, a large trade is carried on. At Amoy they all belong to some particular clan and there reside their relations. There is scarcely a family in the island [of Amoy] which is not connected with the British Settlements, or the Dutch and Spanish settlements in the East.<sup>3</sup>

After the opening of the five treaty ports in 1843, the growing Anglo-Chinese community played an important role in the import-export and coolie trades with coastal China. In Amoy, the Straits Chinese outnumbered the natives of Great Britain. Of the total of 53 British subjects registered at the Consulate in 1846, for example, 27 were Anglo-Chinese from the Straits Settlements. In 1847 there were 16 Anglo-Chinese among the 35 British subjects in Amoy. In 1848, the British subjects there included 13 natives of Great Britain, 4 of British India, and 26 of Chinese ethnicity from the Straits Settlements.<sup>4</sup> On February 9, 1851, the Intendant for the Xing[hua]-Quan[zhou]-Yong[chun] Circuit, Zhang Xiyu, received a dispatch from the British Consulate in Amoy with a list

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3. FO 663/54, Layton to Bonham, no. 39, July 19, 1848.

4. John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842–1854* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 215.



of 60 registered Straits Chinese.<sup>5</sup> Many of these Straits Chinese were sojourners in Amoy. For instance, the 27 registered in 1846 had all returned to the Straits by the beginning of the following year,<sup>6</sup> just as another group of visiting Straits Chinese were arriving. Although a number of them were traders, some of these Straits Chinese were employed at the British Consulate since they were multi-lingual in the local dialect, Mandarin and English. They acted as interpreters between the consular and the Chinese officials.<sup>7</sup> These Straits Chinese also undertook the task of supercargo on board the vessels from the Straits.<sup>8</sup>

These Chinese born in the Settlements were considered by Consul Layton to be the subjects of Her Britannic Majesty and as such they were told to register themselves at the Consulate upon their arrival.<sup>9</sup> In his classic work, *Trade and Diplomacy*, published some 60 years ago, John K. Fairbank devotes five paragraphs to the question of Britain's control over its Chinese subjects in coastal China in general and at Amoy in particular.<sup>10</sup> He highlights the confusing and conflicting issue of dual nationality that was prevalent in Amoy. "True to its legal principles", as Fairbank remarks, "the British government undertook to protect them."<sup>11</sup> The Chinese authorities were prepared to give up jurisdiction over them, provided they "should strictly avoid wearing Chinese dress while in China".<sup>12</sup> The British authorities also stipulated that these British subjects "would forfeit British protection if they penetrated the interior beyond treaty limits, and ... they were liable to all the treaty regulations regarding smuggling and the like".<sup>13</sup>

Another author, E. Tang, discusses the same issue with respect to the status of Chinese British subjects from the Straits Settlements in China. Notwithstanding the time frame given in his title, 1844–1900, he restricts himself almost entirely to events after 1865. Tang's essay shows the continuation of the Sino-British dispute about the nationality question in the later decades of the nineteenth century. He concludes that:

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5. FO 677/26, no. 16, April 18, 1851, Imperial Commissioner-cum-Governor-General of Liang Guang Governor-General Xu Guangjin to British plenipotentiary Samuel George Bonham, no. 16, April 18, 1851.
  6. FO 663/49: Amoy, Layton to Davis, February 6, 1847.
  7. FO 663/49: Amoy, Henry Gribble to Henry Pottinger, January 1, 1844.
  8. FO 663/49, G.G. Sullivan to Davis, November 26, 1845.
  9. FO 663/54, Layton to Bonham, no. 39, July 19, 1848.
  10. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, pp. 215–7.
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
  12. *Ibid.*
  13. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

... there were serious inconsistencies in the British policy of protection towards the Chinese British subjects from the Straits Settlements in China. One evident reason for such a tendency was that the simple-sounding concept of “British policy” was the result of the complex interplay of personalities, interpretations of law, long-term national objectives and short-term local needs and pressures.<sup>14</sup>

Two essays on the question of British protection of its Straits-Chinese subjects have also been written by Murakami Ei. His earlier piece of work discusses the Chinese returnees to Amoy after the opening of the treaty ports in China. He covers the time period 1842–60. Having briefly mentioned a couple of incidents involving Chinese returnees in the first few years after Amoy became a treaty port, his discussion focuses on the rebellion of a secret-society organization, the Small-Sword Society, in Amoy in 1853. The fact that a number of its core members were returnees from Singapore caused the British Consulate to intervene after their arrests by the local Chinese officials. As Murakami sees it, owing to the failures of the local Chinese officials to safeguard the returnees’ personal safety and protect their property, the latter would look to the British Consulate for protection.<sup>15</sup> In his second piece of work, the same author elaborates in great detail on the question of protection of British Chinese subjects in Amoy in the late Qing era, beginning in 1860. He observes that the option to seek British protection was not on account of the “charm of the British modern institution”, rather it was for what could best serve their interests during their presence in China. In most of the cases, neither the Qing nor the British officials had offered them effective assistance or protection.<sup>16</sup>

In this chapter, I intend to trace the dispute to the cases that occurred in the first few years after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking between Great Britain and Qing China in 1842. It focuses on the Lee Shun Fah affair in Amoy in 1847 and proposes to shed light on the Sino-British

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14. E. Tang, “The Status in China of Chinese British Subjects from the Straits Settlements: 1844–1900”, *Papers on Far Eastern History* 3 (March 1971): 205.

15. Murakami Ei, “*Gokō kaikōki Amoi nioharu kikoku kakyō*” 五港開港期廈門における歸国華僑 [The Chinese returnees in Amoy after the opening of the five treaty ports], 「東アジア近代史」 (*Journal of Modern East Asian History*), no. 3 (2000): 112–30.

16. Murakami Ei, “Qing mo Xiamen de Ying ji huaren wenti” 清末廈門的英籍華人問題 [The question of the British Chinese subjects in Amoy during the late Qing era], in 森時彦, *Ershi shiji de zhongguo shehui* 二十世紀的中國社會 [Chinese society in the twentieth century], trans. Yuan Guangquan 袁廣泉 (China: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2011), Vol. 1, pp. 209–10.

perceptions of the nationality issue and the complexity in Sino-British diplomacy.

Prior to the signing of the Peking Conventions in 1860 in the aftermath of the Arrow or Second Opium War that broke out in 1856, diplomatic correspondence between China and foreign nations was expected to be written in the Chinese language. Therefore, a large quantity of such Chinese documents was kept in the Foreign Office files originally sent from the British consular officials in China and transmitted to the British Foreign Office as enclosures through the British plenipotentiary in Hong Kong, concurrently the chief superintendent of British trade in China and governor of Hong Kong. These Chinese-language documents, especially those between the consular and the Chinese local officials, provide first-hand information about the frontline diplomatic entanglements in the treaty port. This section of the British Foreign Office documents, that has not been adequately used in the previous studies on the issue, will form the bulk of sources for the discussion.

## The Dual Nationality Problem

The intention to extend the judicial powers of the British plenipotentiary in Hong Kong and the consular officials in the treaty ports over the British subjects in China developed into a contentious issue in British relations with Imperial China.<sup>17</sup> Article XIII of the General Regulations published on July 22, 1843, that forms part of the Supplementary Treaty of October 8, 1843, subsequent to the signing of the Nanking Treaty at the end of the Opium War, stipulates that:

Regarding the punishment of English criminals, the English Government will enact the laws necessary to attain that end, and the Consul will be empowered to put them in force; and regarding the punishment of Chinese criminals, these will be tried and punished by their own laws, in the way provided for by the

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17. The early intention to extend such judicial power even before the pre-Opium War can be seen, for example, from a document that contains the opinion of the Crown Law Officials on the protection of British subjects in China. See *Law Officers' Opinions to the Foreign Office, 1793–1860: A Reproduction of the Manuscript series with Index and Commentaries*, prepared and edited by Clive Parry (Westmead, England: Gregg International Publications Ltd., 1973), September 17, 1836.

correspondence which took place at Nanking after the concluding of the peace.<sup>18</sup>

The Supplementary Treaty did not specifically mention the status of the Straits-born Chinese British subjects, an omission that very soon gave rise to the dual nationality problem in coastal China. Furthermore, there was one other relevant article of the Supplementary Treaty that had crucial implications in the emerging conflicts between the two nations relating to the Straits returnees in China, even when their status as British subjects had been established. Article VI of the Supplementary Treaty states that:

It is agreed, that English merchants and others residing at, or resorting to, the five Ports to be opened shall not go into the surrounding Country beyond certain short distances to be named by the local Authorities, in concert with the British Consul, and on no pretence for purpose of traffic.... [S]hould any persons whatever infringe the stipulations of this Article and wander away into the Country, they shall be seized and handed over to the British Consul for suitable punishment.<sup>19</sup>

One of the first cases involved the seizure of a Straits Chinese, Wee Cheong Shan, from Malacca in 1844, when he was trading in Ningbo. Consul Robert Thom argued, and John Francis Davis, the British Plenipotentiary and Chief British Trade Superintendent in China and governor of Hong Kong, agreed, that in this British subject “there was nothing Chinese but his name and his origin”.<sup>20</sup> There are two other aspects emerging from this case that warrant some attention. First, the British consular intervention in it reveals a broader concern for British trade interests. As Davis put it:

A very principal portion of the British Trade to be expected at the Northern Ports is raw produce from the Straits, and if pretexts are fallen upon by the Chinese Government to interfere with this in favor of their own Junks, they must be effectually resisted.<sup>21</sup>

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18. “General Regulations, Under Which the British Trade is to be Conducted at the Five Ports of Canton, Amoy, Fuchow, Ningpo, and Shanghai”, in *China, Imperial Maritime Customs, Treaties, Conventions, Etc., between China and Foreign States*, Vol. 1, 1908, p. 196.

19. “Supplementary Treaty Signed by Their Excellencies Sir Henry Pottinger and Ki Ying Respectively, on the Part of the Sovereigns of Great Britain and China, at the Bogue, 8th October 1843”, in *China, Imperial Maritime Customs*, Vol. 1, p. 200.

20. FO 663/8: Amoy, Davis to R. Thom, August 1, 1844.

21. *Ibid.*

The usefulness of the Straits Chinese in serving British trade interests in China easily explains why the British were concerned to offer protection to this class of British subjects. They were familiar with the trade conditions in coastal China, and they also possessed the essential business networks in their ancestral country. This leads to another aspect of the case concerning the protection of these people in China. It was against this backdrop that Davis explored the possibility of asking all persons who found themselves in the situation of Wee Cheong Shan “to wear the English dress during the stay of their ship in port”, so that they would be free of molestation. He explained:

The seizure of a person of this description by the Chinese Government while on shore in his Chinese dress might lead to very serious discussions, as his protection would be absolutely incumbent on the British Authority.<sup>22</sup>

There were other situations in which the British consular officials felt it necessary to provide protection for Chinese considered to be British subjects. For instance, a Singapore Chinese, Chan Chao, requested the help of the Consul in Amoy, G.G. Sullivan, to recover a loan of \$234 from someone in Haicheng district.<sup>23</sup> In another case, a Straits-registered vessel had drifted ashore at Dongshan on the south Fujian coast. It was boarded by “robbers” from the nearby villages. The owner of the vessel and cargo, who was a Penang Chinese named Kan Kwang-euh, made many representations to Consul Sullivan for the recovery of his lost property.<sup>24</sup> Exaction by the native Chinese also caused problems for the returning Straits Chinese. A Singapore Chinese, Guo Qinghao, arrived in Amoy on board a vessel owned by another Straits Chinese. He had been asked by a Straits Chinese, Cai Changgeng, to bring back two young children. It was common for the Straits Chinese to send their young sons back to the homeland for a certain period of time for their upbringing and education. In this case, Guo was accused of smuggling the children back. Some money was exacted from him by someone claiming to be a servant in a customs official’s household. Consul G.T. Lay in Amoy intervened upon receipt of the complaint. The Amoy customs official was furious about the case and promised to bring the culprit to justice.<sup>25</sup>

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22. Ibid.

23. FO 663/51: Amoy, August 15, 1850.

24. FO 663/7: Amoy, February 20, 1851; the Chinese text appears in FO 663/57A, no. 9, March 5, 1851.

25. FO 663/50: Amoy, August 20, 1845 and September 1, 1845.

Although the consular officials felt duty-bound to grant protection to their subjects from the Straits, at times they were caught in a dilemma, as explained by Consul Layton in a dispatch to his superior in Hong Kong. In this case, he had interfered in favor of two Chinese British subjects from Penang who had been seized by the Chinese maritime customs officials as they attempted to smuggle a few articles of foreign import wares into the interior. The two arrived in Amoy in Chinese dress on board of an English brig from Singapore. Without making a proper declaration at the Customs House, they headed straight to the interior with their baggage and the two children whom they had brought from the Straits. When the news of their arrest reached Consul T.H. Layton, he sent his Chinese linguist, King Sing, to the Customs House with his card to demand their immediate release. He warned the customs official that such persons were British subjects and therefore under his protection. He also indicated that, in future, he might demand redress and compensation in such cases. Although the customs official complied with the request and surrendered the two to the consulate, he explained that the detention had been incurred by the fact that the two men had not declared their goods in accordance with the trade regulations agreed upon by the two nations and that he was not aware of their nationality status. This customs official also demanded their presence at the Customs House for the declaration and payment of duties. Clearly, Consul Layton was highly embarrassed by the two British subjects' attempt to smuggle their goods. He informed the customs official that he was disgusted with the intention of the two to evade less than two *taels* in duties and agreed to send them back to the Customs House in the company of a consular assistant to make the necessary declaration and payment. Layton regretted the loss of a good opportunity to raise the issue of nationality with the Chinese authorities. He said, "Had they been innocent of any smuggling (however trivial), I might not have passed so lightly over their case." In fact, he would have been even more embarrassed had the Chinese official queried the two men's nationality status. As he put it, "I had no positive or legal proof that they were British subjects; they had not registered themselves as such."<sup>26</sup>

Replying to Consul Layton's dispatch, the Plenipotentiary John Francis Davis reminded him that:

... as long as this class of persons claimed the protection and rights of British subjects, they are bound by the corresponding obligations. The Chinese Authorities would therefore have been justified in arresting them on their passage into the interior, had

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26. FO 663/49: Amoy, Layton to Davis, no. 45, September 2, 1946.

they even known them to be British Subjects, provided they only gave you notice of the same. But viewing them as Chinese subjects, and having no proofs to the contrary, there could be no doubt of their perfect right to detain them for smuggling.<sup>27</sup>

John Francis Davis went on to instruct Consul Layton to make it clearly known to all the Chinese British subjects resorting to Amoy that, unless they carried proofs of being British subjects and registered themselves as such at the Consulate on their first arrival, they would not be allowed to claim British protection, and that they would likewise forfeit that claim if they chose to penetrate into the interior. Moreover, as British subjects, they would be liable to all the penalties for smuggling, and all the other stipulations provided by the Treaty. Layton was also told that it would be desirable to make this arrangement known to the Chinese authorities. Davis reiterated the thinking that the most effectual mode of preventing the chances of molestation to such British subjects and subsequent trouble to the consular official would be to recommend their adopting the European costume whenever they landed on Chinese territory. Were such a practice adhered to, no misunderstandings could arise. As he explained it to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, given the prospect of a considerable growth in trade between the Straits Settlements and Amoy, he deemed it important to guard carefully against the chances of future trouble in the case of such Anglo-Chinese, by laying down the rules contained in the above instructions for Consul Layton's guidance.<sup>28</sup>

At times the Consul had so much trouble with those Anglo-Chinese whose conduct was dubious that he wished he did not have any of them in Amoy. On one occasion, Layton hoped it was true that a certain John Seng was about to return to the Straits. John was a thief and had actually been convicted of stealing by Layton himself. He had just been released from a fortnight's detention in the Consulate.<sup>29</sup>

More complicated was a case that involved a certain China-born person called Ahine, whose wife was a native of the Straits Settlements. Although Davis was inclined to believe that Ahine could not be considered otherwise than a Chinese subject when in China, he wished the Consul could extend his good services to him. The Consul could address the higher-ranking Chinese officials on Ahine's behalf if they continued to

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27. FO 228/57, Davis to Lord Aberdeen, no. 108, September 7, 1846, Encl. 1, Davis to Layton.

28. See also the correspondence in Chinese between the Consul and the Customs-House official, in FO 663/50, no. 27, August 25, 1846, and no. 28, August 26, 1846.

29. FO 663/49: Amoy, Layton to Davis, no. 13, February 6, 1847.

subject him to extortion. He could cite the respectability of his character and the circumstances attending his misfortune as the reasons for his intervention. He had no doubt that Ahine's wife was a British-born subject and entitled to be registered and protected.<sup>30</sup>

Nor was the matter of proofs of status mentioned earlier very straightforward. Consul S.S. Sullivan explained that the certificates issued to the Straits Chinese staying in Amoy for the purpose of trade clearly indicated that persons born of Chinese parents in the British Settlements under allegiance to the British Crown were entitled to consular protection. This also entailed that their presence in China should be restricted to the limits of the five treaty ports. However, Consul Sullivan complained to his superior, Samuel George Bonham, that the authorities in the Straits Settlements were in the habit of issuing two different forms of certificates. The first was given to the Straits-born whose British status was clear. They were allowed to sue and defend themselves through the Consul. However, certificates were also issued to China-born residents who also expected the same protection when they traveled in China. Sullivan was of the view that it was by no means desirable to make the class of Anglo-Chinese subjects more extensive than the law allowed it to be. This second group of people was so completely intermingled with the natives in China that they were in no way distinguishable from the local Chinese. He complained that these Chinese from the Straits:

... sink the character of British subjects entirely until the consequences of some scrape or family feud compelled them to claim protection, or unless it suits them to assume it for purposes of menace and extortion. They are not open to the influences of the public opinion existing among the foreign community and are often engaged in practices to which no English authority can give his sanction.... To the persons of the second class it becomes necessary to explain that their names cannot in obedience to the instructions be entered on the register. It would save no small amount of disappointment to these parties if the Straits Authorities were to distinguish by more accurate certificates the status of applicants intending to proceed to China.<sup>31</sup>

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30. FO 230/40, Davis to Layton, no. 9, January 20, 1848.

31. FO 663/54, Sullivan to Bonham, no. 55, November 28, 1850.



## The Lee Shun Fah Affair

### *Origins*

Sino-British friction caused by the problem of dual nationality recurred with the outbreak of the Lee Shun Fah affair in 1847, involving an Anglo-Chinese of Penang, Lee Shun Fah (Li Shunfa). John King Fairbank devotes four sentences in his book to the incident:

A typical instance of the trouble caused by this dual nationality occurred in 1847, when an Anglo-Chinese originally of Amoy and now from Penang named Lee Shun Fah, who had evidently acted as a crimp (procurer) in the coolie trade, was seized by local villagers. They held him responsible for the death of sundry coolies below hatches in a typhoon on the emigrant ship *Sophie Frazier*. The Chinese authorities were dilatory about securing his release but at length Mr. Lee was recovered and handed over to the British Consul. In the end the taotai [Circuit Intendant] paid him \$605 compensation as a British subject.<sup>32</sup>

Fairbank's succinct account of the event is based on the British consular documents, which in fact also reveal additional details about the outbreak as follows: Lee was born in Penang to a native of Amoy who had married a local woman, and in 1847 was 23 years of age. For the past four years he had been trading between Penang and Amoy. He was married to the daughter of Seah Kee from a certain village outside Amoy. The amount of his capital invested in trade between Amoy and Penang was about \$300 or \$400. Through his intervention, some 300 coolies had left Amoy for Singapore and Penang on board the *Sophie Frazier* in November 1846. The majority of these coolies were being shipped by a Straits Chinese named Hong Sing (Qiu Fengsheng). They were billeted on the lower deck and the hatches were fastened down on them. A tragic accident had occurred during the voyage when the ship was struck by a major typhoon. After the storm was over and the hatches were opened two days later, 30 coolies were found dead and 5 were severely wounded. Hong Sing was back in Amoy the following year on his annual visit. A farmer named Yang Kea Tsou (Yang Jianzhu) of Hsia-yang (Xiayang) village located in the district of Haicheng from which most of the coolies came had lost seven relatives, including a brother in the incident. Believing that Lee was acting as Hong Sing's agent, Yang gathered some 60 to 70 villagers and attacked the house in which Lee was residing. He detained

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32. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, p. 216.

Lee on November 4, 1847, for at least four days.<sup>33</sup> The incident sparked off a hectic Anglo-Chinese diplomatic flurry at the local consular level.

### ***The Paper War***

Having been informed of the incident, on November 5 Consul Layton in Amoy immediately lodged a protest with Hengchang, the Intendant for the Xin-Quan-Yong Circuit, and demanded Lee’s release within 24 hours, plus compensation.<sup>34</sup> Hengchang sent a prompt reply the following day explaining that, since Lee was being kept in Haicheng district, which was under the jurisdiction of Intendant Wan Qixin of the Ding[zhou]-Zhang[zhou]-Long[yan] Circuit, all he could do was to forward the Consul’s dispatch and requests to the relevant authorities for their immediate attention.<sup>35</sup>

In Consul Layton’s reply on November 8, he began by expressing his appreciation of Hengchang’s prompt action. However, he complained that, from what he had heard, Wan, the Ding-Zhang-Long Circuit Intendant, was hesitant about taking any action, probably for fear of the threat of the villagers’ violent reaction to any official intervention. Moreover, according to his informant, Lee Shun Fah had been tortured by his kidnappers. He was shocked by such a crime committed by a lynch mob that he asserted would never have happened in his country. He hardened his language by saying that Her Majesty, who was governing a wealthy and strong country, would never condone such uncivilized behavior. He had no doubt that it was the responsibility of his counterpart to urge his Ding-Zhang-Long colleague to hand over Lee Shun Fah to the Consulate immediately.<sup>36</sup> Hengchang acknowledged his receipt of Layton’s dispatch

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33. For the case, see for example, FO 663/49: Amoy, Layton to Davis, no. 87, November 10, 1847; FO 228/54, Min-Zhe Governor-General Liu Yunke to former Taotai Lu Zezhang, no. 13, November 17, 1847; Lu Zezhang to Jackson, no. 19, November 28, 1847, enclosing Governor-General Liu Yunke’s instructions, in which Liu mentioned the receipt of a report on the incident dated November 26, 1847, from the Intendant for the Ding-Zhang-Long Circuit (all the documents are in Chinese); FO 663/48: Amoy, Layton to Jackson, no. 29, November 11, 1847 and no. 31, November 13, 1847 (both in Chinese); FO 663/49, Layton to Davis, no. 88, November 15, 1847; FO 663/26, Imperial Commissioner Xu Guangjin to Davis, no. 4, March 23, 1848 (in Chinese).

34. FO 228/54, Layton to Hengchang, no. 7, November 5, 1847 (in Chinese).

35. FO 228/54, Hengchang to Layton, no. 8, November 6, 1847 (in Chinese).

36. FO 228/54, Layton to Hengchang, no. 9, November 8, 1847 (in Chinese).

the following day and informed him that he had reminded Intendant Wan of the need to expedite his action.<sup>37</sup>

It had been several days since Layton had set the 24-hour deadline for measures to be taken by his Chinese counterpart, but to no avail. Obviously, his patience had run out. He decided to follow up again on November 10 by showing his great displeasure and informing Hengchang that he had reported the case accompanied by copies of the dispatches to the British Plenipotentiary, John Francis Davis, so that the issue could be raised with his Chinese counterpart Qiying, the Chinese Imperial Commissioner in Canton and concurrently Governor-General of Liang-Guang. He was certain that the Imperial Commissioner would command the Ding-Zhang-Long Circuit Intendant to order the immediate release of the prisoner and deliver him to the British Consulate in Amoy. Layton threatened his Chinese counterpart in Amoy, reminding the latter of the precedent for adopting tough actions by the British Plenipotentiary in order to settle any friction with the Canton authorities. The Consul also urged Hengchang to do likewise and report the matter to his superior, the Min-Zhe Governor-General, Liu Yunke, in Foochow, so that His Excellency would prod the Ding-Zhang-Long Circuit Intendant to act without further delay.<sup>38</sup>

Layton also wrote to Consul R.B. Jackson in Foochow (Fuzhou) regarding the Lee Shun Fah affair. He expected the latter to liaise with the Min-Zhe Governor-General who was known to be desirous of maintaining good relations with the British officials and to be friendly toward the foreign communities in the treaty port.

At this juncture, Layton received information that Intendant Wan of the Ding-Zhang-Long Circuit was sending his constables to the village to order Lee's release. Layton asked Hengchang to follow the matter up by urging Intendant Wan and the Magistrate of Haicheng district to meet his demands.<sup>39</sup>

In Foochow, upon Consul Layton's request, Consul Jackson approached Official Lu Zezhang for assistance. Lu had formerly been the Intendant for the Ning-Shao-Tai Circuit of Zhejiang and was currently assisting Governor-General Liu Yunke in Foochow to manage foreign and commercial affairs in the provincial capital. Having been briefed verbally by Official Lu about the matter on November 17, the Governor-General sent instructions to Official Lu the same day, commanding him to settle the matter immediately on his behalf. Liu's instructions were indicative

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37. FO 228/54, Hengchang to Layton, no. 10, November 9, 1847 (in Chinese).

38. FO 228/54, Layton to Hengchang, no. 11, November 11, 1847 (in Chinese).

39. FO 228/54, Layton to Hengchang, no. 12, November 14, 1847 (in Chinese).

of the conciliatory attitude adopted by the higher-ranking provincial authorities toward the consular officials. It is worth citing the document at length as follows:

Le [Lee] Shun Fah, a native of Penang, a dependency of his nation, ... was attacked by a band of 60 or 70 ruffians ... who cleared his house of all it contained and carried him away to ... [a] village where they placed him in confinement.... Mr Layton ... thereupon wrote to the [Xing-Quan-Yong] Intendant ... requesting him to communicate with the [Ding-Zhang-Long] Intendant ... upon the subject, and to dispatch instructions to the magistrate of ... [Haicheng] for the release of Le Shun Fah, and the apprehension of his captors.... [T]hese however have not been effected....

The [incident] ... is deemed to be of itself an offence of serious magnitude.... [The] English nation now has commercial intercourse with ... [China] upon terms of the closest amity. Natives are therefore bound to be more than usually courteous in their bearing towards the English; on no account shall it be endured that they use violence against them or molest them.

The people of the village in the district of [Haicheng] ... have nevertheless dared to band together in a large body, and in this manner proceeded ... to plunder the house of a British subject ..., illegally possessing themselves of his person, and ... keeping him ... a prisoner, and cruelly maltreating him, acts which constituted a sufficiently grave misdemeanor....

As regards the Intendant ... and the Magistrate ... in their being unable to prevent the people under their jurisdiction from maltreating a foreigner, and in not proceeding upon receipt of the dispatches from the [Xing-Quan-Yong] Intendant ... to seize the offenders and liberate Le Shun Fah forthwith ..., they have shown themselves remiss in the execution of their duty....

I have now dispatched [three officials and] ... and have placed them under the orders of the Commandant of [Zhangzhou prefecture] ..., Intendant of [the Ding-Zhang-Long Circuit], the Prefect [of Zhangzhou] ..., and the Magistrate [of Haicheng] ..., to proceed in their company to the village ... [for the release of Lee Shun Fah], and to send him to [Hengchang] ..., that the latter may deliver him over to Mr Layton....

At the same time they are diligently to search for and take prisoner the ringleaders,... and [those] who have been concerned in this offence.... [T]he Intendant, the Prefect ..., and the District Magistrate, and the deputed officials are to sit in judgment,

examining witnesses, and [dealing] ... rigorously ... with them....  
 [T]hey are to make an explicit report of the particulars [to me]....<sup>40</sup>

This document shows how anxious were the highest authorities of Fujian to ensure that the diplomatic friction did not spill over into the overall bilateral relations between the two countries. It is certainly amazing that Governor-General Liu had made his judgments on the basis of the information provided by Consul Jackson, without conducting his own investigation into the affair.

While Liu's hasty response to the complaint is somewhat illogical and even unthinkable, it could certainly not be attributed to his timidity or incompetence. In fact, the British perceived him to be a hardliner on account of his stiff resistance in his capacity as provincial governor to the British attack on Zhejiang during the Opium War. When the consular officials heard about Liu's appointment to the Min-Zhe governor-generalship soon after the opening of Amoy, Foochow and Ningbo as treaty ports under his jurisdiction, they felt greatly disappointed. To their relief, however, Liu was conciliatory in his approach to matters involving the foreigners in the treaty ports during his unusually extended tenure of this high position.<sup>41</sup> He endeavored to maintain peace and cultivate friendly relations with the consular officials, to the chagrin of the Foochow literati who found Liu's management of Treaty Port affairs deplorable. Even the newly-appointed Imperial Commissioner in Canton, Xu Guangjin, who took over from the equally conciliatory leadership of Qiying in 1848,<sup>42</sup> did not see eye to eye with Liu's soft approach. In all fairness, Liu did what he thought to be in compliance with the terms of the treaties for the sake of maintaining the peace with the Western powers. Under Liu's tutelage, Official Lu Zezhang in Foochow and Intendant Hengchang in Amoy were able to live in amity with their Western counterparts in the Treaty Ports.

Acting upon Governor-General Liu's instructions, two days later Hengchang sent a dispatch to Consul Layton and confirmed that Lee Shun Fah had been released and taken to Amoy the day before. In Hengchang's presence, the consular official Charles Alexander Winchester conducted

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40. FO 228/54, Liu to Lu, no. 13, November 17, 1847 (in Chinese). A copy of the declaration was sent to the British Consulate; see FO 228/67, Davis to Palmerston, December 24, 1847, Encl. in dispatch 213 of 1847. The citation, with some minor edits, is from the English translation prepared by Martin C. Morrison of the Office of Chief Superintendent in Hong Kong.

41. Liu's unusually long tenure in the same position ended in early 1851 when he was recalled by the new Xianfeng Emperor.

42. Xu was appointed to take over from Qiying on February 23, 1848. See Imperial Edict transmitted through the Grand Council, FO 663/26, no. 5.

a medical examination of Lee and certified that he was unharmed. Lee was then taken back to the Consulate. However, Hengchang requested that Lee appear and testify at a hearing in order that the case be concluded properly.<sup>43</sup>

The following day, the victorious Consul Layton did not seem to be prepared to let the matter rest and the paper war continued. Layton sent a lengthy reply to Hengchang's dispatch. He commenced by protesting about the 13-day delay in settling the matter. Secondly, he was furious that, instead of transferring Lee to the custody of Consular Official Winchester immediately, he had been kept at the *yamen* (government office) from half past two to six o'clock that afternoon. Lee, who was a British subject, had been compelled to set a finger-print on a deposition in Chinese and declare that he had been well treated at the *yamen*. In accordance with Clause I of the Nanking Treaty, Layton argued, the Chinese authorities should provide protection for the British subjects who came to trade in Amoy. Moreover Lee's belongings, looted by the kidnappers, had not been recovered and compensation for the unlawful detention had not been made. When Lee declared that he was not a resident of Haicheng district, as recorded in the deposition, he was reprimanded by the Circuit Intendant for being in a foreign country instead of coming just to Amoy and of colluding with the foreigners. This annoyed Layton who complained in his dispatch, "How many times had I in my dispatches stated that Lee was a resident of British Penang and Her Majesty's subject?" He was therefore free to trade to Amoy in accordance with Clause II of the Nanking Treaty and had the right to stay in a place within the consular jurisdiction as stipulated in Clause VII of the Supplementary Treaty. Equally unacceptable was the designation of Lee as a "*ni fan*", meaning "rebellious criminal". Layton pointed out that Lee was not a Chinese subject, adding "How could a British subject be a rebellious criminal in China?" As for the request for Lee to testify at the trial, Layton said that Lee's testimonial could be made at the Consulate, or the Consul and the interpreter would accompany him to testify before the judges. In conclusion, Layton demanded that, within 30 days, the sum of \$450 looted by the villagers be returned, compensation be paid for the loss of his belongings, that were worth \$40, provided that the items could not be retrieved, and a fine of \$100 be imposed on the kidnappers.<sup>44</sup>

In his response to Layton's dispatch Hengchang lamented that, in accordance with the treaty and to maintain the cordial relations with the British consular officials, he had been pursuing the matter with

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43. FO 228/54, Hengchang to Layton, no. 14, November 19, 1847 (in Chinese).

44. FO 228/54, Layton to Hengchang, no. 15, November 20, 1847 (in Chinese).

great diligence immediately after being informed by the Consul of the incident. Although it had happened in a location which was not under his jurisdiction, he had been communicating with the officials in charge and urging them to settle the issue without delay. He complained that he was totally exhausted by the painstaking efforts he had made. Responding to the points raised by the Consul, Hengchang pointed out that it was Lee who had stated himself that he was a native of Haicheng.<sup>45</sup> The short delay in handing him over to Winchester had been caused by the fact he had had to verify Lee's identity. Winchester also said he did not know Lee personally. About the recovery of the looted items, Hengchang said he would liaise with Intendant Wan and the Magistrate of Haicheng district.<sup>46</sup>

In his reply, Layton denied that Dr Winchester had not recognized Lee. On the contrary, he had known Lee for three years. The Circuit Intendant could have asked the wardens who escorted Lee back to Amoy to testify to Lee's identity. The Consul repeated his demand for the arrest of the kidnappers; if this demand were not met, he threatened to take further action following the arrival in Amoy of the warship HMS *Scout* and the HC Steamer *Pluto*. He would also bring the issue up with the British Plenipotentiary in Hong Kong, although he did hope to be able to maintain the friendly, co-operative relations between the two nations that they had been making efforts to cultivate all along.<sup>47</sup> Hengchang conceded and agreed to meet Layton's demands for the arrest of the villagers who were involved in the kidnapping case.

In Foochow, Officer Lu Zezhang considered the case settled and duly informed Consul Jackson accordingly.<sup>48</sup> On December 24, 1847, Layton acknowledged receipt of an amount of \$605 to compensate Lee Shun Fah's losses from the Ding-Zhang-Long Circuit Intendant and the Haicheng magistrate.<sup>49</sup>

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45. FO 228/54, Hengchang to Layton, no. 16, November 22, 1847 (in Chinese). Probably a cultural misunderstanding had arisen between the Intendant and the Consul. Until the recent past, a Chinese in China or a person of Chinese descent overseas, if asked for his or her identity, would have customarily stated his or her native-/ancestral-place origin (*jiguan* or *zujī*) rather than nationality (*guoji*). For this reason, Hengchang must have been puzzled by the accusation of having fabricated the deposition in this regard.

46. *Ibid.*

47. FO 228/54, Layton to Hengchang, no. 17, November 24, 1847 (in Chinese).

48. FO 228/54, Hengchang to Layton, no. 18, November 27, 1847 (in Chinese); and FO 228/54, Lu to Jackson, no. 19, November 28, 1847 (in Chinese).

49. FO 228/54, Layton to Hengchang, no. 207, December 24, 1847 (in Chinese).

Probably due to Governor-General Liu's regret about his hasty response to Consul Jackson's earlier complaints, he had now received a full report on the affair from Intendant Wan of the Ding-Zhang-Long Circuit. According to the investigation conducted by the local officials, Lee Shun Fah was a regular resident in his native village.<sup>50</sup> He conducted business sending cargoes overseas and transporting native villagers to foreign countries. On account of a shipwreck that caused the loss of life, the relatives of the dead in the village approached Lee Shun Fah for an explanation and to ask for the return of the victims' belongings. The villagers were in negotiations with Lee about the settlement of the matter. Therefore, it was not a case of kidnapping. Refuting Consul Jackson's allegation, or what even other Chinese officials themselves had earlier believed, the local officials also verified that no violent act had been committed. Governor-General Liu instructed Lu Zezhang to clarify the matter with Jackson.<sup>51</sup>

### ***The Chinese Imperial Commissioner's Rebuttal***

As the British representative in Amoy, Layton perceived the incident to have had marked repercussions on the rights of Her Majesty's subjects in China. Therefore, on November 29, 1847, he suggested to Davis that his superior should raise the case immediately with the Chinese Imperial Commissioner in Canton.<sup>52</sup> Prior to the establishment of the Zongli Yamen (Office for General Administration) in Peking, in 1861 the imperial commissioner in Canton "functioned as the official exclusively in charge of foreign affairs".<sup>53</sup> In his capacity as the British plenipotentiary in China, John Davis followed up the case as requested by Layton and lodged a protest about the matter with the Chinese Imperial Commissioner, Qiying.

John Davis received a reply from Acting Imperial Commissioner Xu Guangjin, concurrently Acting Governor-General of Liang-Guang and Governor of Guangdong. Commissioner Xu stated that, upon receipt of a complaint from John Davis, his predecessor, the former Imperial Commissioner Qiying, had immediately ordered an investigation by the provincial authorities in Foochow.

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50. Note that Lee's wife was living in the natal village.

51. FO 228/54, Lu to Jackson, no. 19, November 28, 1847, enclosing a copy of Liu's instructions (in Chinese).

52. FO 663/49: Amoy, no. 93.

53. Masataka Banno, *China and the West, 1858-1861: The Origins of the Tsungli Yamen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 6.



Now Xu had received a reply from Governor-General Liu Yunke, acknowledging the receipt of a consular complaint regarding Lee Shun Fah's case. Initially, the Foochow authorities agreed that it was a serious offense. They also felt that the good relations between the two nations warranted a courteous reception of the British subjects by the Chinese. During the investigation, the local officials found out that Lee Shun Fah's father, Li Qingzhi, was a resident of Haicheng district. While abroad he had married a foreign wife, who gave birth to Lee Shun Fah. Lee Shun Fah came back to China at the age of 7 and went abroad again at 15. Thereafter, Lee Shun Fah had been trading between the two places. In 1846, Lee Shun Fah acted as an agent for some investors in the natal village for some business involving shipping goods and over a hundred coolie migrants abroad. Lee Shun Fah had chartered a foreign vessel for the purpose. On account of the tragic deaths of 11 migrants during the voyage, Lee Shun Fah spent time negotiating a settlement while he was back in his native village the following year, but the principal investor, Li Qingfeng, refused to give the victims' relatives any compensation. The parties involved met to negotiate a settlement and, on these grounds, there was no case of kidnapping and looting to answer. However, Li Qingfeng's son reported the case to Consul Layton, alleging that his father and Lee Shun Fah had been kidnapped by the villagers. Following the Consul's request, Lee Shun Fah was released and delivered to the Consulate.

Referring to Consul Layton's demand for compensation, Governor-General Xu strongly argued against any demand being settled before the trial. When the trial was brought to court, the accused villagers denied the charge of kidnapping. Unfortunately, Lee Shun Fah was hiding in the Consulate and refused to testify before the judges. As a result, the case was inconclusive. In order not to spoil good relations with the Consul, the high-ranking provincial authorities ordered the payment of compensation amounted to \$605 by the clansmen in the village through the local officials. Citing Governor-General Liu, Xu showed his disapproval of Consul Layton for having listened only to a one-sided account and therefore making an inaccurate charge. This unfairness, he continued, would not contribute positively to maintaining good relations between the two nations.

Having reviewed the case, Imperial Commissioner Xu considered Lee Shun Fah a Chinese subject who was very close to his clansmen in his natal village. He wore the same clothes and spoke the same dialect as other villagers did. His clansmen treated him as a fellow villager who traded abroad and they had no idea of his foreign status. If Lee was accepted as a British subject on the basis of his birth-place, as the Consul saw it,

his foreign identity would have barred him from going to the interior beyond the limits of the treaty port under the terms of the Treaty. There were numerous people from the Zhang-Quan region (the two prefectures around Amoy) who traded overseas. If the case were allowed to set a precedent, any future quarrels that erupted between the returnees and their clansmen would consequently be brought up to the Consulate for intervention. This certainly would cause endless confusion and conflict, Xu concluded.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike his predecessor, Qiying, who was known for his conciliatory approach in the negotiations leading to the signing of the Nanking Treaty and during his subsequent imperial commissionership in Canton, Commissioner Xu adopted a tougher stance in his dealings with his British counterpart in Hong Kong and espoused a strict interpretation of the treaties.

### ***Consul Layton Ponders Further on the Affair***

As a frontline official representing the British interests in the treaty port, Consul Layton fought for the protection of British subjects in China on the basis of legal principles. At the time he approached Consul Jackson in Foochow for assistance, he also requested Commander Loring of HMS *Scout* to bring to Amoy both the sloop and the HC Steamer *Pluto* in the belief that their arrival would enable him to obtain the release of Lee Shun Fah, compensation for the injuries inflicted on him and the public punishment of his kidnappers within a few days. He even considered making a “little war” upon the village of the kidnappers in which some 500 or 600 people resided. He calculated that, “the good understanding at present subsisting at Amoy would not, I think, be at all endangered by destroying or burning this village”. When he had thought it over, he deemed it undesirable “to risk any such loss of good feeling” in the treaty port. Nevertheless, he insisted on full compensation for Lee’s trauma. Although the village was about 5 to 7 miles from his Consulate, he considered it to be within the “inner waters” and therefore “within my consular jurisdiction”.<sup>55</sup> It is a pity that the Chinese and the British sides stopped short of going any further in their interpretation of the treaties

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54. FO 663/26, Xu to Davis, March 23, 1848; also in FO 682/1981/50, March 23, 1848 (both Chinese texts).

55. For information and citations, see FO 663/49: Amoy, Layton to Davis, no. 87, November 10, 1847; FO 663/48: Amoy, Layton to Jackson, no. 29, November 11, 1847; and no. 31, November 13, 1847; FO 663/49, Layton to Davis, no. 88, November 15, 1847; no. 90, November 17, 1847; no. 92, November 18, 1847; no. 93, November 29, 1847; and no. 97, December 15, 1847.

to see if Consul Layton's argument about the limits of the consular jurisdiction could be substantiated.

Since a full-scale war was out of the question, Layton found it expedient to amend some regulations for the port of Amoy to avoid a recurrence of similar incidents involving the Chinese returnees. Article 14 of these rules drafted by him stipulated that:

All persons who are British Subjects, and are born in British Colonies, or Possessions, resident in, or visiting the Port are amenable to all the above Regulations, and to British law alone; and all cases where from peculiar custom, or position, any of the above Regulations may interfere with their personal rights, or individual interests, the circumstances of the case must be reported to the Consul.

In addition to registering themselves ... they will be required to register upon the Consulate Books their Wives and Families, and the names and ages of each, and also all landed property, or houses, which they may possess in, or about Amoy.<sup>56</sup>

The original wording of the first sentence read: "All Chinese by names, or descent, resident in, or visiting the Port, who are British Subjects, and are born in British Colonies ...", but the Circuit Intendant in Amoy strongly objected to this framing of the rule. It was therefore re-worded accordingly.<sup>57</sup> Before registration at the Consulate, they would be required to produce a certificate from the Resident of the Settlement to which they belonged in order to establish their status as British subjects.

Upon his release, Lee Shun Fah decided to take his wife with him on his return voyage to Penang. It was truly a great relief to Consul Layton who complained to John Davis that he hoped Lee would not come back to Amoy again. Layton even declined to meet Lee's uncle who came to thank him for his efforts.<sup>58</sup> Despite all his hard work, his insistence on the legal principles and his victory in the case, Layton found Lee's behavior distasteful. If Lee considered himself a British subject and had abided strictly by the terms of the treaty, he should not have visited his native village which was beyond the treaty-port limits and therefore outside

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56. FO 663/54: Amoy, Layton to Bonham, July 19, 1848; also in FO 228/84, Layton to Bonham, no. 38, July 19, 1848; the Regulations were officially announced by Her Majesty's plenipotentiary; see "Government Notification", in FO 663/6, June 1, 1849.

57. Ibid.

58. FO 663/49: Amoy, Layton to Davis, no. 100, December 27, 1847.

the consular jurisdiction. Layton was especially displeased with Lee’s involvement as a crimp in the coolie trade.

Despite Consul Layton’s enthusiasm about the matter of protection, he was greatly displeased by the fact that these persons whom he intended to protect acknowledged the authority of the Consul and declared themselves British subjects only when they got into trouble with the local authorities. Often, they threatened the junior mandarins with making a complaint to the Consul on the slightest suspicion of injury. Otherwise, they retained Chinese costume, wore pigtails, spoke the dialect of Amoy and lived in the Chinese style. Some of them had wives and children in Amoy, or in places on the mainland adjacent to it. They left them in the care of their relations when they returned to the Settlements. Some had inherited land and houses from their fathers. Some purchased them in contradiction to the treaty. A number of claimants for British status had in fact long ceased to be connected with Singapore. “Are these persons British or Chinese Subjects?” Layton was uncertain.<sup>59</sup> His superior in Hong Kong did in fact doubt their British status. So did the Circuit Intendant in Amoy who wished to assume that they were Chinese subjects. In his quandary the Consul raised a series of questions:

Were these people born in our Colonies to proceed to England, would they be Subjects of Her Majesty, or of the Emperor of China? Would a Frenchman born in Jamaica where his Father was domiciled be a French, or an English Subject, upon removing to France, and would he be entitled to the protection of the British Ambassador in Paris? Are the Canadians born of French Parents British or French Subjects? If these Anglo-Chinese be British Subjects in Singapore, etc., do they cease to be so upon setting foot in China? Will the Chinese Authorities who do not recognize International Law or the comity of Nations beyond the letter of the Treaties be justified in declaring that their immediate descent from Chinese Fathers wherever born makes them Chinese Subjects at Amoy?<sup>60</sup>

Although Layton had never doubted that these Anglo-Chinese were British subjects, he thought he might have erred in the course of rendering them protection if their birth in a British colony alone was not a sufficient claim to such rights. He also did not feel capable of arguing their case. However, he warned that if the argument that they lost their

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59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

rights to British protection when they proceeded to China was accepted, they would be harassed by the junior mandarins in Amoy. If their right to protection was denied, the British trade between Amoy and Singapore would be greatly diminished within a short time.<sup>61</sup> For this commercial rather than legal consideration, the Consul would continue to treat them as British subjects. He reminded his superior in Hong Kong that the decision of the Law Officials of the Crown on this matter was very important to the protection of the personal security and the property of these Anglo-Chinese in Amoy.

### **The British Plenipotentiary and the Law Officials of the Crown Interpret**

The British Plenipotentiary in Hong Kong, Samuel George Bonham, had doubts of the expediency of Article 14 as proposed by Consul Layton, which stated that all Chinese who had been born in the Straits Settlements were to be considered British subjects, no matter whether they resided in Amoy on a permanent or temporary basis. In his communication to Foreign Secretary Viscount Palmerston, seeking instructions on the matter, he explained that had Layton proposed to exercise jurisdiction only over Chinese born in the Straits Settlements temporarily resident at Amoy, residing either on board ship or in the immediate vicinity of the Consulate, he would not have objection to the same. However, Layton appeared to have gone further and considered that he should have the sole authority over the wives and families of these people, although they were not resident on Amoy Island itself, but on the adjacent islands, or on the mainland of China, and therefore certainly beyond the ordinary range of the consular jurisdiction. Moreover, the wives of whom Layton spoke were not persons born in the Straits Settlements, but were natives of China itself and *bona fide* subjects of the emperor of China. Even the Anglo-Chinese in many cases did not reside within the limits of the consular jurisdiction. They had also contravened the spirit of Article VII of the Supplementary Treaty by the purchase of land. Moreover, in many cases the Anglo-Chinese appeared not to reside within the limits of the consular jurisdiction. If a person was considered a British subject and should die without a will, how was his property to be divided? For all these reasons, difficulties might arise from recognizing the rights of these people without the imposition of some limitations. They must of

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61. Ibid.

necessity be subject to the same restrictions as were imposed on subjects born in Great Britain.<sup>62</sup>

The Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston transmitted the plenipotentiary’s dispatch to the Crown Law Officials for advice. Having taken the subject into consideration, the Law Officials were of the opinion that:

Mr Bonham should be informed, that Persons born of Chinese Parents in British Settlements under allegiance to the British Crown, are entitled to be treated and protected as British Subjects, whilst residing and carrying on their Trade within the limits of the Five Chinese Ports in which British Consuls have a right to exercise jurisdiction, but, that they are not entitled to such Protection when they take up their Residence in other parts of China, provided the Law of the Empire recognizes them as Chinese Subjects, notwithstanding the circumstance of their having been born in a Foreign Country.<sup>63</sup>

Clearly, the legal advice of the Crown’s Law Officials did not differ entirely from the Chinese position in the dispute.

## Concluding Remarks

In the first few years after the signing of the Nanking Treaty, the local and provincial Chinese authorities in Fujian adopted a conciliatory approach in settling frictions with the British consular officials. The uppermost concern of the Chinese officials was to maintain peace.<sup>64</sup> Somewhat ironically, and to the annoyance of their British counterparts, the Chinese authorities often relied upon “a strict interpretation and execution of the Treaties”<sup>65</sup> to justify their position and argue against their opponents’ demands, that they saw as having violated clauses of the treaties. However, when their counterparts insisted on pressing the point, the Chinese officials would eventually retreat from their

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62. FO 228/80, Bonham to Palmerston, no. 88, August 24, 1848.

63. *Law Officers’ Opinions to the Foreign Office, 1793–1860*, Vol. 19, November 21, 1848.

64. The Qing court perceived the Treaty of Nanking as “a peace treaty in perpetuity” (*wan nien he yue*, or a peace treaty lasting for ten thousand years), which would guide the conduct of the bilateral relations between Qing China and Great Britain.

65. As pointed out in FO 228/47, Aberdeen to Davis, no. 36, May 23, 1845.

position, overwhelmed by deep feelings of helplessness and profound resignation, as seen in the case of the nationality question.

As regards the British policy considerations, the authorities realized that because of the legal ambiguities in the disputes, there were difficulties in pushing their cases through without threatening the use of force. The British officials in China as well as the Crown legal experts were fully aware that they could fight their cases and emerge victorious. However, if they were to abide by the spirit of the Treaty, they were equally aware that this would be a different kettle of fish. Any victory in the diplomatic contest did not necessarily mean that they always had the truth on their side.

In the Lee Shun Fah case, the extent of the British commercial interests involved was not crucial enough to warrant an outright "little war". For the meantime, a paper war, consisting of sending protest notes to the Chinese authorities and pressing their counterpart for concessions, was perceived to be sufficient to stake their claims in the name of legal principles. In this sense, the protection of the Straits Chinese was only a secondary issue, despite the over-zealousness of the consular officials. Nonetheless, the British side realized that the existing clauses of the Treaty that they dictated to the loser of the Opium War had at times put them in an awkward situation. What they saw as the "imperfections"<sup>66</sup> in the Treaty could only be remedied through a treaty revision devised to enhance their interests.

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66. The phrase "imperfections in the treaty agreement" is used in John King Faribank, *Trade and Diplomacy*, p. 102.

## Glossary of Chinese Characters

<i>ao</i> 澳	<i>dan</i> 石
<i>baidui</i> 白兌	Daoshan 道山
<i>baihu so</i> 百户所	Daotai 道台
<i>banji</i> 版籍	Dashi 大食
<i>bantu</i> 版图	Di 狄
Bao 包	<i>dianhu</i> 佃戶
<i>baojia</i> 保甲	<i>diding yin</i> 地丁銀
<i>baoshang</i> 保商	<i>ding</i> 丁
<i>bazong</i> 把总	Dong Fan 东番
<i>beicao</i> 北艚	Dong Yang 东洋
Bei Jiao 北郊	<i>doulao</i> 斗栳
<i>beiwo duzhihui</i> 备倭都指挥	<i>duchayuan</i> 都察院
Bengang Hang 本港行	<i>duyushi</i> 都御史
Bosi (Persia) 波斯	<i>e su</i> 惡俗
<i>buzheng shi</i> 布政使	Fa Xian 法显
Cai Qian/Ts'ai Ch'ien 蔡牽	<i>fan shang</i> 番商
Changlim (Zhanglin) 樟林	<i>fanguai</i> 番鬼
Chaozhou 潮州	<i>fu</i> 富
<i>chatian</i> 茶田	Fu Chao Hang 福潮行
<i>chengyi</i> 城邑	<i>Fujian haidao fushi</i> 福建海道副使
<i>citang</i> 祠堂	<i>fuyi</i> 抚夷
<i>cun genben</i> 存根本	Fuzhou 福州
Da Xiyang 大西洋	Gang Jiao 港郊
<i>da zuzhu</i> 大租主	<i>gangkou</i> 港口
<i>dali si</i> 大理寺	<i>gongbo</i> 贡舶



- gongshi* 贡使  
*gongshun* 恭顺  
 Guandi 關帝  
 Guandong 关东  
*guandou* 官斗  
*quantian* 官田  
*gui* 贵  
*guo* 国  
 Guo Songtao 郭嵩焘  
*guojia fuyou sihai* 国家富有四海  
*guxuan haiwai* 孤悬海外  
*haifang* 海防  
*haifang tongzhi* 海防同知  
*haijin* 海禁  
*haishi* 海市  
*haiwai* 海外  
*haiwai tianqian* 海外天塹  
*han bianchui* 捍边陲  
*hang/hong* 行  
*hao qin yuanlue zhi jun* 好勤远略之君  
*hengyang chuan* 横洋船  
*hongmao fan* 红毛番  
*hu shi* 互市  
*huairou* 怀柔  
*huangfu* 荒服  
*huawai zhou* 化外州  
*huiguan* 会馆  
*hukou* 户口  
*huo* 货  
*jianhao* 奸豪  
*jianmin* 奸民  
*jiao* 郊  
*jiaowai zhuguo* 徼外诸国  
*jiaoyi* 剿夷  
*jibei* 吉貝  
 Jicui [Temple] 积翠[寺]  
*jimi* 羈縻  
*jishizhong* 给事中  
*jiuzhou zhi di* 九州之地  
*junwei* 郡尉  
*junxian* 郡县  
*kaiyang* 开洋  
*kebing* 客兵  
*ketou* 客頭  
*kongsi* (partnership) 公司  
 Kunlun 崑崙  
*lai xiang* 来降  
*li* 吏  
*li* 利  
 Li Guangtou 李光頭  
 Li luan 黎乱  
 Liang-Guang 两广  
 Lin Chanyi 林昌彝  
 Lin Xiyuan 林希元  
 Lin Zexu 林则徐  
 Lingwai 岭外  
 Liu Yunke 刘韻珂  
*Liuqiu lidai bao'an* 琉球历代宝案

- Louthias 老爹/老爺  
 Lu Zezhang 鹿泽长  
 luohuasheng 落花生  
 Man 蛮  
 Mazu 媽祖  
 menhu 门户  
 miaotian 廟田  
 Min-Yue 閩粵  
 minnan ren 閩南人  
 mintian 民田  
 mu 畝  
 nanco 南艚  
 Nan Jiao 南郊  
 neidi zhi chen 內地之臣  
 neihe 內河  
 neiyang 內洋  
 nifan 逆番  
 Qi 齊  
 qianhu so 千戶所  
 qiaoxiang 橋鄉  
 qing 頃  
 Qingshui 清水  
 Quan[zhou]-Zhang[zhou] 泉漳  
 rushi nianmi 如石碾米  
 sanchi tongzi 三尺童子  
 san [fa]si 三[法]司  
 Sanjiao 三郊  
 shangbo 商舶  
 shangchuan 商船  
 shanghang 商行  
 shefa 設法  
 Shen Baozhen 沈葆楨  
 Shenshang 紳商  
 shengjiao 聖教  
 shengyuan 生員  
 shibo [tiju]si 市舶[提舉]司  
 shihao 勢豪  
 shijia 勢家  
 Shisan Hang 十三行  
 shiwei shuguo 世為屬國  
 Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳  
 shuishi tidu 水師提督  
 Shuangyu 雙嶼  
 taiyun 台運  
 tang bo 唐舶  
 Tang Jiao 糖郊  
 tangchuan 糖船  
 tianchao 天朝  
 tianfu 田賦  
 Tianyai Haijiao 天涯海角  
 tidu Min-Zhe haifang junwu 提督  
 閩浙海防軍務  
 Tong 同  
 tongzhu 銅柱  
 tousu 偷渡  
 Tudigong 土地公  
 tuntian 屯田  
 waiguo 外國  
 waihai 外海

- Waiyang Hang 外洋行  
 Wan 万  
 Wang Tao 王韜  
 Wang Zhi 王直  
 wangzhuan 王莊  
 wei 伪  
 Wei Yuan 魏源  
 weiso 卫所  
 wende buzhu er hou you wugong  
 文德不足而后有武功  
 wenxing tiaoli 问刑条例  
 Wokou 倭寇  
 Wushishan 乌石山  
 Xia 夏  
 Xiamen yicang 廈門義倉  
 xiangdou 鄉斗  
 xiangshui 鄉稅  
 xiao zuzhu 小租主  
 xiaomin 小民  
 xing duzhihui 行都指揮  
 xingbu 刑部  
 Xiyang ren 西洋人  
 Xu Fuyuan 徐孚遠  
 Xu Guangjin 徐廣縉  
 Xu Guangqi 徐光啟  
 Xu Jiyu 徐繼畲  
 Xu Xueju 徐學聚  
 xuetian 學田  
 xun'an 巡按  
 xunjian shi 巡檢使  
 xunshi 巡視  
 yadong 压冬  
 yahang 牙行  
 yangchuan 洋船  
 yanghang 洋行  
 yaofu 要服  
 Yaowang 藥王  
 Yi 夷  
 yi 義  
 Yi Jing 义淨  
 yichuan 驛傳  
 yiguan wenwu 衣冠文物  
 Ying 鷹  
 ying 营  
 Ying Ji Li 英吉利  
 yitian sanzhu 一田三主  
 yiwu 夷务  
 yong 勇  
 you haifang er wu haizhan 有海防  
 而无海战  
 youbing 遊兵  
 Yue 越  
 Yue 粵  
 yuke tongshang 裕課通商  
 zeichuan 賊船  
 Zhang Wei 張維  
 Zhang Yi 張嶷  
 Zhang-Chao 漳潮  
 zhenshou zhonggui 鎮守中貴  
 Zheng He 鄭和

*zheng kou* 正口

*zhitian* 職田

*zhongguo bo shang* 中国舶商

*zhongguo zhi minren* 中国之民人

Zhongzuoso 中左所

Zhu Wan 朱纨

*zongdu* 总督

Zongli Yamen 总理衙门

Zoumaxi 走马溪

zu 族

*zutian* 族田

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CMS	Church Missionary Society Archives
CXJXL	Dong Yingju, <i>Chongxiang ji xuanlu</i>
DQY TZ	<i>Da Qing yitong zhi</i>
FO 17	Great Britain. Foreign Office Files No. 17
FO 228	Great Britain. Foreign Office Files No. 228
FO 230	Great Britain. Foreign Office Files No. 230
FO 663	Great Britain. Foreign Office Files No. 663
FO 677	Great Britain. Foreign Office Files No. 677
GDHFHL	Lu Kun, et al., comp., <i>Guangdong haifang huilan</i>
GZD:QL	<i>Gongzhong dang Qianlong chao zouzhe</i>
GCR (Beijing)	Junji dang. First Historical Archives, Beijing
GCR (Taipei)	Junji dang. National Palace Museum Archives, Taipei
GZD:YZ	<i>Gongzhong dang Yongzheng chao zouzhe</i>
HGTZ	Wei Yuan, <i>Haiguo tuzhi</i>
LCYSWJ	Lin Changyi, <i>Lin Changyi shiwenji</i>
LWDD	Zhou Qufei, <i>Lingwai daida</i>
MJSWB	<i>Ming jingshi wenbian</i>
MSL	<i>Ming shilu</i>
QCHJTS	<i>Qingchu haijiang tushuo</i>
QLFTZXTZ	Hong Liangji, <i>Qianlong fu ting zhou xian tuzhi</i>
QSL	<i>Qing shilu</i>
SKQS	<i>Siku quanshu</i>
SYLSH	Lin Changyi (comp.). <i>Sheying lou shihua</i>
TWXXCK	<i>Taiwan wenxian congkan</i>
TXJGLBS	Gu Yanwu, <i>Tainxia junguo libin shu</i>
XFHZYDCC	Wang Xiqi, comp., <i>Xiaofanghu zhai yudi congchao</i>
YMXSJL	Du Zhen, <i>Yue-Min xunshi jilue</i>
YWSM:XF	<i>Qingdai chouban yiwu shimo: Xianfeng chao</i>
ZKYZZ	Zheng Ruozeng, <i>Zheng Kaiyang zazhu</i>

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