

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/19069> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Cheng, Weichung

**Title:** War, trade and piracy in the China Seas (1622-1683)

**Date:** 2012-06-12

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**CHAPTER ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**Silver tides sweep the Chinese tributary system**

Before the Western countries forced China and its vassal countries under duress to join the nation-state system in the nineteenth century, the political relations of the Chinese empire in East Asia were regulated within the framework of the Sino-centric tributary system. This balance of power was an extension of the domestic political structure which sustained the Chinese empire for almost two thousand years.<sup>1</sup> ‘Barbarian’ rulers in the countries surrounding China acknowledged the superior status of the Chinese emperor and in return for this recognition the Chinese court guaranteed the legitimacy of their position. Sometimes it could even initiate substantial interventions to come to their rescue. How strong this intervention would be depended on the actual physical force available to be deployed by the Chinese empire at that moment.<sup>2</sup> In comparison with the other political entities in the region, the sheer size of the Chinese empire exerted remarkable psychological pressure on its neighbours. Leaving these various pressures aside, the economic rewards bestowed on the vassal states in this tributary system were very attractive since membership articulated with the operation of the monopolistic crown trade between vassals and overlord. When China was compelled to proclaim the *Hai-chin* or maritime prohibitions in a desperate attempt to stabilize the social order along its coast, these new regulations did not disrupt the arrival of the tributary embassies from overseas rulers which

---

<sup>1</sup> John King Fairbank, ‘Tributary Trade and China’s Relations with the West’, *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 1/2 (1942), 129-149 at 131-33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 137; For a more comprehensive and thorough description of the Ming tribute system and its relation to overseas trade cf. Chang Pin-tsun, ‘Chinese Maritime Trade: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Fu-chien’ (Diss., Princeton: 1993), 8-11.

## INTRODUCTION

continued to arrive regularly and formed the only legal channel for trade in the first half of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).<sup>3</sup>

As much as the tributary system was an extension of Chinese domestic political strength, domestic turmoil in a vassal state as the result of the collapse of central authority might also exclude it from the tribute system. Japan joined the Ming tributary system after its shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, was recognized as a subordinate with the status of 'King of Japan' by the Ming emperor in 1408.<sup>4</sup> Almost sixty years later, the Muromachi *Bakufu* [Japanese, hereafter J.] lost its authority after disputes arising from the shogunal succession in 1467 and central authority in Japan began to fall apart.<sup>5</sup> When the daimyos of Hosokawa and Ouchi separately dispatched tributary embassies to China in 1523, both of them claimed to be legitimate envoys authorized by the shogun and tried to vitiate each other's claims. Their conflict which degenerated into a series of continuous raids caused large-scale disarray to proliferate along the Chinese coast. Rather than become involved in the fighting between the two factions by choosing for one of the parties, the Chinese court eventually decided to cease any contact with Japan in 1547.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Fairbank, 'Tributary Trade and China', 138-9; Hok-Lam Chan, 'Chinese Barbarian Officials in the foreign Tributary Missions to China during the Ming Dynasty', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 88/3(1968), 411-18 at 417; Chang, *Chinese Maritime Trade*, 11-36.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald P. Toby, *State and diplomacy in early modern Japan: Asia in the development of the Tokugawa bakufu*, (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1984), 24; Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China*, (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1996), 90.

<sup>5</sup> Marius Berthus Jansen, *The making of Modern Japan*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>6</sup> John Whitney Hall, James L. McClain (eds), *The Cambridge History of Japan*, 6 vols, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1991), IV, 67; Toby, *State and diplomacy in early modern Japan*, 24; Moreover, because of the financial burden

## CHAPTER ONE

At more or less the same time, a silver-mine in Iwami in Japan was put into full production. Using the silver it provided, Japanese merchants continued their quest to obtain Chinese goods via the Korean Peninsula, but their plan was thwarted. The Korean government became worried about the destabilizing effect the sudden increase in the silver flow could have and banned the trade in 1539.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the silk yarn produced in the Chiang-nan area around Su-chou and Hang-chou in China continued to be in great demand in Japan. The high profits to be obtained in the silver-for-silk trade created waves of smugglers who rushed to China from Japan. Without formal channels between the two countries which could maintain security, the smugglers often collaborated with the pirates or even turned to piracy themselves. This second wave of piracy is referred to in Chinese sources simply as '*Wo-k'ou*', namely 'Japanese pirates'. In complete contravention of the nominal goal of the Sino-centric tributary system, Japanese pirates escaped scot free at home and continued to plunder their Ming victims. The Chinese Ming court was not in the position to restore the central government in Japan which would have enabled the traders to obtain the silver it desperately required by this time through legitimate trade. The inability of the Chinese court to take adequate measures to respond to this wave of piracy along the Chinese coast was a consequence of the long decline to which its military defence system had been subjected ever since an unrealistic military farming programme was introduced to the military colonies (*Wei-so*) along the border in 1371.<sup>8</sup> This system was devised so that the soldiers in the garrisons could be self-supporting by working as farmers and simultaneously be ready to keep the enemy at bay. This farming programme transformed the

---

placed on the Ming court in this tributary exchange, the court had discouraged tributary missions since 1430s, cf. Chang, 'Chinese maritime trade', 39-45.

<sup>7</sup> Von Glahn, *Fountain of fortune*, 114-5

<sup>8</sup> Ray Huang, *Taxation and Governmental Finance in Sixteenth-Century Ming China*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1974), 65-7. I followed the author to translate '*Wei-so*' as military colony.

## INTRODUCTION

hereditary soldiers into peasants and in the result was the withering of the garrisons during the century-long peace that followed. By the middle the fifteenth century soldiers were even selling or mortgaging their farmland.<sup>9</sup> In most of the military colonies along the coast, the numbers of residential troops had declined to less than half of what they had been when the Wo-k'ou first launched their raids. In Fu-chien the numbers of the Wei-so soldiers declined to only 20 per cent.<sup>10</sup> In some extreme cases, the numbers of soldiers who continued to live in the colonies amounted to only 2 or 3 per cent of the original quota.<sup>11</sup> In comparison with the bellicose 'Wo-k'ou' who had earned their spurs in the interminable rivalry in the 'warring states' of Japan, the Ming coastal defence force had little fighting experience.<sup>12</sup> The upshot was that the Ming court had to rebuild the coastal defence force before it could really contemplate regulating the coastal commerce and diplomacy with Japan within or without the tributary system.

### **The emergence of the Chinese privateers**

In 1554, as Supreme Commander of Chiang-su (Tsung-du) Chang Ching was dispatched by the Ministry of War to carry out this mission of military reform.<sup>13</sup> His recruits included mountain aborigines from Kuang-hsi,

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Fan Chung-I, T'ung His-kang, *Ming-tai Wo-k'ou shih-lüeh* [A Brief History of Wo-k'ou during the Ming Dynasty], (Peiking: Chung-hua Shu-chü, 2004), 202; Two different reports written by the Fu-chien officials which point out two different percentages and that actually the numbers were only 18.5% and 42.8% of the original quotas of the coastal defence of Fu-chien around 1547, see: Chang, 'Chinese Maritime Trade', 204-8.

<sup>11</sup> Ray Huang, *1587: a year of no significance : the Ming dynasty in decline*, (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1981), 160.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>13</sup> The Chinese official titles in this dissertation are translated according to : Charles

## CHAPTER ONE

salt-smugglers from South Chih-li (Nanking or Chiang-su) and Buddhist monks from Shan-tung. In the other words, he formed an army of mercenaries. Although the hereditary soldiers in the military colonies were still liable to be called up for duty, they were no longer able to play any meaningful part in engagements with the enemies.<sup>14</sup> In 1557, in a hasty effort to build up some military pressure, the Supreme Commander of Chê-chiang-Nan-chili-Fu-chien, Hu Tsung-hsien, also devised plans to recruit a navy from among the Chinese pirates and smugglers who used to co-operate with Japanese. This came to naught as Emperor Chia-ching (1522-1566) rejected his proposal and eventually the most prominent smuggler and potential naval commander, Wang Chih, and his followers were trapped and sentenced to death.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, the mercenaries were soon spreading alarm among the local elites along the coast who were horrified by their ill-discipline.<sup>16</sup> Disorderliness was not the only problem they presented. The cost of maintaining the mercenaries in the intervals between the pirate

---

O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, (Taipei, Southern Materials, Inc.:1988).

<sup>14</sup> Huang, *Taxation and Governmental Finance*, 292; Fan, *Ming-tai Wo-k'ou shih-lüeh*, 244-8.

<sup>15</sup> T'ai-wan yin-hang ching-chi yen-chiu shih[hereafter, TWYH, The economic research department of the Bank of Taiwan](ed.), *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*[Historical Materials about Fu-chienese Coastal Waters Selected from the Veritable Records of the Ming] T'ai-wan wen-hsien ts'ung-k'an [hereafter TW, Taiwan Historical Documentary Collectanea] no. 296, (1971), 29; Huang, *1587: a year of no significance*, 164; John E. Wills Jr, 'Maritime China from Wangchih to Shih Lang', in Jonathan D. Spence and id. (eds), *From Ming to Ch'ing*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 204-38 at 211-13. Hsü Kuang-ch'i insisted Hu Tsung-hsien had made a sincere attempt to recruit Wang Chih for the court camp. The Emperor did not allow this and demanded the death penalty. Cf. Hsü Kuang-ch'i, 'Hai-fang Yü-Sso[A General Discussion of Coastal Defences]', in TWYH (ed.), *Ming ching-shih wên-pien hsüan-lu*[Selections of Political Comments in the Ming Dynasty], 2 vols, TW 289, II, 211-23 at 212.

<sup>16</sup> Fan, *Ming-tai Wo-k'ou shih-lüeh*, 189.

## INTRODUCTION

raids also proved too high to bear for longer periods.<sup>17</sup> In short, these mercenaries were more trouble than they were worth and so the recruitment of mercenaries from the local civilian population seemed to offer a more practical solution.<sup>18</sup> The Wei-so Regional Military Commissioner, Ch'i Chi-kuang, attempted to turn the farmers and miners into more unified, stable brigades after 1559.<sup>19</sup> As a reward for good behaviour, he promised each soldier at least as much pay as he would obtain from a day-labour and 30 ounces of silver for each enemy head taken in battle.<sup>20</sup> As it combined low costs with better disciplined troops, this solution proved very practicable; Chi Chi-kuang's troops became the backbone of the Chiang-su and Chê-chiang coastal defence forces and he gradually forced the pirates out and drove them towards the coastal waters of Fu-chien and Kuang-tung.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 1-1: The Wo-k'ou raids along the Chinese coast from 1552-1565**

	Chiang-su	Chê-chiang	Fu-chien	Kuang-tung
1552-1557	89	61	14	2
1558-1565	6	7	65	12

Source: Fan Chung-I; T'ung His-kang, *Ming-tai Wo-k'ou shih-lüeh* [A brief History of Wo-k'ou during the Ming dynasty], (Peiking: Chung-hua Shu-chü, 2004), 140;158

---

<sup>17</sup> Lin Jen-ch'uan, *Ming-mo ch'ing-ch'u Ssu-jên hai-shang mao-i*[Private Trade during the late Ming and Early Ch'ing Dynasty], (Shang-hai: Hua-tung shih-fan ta-hsüeh, 1987), 76-7.

<sup>18</sup> Chang, 'Chinese Maritime Trade', 247-8. Chang Pin-tsun referred to these recruited soldiers as 'volunteers'. He also pointed out their status was different to that of the Wei-so soldiers.

<sup>19</sup> Huang, *1587: a year of no significance*, 260.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>21</sup> Chang, 'Chinese Maritime Trade', 70-1.

## CHAPTER ONE

In the struggle to restore peace along the coast during the continuing pirate raids, the Supreme Commanders and Grand Co-ordinators were awarded the power to take autonomous command of their armies, this was a privilege which had never been granted so frequently in previous times. Vested with this authority, they could even issue orders to local commanders without having to consult the generals first. They were also put in charge of provisioning the army. Since the military colonies had by then dwindled to mere skeletons, this measure integrated the troops into the budget of the provincial administration.<sup>22</sup> To finance the newly recruited local mercenaries, the Supreme Commanders and Grand Co-ordinators were also granted rights to levy new taxes and spend the resultant sums without the ratification of the central court in Peking. These local taxes were not even listed under the provincial revenues submitted to the court.<sup>23</sup> Such conveniences allowed the Supreme Commanders and Grand Co-ordinators to exert unprecedented military and financial autonomy at the provincial level. The story below reveals that these authorities also played a role in the carrying out of the institutional reforms of the Ming maritime policy.

Even before the Wo-k'ou 's raids on the Chinese coast began, for a long time Yüeh-kang (Moon Harbour) in the estuary of the Chiu-lung River had long been a popular lair for smugglers. After the Ming court gradually rebuilt the coastal defence force in Chê-chiang and northern Fu-chien, the Japanese pirates turned up there once again.<sup>24</sup> As they did not have the requisite naval

---

<sup>22</sup> Huang, *1587: a year of no significance*, 162; Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles*, 80.

<sup>23</sup> Huang, *Taxation and Governmental Finance*, 291.

<sup>24</sup> Li Chin-ming, 'Ming-ch'ao chung-yeh fu-chien chang-chou yüeh-kang te hsing-ch'i yü fu-chien tê hai-wai i-min [The Rise of Yüeh-kang in Chang-chou during the Middle of Ming Dynasty and Fu-chienese Oversea Immigrants ]', in: Tang Shi-yeoung (ed.), *Chung-kuo hai-yang-shih fa-chan lun-wên-chi* [Essays in Chinese Maritime History], (Taipei: Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences Academia Sinica, 2008), Vol. X, 65-100 at 72-6; Chang, 'Chinese Maritime Trade',

## INTRODUCTION

vessels, the Fu-chien officials were not able to eject the smugglers. An essay, 'Opinions about Pacification or Appeasement' written by a local member of the gentry, Hsieh Pin, in 1562, mentions that:

*'The groups which flocked there were no fewer than several tens of thousands, and the illicit junks constructed with double masts were no fewer than one or two hundreds. They sailed through the turbulent waves as far as Japan and as near as Siam and Pahang. They can visit any place. They have robbed traders and civilians along the borders for such a long time. When they heard that an official force was on its way, they fitted out their junks to carry evacuate their families and take refuge on islands like P'eng-hu (the Pescadores). They might just linger at some distance from the estuary and return after the official forces retreat again.'*<sup>25</sup>

In the same piece, the writer also suggests that some of the smugglers should be recruited into the coastal defence troops and allow them the opportunity to become lower-ranking officers. The new recruits should register their vessels so as to take turns to be on duty. Junks which were not on duty should be allowed to pursue their own business.<sup>26</sup> About the same time, the Ming court also entered into negotiations with the most notorious smugglers in the area, namely: the twenty-four generals of Yüeh-kang,' who had occupied the harbour since 1556.<sup>27</sup> Later in 1564, the Grand

---

251-7.

<sup>25</sup> Liang Chao-yang, 'Hai-ch'êng hsien-chih[Local Gazette of Hai-ch'êng District]', in Lin You-nien (et al. comp.), *Jih-pên ts'ang chung-kuo han-chien ti-fang-chih t'ung-k'an*[Rare Chinese Local Gazettes Preserved in Japan], 24 vols, (Peking : Shu-mu wên-hsien, 1992), VI, 526.

<sup>26</sup> Liang, 'Hai-ch'êng hsien-chih', 527.

<sup>27</sup> Li, 'Ming-ch'ao chung-yeh fu-chien chang-chou yüeh-kang tê hsing-ch'i yü fu-chien tê hai-wai i-min', 76; Ch'ên Tsung-jên, 'Wan-ming yüeh-kang k'ai-chin tê hsü-shu yü shih-chi'[The Narrative of and the Reality behind the 'Lifting of the Maritime Ban' in Yüeh-kang during the Late Ming Period], in: Tang Shi-yeoung(ed.), *Chung-kuo hai-yang-shih fa-chan lun-wên-chi*[Essays in Chinese Maritime History],

## CHAPTER ONE

Co-ordinator of Fu-chien, T'an Lun, sent a letter to Emperor Chia-ching, in which he requested that the junk traders be permitted to sail and trade in the coastal waters on condition they did not sail to Japan:

*'Now, the solution is that, although the trade with Japan should [continue to]be prohibited, the fishing junks, and those used for the rice transport trade, for the purchase of [Nan-yang] pepper and sandalwood in Kuang-tung, and for the distribution of white sugar from Chang-chou, should be allowed to sail in coastal waters on condition that all junks should be registered and monitored by each other.'*<sup>28</sup>

The motivation for legitimizing the traffic in coastal waters was to ensure that the coastal defence troops were provided with enough seaworthy vessels. At that moment the Fu-chien force was poised to confront the Chinese pirate Wu P'ing, who was cruising Fu-chien and Kuang-tung waters with a sizeable fleet.<sup>29</sup> In 1564, Wu P'ing even successfully occupied Hui-chou and Ch'ao-yang with a fleet of 200 junks.<sup>30</sup> The troops of the Regional Commander of Fu-chien, Ch'i Chi-kuang, were skilled in fighting on land, but they did not have the skill to engage the pirates on the water. A shortage of sufficient war-junks was the reason the Fu-chienese coastal defence troops had failed to capture Wu P'ing after they defeated him at Nan-ao in 1565.<sup>31</sup> Ch'i Chi-kuang therefore seriously considered enlisting

---

(Taipei: Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences Academia Sinica, 2008), Vol. X, 101-42 at 122.

<sup>28</sup> T'an Lun, 'Tiao-ch'ên shan-hou wei-chin shih-i i-pei yüen-lüeh i-chih chih-an shu' [A Letter regarding to a Long-term Policy after the Battles to Maintain Order and Improve Later Coastal Defences] , in: id, *T'an-hsiang-min tsou-i* [The Official Correspondence of Tan Lun], (Peking: Hsien-chuang shu-chü, 2004 ), 24-5, cited from Ch'ên, 'Wan-ming yüeh-kang k'ai-chin tê hsü-shu yü shih-chi', 120.

<sup>29</sup> Ch'ên, 'Wan-ming yüeh-kang k'ai-chin tê hsü-shu yü shih-chi', 133.

<sup>30</sup> Lin, *Ming-mo ch'ing-ch'u Ssu-jên hai-shang mao-i*, 107.

<sup>31</sup> Ch'ên, 'Wan-ming yüeh-kang k'ai-chin tê hsü-shu yü shih-chi', 134.

## INTRODUCTION

fishing and trading junks from Yüeh-kang to assist his forces.<sup>32</sup> In 1567 the Grand Co-ordinator of Fu-chien, T'u Tsê-min, actually put this suggestion into practice. Trading junks were registered and assigned to different localities at which they would act as a support force for the war-junks. They were paid from the budget of Chang-chou prefecture. If they actually engaged the pirates in skirmishes, the civilian junk traders would also be given cash rewards.<sup>33</sup> This arrangement promoted the Yüeh-kang junk traders to the formal status of 'privateers', that is, in an officially sanctioned war action, they had the right to use violence.

The Portuguese merchants in Macao were also incorporated into this pattern of privateering. In 1564, when a group of Chinese navy soldiers mutinied in Ch'ao-chou, the Portuguese volunteered to assist the Regional Commander of Kuang-tung, Yü Ta-you, to put down the rebellion. He enlisted 300 Portuguese soldiers and added some of the junks of local privateers to his fighting force.<sup>34</sup> Four years later in 1568, when the Fu-chien Grand Co-ordinator, T'u Tsê-min, had assembled a sufficiently large naval force including privateers from Yüeh-kang, Yü Ta-you planned to mount an expedition from Fu-chien to Kuang-tung, in a concerted effort to annihilate the pirate Ts'êng I-pên, Wu P'ing's successor.<sup>35</sup> In the meantime, Ts'êng I-pên attacked Kuang-chou, but was defeated by a joint force of the

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>34</sup> Huang Hung-chao, 'P'u-t'ao-ya-jên chü-liu Ao-mên k'ao-lüeh'[A Brief Study of the Beginnings of the Portuguese Settlement in Macao], *Wên-hua tsa-chih*[Revista de Cultura], 66 (2008), 171-180, at 176; Tang K'ai-jian (T'ang K'ai-chien), Zhang Zhao (Chang Chao), 'Ming Chung-hou-ch'i p'u-jên pang-chu ming-ch'ao ch'ao-ch'u hai-tao shih-shih tsai-k'ao'[Historical Examination of the Assistance of the Portuguese of Macao to the Ming Government in the Eradication of Pirates in the Mid- and Late Ming Dynasty], *Journal of Hubei University* (Philosophy and Social science), 32/2(2005), 192-197 at 195.

<sup>35</sup> Ch'ên, 'Wan-ming yüeh-kang k'ai-chin tê hsü-shu yü shih-chi', 125-6.

## CHAPTER ONE

Portuguese in Macao and local Chinese privateers.<sup>36</sup> Ts'êng I-pên was eventually defeated in 1569 by Yü Ta-you with his combined fleet from Fu-chien and Kuang-tung.<sup>37</sup>

Although a few pirates still raided the Chinese coast in later years, peace had basically been restored along the Chinese coast. The coastal traffic between the different provinces was re-opened. In a ingenious solution, privateers were available when needed and tax revenues were obtained to support the coastal defence vessels.<sup>38</sup> Most sources confirm that, between 1567 and 1574, the customs revenues from Yüeh-kang/Hai-ch'êng emerged as an important source of income which bolstered the Fu-chienese provincial budget.<sup>39</sup>

One side-effect of the re-organization of the coastal defence troops was that a specially designated harbour was opened up to cater for the overseas traffic bound for foreign ports, with the exclusion of Japan. Most of the overseas destinations were recorded in the '*Tung-His-Yang K'ao* (Authenticated Knowledge of Eastern and Western Oceans)', a work compiled by a local scholar Chang Hsieh and published in 1617.<sup>40</sup> This book provides a bird's eye view of the commercial map of the Fu-chienese junk traders in the East and South China Seas. The destinations were split into two groups, namely, the Compass Needle Route of the Western Ocean (*his-yang*) and the Compass Needle Route of the Eastern Ocean (*Tung-yang*). Leonard Blussé has given a brief sketch of this commercial map:

*'The eastern route ran from Mount T'ai-wu in the Bay of Amoy via the*

---

<sup>36</sup> Tang, 'Ming Chung-hou-ch'i p'u-Jên pang-chu ming-ch'ao ch'ao-ch'u hai-tao shih-shih tsai-k'ao', 195.

<sup>37</sup> Lin, *Ming-mo ch'ing-ch'u Ssu-jên hai-shang mao-i*, 108.

<sup>38</sup> Ch'ên, 'Wan-ming yüeh-kang k'ai-chin tê hsü-shu yü shih-chi', 135-9.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>40</sup> Chang Hsieh, *Tung-hsi-yang k'ao* [Authenticated Knowledge of Eastern and Western Oceans], (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981), 7.

## INTRODUCTION

*P'eng-hu Archipelago to Luzon, from where it continued all the way to the Moluccan islands; while the western route from the same starting point followed the western perimeter of the South China Sea, running via Champa, Cambodia, Siam, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra to the north coast of Java, from where it branched out to Timor, which in turn was connected with the terminus of the Eastern route, the Spice islands. The Eastern trunk route contained some 46 branches, most of them situated in the Philippines and the Sulu Archipelago, while the Western route had as many as 125 possible stop-overs.*<sup>41</sup>

The presence of Portuguese in Macao was tolerated by the Ming court during this period, although their residence there was never officially authorized and was frequently questioned until the 1620s.<sup>42</sup> The Portuguese were able to survive in Macao because of their unwavering co-operation with the feudal lords of the island of Kyushu in Japan, which made them reliable go-betweens in the Sino- Japanese trade, and to the Chinese and Japanese smugglers. As Blussé has pointed out:

*'It is remarkable that the European maritime powers which managed to capture a share of the China Sea traffic in this particular period, all adjusted themselves to this existing transport situation: they either tried to link up their own shipping to the Tung -his yang network or turned the absence of a direct Asian navigation link between China and Japan to advantage by providing such a link, the Macao-Nagasaki connection being a case in point.'*<sup>43</sup>

Besides the Portuguese who had settled at two terminals along the Western route, Malacca and Macao, the Spaniards established their

---

<sup>41</sup> 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 at 59.

<sup>42</sup> Huang, 'P'u-t'ao-ya-jên chü-liu Ao-mên k'ao-lüeh', 179.

<sup>43</sup> Blussé, 'No Boats to China', 59.

## CHAPTER ONE

headquarters in Asia along the Eastern route in Manila in 1571.<sup>44</sup> Because the Spaniards could provide the Hai-ch'êng junk traders with silver from Peru in Manila, the silks-for-silver trade soon forged a firm link between both parties.<sup>45</sup> After the last groups of Chinese pirates who had tried to establish themselves outside China, either in Taiwan or in the Philippines, were annihilated at the end of the 1570s, the Manila trade went ahead by leaps and bounds.<sup>46</sup> At least after 1589, the Chinese junks returning from Manila carried silver pieces-of-eight almost to the exclusion of any other valuable goods.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 1-2: Estimates of Philippine Silver Exports to China, 1586-1615**

Year	Value of exports by Chinese junks (pesos)
1586-90	625,000
1591-95	3,827,500
1596-1600	4,026,000
1601-5	5,017,333
1606-10	7,730,500
1611-1615	4,479,700

Source: Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques*[The Iberian Philippines and Pacific: 16th-18th century] (*XVI<sup>e</sup>, XVII<sup>e</sup>, XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*), (Paris: S.E.V. P. E. N., 1968), 200-205.

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>45</sup> Von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune*, 118-9.

<sup>46</sup> Lin, *Ming-mo ch'ing-ch'u Ssu-jên hai-shang mao-i*, 108-111. For example, Lin Tao-ch'ien tried to set foot in Taiwan and Lin Fêng tried to occupy a site in Luzon.

<sup>47</sup> Chang, *Tung-hsi-yang k'ao*, 132. The Ming taxation reform of 'one single whip system (I-t'iao-pian-fa)' had also contributed to this huge demand. The reform was introduced into Fu-chien in 1578. Chang, 'Chinese Maritime Trade', 222-4.

## INTRODUCTION

### The maritime mercenaries step onto the stage

While order was gradually being restored along the Chinese coast in the 1580s, the domestic strife which had divided Japanese society for almost one century also gradually petered out and a real effort to achieve unification was made. In 1560s the warlord Oda Nobunaga enjoyed a meteoric rise to power and occupied Kyoto, the nominal capital of Japan. By 1568, he was no longer satisfied to be merely a supporter of the Muromachi Bakufu but made a concerted effort to unify all of Japan under his own sway. When he was betrayed and murdered by his subordinates in 1573, the territory under his control, about one-third of Japan, fell into the lap of his most trusted ally Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi took up the torch and carried on with Oda's ambitions to unify the country.<sup>48</sup> In 1587 he pacified the southernmost island of Kyushu and in the following year issued orders to eradicate piracy.<sup>49</sup> This was the moment at which the movement to subordinate the coast of Japan to central authority, the necessary prerequisite for initiating once again formal diplomatic negotiations with China, began.

In the 1580s as Peruvian silver poured into China via the Hai-ch'êng-Manila corridor and the Japanese silver stream was channelled to Macao through Portuguese hands, the Sino-Japan smuggling trade became more risky than the legitimate routes and was a less attractive option for Japanese investors.<sup>50</sup> However, when he noticed the great potential offered by this business, Hideyoshi personally stepped into this lucrative trade in

---

<sup>48</sup> Jansen, *The making of Modern Japan*, 11-17.

<sup>49</sup> Hall, *The Cambridge History of Japan*, IV, 68; 264; Iwao Seiichi, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū* [Studies in the History of Trade under the Vermillion-Seal Licenses of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Revised and enlarged edition], (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kombunkan, 1985), 57; Yoshi S. Kuno, *Japanese Expansion on the Asiatic Continent: A Study in the History of Japan with Special Reference to her International Relations with China, Korea, and Russia*, 3 vols, ( Berkeley, University of California Press: 1937), I, 124-5.

<sup>50</sup> Iwao, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū*, 9-10.

## CHAPTER ONE

1589 and became its biggest investor.<sup>51</sup> As self-declared ruler of Japan, Hideyoshi decided to set about acquiring tribute from neighbouring countries. He challenged the traditional manner in which Japanese rulers had participated in the Sino-centric tributary system in the past. Hideyoshi's move might have seemed a puzzling one at the time, but his diplomatic measures suggest a consistent mindset. He sent a diplomatic embassy to Korea in 1587 and with the same purpose in mind dispatched three embassies to the viceroy of the Portuguese Estado da Índia in Goa, the Spanish Governor-General in Manila and the King of Ryūkyū in 1591.<sup>52</sup> The junks carrying the envoys were provided with letters of marque and reprisal (henceforth Letter of Marque) to prove their status. On the strength of employing these tactics, Hideyoshi obtained an almost monolithic authority in regulating all Japanese traders abroad.<sup>53</sup>

In an attempt to improve relations the Korean king, Yi Kong, sent an envoy to Hideyoshi but he could not agree with Hideyoshi's ideas of creating a Japan-centric tributary system. Upon this rejection, Hideyoshi decided to invade Korea and challenge the primacy of Ming China in the region.<sup>54</sup> He set up a ship-building programme using the most recent technology to provide the vessels to carry his troops across the sea strait.<sup>55</sup> After the first invasion in 1592, he expanded the trade with Macao, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and Siam in his search for military supplies like lead and saltpetre.<sup>56</sup> Japanese navigation was improved immensely by synergizing the Portuguese and the Chinese technology. After some 158,000 Japanese troops had landed in Pusan, Seoul was seized within two months. A large Ming army

---

<sup>51</sup> Iwao, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū*, 14-15.

<sup>52</sup> Hall, *The Cambridge History of Japan*, IV, 68-9; Jansen, *The making of Modern Japan*, 19; Kuno, *Japanese Expansion on the Asiatic Continent*, 143-5.

<sup>53</sup> Iwao, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū*, 49-54.

<sup>54</sup> Hall, *The Cambridge History of Japan*, IV, 68; 70.

<sup>55</sup> Iwao, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū*, 24-5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-7.

## INTRODUCTION

was dispatched to succour the Korean king but, after several rounds of battles, the three camps entered into long protracted negotiations. Hideyoshi proposed a revision of the Sino-centric tributary system and requested a Ming princess to be the consort of Japanese emperor, subtly insinuating an equal status between China and Japan. The Ming court was not prepared to go farther than investing him with the title of the 'king of Japan', as it had done with Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1408. The negotiations were broken off and another 140,000 Japanese troops were dispatched to Korea in 1597. Eventually, the Korean adventure came to a sudden halt because of the unexpected death of Hideyoshi in 1598.<sup>57</sup> Since Hideyoshi had not arranged his succession, his death created a power vacuum in Japan. The fragile balance of power among the daimyos collapsed and a new round of contest for power began. The Japanese challenge to the Sino-centric tributary system also unobtrusively faded away.

Although Hideyoshi's plans had been doomed, not to come to fruition, bolstered by strong domestic demand the expansion of Japanese foreign trade did not flag. In 1595 a Jesuit father predicted to the Governor-General of Philippines, Gomes Perez Dasmarinas, that Chinese silk imports destined for Japanese junks in Manila would cause the silk price to drop.<sup>58</sup> Although official contacts between China and Japan had been terminated completely after the Japanese retreated from Korea, the silk-for-silver transit trade between Fu-chienese and Japanese merchants in Manila did not falter, apparently condoned by the Ming court.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Hall, *The Cambridge History of Japan*, IV, 72-3. Kuno, *Japanese Expansion on the Asiatic Continent*, 160-70.

<sup>58</sup> Iwao, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū*, 12-3.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 30; Hsü Kuang-ch'i, 'Hai-fang Yü-Sso', 213.

## CHAPTER ONE

**Table 1-3: Chinese and Japanese junks visiting Manila between 1577 and 1612**

Year	1577	1578	1580	1581	1582	1588	1591	1596
Chinese junks	9	9	19	9	24	46	21	40
Japanese junks							1	1

  

1597	1599	1600	1601	1602	1603	1604	1605	1606
14	19	25	29	18	16	15	18	26
2	10	5	4	3	1	6(4)	3(4)	3

  

1607	1608	1609	1610	1611	1612
39	39	41	41	21	46
3(4)		3	(2)	(2)	(1)

Source: Chaunu, *ibid.*, 148-150; Iwao Seiichi, *Nan'yō Nihon-machi no kenkyū*, (Tōkyō : Iwanami Shoten, 1966 ), 10-11.

Five years after Hideyoshi's death, one of his generals, Tokugawa Ieyasu, climbed to the summit of power and was appointed Shogun in 1603. Throughout the following years, he continued to strengthen the base of his new regime and turned Hideyoshi's aggressive diplomacy into a more moderate direction. In 1601, he sent separate letters to the Governor-General of Philippines and the Viceroy of Annam, in expressing his goodwill. In 1606, Ieyasu also sent a letter to the Siamese king. Formal trade relations were established soon after.<sup>60</sup> Ieyasu requested the recipients to protect the Japanese junk traders in possession of a licence with his vermilion seal (*Goshuin* [J.]) and to ban Japanese traders who tried to do business without

<sup>60</sup> Iwao, *Shuinsen to Nihon-machi*, 22-5.

## INTRODUCTION

it.<sup>61</sup> In the letter to the Governor-General of the Philippines, he also promised to punish any Japanese criminals if foreign authorities appealed to him to do so.<sup>62</sup> Between 1604 and 1607 Ieyasu also issued licences to junks sailing to Macao . The visits of these junks indicated that an almost direct commercial trade channel to China had been opened.<sup>63</sup>

Ieyasu also made efforts to repair the Korean-Japanese relationship. The lord of Tsushima, an island situated between Kyushu and the Korean coast, exploited his traditional middleman position and sought to renew relations with the Korean king. After King Yi Kong had informed the Chinese court of the Japanese request to re-establish friendly relations, he sent envoys to visit Ieyasu in 1604.<sup>64</sup> To prove his sincerity about re-establishing friendship, Ieyasu returned 1,300 Korean prisoners-of-war the following year.<sup>65</sup> When the Chinese court decided to leave this matter in the hands of King Yi Kong, in 1607 the latter decided to dispatch a 500-strong embassy to Japan to negotiate the restoration of a formal relationship.<sup>66</sup> Because Shogun Hidetada, who had succeeded Ieyasu in the meantime, was not willing to accept the Sino-centric tributary system as the basis of Japanese-Korean relations, a formal relationship was only concluded between the Daimyo of Tsushima and the Korean court two years later in 1609. This arrangement allowed all further trade between Tsushima and the Korean port of Pusan to ignore the tributary issues.<sup>67</sup> During the negotiations, envoys from Tsushima even suggested the Korean king allow them to send an envoy to China via the

---

<sup>61</sup> Iwao, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū*, 60-1

<sup>62</sup> Iwao, *Shuinsen to Nihon-machi*, 22; 28-9; Iwao, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū*, 64.

<sup>63</sup> Iwao, *Shuinsen to Nihon-machi*, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Toby, *State and diplomacy in early modern Japan*, 27.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-34.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9.

## CHAPTER ONE

Korea network.<sup>68</sup>

Another way of re-opening the negotiations between Japan and China was to seek the help of the king of Ryūkyū as an intermediary. The Ryūkyū kingdom occupied a firm position in the Sino-centric tributary system. Hideyoshi had urged the king of Ryūkyū to pay him tribute, but this request was ignored. Tokugawa Hidetada harboured the same ambition and he authorized the lord of Satsuma in Kyushu to send an expeditionary force to Ryūkyū in 1609 and occupy its capital Naha. The following year the king of Ryūkyū was forced to pay tribute to Hidetada in Edo, but he also continued to do so as a vassal of the Chinese emperor.<sup>69</sup>

When the Tsushima envoys visited Pusan and spoke of the plan to send an envoy to China, they were seeking a way to rebuild the formal commercial channel with China. Without beating about the bush, they asked for a tally trade licence '*k'an-ho*[J.]' which was normally used by tributary envoys to gain admittance to Chinese ports.<sup>70</sup> In 1610 a merchant from Nanking, Chou Hsing-ju, visited the shogunal capital and suggested to the Japanese authorities that they request the Grand Co-ordinator of Fu-chien, Ch'ên Tzu-chên, to issue a tally trade licence. Hidetada ordered Honda Masazumi to write an official letter to have this arranged.<sup>71</sup> Masazumi mentioned nothing about tribute-bearing in this letter, but simply asked for a licence for the tally trade. He requested the protection of the Chinese court for Japanese trading junks carrying official passes, if they were forced to anchor off the Chinese coast to take on essential provisions.<sup>72</sup> Before the letter reached Ch'ên

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>70</sup> Hayashi Fukusai (comp.), *Tsūkō ichiran* [Overview of All Foreign Communications], 8 vols, (Tōkyō : Kokusho kankōkai, 1912-1913), V, 340.

<sup>71</sup> Hayashi, *Tsūkō ichiran*, V, 340-44; Hayashi Razan, *Hayashi Razan bunshū* [Collected Works of Hayashi Razan], 2 vols, (Tōkyō : Perikansha, 1979), I, 130.

<sup>72</sup> Hayashi, *Tsūkō ichiran*, V, 340-44; Hayashi, *Hayashi Razan bunshū*, I, 131.

## INTRODUCTION

Tzu-chên, he was informed that some Fu-chienese junk traders had just broken the ban on visiting Japan because the silk price there was double the price in Manila.<sup>73</sup> He was alarmed. Therefore, even if the letter had been delivered to Ch'ên Tzu-chên, he would not have deigned to reply. Both Chinese and Japanese sources confirm that more and more Chinese junks began to sail secretly to Japan during this period.<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile, the Ming court began to harbour suspicions about whether the Japanese were plotting another expansionist move after it was discovered that the Japanese were allowed to trade in Pusan and the king of Ryūkyū had been captured by the lord of Satsuma in 1612.<sup>75</sup> After messages were received from Korean court and a Ryūkyū tributary embassy arrived in Peking,<sup>76</sup> the Ming court correctly surmised that the Tokugawa Bakufu had no intention of returning to the fold of the Sino-centric tributary system, but was only seeking to establish some sort of trade relationship. The court also realized that most of the piracy along the Chinese coast was the work of Chinese not Japanese pirates, and hence the Tokugawa Bakufu had nothing to do with it. Since the Chinese court refused to adjust its tributary system to accommodate the Japanese request for equal relations, its only option was to reinforce the coastal defences in case Japanese aggression should happen to undergo a resurgence.<sup>77</sup> In the following year, in an attempt to undermine the smuggling trade the Ming court banned the coastal trade in the provinces of

---

<sup>73</sup> TWYH, *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*[Historical materials about Fu-chienese waters selected from the Veritable Records of the Ming]TW no. 296, (1971), 103.

<sup>74</sup> Fan Chin-min, 'Fan-fan fan-tao ssu fang-hsiu'[Foreign Trade Only Stops when the Trader Dies], *Tung-wu li-shih hsiao-pao*[Soochow Journal of History], 18(2007), 75-112 at 80.

<sup>75</sup> TWYH, *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*, 106.

<sup>76</sup> Hayashi, *Tsūkō ichiran*, V, 344.

<sup>77</sup> TWYH, *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*, 109-110.

## CHAPTER ONE

Chiang-su and Chê-chiang.<sup>78</sup> About the same time, the Japanese inhabitants in Macao were expelled by the Kuang-tung authorities.<sup>79</sup>

When the Japanese attempts to seek access the Ming court via Korea and Ryūkyū misfired, some Japanese junk traders tried to make direct but informal contact with the local Chinese authorities. In 1616 Murayama Tōan of Nagasaki had plans to establish a base in Taiwan which would serve as a transit harbour in the vicinity of China. His flotilla consisting of twelve junks ran into a typhoon near Taiwan and was blown onto the coast of China. A Fu-chien coastal defence officer, Tung Po-ch'i, was sent to investigate what it was doing, but was captured by the Japanese sailors and taken home with them to Japan. In 1617 Tung Po-ch'i was brought back to Fu-chien accompanied by Japanese envoys carrying a tributary letter '*Piao/Pau*[J.]' which was an overture towards the opening up of the tally trade. The Fu-chien authorities refused to accept the letter because its contents 'did not adhere to the correct style'.<sup>80</sup> However, the dialogue between the Japanese leader, Akashi Michitōmo, and the Hai-tao (Coastal Defence Circuit), Han Chung-yung, is recorded in different sources. The exchange of words shows that the Chinese side was concerned about the question of whether the Japanese intended to occupy Taiwan. In an attempt to allay their anxieties, Michitomo emphasized he was only interested in promoting trade. He also expressed the hope that the Fu-chien authorities would at least respect his legal status and would not treat him and his crew as pirates. By making this first move, he hoped to avoid falling victim to hostile treatment. In reply, Han Chung-yung requested the Japanese junk traders give up their idea of occupying Taiwan because any such move would cause alarm at the Chinese court. Nevertheless, he took the opportunity to imply that the Ming court would not consider the transit-trade between Fu-chienese traders and

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 113-4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>80</sup> Chang, *Tung-hsi-yang k'ao*, 118.

## INTRODUCTION

Japanese traders in Manila illegal. To quote his words: ‘ In fact sixteen junks have been granted licences to trade annually in Manila. Is it really possible that such large amounts of Chinese goods are all consumed by the limited population there?’ He also said frankly that the Chinese court would not prevent its subjects trading with Japan if they happened to be living abroad. To quote his words: ‘For these miserable people living in some faraway corners who take the risk of trading in your country, we have relaxed our restrictions and tolerate their behaviour’. Since the attitude of the Chinese court to the trade was now explicit, Han Chung-yung warned the Japanese against occupying Taiwan. Were they to do so, the Chinese court would have no choice but ban all silk exports, including the transit trade.<sup>81</sup>

In the meantime, the Fu-chien Grand Co-ordinator, Huang Ch’êng-hsüan, had been deeply shocked by the Japanese appearance off the coast of Fu-chien in 1616, because when the Michitōmo’s flotilla arrived on Quemoy no Chinese coastal defence troops were strong enough to confront them if necessary.<sup>82</sup> In order to remedy the situation, Huang Ch’êng-hsüan immediately launched a series of measures to reform the coastal defence system.<sup>83</sup> He discovered that the Wei-so soldiers were not trained to fight at sea: ‘ Some of them turned pale when on board, hiding behind the hull when under attack. When they were expected to give assistance, they fled away.’ The way to strengthen the coastal defences in the short run was to hire maritime mercenaries. He said: ‘ Even soldiers who are hired temporarily are stronger than weak soldiers. We should bend the rules and allow the mercenaries to join the official troops if they prove to be brave soldiers. Incompetent soldiers should be disbanded.’<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Chang, *Tung-hsi-yang k’ao*, 250-2; TWYH (ed.), *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*, 118-120.

<sup>82</sup> Chang, *Tung-hsi-yang k’ao*, 118.

<sup>83</sup> TWYH (ed.), *Ming shih-lu min-hai kuan-hsi shih-liao*, 113-4.

<sup>84</sup> Huang Ch’êng-hsüan, ‘T’iao-I hai-fang shih-i shu[A Letter Proposing a Project for

## CHAPTER ONE

The newly recruited maritime mercenary force consisted of 300 soldiers in twelve war-junks. They were enrolled into a flotilla of thirty-two war-junks which patrolled the waters between Wu-yü and T'ung-shan and the P'eng-hu Archipelago (the Pescadores),<sup>85</sup> precisely the spot where the Michitōmo's ships had anchored in the summer of 1616. Twenty war-junks would be anchored off the Pescadores to back up the residential troops on land and the other twelve war-junks were to cruise the water between the Pescadores and Wu-yü.<sup>86</sup> All the clues point to the fact that this maritime mercenary force was assigned to this area as a counter-force to prevent the Japanese fleet from again anchoring in the same coastal waters.

A local member of the gentry, Chao Ping-chien, was appointed Assistant Squadron Leader to lead the mercenary flotilla. His task was to curb the smuggling between the Chinese and Japanese.<sup>87</sup> It seems that, having been presented this opportunity on a plate, Chao Ping-chien lost no time in making himself the boss of a smuggling network, whose members included the naval lieutenants in Amoy and on the Pescadores and a prominent Chinese smuggler, Lin Chin-wu, hiding out in Taiwan.<sup>88</sup> This flotilla rapidly grew into the most powerful force the area and harried any other junk traders who happened to be passing by. In 1618 when the new Grand Co-ordinator, Wang Shih-ch'ang, arrived in Fu-chien, all the complaints which had been piling up about Chao Ping-chien were reported to

---

Coastal Defence], in: TWYH ed., *Ming ching-shih wên-pien hsüan-lu*[Selections of Political Comments in the Ming Dynasty], 2 vols, TW 289, II, 202-210 at 210.

<sup>85</sup> Huang, 'T'iao-I hai-fang shih-i shu', 205.

<sup>86</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>87</sup> Ch'ên Hsiao-ch'ung, 'Chang Hsieh "Fei-yün-chu hsü-chi shê-t'ai shih-liao kou-ch'ên"[A Historical Source concerning Taiwan in Chang-hsieh's "Fei-yün-chu hsü-chi"]', *T'ai-wan yen-chiu chi-k'an*[Taiwan Research Quarterly], 91(2006), 74-80 at 76; From Huang Ch'êng-hsüan's letter, it can be inferred that his position was that of 'Hsieh Tsung', literally the 'Assistant Chief Squadron Leader'.

<sup>88</sup> Ch'ên, 'Chang-hsieh "Fei-yün-chu hsü-chi shê-t'ai shih-liao kou-ch'ên', 76.

## INTRODUCTION

him. Later, when he had obtained further evidence from the interrogation of a pirate which brought to light details of Chao Ping-chien's illicit correspondence, he lured Chao Ping-chien to Amoy, where the latter was arrested and executed.<sup>89</sup> Because Chao Ping-chien had not rebelled outright, it is hard to judge whether he had really committed treason. According to a letter sent by the Chiang-su-Chê-chiang Regional Commander, Wang Liang-hsiang, to the Shogun in 1619, Michitōmo's claim gained credit at the Ming court which loosened up the restrictions set forth in the maritime ban and allowed the trading junks to sail abroad again.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps Chao Ping-chien was removed from his post only because the Fu-chien authorities were convinced that the Japanese had no malicious intentions and hence judged that Chao Ping-chien and his mercenary gang had become superfluous, even harmful.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, when Regional Commander Ch'i Chi-kuang had recruited and trained mercenary troops to defend the Chinese coast against the Wo-k'ou invasions into Chê-chiang on land, and Regional Commander, Yü Ta-you had hired the privateers from Hai-ch'êng, Japanese vessels were still less well equipped than Chinese junks.<sup>91</sup> This situation changed after Hideyoshi's seven-year expedition to Korea. His requirements improved Japanese ship-building technology enormously. Japanese junks were now constructed as skillfully as their Chinese counterparts which they matched in size and weaponry.<sup>92</sup> This is the explanation of why Huang Ch'êng-hsüan had to hire maritime mercenaries to

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>90</sup> Hayashi, *Tsūkō ichiran*, V, 557. This letter requested the Japanese shogun to arrest some pirates raiding the Fu-chien coast. Because the letter was addressed to Shogun, the Japanese authorities decided it was not appropriate for them to accept it and hence no formal reply was forthcoming.

<sup>91</sup> Huang, *1587: a Year of no significance*, 169-70. Yü Ta-you argued that the best way to eradicate Japanese pirates was to attack them at sea.

<sup>92</sup> Iwao, *Shinpan shuinsen bōeki shi no kenkyū*, 24-7.

## CHAPTER ONE

be the core force in his proposal, and of why Chao Ping-chien had no problem in gaining supremacy over the other coastal troops. Since 1615, between one and four Japanese *goshuin* junks had visited Taiwan every year and this pattern continued until 1633.<sup>93</sup> After Michitōmo vouchsafed the peaceful intentions of his country in 1617, the Fu-chienese authorities decided to turn a blind eye to Taiwan as a de facto Sino-Japanese transit trading harbour, on condition that the Japanese promised to relinquish their plan of settling in Taiwan. Although Chao Ping-chien was removed from his post, the positions of the T'ung-shan and Wu-yü, Assistant Squadron Leaders in the Pescadores, were still open to the other maritime mercenaries. They took over the role of the intermediaries of the Fu-chienese authorities in the latter's attempts to manage the 'stateless' space in between the existing Chinese and emerging Japanese world orders.<sup>94</sup> In this regard, the maritime mercenary force in Fu-chienese waters fulfilled a similar function to that of Tsushima or Satsuma under the rule of the Japanese Bakufu, with the vital difference that it could be more easily removed whenever the Fu-chien authorities should happen to change their minds.

If the Japanese menace had continued, the Fu-chienese authorities could have relied more heavily on the newly recruited maritime mercenaries. However, this was the last attempt by the Tokugawa Bakufu to seek some sort of formal relationship with the Chinese Ming court. After 1617, the interest of the Tokugawa Bakufu in obtaining Chinese recognition gradually cooled, because the Korean king, Yi Hon, dispatched an embassy of 428 persons to visit Hidetada to congratulate him on his conquest of Osaka Castle

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>94</sup> This 'stateless' situation might be related to the concept of 'stateless maritime space' created by John Wills Jr, cf. Id., 'Hansan Island and Bay(1592), Peng-hu(1683), Ha Tien (1771); Distant Battles and the Transformation of Maritime East Asia', in: Evert Groenendijk, Cynthia Viallé, Leonard Blussé (eds), *Canton and Nagasaki Compared 1730-1830: Dutch, Chinese, Japanese Relations*, (Leiden, Institute for the History of European Expansion, 2009), 255-260 at 255.

## INTRODUCTION

and the further unification of Japan. To the wider audience attending the meeting, this embassy signified the triumph of the new Japan-centric tributary system, since in reality the Korean king ‘came to pay tribute’ to the Japanese shogun, even though the Korean envoys insisted they were not doing so.<sup>95</sup> This event offered sufficient grounds for the Tokugawa Bakufu to legitimize its rule over Japan and occupied by this project, it gradually lost most of its desire to pursue further overtures with China.

When the Dutch East India Company (VOC) dispatched a fleet from Batavia to sail to the coast of China to seek permission to open up free trade in 1622, the initial move of the Dutch was to attempt to seize Macao from Portuguese but after this plan failed they were forced to move to the Pescadores. This defeat just happened to coincide with the arrival of another group of *go-shuin* junk traders organized by a Chinese merchant Li-Tan, who was based in Hirado, Japan, and his mercenary partner Hsü Hsin-su. They were in the process of acquiring a monopoly in the transit trade in the waters around Taiwan and the Pescadores. After confrontations with the Ming army in 1623, on the advice of Li Tan the Dutch governor, Martinus Sonck, retreated to Taiwan in 1624. The conflict between the Dutch and the Ming troops provoked the Fu-chien authorities to promulgate another ban on overseas Chinese shipping, which suddenly interrupted the Sino- Japanese transit trade. Ironically just a year earlier, in 1622, the Grand Co-ordinator of Fu-chien had just sent an official letter to the regent (*Daikan*[J.] of Nagasaki, Suetsugu Heizō, in which he requested Japanese co-operation to arrest Japanese pirates. This move seems to hint that China was making overtures to Japan. Heizō replied that in that case the Chinese Ming court should send a formal envoy as would befit a state-to-state relationship. Heizō expected the Chinese court would allow the Japanese junks to visit China, but nothing more was mentioned about the tributary system.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Toby, *State and diplomacy in early modern Japan*, 65-67.

<sup>96</sup> Hayashi, *Tsūkō ichiran*, V, 345; Toby, *State and diplomacy in early modern Japan*,

## CHAPTER ONE

King Yi Kong of Korea had consulted with the Ming court about the delicate question of whether he should reply to a Japanese invitation to send an embassy in 1606, but the Ming court left this decision up to him. The Korean court had little choice because it could not afford to risk Japanese hostility in the south just at a time the Manchus had begun to attack its northern borders.<sup>97</sup> Neither China nor Korea was able to keep the Manchus at bay in the years which followed. The Manchus inflicted a serious defeat on the Ming troops in the battle of Sarhu in 1619 and thereafter began their rapid territorial expansion.<sup>98</sup> While the Japanese silver exports might have been the prime reason for Hideyoshi to invent a Japanese tributary system alongside its Sino-centric counterpart, the rise of the Manchus was actually the most important reason the Sino- and Japan-centric tributary systems were kept apart after 1607. The Japanese silver and the expansion of the Manchus were the two elements which created this 'stateless space' which remained open to Chinese, Japanese and later Dutch traders until 1624, and also deeply influenced the later development of the Fu-chienese maritime mercenaries as will be revealed in the following chapters.

---

61-4.

<sup>97</sup> Toby, *State and diplomacy in early modern Japan*, 32.

<sup>98</sup> Frederick W. Mote.; Denis Twitchett (eds), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 7, The Ming dynasty 1368-1644, part I, (Cambridge, Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1988), 580-3.