

Chapter 2

Unrest on the China Coast

Hangzhou 杭州 bay clearly divides the China coast into two distinct sections. With the exception of the Shandong 山东 peninsula, the north of the bay is mostly sandy, while the south of it is rocky. The rocky and irregular southern coastline, which extends from the Zhoushan 舟山 islands to Hong Kong (Xianggang 香港) for approximately 600 miles, has numerous small deltas, narrow flood plains, islands and bays, and good harbors, and a few interior basins. Its irregularities are best seen in the section from Xiamen 厦门 (Amoy) to Fuzhou 福州 (Foochow) in Fujian 福建 province, some 140 miles distant as the crew flies. The actual length of the shore is more than ten times this distance. Small peninsulas, no fewer than 3338 of them, dot this deeply serrated coast. These characteristics made the southeastern China coast the region of navigation and trade. The same coastal region, where islands and harbors abound, could also become a haven for criminals, like pirates, should law and order fail to maintain.

2.1 Background to Maritime Activities

Maritime activities on this coast can be traced back to the time immemorial. As many ancient Chinese records show, people living in the Yangzi delta region had “used boats as transportation” (*yichuan weiju* 以船为车) before the beginning of imperial China in 221 B.C. No later than the early Han period (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), skills in building and sailing ships had found their way to Fujian. According to the grand historian Sima Qian 司马迁, between 112 and 111 B.C., Emperor Wu 武 of the Han 汉 dispatched a fleet from the port of Ningbo to suppress the rebellious Nanyue 南越 to the south.¹ This shows the availability of ocean-going vessels at the time. The first recorded large-scale coastal exploration, however, did not take place until A.D. 230 when the King of Wu sent Wei Wen 卫温 and Zhuge

¹Sima Qian, *Shiji*, *juan* 114, pp. 2980–83.

Zhi 诸葛直 to sail with a fleet of 10,000 men from the mouth of the Yangzi River to Guangdong 广东. Their ships were taken to the open sea and captured thousands of men from Yizhou 夷州,² only tropical diseases and the hazards of voyages deterred further exploration.

At the beginning of the fifth century, the rebel Sun En 孙恩 was able to assemble enough men and ships to threaten the security of east Zhejiang from the sea. He had occupied numerous counties on land, and when being defeated he retreated to the sea and came back on another occasion. At least once he targeted at Nanjing 南京, and sent “shocks and fear” to the rulers of the East Jin 晋 regime. His brother-in-law Lu Xun 卢循 took over after his death, and extended his assaults on Guangdong with a force of “tens of thousand men and a thousand ships.”³ Most of these pirate raids, though eventually exterminated, caused great security concerns for the inland authorities. Thereafter, the successive Chinese governments took coastal defense more seriously than ever.

The Sui 隋 dynasty, which eventually rejuvenated the disintegrated Chinese empire, sent eight routes of armed forces to conquer south China in 588, one of which was a naval force under the command of Yang Su 杨素. Admiral Yang built a “five storied tall” flag ship capable of accommodating 800 soldiers, brought his fleet from Shandong to the central Yangzi, and sent his enemies in panic escape. Subsequently, the admiral fully pacified the Yangzi delta as well as both Zhejiang and Fujian coasts.⁴ The rulers of the unified Sui China not just constructed the celebrated Grand Canal (Yunhe 运河) but also set the stage for more extensive seafaring activities. The Sui fleets had invaded Taiwan, and from there reached as far as Indo-China and Malaya.

The short-lived Sui dynasty paved the way for the more cosmopolitan Tang 唐 China in the seventh century and witnessed a great expansion of sea-borne commerce. Sea routes among China, Korea, and Japan were well established. To the south, no later than the mid-eighth century, Guangzhou emerged to be a busy port, and its trade extended all the way to the Persian Gulf. The high-ranking Tang official Jia Dan 贾耽 (730–805) turned out to be a great geographer. He drew a huge atlas entitled “the Sea-faring routes from Guangzhou to foreign lands” (*Guangzhou tonghai yidao* 广州通海夷道), on which he indicated specific routes and calculated taking approximately ninety days to reach Persian Gulf via various present-day southeast Asian countries.⁵ Jia’s work testifies to the commercial linkage between the Chinese empire and the Arab world in the eighth century. As a result, Tang China had already created a Maritime Bureau (*Shibosi* 市舶司) in

²See Cheu Shou, *Sanguo zhi*, vol. 3, p. 1136.

³See *Jinshu*, vol. 8, pp. 2635, 2631–38.

⁴See *Suishu*, vol. 5, pp. 1283–84.

⁵See *Jiu Tangshu*, vol. 12, pp. 3785–86.

charge of trading activities and numerous merchant vessels from foreign lands. A large number of Chinese ships sailed to distant lands as well. With the improvement in ship-building technology, the “Tang ships” were famous for their large size, sturdy body, and better wave-resisting capability. No less than the ninth century that the Chinese ships dominated the seas, and the Arabs and the Persians all came and lived not just in such trading port as Guangzhou but also in the imperial city of Chang’an 长安.⁶

The international trade made it possible for another era of maritime expansion in the twelfth century, when the political, cultural, and demographical centers had gradually shifted from the Yellow River plains to the lower Yangzi delta. This was Southern Song 宋 China (1127–1278), during which no less than nine ports from the entrance of Yangzi to Guangzhou were open for overseas trade. In particular, Quanzhou in south Fujian enjoyed the most phenomenal growth. Never before had so many seaports operated on the coast. To be sure, this was a result of socio-economic development in the region and of the use of compass that greatly facilitated navigation. But the government’s promotion was equally significant. It set up maritime bureaus to encourage commerce by offering banquets to entertain foreign traders when they first arrived and gave them the privilege of reporting any wrong doings of local officials directly to higher authority. With the expansion of trade, the number of the bureau rose steadily. In addition to the older bureaus in Guangzhou (971), Hangzhou (989), and Mingzhou 明州 (the present day Ningbo, 999) respectively, new ones were open in Quanzhou (1087), Mizhou 密州 (1088), Xiuzhou 秀州 (1113), Wenzhou 温州 (1132), Jiangyin 江阴 (1146), and Haiyan 海盐 (1246). The government was plainly motivated by huge profits from international trade.⁷ Huge revenues from maritime bureaus no doubt contributed to the fact that the south China economy now surpassed that of the north in this time.

The Mongol conquest of China in 1271 did not prevent maritime activities from growing. While seaborne commerce remained active on the southeast coast, the Mongols started massive “sea transport” (*haiyun* 海运) from Yangzi delta to the north China plain, effectively transporting southern grains to Dadu 大都 (the present day Beijing 北京). The Mongol invasion of Japan temporarily disrupted the booming trade since the early Song China. Nor did the Mongols slow down the trade with Southeast Asian countries. The seaports, such as Guangzhou and Quanzhou, became world-renown centers for shipbuilding. In the thirteenth century, China was proud to claim the largest and most advanced ocean-going vessels, the best navigation skills, and busiest international trading ports. Quanzhou, in particular, won the reputation of being the “leading harbor in the world” at the time.

⁶Cf. Yu Hua, *Zhongguo hangyun shihua*, pp. 37–45 and Zhang Xun, *Woguo de gudai haishang jiaotong*, pp. 19–28.

⁷See Fang Hao, *Zhongxi jiaotongshi*, vol. 2, pp. 28–52.

2.2 Trade and Security

Sea-borne commerce, though bringing huge profits to bear, heightened security problems on the coast. Inevitably, the priority of security took over trade. Obviously for the purpose of a closer supervision, the Chinese governments generally monopolized overseas trade, allowing only a small amount of merchandise to barter between the foreigners and the private natives. In spite of enjoying the lion's share of the enormously profitable trade, the government always kept a nurverse eye on the coastal trading activities.⁸ The superior Song-Yuan naval forces unwaveringly took law and order on the coast as its foremost duty.

Ming 明 China (1368–1644) appeared to be a major turning point in China's maritime history. The notorious "seafaring prohibition policy" technically prevented trading activities from growing. Like its predecessors, the Ming court knew the profits of the trade but it was grossly worried about coastal insecurity as a result. It dealt with coastal unrest often in a rigid and desperate manner. Noteably, at the outset of the Ming dynasty, due to the demobilized rebels joining in piracy, as the 1370 records show, nowhere on the coast from Liaodong 辽东 to Guangdong was free from pirate raids. Faced the crisis, the Ming authorities simply resorted severely to cut off overseas trade as the means to minimize coastal insecurity. Only licensed ships within a tributary framework were permitted to enter into any Chinese port. As a result, the number of visiting foreign ships was sharply reduced.⁹

Japan added weight to the Ming's concern about insecurity. From the beginning of the Ming dynasty, the Japanese adventurers had become a major source of the worsening coastal violence. The Hongwu 洪武 emperor (1368–1399), the founder, had twice sent special envoys to Japan's Ashikaga Bakufu asking for cooperation, but no assistance had ever been obtained. The treason case of his own Prime Minister Hu Weiyong 胡维庸 intensified Hongwu's fear. Reportedly, the prime minister had sent his close lieutenants to Japan seeking assistance for his planned coup. It took more than a decade to find Hu guilty, and the punishment was so severe that no less than 30,000 Hu's associates were put to death with him. The cruelty made manifest how insecure the Ming ruler was.¹⁰ The following era of Emperor Yongle appeared much more tranquil, and the emperor showed his strong interest in maritime activities. For one thing, he needed tributary envoys to strengthen state prestige, and for another he was anxious to find the missing Emperor Hui 惠, who was said to have sought refuge overseas, from whom he had seized the throne violently. Consequently, maritime bureaus were reopened, and envoys were sent abroad to solicit trade. During the Yongle 永乐 period, the most famous episode was the voyages of Zheng He 郑和, whose "treasure ships"

⁸Fang Hao, *Zhongxi jiaotongshi*, vol. 2, pp. 30–37.

⁹See Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, pp. 9–11. Cf. Tanaka Takeō, *Wakō tō kangō boeki*.

¹⁰See Zhang Tingyu comp., *Mingshi*, vol. 28, pp. 7906–7908, 8341–42, 8344; cf. Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, p. 128.

(*baochuan* 宝船), dwarfed any other flotilla at the time, sailed probably as far as to the eastern African coast, and predated the Europeans' geographical discovery about a century. But the voyages suddenly came to an end without much lasting consequences.¹¹ While encouraging foreign traders to come, Ming China had no intention of allowing its own people to go abroad freely. In fact, no native, for example, could legally own an ocean-going vessel. Violation of this rule was subject to capital punishment.¹² Even though the government no longer wanted to monopolize the profit from trade, security remained the overriding concern. The fear was that the natives, once being abroad, might conspire with the foreigners to harm the home country.¹³ As the government became weaker as time went on, it tended to take even more guarded measures. Eventually, Ming China adopted a policy of full-fledged sea-faring interdict.¹⁴

Two incidents between 1516 and 1517 illustrated how nervous the Ming government became. The one involved the Japanese. Japan's trade with China was under the highly restrictive licensed, tributary framework. The Ōnin war in Japan resulted in many hostile factions, thus ship owners of rival factions fiercely competed with one another for the China trade. In May 1516, an Ochi ship entered the port of Ningbo ahead of a Hosokawa ship, and yet maritime officials, apparently having received bribes, let the late comer discharge its cargo first. The furious Ochi traders attacked the Hosokawa ship, killed the Chinese naval commander, and raided the Ningbo-Shaoxing 绍兴 area before departure. Distressed by the violence, the Ming authorities almost immediately stopped the trade.¹⁵ The other involved the Portuguese. In 1517, two tall Portuguese vessels penetrated illicitly into the Canton River and the "thunder of their guns shook the walled city [of Guangzhou]".¹⁶ The maverick behavior of the foreign intruders deeply troubled the Ming authorities. What was more, in the year that followed, the Portuguese captain Simon de Andrade unilaterally constructed a fortress on an offshore island, which provoked the Ming to issue an order of expulsion. Furthermore, the Portuguese annexation of Malacca, a tributary state of the Ming, convinced the Chinese that the foreigners had to be kept at bay. Then the Portuguese retaliated by attacking the Guangdong coast in 1523. The Ming forces, having won victory over the outnumbered Portuguese, reinforced the long-standing "seafaring prohibition" policy.¹⁷

¹¹See Xu Yuhu, "Zheng He xiixiyang yuanyin zhi xintan," pp. 110–114; Kuei-shen Chang, "The Maritime Scene in China at the Dawn of Great European Discoveries," vol. 94 no. 3, pp. 347–59; Levathes, *When China Ruled the Sea*, pp. 172–73.

¹²See Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, p. 94.

¹³Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, p. 25. See also Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben*, pp. 123–125.

¹⁴See Zhang Weihua, *Mingdai haiwai maoyi jianlun*, pp. 34–40; Jung-pang Lo, "The Decline of the Early Ming Navy," pp. 149–168.

¹⁵See Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, pp. 115–24.

¹⁶Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 28, pp. 8430–32.

¹⁷Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 28, p. 8432; Cf. T'ien-tse Chang, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514–1644*, pp. 53–68.

Repeated violent incidents persuaded the Ming to close down all of its maritime bureaus altogether. No visiting foreign ship was allowed to enter into any Chinese port. Nor were the Chinese permitted to go overseas; in the decree of 1525 two mast Chinese vessels should all be destroyed.¹⁸ As a result, the entire coast was virtually closed down. In the past, when the partial prohibition was in force, violations seemed insignificant. But now when their living was being fully deprived, the poor population on the coast was compelled to take risks in smuggling or in participating piracy. Even the interest of the rich community on the coast felt threatened not to mention the distressed foreign traders. They formed a sort of united front to defy the government interdict. Consequently, a powerful maritime protest was in the making.

2.3 The Great Pirate War and Aftermath

The Ming government in effect arbitrarily disrupted the rising trend toward commercialization. By mid-Ming a commercialized economy had reached a high level. Urban centers specializing in handicraft industries, such as iron work, porcelain, cotton, silk, stains, papers, lumber, lacquer, and the like, grew like mushrooms, in particular in the lower Yangzi 扬子 delta, in Jiangxi River valley, and in the southeast seaboard. Suzhou 苏州 in the Yangzi delta became a major silk town, in which assembled so many workers that the dyers alone amounted to 10,000. Jingdezhen 景德镇 in Jiangxi 江西 emerged to be a great porcelain city crowded by over 10,000 working families.¹⁹ Demands for manufactured goods in towns and cities inevitably drew laborers from villages.²⁰

Commercialization was also evident in the wider circulation of silver as medium of exchange. Both public and private treasures were immensely enriched.²¹ The expansion of the private section of the economy was particularly noteworthy. Prior to the Ming, China had no significant private handicraft industry to speak of. Even during the early Ming, the state monopoly left little room for private business. Traditionally, the artisan system registered all skilled craftsmen for public service. By the sixteenth century, craftsmen were finally released from state control and started working in privately owned factories. Private employers thus rose sharply

¹⁸See *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao*, pp. 2–3.

¹⁹Cf. Ke Jianzhong, “Shilun Mingdai shangye ziben yu zibenzhuyi mengya de guanxi” p. 83; Hong Huanzhuang, “Lun shiwu shiliu shiji Jiangnan diqu zibenzhuyi shengchan guanxi de mengya” p. 241; Li Guangbi, “Mingdai shougongye de fazhan,” p. 39; Chen Shiqi, “Mingdai de gongjiang zhidu,” p. 460.

²⁰See Hong Huanzhuang, “Lun shiwu shiliu shiji Jiangnan diqu zibenzhuyi shengchan guanxi de mengya,” p. 239; Cf. Hou Wailu, “Shiqishiji de Zhongguo shehui he qimeng sichao de tedian,” p. 94.

²¹See Chen Shiqi, “Mingdai de gongjiang zhidu,” vol. 1, p. 451 and Atwell, “Notes on Silver, Foreign Trade, and the Late Ming Economy,” pp. 1–33.

and many of them became exceedingly wealthy.²² In the porcelain city Jingdezhen, for example, twenty out of seventy furnaces in the 1530s were privately owned, and the growth rate of private furnace was far greater than that of state furnaces.²³ Examples of making rapid fortunes were numerous. An owner of a textile factory often owned twenty to thirty machines. A modest person, once taking up commercial enterprises, could become an amazingly rich man.²⁴

Indeed, the latter half of the sixteenth century witnessed immense socio-economic changes. A class of “wealthy merchants” (*fushang* 富商) and “giant traders” (*dagu* 大贾) was born. They owned large shops and factories. Their success almost reversed the traditionally negative social standing of the merchant class. Quite few of them actually came from an elite background, and some were degree holders. Obviously scholars were no longer ashamed of doing business. The scholarly gentry tended to transfer its wealth from land to commerce, while the merchants had no interest in investing their money in land and elevated themselves into the class of gentry.²⁵ This social phenomenon alerted the celebrated late Ming scholar Gu Yanwu 顾炎武 (1613–1682) that there had been more rich merchants than rich landlords since the early sixteenth century, which he considered a “strange trend”.²⁶ It is quite true that most rich men in the Yangzi delta at the time were no longer landowners. The modern historian Fu Yiling 傅衣凌 convincingly concluded that the supremely wealthy households in Jiangnan, south of the Yangzi, made their fortune through industry and commerce.²⁷

The booming handicraft industries and their products, such as silk and porcelain, needed markets, and sea-borne commerce was no doubt an essential stimulant for manufacturing. The outflow of a large quantity of goods to foreign countries would open lucrative external markets. But the seafaring interdict deprived the manufacturers of such opportunity.²⁸ Nevertheless, the prominent merchant families had already formed powerful business alliance to pursue their vital interest. Taking the merchants from southern Anhui for example, they were often bound together by marriage and set up well-organized commercial networks almost all over China. Regardless the interdict, they managed to sell their merchandise overseas and purchased foreign goods abroad through traders and smugglers on the Fujian-Guangdong coast.²⁹

²²See Chen Shiqi, “Mingdai guan shougongye de yanjiu,” pp. 70–106.

²³See Ke Jianzhong, “Shilun Mingdai shangye ziben yu zibenzhuji mengya de guanxi,” vol. 2, pp. 99, 101, 104.

²⁴See Li Guangbi, “Mingdai shougongye de fazhan,” p. 37.

²⁵Cf. Zhang Dechang, “Mingdai Guangzhou zhi haipo maoyi,” pp. 1–18; Fujii Hiroshi, “Shin-an shōnin nō kenkyū,” pp. 1–44.

²⁶Cited in Liu Yan, “Mingmo chengshi jingji fazhanxia de chuqi shimin yundong,” p. 404.

²⁷See Fu Yiling, “Mingdai jiangnan fuhu de yanjiu,” p. 540.

²⁸Fu Yiling, “Mingdai Jiangnan dizhu jingji xinfazhan de chubu yanjiu,” p. 54; Jia Jingyan, “Mingdai ciqi de haiwan maoyi,” pp. 49–50.

²⁹See Fujii Hiroshi, “Shin-an shōnin nō kenkyū,” vol. 36, no. 1 pp. 1–44.

This being the case, however tough the maritime interdict appeared, it seemed unable to eliminate the sea-borne commerce altogether. But the interdict disrupted the normal growth of trade; in effect, it made smuggling rampant. The smugglers, who had to behave in a very wary and highly restricted fashion, could carry none but small articles of luxury, such as horns, ivory, and spices. Given the reality, there was no prospect whatsoever of importing or exporting large quantity of goods, which would stimulate a major break-through in manufacturing and commerce. Without substantial imports of raw cotton from abroad, for example, the traditional Chinese technology, which was sufficient to handle the products in lower Yangzi, had no incentive for technological revolution to accelerate production. This situation made Chinese economy fall into what Mark Elvin termed “the high-level equilibrium trap”.³⁰

Illegal trade or smuggling required huge budgets to pay for the protection of contrabands, the bribery of officials, the employment of smugglers, and fighting government troops. These expenses could have otherwise been used for further commercial investment. All in all, the Ming government policy kept a commercial society from rising in sixteenth century China. The infantile commercialism failed to win over, or even to exercise significant influence on, to use Edward Fox’s term, the “territorial society”.³¹ On the other hand, the territorial society in Mainland China with its monarchic power had little hesitation to suppress the commercial society for the sake of political security and social stability. Accordingly, unlike seventeenth century England, where social mobility gave rise to a new social control in the form of authority representing considerable upward mobility by the merchant class, sixteenth century China, though experiencing considerable upward mobility by the merchant class, kept its old social control intact, which did not work to the profit of the merchant class.

For about three decades after 1525, in spite of the maritime interdict, trading activities in one form or another had gone on in an abnormal fashion. The gigantic smuggling mechanism involved the various classes of people. Wealthy merchants, who invested in shipbuilding and overseas trips, operated at the center. They built up solid social ties with local gentry and the latter joined their hands in smuggling up to their necks.³² The combined efforts of wealthy merchants and local gentry made it well nigh impossible for the authorities to enforce interdict. Just too many local officials would rather take bribes than carry out their onerous duties. Bribes thus established the illicit relationship between the corrupt officials and the greedy smugglers. So long as they were also the beneficiaries of the illegal operation, the officials were unlikely to enforce the law.³³ Whenever a smuggler’s runner was

³⁰See Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, pp. 248–45.

³¹See Fox, *History in Geographic Perspective: the Other France*, pp. 54, 64.

³²See Zhang Xie, *Dongxi yang kao*, p. 265; Sakuma Shigao, “Mindai kaigai shiboeki nō rekishi-teki haikai—Fukken-shō chushin tōshite,” p. 10. Refer also to *Mingshilo minhai guanxi shiliao*, p. 6.

³³Cf. Mitamura Taisuke, “Tōyō nō rekishi—Miteikoku tō wako,” pp. 269–272; Pelliot, “Le Hoja et la Sayyid Husain de L’histoire des Ming,” pp. 81–292.

caught, government officials would lend helping hand, either to play down the matter or simply to release the criminal. The local powerful families really kept smuggling alive and kicking.³⁴

The sea-going traders, with the powerful and wealthy families behind the scene, took the actual risks to keep business going. They went abroad and traded overseas. Normally, they borrowed or rented ocean-going ships from their rich sponsors and shared the profits with them after the trip. Some of them simply became the employees or the managers of powerful families, setting sail to and from Japan or Southeast Asia to earn their wages. They as well had their own employees—sailors, servants, runners, warehouse keepers, and guards, who were often the destitute coastal inhabitants, particularly from the overfish Fujian coast. Since the maritime interdict denied the livelihood of the poor, there was no shortage of desperate men to run the risks.³⁵ In an ironical way, smuggling seemed to have eased the serious unemployment problem at the time. Smuggling thus carried on indefinitely.

The smugglers were preys of not only the troops but also the pirates. Some smugglers, however, became pirates themselves under different circumstances, for instance, in revenge on their bosses or partners for betrayal or maltreatment. Many Japanese, Korean, and European traders also fell into the pirate category either for the resentment of the maritime interdict or simply for envying high profits.³⁶ Threaten by the growing piracy, the wealthy families, which invested their money in smuggling, raised their own arm forces, or established a foreign connection, or drew pirate gangs into their orbit to protect their business interest.³⁷

The coastal defense of the Ming government was a highly defensive one. Just like the Great Wall and Weiso 卫所 garrison posts on the northern frontiers,³⁸ the coastal guards (yanhaiwei 沿海卫) the government set up along the coastline was to supervise a chains of command, including defense chiliads, barracks, castles, water stockade, watchtowers, and outposts. Such a defense, according to the study of Kawagoe Yoshiro, required one of every four male inhabitants in the littoral regions to serve.³⁹ Ideally defense should not just be a shield; rather, a shield from behind which to deal out many well directed blows.

In the early Ming, the naval task forces were still able to patrol the shore beyond the fortified towns and villages regularly. They were even capable of launching offensive expeditions. Since the pirates came by sea, they had to be dealt with at

³⁴See *Mingshilu*, 85, 350, pp. 6326–27; Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben*, p. 109.

³⁵See Zhang Weihua, *Mingdai haiwai maoyi jianlun*, pp. 76–88; Sha Shiwu, “Ming Qing Fujian yanhai jianshang kao,” pp. 1–5.

³⁶See Hu Zongxian, *Haifang tuzhi*, juan 4, p. 34.

³⁷See Zhang Xie, *Dongxi yang kao*, p. 243.

³⁸See Taylor, “Yuan Origins of the Wei-so System,” pp. 23–40.

³⁹See Kawagoe Yoshiro, “Ieidai kaibō taisei nōkeisei ni tsuite,” pp. 169–182; Xu Tiantai, “Mingdai Fujian wohuan chugao,” p. 18.

sea.⁴⁰ For several decades, the Ming was able to sweep away pirates and secure the sea routes. But its defense capability dwindled rapidly through the onset of supine attitudes toward maritime activities.⁴¹ The defense line of the Fujian coast had been consistently moved inward since 1444. The fortifications on the outer islands, known as “advancing naval posts” (*shuizhai* 水寨) almost ceased to exist except in name. Defenses were concentrated on the islands much closer to the shore, and many coastal towns were only thinly garrisoned because of inadequate funds and massive desertion. By 1550, according to Chen Maoheng’s 陈懋恒 estimation, the coastal garrisons in Zhejiang, for example, had left no more than 22% of their original strength due largely to desertion. Desertion in Fujian was as high as 44%.⁴²

And the poorly motivated and inadequately equipped defense troops, mostly temporarily recruited, proved no match for the energetic pirate force. Especially the Japanese pirates, thanks to their superior ships and weapons, swarmed violently over the walled towns and carried the fortified castles without regard to heavy casualties.⁴³ The extent of havoc caused by pirates was truly alarming, and the Ming government found itself embarrassingly unable to affect the defense of the shoreline. Ironically, the maximum efforts the government tried to assure security and stability ended up in fiasco.

The garrison farms on the coast, which supplied grain for local defense forces, were also in trouble because of corruption and land annexation. When the economic base of the defense system deteriorated, all sorts of consequences ensued. The morale was low and the defense was poorly maintained. The shortage of weapons and ammunitions was rife. When dangers actually arose, garrison commanders often enlisted private ships for re-enforcement, as government warships were not serviceable because of chronic lack of maintenance, and new ones were yet built. Disciplinary problems of the troops were also on the increase, and the ill-behaved service men abhorred the local inhabitants, who complained of “oppressive soldiery” (*bīngzāi* 兵灾).⁴⁴ Henceforth the Ming government lost its ability and credibility to police the sea.⁴⁵

The fragile defense, once being exposed, inevitably encouraged piracy. 1553 marked the prelude of the great pirate war for years to come. As the late-Ming scholar Cai Jiude 采九德 noted in his 1558 book, a foreign vessel with more than sixty persons on board anchored at Haiyan 海盐 in Zhejiang on 13 May 1553. When Commander Wang Yinglin 王应麟 and his troops made an inquiry, the foreigners told in writing that they were Japanese to come here because of the

⁴⁰See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 12, p. 3754; cf. Jung-pang Lo, “The Decline of the Early Ming Navy,” pp. 150–52; Jung-pang Lo, “The Termination of the Early Ming Naval Expeditions,” pp. 127–40.

⁴¹See Lo, “The Decline of the Early Ming Navy,” p. 167.

⁴²See Chen, Maoheng, *Mindai wokou kaolue*, p. 35. cf. pp. 34–36.

⁴³See Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, p. 179.

⁴⁴See *Ming jingshi wenbian xuanlu*, vol. 1, pp. 18–19. cf. Xu Tiantai, “Mingdai Fujian wohuan chugao,” pp. 18–20.

⁴⁵See Xu Tiantai, “Mingdai Fujian wohuan chugao,” p. 18.

failure of their ship's rudder. And they would leave when the rudder fixed and provisions replenished. The seemingly harmless foreign visitors drew a large curious crowd from nearby towns. When the Chinese approached to the ship, however, the Japanese, all sudden, shot sharp arrows at few to their instant death. The rest took fright and ran away to the walled city for protection. After sunset, some of the Japanese left their ship and were on the rampage. When the sun rose next morning, the officer Hu Shicheng 胡士澄 brought men and gunpowder with him to burn down the ship. A dozen Japanese were killed, while six of them captured, and took Ming troops quite a while to eliminate the rest. The total Ming casualty amounted to eighteen, including officer Hu. Their heads were brutally chopped off and displayed in a row on a bridge. This eyewitness's observation dramatically inaugurated the decade-long crisis on the coastal region.⁴⁶

The knowledgeable local residents soon discovered that many unsuccessful and frustrated Chinese, including some elite, took part in piracy.⁴⁷ As the Qing historian Gu Yingtai 谷应泰 confirmed, those who led the Japanese pirates were often Chinese, such as Wang Zhi 汪直, the most powerful one, Xu Hai 徐海, ranked second, and dozens of less well-known chiefs.⁴⁸ They led the way to raid the vast coastal regions from north of the Yangzi to Hainan Island in the south, and loot deep inside Jiangsu and Zhejiang. There came pirate coalitions consisting of different nationalities.

Wang Zhi was originally a wealthy trader and smuggler from southern Anhui. The noted "Anhui merchants" (*Huishang* 徽商) had long since established their name in business. Wang succeeded in overseas trade by establishing commercial ties with foreigners, mostly Japanese and Portuguese. In 1530, when Wang was still a salt merchant at home, bad business compelled him to go overseas without regard to the government prohibition. He joined a large number of traders of different nationalities to seek trade profits and challenge the maritime interdict imposed by the Ming authorities. They actively engaged in massive smuggling on the southeast China coast. No later than 1535, a decade after the issuance of the maritime interdict, Yuegang 月港, literary Moon Haven, later known as Haicheng 海澄, near Zhangzhou in Fujian became the notorious hub of smuggling. About the same time, the Fujanese pirate Deng Liao 邓獠, who had escaped from a Fujian prison earlier, brought the Portuguese to Shuangyu 双屿, literary A Pair of Isles, at the southern tip of the Zhoushan islands, where quickly emerged to be a booming harbor filled up with Chinese and foreign trader-smugglers from India, Burma, Malaya, Ryūkyū, Japan, as well as the Europeans and the Africans. They penetrated deep into the hinterland.⁴⁹ The illegal operations in Yuegang and Shuangyu, as a recent scholar put it, "crowded with big ships, smugglers, and pirates of various nationalities".⁵⁰

⁴⁶Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 1–3.

⁴⁷Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 5–6.

⁴⁸Gu Yingtai, *Ming wokou shimo*, p. 7.

⁴⁹See Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiaqing jian de huijin zhengce*, p. 128.

⁵⁰Cited in Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben*, p. 110.

In 1542, the Anhui merchants Xu Er 许二 and his brothers established a lucrative smuggling headquarter at Shuangyu and sent his fellow provincial Wang Zhi to seek market in Japan. In 1542, Wang set foot on Hirado 平戸 in southwest Japan, where he operated his illegal China trade. In the summer of 1543, when Wang took three Portuguese and 100 other customers from Burma to China, his ship was brought by storm to southern Kyūshū. The accident turned out to be a major historical event, the arrival of the Europeans and their firearms in Japan. Wang henceforth ran his lucrative smuggling between Shuangyu and Hirado. Not until after the Ming military forces attacked Shuangyu in 1547 that smuggling came to a halt at least temporarily. When the smugglers killed nine members of the prominent Xie 谢 family in Zhejiang apparently over financial dispute, Zhu Wan 朱纨 (1492–1549), the governor of the province, was entrusted to crack down violence.

Governor Zhu was given a specific instruction to enforce law and order along the coastline south of the Yangzi from Zhejiang to Guangdong.⁵¹ He took his duties seriously. He dispatched a naval task forces to attack Shuangyu. Numerous smugglers, including some Japanese, were first put into custody and then ninety-six of them were executed.⁵² Zhu virtually destroyed the smuggling center. The Portuguese abandoned their base, eventually settling down at Macau, while the Xu brothers were missing, presumably dead, and then Wang Zhi led few surviving escapees to safety.⁵³ Zhu's action was forceful, but it ran counter to the lucrative interest groups, including prominent and influential regional and local families. The governor was fully aware that it was easier to crack down on common criminals than to deal with "the criminals dressed in gentleman's robe",⁵⁴ to whom he clearly referred members of the prestigious elite class, or members of the powerful families in the region. Although the governor had no fear of tracking down the powerful people who had been involved in smuggling,⁵⁵ the latter showed their teeth. They got a Fujian censor to accuse the governor of unjustly bringing many innocent good families to ruin. Before long, another censor initiated an impeachment proceeding against the governor for his "unconscionable executions".⁵⁶ When the governor was under attack, no high-ranking official in Beijing came to his defense. Nor did his political skills match his administrative forcefulness. His memorial to the imperial court in response to the accusations was deemed "arrogant".⁵⁷ Lacking independent judgment, the Ming emperor hastily dismissed the man whom he had entrusted to

⁵¹See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, pp. 5403–04; cf. So Kwan-wai, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China*, pp. 41–72.

⁵²See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, p. 5404 and Zhang Xie, *Dongxi yang kao*, p. 266.

⁵³See Tang Jintai, *Kaiqi Taiwan diyiren Zheng Zhilong*, pp. 16–17.

⁵⁴See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, p. 5405 and *Ming jingshi wenbian xuanlu*, vol. 1, p. 16.

⁵⁵Cf. Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiaqing jian de haijin zhengece*, pp. 140–150.

⁵⁶See *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao* p. 17. Cf. Pelliot, "Le Hoja et la Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming", p. 196. Li Liyue, "Minnan shishen yu Jiajing nianjian de zousi maoyi," p. 105.

⁵⁷See *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao*, pp. 14–15.

do the difficult job and did it effectively. The heart-broken governor committed suicide in the end.⁵⁸

The governor's relentless efforts before his tragic death, to be sure, had weakened the smuggling mechanism. But his incomplete work soon invited pirate gangs, former smugglers, and foreign adventurers to come back *en masse*. Many of the governor's naval men were so disillusioned that they themselves joined pirate gangs after the death of their revered leader.⁵⁹ No regional and local officials ever wanted to tackle the problem again. When the coastal disorder was turning from bad to worse in the 1550s, the pirates finally waged a war against the Ming dynasty. The decade-long pirate war had placed several coastal provinces in ruin.

Wang Zhi took the leadership and re-organized his trading business, traveling between Hirado and the Zhejiang coast. He gained strength by playing the rule of the jungle, attacking and annexing pirate gangs as well as the maverick smuggling groups. Also he was able to establish secret contacts with some members of the Zhejiang authorities. More than once he actually helped the authorities raid and capture violent criminals. What Wang really struggled for was to legalize the trade, and he made it clear to the Ming authorities what he wished. But the Ming court was hesitating, to say the least, to answer Wang's call. The Ming government's refusal to legalize and open up trade stiffened Wang's defiance and resorted to violent actions. The Wang gang consisting of traders, smugglers, and pirates soon emerged to be the dominant force on the Zhejiang coast. The flag ship he built 120 feet long had the capacity of carrying 2000 men, and he even proclaimed himself as the "King of Anhui" (Huiwang 徽王).⁶⁰ He was in effect "the king at sea".⁶¹

The Ming court was most reluctant to lift the trade ban because the civil war in Japan at this time drove numerous wandering *samurai* to be pirates active on the China coast. When Wang's trading base on Zhoushan was attacked, he decided to build a navy of his own to resist. In his name, the rebels started waves of assaults in 1553 on the coastline and wrought havoc to no less than thirty prefectures in the Yangzi delta, where towns and cities were occupied for as long as three months.

In the years that followed they laid waste the lands north of the Yangzi, blocked the vital grain transport at the Grand Canal, and sent their foregoing parties as far as into Shandong. Subsequently, great southern cities, such as Suzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou 扬州, Songjiang 松江, and Nanjing (Nanking) all fell prey to destruction.⁶² The Ming government conveniently addressed all its enemies at sea as pirates. But most of them were in effect seaborne merchants, who had been driven by the seafaring interdict into smuggling and piracy. They became the sea rebels

⁵⁸See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, p. 5405 and Zhang Weihua, *Mingdai haiwai maoyi jianlun*, p. 84.

⁵⁹See Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, pp. 177–78.

⁶⁰See Chen Maoheng, *Mingdai wokou kaolue*, p. 103; Cf. Zheng Guangnan, *Zhongguo haidao shi*, pp. 183–98.

⁶¹Zheng Guangnan, *Zhongguo haidao shi*, pp. 189–91.

⁶²See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 27, pp. 8352–53 and *Mingshilu minha iguanxi shiliao*, pp. 18–22.

because they had been denied their right to trade. Their wealth and skills made them no ordinary pirates. Their capability of inflicting great havoc on the coast was not at all surprising.

The immensely successful Wang Zhi was condemned as the “pirate chief” by the Ming government; however, he was honored as the “Senior Captain” (*lao chuanzhang* 老船长) by his followers and supporters. Indeed, he displayed his great power at sea from 1553 to 1556. From his base in southern Japan, he recruited numerous unemployed Japanese as his vanguards. His blue sea fleets, which consisted hundreds of ships and thousands of men, raided coastal cities at will in 1553. As the government sources record, they slaughtered innocent people by the thousands and robbed whatever was valuable in the opulent towns.⁶³ Wang’s violent action for him was to stage his revenge and protest. In his message to the Ming court in the midst of war, he identified himself as a “sea merchant” (*haishang* 海商). He complained about the maritime interdict and accused government officials of illegally seizing his properties and imprisoning members of his family. He still wanted to seek a compromise, however. He concluded by suggesting that should the imperial court agree to legalize trade and pardon him, he would surrender himself and help restoring coastal peace.⁶⁴ Wang’s message most unlikely reached the emperor, because the delivery of it from such an “outrageous” person was an offense. Besides, the message plainly laid out the demands that ran counter to the standing government policy.

From 1553 onward, the “riots of the pirates” (*wobian* 倭变) caused very serious crisis on the coast. On June 28, the pirates attacked Pinghu 平湖 and killed more than hundred people; shortly afterward, they pillaged villages near Haining 海宁 on June 8 in the same year. The sudden assaults resulted in increasing casualty and kept local defense busy. By the end of 1553, Haiyan was being attacked four times and approximately 3700 of its inhabitants killed. In the following year, the pirates penetrated into inlands, “committing murder and looting of unparalleled savagery.” In Jiaying 嘉興, they intruded into the residence of the Jiang family, killed six, including a baby in bed, and drank the blood stains with wine. In Jiashan 嘉善 county, they demolished civilian homes and robbed storehouses empty. In Haining, they sacked people, using men as shields in battle and women to be slaved during the day while being rap and rend at the night. Ostensibly, the Ming authorities lacked coordination; each town or city hid behind the walls leaving villagers at the mercy of the pirates. The local Ming authorities did fight the invaders hard; for instance, it took forty-two days to get pirates out of Shidun 石墩, but apparently costly and ineffective. Thousands of people were dead, tens of thousands homes destroyed, and pirates kept coming. On 13 July 1554, thousands of pirates stormed the Tan 譚 family’s rice depot before marching into Suzhou, where the defense

⁶³Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 27, pp. 8353–54; Gu Yingtai, *Ming wokou shimo*, 7–15.

⁶⁴See Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, pp. 208–09; Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, p. 5410; cf. Hucker, “Hu Tsung-hsien’s Campaign against Hsu Hai, 1556,” pp. 273–307; Wills, “Maritime China from Wang Chih to Shi Lang,” pp. 210–13.

force bore down and Commander Xia 夏 died with hundred of his men. The situation appeared quite hopeless.⁶⁵

In response to the outbreak of the rampant pirate war in 1553, Wang Shu 王紆, the newly appointed coastal commander of Zhejiang, still conceived the enemy in the old fashion way. He believed the pirates would only attack the three coastal towns, namely, Ningbo, Taizhou 台州, and Wenzhou 温州, between April and June and would depart soon after raiding. Should he hold the ground tight, he would get over with it. But, to his great surprise, the garrisons and walled fortifications were woefully deteriorated. When the pirates forcefully invaded the greater Yangzi delta and penetrated deeply into the hinterland in 1553, the Zhejiang commander had no way to stop them, thus losing his job.⁶⁶ In desperation, the Ming court dispatched Zhang Jing 张经, the President of the Board of War, to Zhejiang as Governor-general (*Zongdu* 总督) in co-ordination of the anti-pirate war. Zhang had no new strategy. Like his predecessors, he simply constructed walls to surround towns and recruited men to do fighting. Even so, he had great difficulty in financing his project. The local gentry, unhappy with Zhang's incompetence, suggested their own way of defense. They favored a more professional army on the local level, to which Zhang disagreed. The repeated defeats resulted in the recall and arrest of Governor-general Zhang Jing in 1555.⁶⁷

Zhang's successor was Hu Zongxian 胡宗宪, a more experienced men in dealing with the pirates. Hu at last abandoned the old strategy and pursued the enemy more aggressively. More importantly, he won the confidence of local elites. In accordance to their wishes, he started training "village army" (*Xiangjun* 乡军) as a permanent local defense force. Eventually, the well-trained new army under the commands of Qi Jiguang 戚继光 and Yu Dayou 俞大猷 gradually ended the pirate war in 1560.

We may add, however, that Governor-general Hu's success owed much to his treacherous tactics. Once, for example, he dispatched two boats carrying hundred pots of poisonous wine, awaiting pirates to grab, and many were killed by poison.⁶⁸ Hu also focused his attention on the top leader Wang Zhi, who happened to be a person from the same Anhui province. Provincial fellowship helped Hu succeed in establishing an intimate personal relationship with Wang. In response to the governor, Wang sent Mao Haifeng 毛海峰, his adopted son and a pirate chief in his own right, to the Hu camp for negotiation. Wang had all the intention for compromise, as his prime interest was trade rather than piracy. In fact, to show his sincerity, Wang secretly helped Hu win several victories during pirate raids. Also, meeting Hu's request, Mao circulated among many other pirate chiefs Wang's intention of accommodating the government's call for appeasement.

⁶⁵Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 18–19, 21–22, 27, 32–33, 34, 41–42.

⁶⁶See *Ming jingshi wenbian*, *juan* 283, pp. 2992–2993.

⁶⁷See Gu Yingtai, *Ming wokou shimo*, p. 12. Cf. Wu Daxin, "Jiang Zhe defang shishen yu yuwu zhengce," pp. 8–12.

⁶⁸Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 68–69.

Before long, the notorious pirate chief Xu Hai 徐海 surrendered. On 21 August 1556 the official named Luo 羅 at Gancheng offered a lavish banquet to entertain ten of the Xu followers. When the party was over, all of them were under arrest. Though unaware of the trick, Xu was suspicious and did not show up two days later. Not until September 4 Xu arrived at the town of Pinghu 平湖, where he found some officials very hostile. Before long, on September 14, he sensed the promised leniency, let alone rewards, would unlikely be delivered and regretted that he disbanded his pirate gang too quickly. On September 18, the Moon Festival Day, he declined the invitation of Pinghu commander to be his company. Realizing the peril of his situation, Xu escaped on September 22. Then the Ming naval forces launched all-out attack on the day next. Xu Hai got killed on September 28 after many pirates drowned at sea and over thousand captives.⁶⁹ Governor Hu Zongxian reported “great victory” (*dajie* 大捷) to the imperial court.⁷⁰

Xu Hai’s death did not immediately alarmed Wang Zhi, whose hope for legalizing trade was so high that he was reluctant to abandon his promise to Hu.⁷¹ And Hu wisely released Wang’s wife and children from prison to convince Wang his sincerity. Hu even purposefully showed Mao a bogus of his secret correspondence to the imperial court, in which he vaguely promised Wang what Wang had wanted, including the possibility of granting an appropriate rank to Wang. When Mao reported Wang what he had heard and seen, Wang cleared out much of his suspicion. Yet, taking a measure of caution, Wang demanded a high-ranking official to his camp as hostage. When Hu sent one without hesitation, Wang felt secured enough to go. Hu was delighted to welcome Wang’s surrender. Wang and his company, though officially in custody on 13 February 1558, were treated as distinguished guests. Eventually, however, under the mounting pressure Hu could not but follow the order to execute Wang on 22 January 1560 at Guanxiangkou 官巷口 in the provincial city of Hangzhou.⁷² In retaliation, Mao killed the hostage and swore revenge. But he and his followers were drowned in a savage sea storm before they could attempt it.⁷³

Treachery was perhaps not Governor Hu Zongxian’s real intention. He recognized the rigid maritime interdict as the root cause of the coastal trouble, and had sincerely recommended to the court a measure of relaxation. He had certainly given Wang Zhi the impression that the government would favorably consider the reopening of the coast for trade. But the governor had no power to make the ultimate political decision. He could only convey his personal opinion to Beijing.

⁶⁹See Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 80, 85, 86, 88–92. Cf. Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, pp. 5413, 3411–3412 and *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao*, p. 27.

⁷⁰For the complete text of Hu’s memorial see Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 93–97, in which Xu Hai is portrayed as “culprit” (*zeshou* 賊首).

⁷¹Wang asked Hu to deliver for him a plea for trade in a message to the Ming court. For the full text of Wang’s message see Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 98–100.

⁷²Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 103, 106.

⁷³See *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao*, p. 31 and Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, pp. 213–14.

He pled to the throne for legalizing the Sino-Japanese trade as a fundamental solution to coastal unrest. But the censor Wang Bengu 王本固 vehemently opposed such recommendation. There were also rumors implicating Hu in accepting enormous bribes from the pirate chief. To save his own skin, Hu had no hesitation to endorse Wang's execution in 1559.⁷⁴

Hu took the credit of eliminating "the leading pirate chief," but Wang's death meant the failure of his policy. He was after all unable to reverse the course of the Ming's maritime policy. Inevitably, the root problem of smuggling and piracy remained unresolved. Pirates and smugglers were caught and executed, but they kept coming. Hu Zongxian, once anti-pirate hero, in the end was condemned as "incompetent" in dealing with the pirate problem. He was dismissed from his post as governor-general of Zhejiang and Fujian in 1562. Back in Beijing, less than a year later, Hu followed Zhu Wan's steps to commit suicide in the midst of false accusations and innuendo, despite the fact that he was posthumously rehabilitated in 1572.⁷⁵

To the great credit of generals Qi Jiguang and Yu Dayou's relentless efforts, the pirate war in the greater Yangzi region in 1565 finally came to an end. But looking closely we may find that many smugglers and pirates were actually driven down to the Fujian coast, where terrain appeared more in their favor.⁷⁶ In Fujian, earlier in 1562, the "Rebellion of Twenty-four Captains" had taken place at Yuegang in Fujian. These captains likewise were small trader-smugglers in the region. With the general support of local population, this "rebellion" flared into widespread unrest. The rebels captured cities and towns in the province with great ease. Not until 1564 was the rebellion dying out. According to the research of Katayama Seijirō, this rebellion inspired the Ming government to legalize trade at Yuegang.⁷⁷

Indeed, in 1567, the Ming emperor, at the request of Governor Tu Zemin 涂泽民 of Fujian, authorized the opening of the port Yuegang for trade. The legalization of trade, indeed, eased piracy and violence.⁷⁸ For Chen Shangsheng 陈尚胜, Yuegang was a logical choice for legalizing the trade, as its location relatively remote from the hinterland and it had never been under control, since pirates and smugglers had used it as haven from the beginning of the sixteenth century onward. Chen argues that to legalize trade at Yuegang could be helpful to control the volatile environment. In any event, the long-standing government policy to prohibit trade began to crack. Traders now registered their names and addresses, filed applications before

⁷⁴See Fan Zhongyi, Tong Xigang, *Mingdai wokou shilue*, pp. 256–58; Gao Yangwen, Tao Qi comp. *Mingdai wokou shilue*, p. 258. Wills, "Maritime China from Wang Zhi to Shi Lang," pp. 210–13.

⁷⁵Gu Yingtai, *Mingshi jishi benmo*, p. 22.

⁷⁶Gu Yingtai, *Mingshi jishi benmo*, pp. 22–24.

⁷⁷Katayama Seijiro, "Geko nijunshi sho no hanran" pp. 389–419. See also Zhang Xie, *Dongxiyang kao*, p. 267.

⁷⁸See Bai Di, *Yuandong guoji wutai shang de fengyun renwu Zheng Chenggong*, p. 9.

sailing, and paid tax revenues.⁷⁹ The Yuegang trade brought handsome fortune to the Ming government. In 1594 the tax revenue collected at the port amounted to 29,000 teals of silver; however, the lucrative revenue also triggered corruption and infightings among officials.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the opening of just one port showed the government's general insecurity over seaborne commerce remained unabated.

Even Yuegang (later named Haicheng) was not really a free port. It required "ship permit" (*chuanyin* 船引) to do oversea trade, and only traders from Zhangzhou 漳州 and Quanzhou were entitled to get permits. The rest Fujianese and those from other provinces, who were excluded from the privilege, resorted to risking smuggling. In the year of 1589, eighty ships received permits and set sail. As the number of permits issued annually was far from satisfying the demand, it was increased to 210 later on. Still, too many profit-seeking traders who failed to get permit ventured abroad illegally.⁸¹ Even the traders from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou were not allowed to go anywhere they wanted. They sailed mostly to Southeast Asian countries, in particular Luzon in the Philippines. Japan, for example, was specifically forbidden. In a sense, the legalization of trade at Yuegang had its limit and some forms of restrictions and supervision remained.

Overall, coastal China remained as tightly restricted as it was guarded throughout the Ming period. With the dynasty in decline, both the size and strength of the coastal defense were cut back. The weary Ming court now feared the presence of any sort of power on the China coast, not even trusting its own military leaders. The preceding review of coastal China may have explained why China's maritime expansion was nipped in the bud. It was not because Mainland Chinese lacked of seafaring incentives; in fact, driven by profits, they were eager to trade. But the successive Ming rulers preoccupied with political security had been deliberately curtailed and suppressed seaborne commerce. An especially high price was paid for the arbitrary policy. Even after a high price being paid, the coast was not at all being secured. The rigid security measures, such as maritime interdict, actually made the coast less secure, because the seafaring prohibition often turned law-binding traders into vicious smugglers or violent pirates. The devastating pirate war of the 1550s proved the preventive coastal policy a resounding failure. The thirteen years of the costly military campaigns only temporarily eased the situation in the coastline, while a golden opportunity for maritime expansion was lost. In other words, a commercial society on the China coast, which depended on the circulation of merchandises for existence, had been persistently suppressed by political power. Artificial political power to reverse economic forces, however ineffective and counter-productive, was enough to disrupt normal trading activities to grow. A net consequence of it was endless smuggling and repeated violence on the coast. Smuggling and violence invited further governmental repression of trading activities. The vicious cycles made it utterly impossible for a maritime

⁷⁹Chen Shangsheng, *Huaiyi yishang MingQing haiyang liliang xingshuai yanjiu*, p. 148.

⁸⁰Zhang Xie, *Dongxiyang kao*, juan 5, p. 7.

⁸¹See Fu Yiling, *MingQing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben*, p. 113; cf. 108–12.

China to run its full course. This historical experience may also help explain why as late as the beginning of the seventeenth century Taiwan, barely one hundred miles from the Fujian coast, was still by and large beyond the grasp of Chinese government and its people.

The Chinese population had been growing fast since the fourteenth century, from approximately 65 million in 1398 to 430 million in 1850.⁸² The province of Fujian, facing Taiwan across the strait, gradually found itself not only crowded but also destitute.⁸³ Formidable physical barriers surround much of the land. Hills 200–500 m high covered almost half of the region's arable acreage; only 10% of the area of Fujian was lower than 200 m. This is why the Fujianese used to call their homeland “abundant hills, scanty farms” (*shanduo tianshao* 山多田少). Consequently, the unpromising land could hardly support the ever-increasing mouths. The poignant suffering was increased by the oppressive social system. A small group of powerful local families owned most of the grain fields. Buddhist estates in Fujian were also huge and monopolistic. By about the fourteenth century the poverty of the Fujianese masses had already reached an unbearable level.⁸⁴

This situation naturally called for overseas relief. The Fujian coast, which consisted of four prefectures (*fu* 府), had good harbors, and was flat and suitable for maritime activities of various kinds. In particular, Quanzhou, which is known as Dianfou, Zeytoun, Zeytoun, Zaitun, or Zaytou in Arabian sources, enjoyed a commercial glory in the eleventh and the twelve centuries.⁸⁵ An 800 years old Song dynasty vessel, which had a capacity of 200 tons of various commercial goods, was excavated from Quanzhou harbor.⁸⁶

Under more favorable circumstances, seaborne commerce would have grown and settlement in Taiwan of the overflow population of Fujian would have followed. But potential mariners and colonists were again hindered and frustrated by the maritime interdict of the Ming government.⁸⁷ To be sure, the prohibition was not always in force; from time to time, a restricted form of trade was permitted. Yet any restriction to the profitable seafaring activities twisted the normal events into violent deeds of lucrative smuggling and brutal piracy. Governor Zhu Wan's report of 1548 clearly stated that Fujian, particularly the coastal regions of Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, had some of the most serious cases of smuggling and piracy.⁸⁸

⁸²Ho, *Studies on the Population of China 1368–1953*, p. 101.

⁸³See the remarks by Liang Tingdong 梁廷棟, President of the Board of War, in *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao* p. 153; Refer also to Gu Yanwu, 1823. *Tianxia junquo libingshu*, juan 91, p. 3a.

⁸⁴*Mingshilu* n.d. juan 47, p. 3658; cf. Bielenstein, “The Chinese Colonization of Fukien until the End of Tang,” pp. 98–122.

⁸⁵Chang, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514 to 1644* pp. 12–28.

⁸⁶This Song boat is now the possession of maritime museum in Quanzhou. For details about the excavated boat see “Quanzhou wan Songdai haichuan fajue jianbao,” pp. 1–18.

⁸⁷Cf. Chen Wenshi *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*.

⁸⁸Cf. *Ming jingshi wenbian xuanlu*, pp. 16–17; Wiethoff, *Die chinesische Seeverbotspolitik und der private Überseehandel von 1368 bis 1567*, pp. 49–60; Sakuma Shigeo, “Mindai kaigai

The conclusion of the major pirate war in the 1550s in effect only shifted the gravity of smuggling and piracy southward from Zhejiang to Fujian. Things had certainly not changed much for the better in Fujian. Unrest remained “widespread and poisonous” in the entire province, according to a 1615 report of an official by the name of Xu Zhongji 徐仲楫.⁸⁹ The imperial government treated the Fujian turmoil as a serious security question, and yet the local official Cao Lutai 曹履泰 frankly admitted that it was impossible to put down piracy just as it was no way to sweep up the ever-failing autumn leaves.⁹⁰

It was precisely the problems of trade, smuggling, and piracy that brought the island of Taiwan into focus. The island, which the Portuguese called Formosa, had remained largely uncivilized until sometime in the early seventeenth century. Apparently, the Chinese were aware of the existence of the island long before. The historian Fan Ye 范晔 (A.D. 398–445) wrote that the Chinese had set foot on Taiwan as early as the third century before the birth of Christ.⁹¹ The first historic account of the landing of the Chinese on the island, then known as Yizhou, was about the arrival of the Wu 吴 fleet in A.D. 230 recorded in the *Sanguozhi* 三国志 (*the History of the Three Kingdoms*) by Chen Shou 陈寿, a historian of the third century.⁹² As a rule in imperial China, the Chinese seemed to have had little interest in overseas expansion, let alone bringing a distant barren island, like Taiwan, into the sphere of the empire. The Chinese, however, had built settlements on Penghu 澎湖 since the sixth century.⁹³ Traditionally, the Chinese people were accustomed to define “nationhood” in terms of culture and an obscure boundary to it was vaguely set at the limit of Chinese cultural influence. Hence, during the long history of imperial China, the occasional forays into Taiwan, considered beyond the reach of Chinese civilization, were rather temporary affairs. The main goal aside from curiosity was to find manpower to ease the labor shortage on the mainland. One account states that from the third to the seventh century, no fewer than 10,000 Taiwanese aborigines had been brought to the mainland as laborers.⁹⁴ There was no scheme for Chinese exploration of Taiwan so long as South China remained thinly populated, even though the island is only one hundred miles from the Fujian coast.

In the sixteenth century, Commander Yu Dayou in Fujian advocated a more aggressive strategy in dealing with coastal unrest. “Since pirates came from sea,” as the commander put it, “we must attack them at sea by a powerful navy.”⁹⁵ He thus

(Footnote 88 continued)

shibōeki no rekishi-teki—Fukken-shō o chūshin toshite,” pp. 1–25; Sa Shiwu, “Ming Qing Fujian yanhai jianshang kao,” pp. 1–5.

⁸⁹Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao, p. 42.

⁹⁰Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao, p. 160.

⁹¹See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, vol. 10, p. 2822.

⁹²See Chen Shou, *Sanguo zhi*, vol. 5, p. 1135.

⁹³Lian Heng, *Taiwan tongshi*, vol. 1, pp. 1–2.

⁹⁴Wu Fa, *Taiwan lishi zhaji*, p. 16.

⁹⁵Cited in Li Zhi .*Xu cangshu*, p. 288.

abandoned the conventional defensive posture on land. In 1563, his forceful presence at the high seas drove pirate chief Lin Daoqian 林道乾 first to Penghu and later to Taiwan, where Lin and his followers found sanctuary and brought in an unknown number of Fujianese settlers. Although the commander occupied Penghu and restored there the desolated government garrisons, he did not go on to Taiwan either because he was unable to do so, or because he considered it beyond his defense perimeter. In any event, from his Taiwan base, Lin resumed piratical activities against the mainland coast in 1567. He and his band remained active in the South China Sea until 1580.⁹⁶ In view of the increasing importance of Penghu's strategic location, the Ming authorities dispatched there a permanent defense post in 1597, and in the year that followed, a regular naval patrol was in operation.⁹⁷

2.4 Here Came the Red-Haired Dutch

At the dawn of the seventeenth century, the Dutch presence further complicated the situation on the China coast. In comparison with other Europeans in Asia, the Dutch were latecomers. Both Portuguese and Spaniard appeared on the China coast much earlier, but only the Dutch came with better organization and armament. The Netherlands, after its independence in the sixteenth century, enjoyed fast growth in commerce, industry, and navigation. By the middle of the century, the Dutch had already possessed no less than 1800 ocean-going vessels, and Amsterdam emerged to be a major seaport of 30,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the seventeenth century. About at this time, the Dutch became interested in oriental trade via the Portuguese. In 1595 a fleet of four armed Dutch ships under the command of Cornelis de Houtman set sail to East India and thus started the highly profitable overseas trade.⁹⁸

The Dutch success alarmed the Spanish and tried to impose embargo on them, but such hostile action only stiffened the Dutch resolve. In March 1602, at the intervention of the Dutch parliament, the numerous Dutch companies merged into the United East India Company (Verenigde Oost Indische Compagnie, or V.O.C.), which was granted in a charter by the government the power of possessing and using arms and of representing the sovereign to administer the Asian population. Four years later, the company owned no less than 41 warships, 3000 merchant vessels, 100,000 employees, and a capital of 6.6-million guilder. During its first seven years of existence, the company sent fifty-five great ships to Asia, where the Dutchmen founded a new Batavia, the present-day Jakarta, in Java to explore the

⁹⁶See Li Yuanchun, *Taiwan zhilue*, vol. 1, p. 13; see also Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, pp. 5433, 5601–5608.

⁹⁷See Huang Zhongqing, "Mingdai Fujian haifang de shuizhai yu youbing," p. 409.

⁹⁸J. I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585–1740*, pp. 117, 308–09, 319–20.

riches of Southeast Asia. Their naval and commercial power was comfortably secured after their decisive victory over Spain at Gibraltar in 1607.⁹⁹ With Batavia as its headquarters, the company established a network of no less than 30 commercial entrepôts all over Asia. From Batavia stretched out two main trade routes: one sailed northwestward to Persia via Malacca, Bengal, and India and the other northeastward to Japan via Burma, Indo-China, and Taiwan. There were numerous Dutch circles of trade in their vast commercial empire to meet special local circumstances, but the company had overall control in order to compete with traders of various nationalities.

For the first time, in 1601, Jacob Cornelisz van Neck commanded their fleets from Amsterdam, and showed up at eastern Canton. In principal, the Dutch had two purposes: defeat their Portuguese rivals on the one hand and open the China trade on the other. On September 27, Neck anchored off Macau to request trade. But he was driven away from Macau by the Portuguese. To the Chinese, the appearance of the strange-looking foreigners and their tall ships and powerful guns was a shocking experience. As the Dutch noticed, the Chinese “took to flight on the approach of our people”.¹⁰⁰ The Chinese were, indeed, afraid of the Dutch because what they had seen were “the red-haired barbarians” (*hongmo fan* 红毛番) or “the red-haired ghosts” (*hongmao gui* 红毛鬼).¹⁰¹ The occasion marked the beginning of Dutch participation in competing for China trade. Then shortly afterward, in June 1604, Wybrandt van Waerwijck commanded a larger fleet to set sail from Amsterdam, and took him almost a year to reach Macau in an attempt to take it over from the Portuguese by force. The Dutch sunk a Portuguese ship and captured another one. The captured Portuguese ship with Japan-bound cargoes worthy 1.4-million guilder suggested to the Dutch how profitable the trade was.¹⁰² But Waerwijck failed to take Macau because of storm.¹⁰³

The late-comer Dutch envied the Portuguese foothold at Macau and the Spanish trading entrepôt in the Philippines. Since they tried unsuccessfully to take over their competitors’ trading posts by force, they were desperately seeking one for themselves. By chance they made acquaintance with some overseas Chinese traders from southern Fujianese in Southeast Asia, namely, Li Jin 李锦, Pan Xiu 潘秀, and Guo Zhen 郭震, who told the Dutch that local Chinese officials could be bribed and that they should occupy Penghu and use it as a foothold to do business with the Chinese. Li drafted the letter on behalf of the Dutch, but Pan was arrested in Zhangzhou and Guo thus dared not deliver the letter.¹⁰⁴ As a result, Waerwijck brought Captain

⁹⁹Refer to Haley, *The Dutch in the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 25–26; Wills Pepper, *Guns, and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China 1662–1681*, p. x; Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, p. 26.

¹⁰¹Cf. Wang Linheng, *Yuejian pian*, juan 3.

¹⁰²See Cao Yonghe, “MingZheng shiqi yiqian zhi Taiwan,” p. 53.

¹⁰³Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁴Zhang Xian, *Dongxiyang kao*, p. 246. Zhang Weihua, *Mingshi Ouzhou siguo zhun zhushi*, p. 92. *MingQing shiliao wubian*, vol. 1, p. 1.

Cornelis Reyerszoon' two large decked warships with him to invade Penghu on 7 August 1604. The Dutch landed virtually unopposed because the Chinese garrison left few troops in duty due to changing shifts.¹⁰⁵ The several hundred Dutchmen thus easily occupied the island and planned to stay there for a long haul.¹⁰⁶

Trying to establish trade relationship with China, the Dutch sent Li Jin to Zhangzhou only to find his friends Pan and Guo already in prison and the Ming officials were angry at the Dutch occupation of Penghu. Li pretended himself as an escapee from the Dutch, but he was thrown into prison with his friends in any case. But before long, in an attempt to solve the problem with the Dutch, the Quanzhou authorities set all three free in order to dispatch them to talk the Dutch into leaving Penghu. Li and his company, however, dared not tell the Dutch the truth, thus saying vaguely that the Chinese authorities had yet decided whether or not to permit trade.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, while the Dutch were waiting at Penghu for an agreement of trade, the Ming officials anxiously expected the aliens to leave.

During the deadlock, the tax supervisor Gao Cai 高采 being bribed talked Grand Marshal Zhu Wenda 朱文达 into trade with the Dutch, arguing that the combined naval forces of Fujian would not enough to subdue the powerful Dutch warships. With Zhu's consent Gao sent his confidant Zhou Zhifan 周之范 to Penghu for negotiation. Zhou asked for an enormous price, including a sum of 45,000–50,000 Real as tribute to the Ming emperor. Reportedly, Waerwijck was first shocked and then glad to accept it as the basis for further discussion.¹⁰⁸

Before long a tense debate started off among the Fujian officials. Security concern again overwhelmed commercial interest. Governor Xu Xueju 徐学聚 of Fujian forcefully argued that Penghu as the gateway to Quanzhou and Zhangzhou should never be occupied by any alien power. Xu warned his government that the Dutch would make Penghu another Macau and dominate the coastal trade. Should the trade run out of control, as the governor went on, outlaws of different sorts would use Penghu as their launching pad for attacking the coast.¹⁰⁹ When Xu's memorial reached Beijing, the Board of Defense instructed the Dutch to be expelled from Penghu. To follow the order, Commanders Shi Dezheng 施德政 and Shen Yourong 沈有容 started to assemble force at Jinmen 金门. Shen personally went to Penghu on November 18 to inform the Dutch unequivocally that his government would not allow them to use the island for the purpose of trade. Shen made quite clear to the Dutch that he would use force if necessary. Waerwijck, reluctant as he appeared, decided to pull out from Penghu on 15 December 1604, a little over four

¹⁰⁵Groeneveldt, *De Nederlanders in China Eerste Deel*, pp. 11–23; *Mingji Helanren qinju Penghu candang*, pp. 1–10.

¹⁰⁶Zhang Weihua, *Mingshi Ouzhou siguo zhun zhushi*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁷Zhang Weihua, *Mingshi Ouzhou siguo zhun zhushi*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁸Yang Yanjie, "Yiliuwuling zhi yiliuliu nian Zheng Chenggong haiwai maoyi de maoyi'e he lirun'e gusuan", pp. 221–35. See also Yang Yanjie, *Heju shidai Taiwanshi*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹See Zhang Weihua, *Mingshi Ouzhou siguo zhuan zhushi*, p. 98.

months after his arrival.¹¹⁰ Shen, a former pirate-suppression hero, was now praised by many as an extraordinary general who repelled the Dutch without fighting a battle. As a poem by Chen Jianxun 陈建勋 remarked, General Shen all alone talked the enemy into giving up in so graceful manner and instantly resolved the ongoing crisis.¹¹¹

But the Dutch did not leave forever; in fact, they would not at all give up finding a foothold connecting to the China trade. In 1619 the Dutch East India Company made Jan Pieterszoon Coen its governor. This able man in next few years aggressively expanded colonialism in the region. A large number of Chinese and other Asian traders and laborers was recruited to Batavia for service. Also he united the British in a commercial war against both the Portuguese and the Spaniard. Also, in order to find a foothold on the south China coast, he again planned to attack the Portuguese Macau or to seize a place elsewhere. The Dutch was confident this time, as they believed Macau could easily be taken with 1000–1500 troops.¹¹² The Dutch-Portuguese war was fought on 24 June 1622. The battles were fierce—the Dutch casualties ran as many as 136 dead and 126 wounded, but the Dutch again failed to capture Macau.¹¹³ As late as 1653 they still refused to give up their ambition to take Macau over. For them, the Portuguese Asian den, namely Macau, was the perfect place to connect China market.¹¹⁴ They believed they could not fill the Portuguese shoes lest Macau should be taken. Given the fact that they failed to capture Macau, they returned to Penghu, where they soon found a good harbor and the location was not very far from Zhangzhou on the Fujian coast. They chose it as their second best.¹¹⁵

When the Dutch landed on Penghu on 11 July 1622, they saw the sandy island rather barren, having neither woods nor rocks to do constructions. Cornelis Reijersz, the naval commander of the Dutch expeditionary forces, thus moved on to Dayuan 大员 at southern Taiwan on July 27, where the Chinese had already built settlements. But the entrance into the port of Dayuan appeared hazardous. Besides, the Dutch considered the site of Dayuan, further from the China coast, strategically inferior to Penghu.¹¹⁶ Hence, Commander Reijersz came back to Penghu on July 31 to build a base for the China trade. The Dutch started to construct fortresses on Penghu beginning from August 2.¹¹⁷ Governor Shang Zhouzuo 商周祚 of Fujian

¹¹⁰See Chen Xueyi 陈学伊's essay in Shen Yourong comp, *Minhai zengyan*, pp. 33–34; cf. Zhang Xie, *Dongxi yang kao*, pp. 258–59. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, p. 26.

¹¹¹See Shen Yourong comp., *Minhai zengyan*, pp. 92–93.

¹¹²*De VOC en Formosa*, pp. 4, 7.

¹¹³*De VOC en Formosa*, pp. 14–15.

¹¹⁴*Badaweiyi cheng riji*, p. 123.

¹¹⁵*De VOC en Formosa*, p. 8.

¹¹⁶See Lin Weisheng, “Helanren ju Penghu shimo”, pp. 7–8.

¹¹⁷*De VOC en Formosa*, pp. 15–16; Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, p. 27; Cf. Yang Yaanjie, *Heju shidai Taiwanshi*, p. 20.

who thought the Dutch had left Penghu as he reported to the Qing court in May only discovered the aliens in effect sending the Chinese guardsmen fled and trying to stay there indefinitely.¹¹⁸

While the Dutch clearly needed Penghu to connect the China trade, the Chinese considered the Dutch occupation of their off-shore islands as security threat. Even in speaking of trade, both sides had an unbridgeable conceptual gap. To be sure, the Dutch took free-trade for granted, but the Chinese experiences of coastal trade were loaded with unrest and violence. When the Dutch were waiting for trade permit in Penghu, Commander Wang Mengxiong 王梦熊 arrived on 1 October 1622 with a fleet of four ships to deliver Governor Shang's message that the Dutch requests for permission of trade and the occupation of Penghu were both rejected.¹¹⁹

When the Dutch found they were unable to get their way, they were prepared to use force as they had done so successfully with many small Southeast Asian countries. At Reijersz's order, from November 27 to December 1, 1622, Cornelis van Nieuweroode brought five Dutch battleships to Xiamen, where they sank 80 Chinese junks, of which 26 were battleships, before intruding into Xiamen harbor and having captured 80 captives, 60 cannons and numerous weapons. As well they plundered Gulangyu 鼓浪屿 nearby. Having shown off force, the Dutch returned to Penghu.¹²⁰ The Chinese reported that they sank one Dutch ship and killed a score of enemies¹²¹; the score pale in comparison with the Dutch's.

The prowess of the Dutch naval forces evidently worried the Chinese authorities. In December, the officials in Fujian were now willing to talk to the Dutch in Penghu. Reijersz thus arrived at Fuzhou, the provincial capital of Fujian, and met with Governor Shang Zhouzuo on 11 February 1623. Governor Shang insisted that the Dutch would have to leave Penghu. When Reijersz said he could not leave Penghu without the authorization of his governor in Batavia, Shang agreed to dispatch representatives to go to Batavia. The governor added a concession note that should the Dutch withdraw from Penghu, he would consider trade; however, the permissible trade had to be conducted somewhere beyond the Chinese jurisdiction.¹²² That meant the Chinese really had no intention of opening up their coast for free trade as the Dutch wished. They would be glad to trade with the Dutch only in Southeast Asia or Batavia, or any other foreign places.¹²³ The Chinese were even willing to send navigators to help the Dutch to find a place other than Penghu. The place the Chinese officials recommended turned out to be a "small barren sandbank of about a mile in circumference called Tayouan (Dayuan)"

¹¹⁸The governor complained of the Dutch treachery, see his report to the Ming court "Xunfu Fujian houdai Shang Zhouzuo zou", in *Mingji Helanren qinju Penghu candang*, p. 3.

¹¹⁹*De VOC en Formosa*, p. 16. See also Lin Weisheng, "Helanren ju Penghu shimo," p. 10.

¹²⁰*De VOC en Formosa*, p. 18; Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, p. 18.

¹²¹See Zhang Weihua, *Mingshi Ouzhou siguo zhuan zhushi*, p. 104.

¹²²*De VOC en Formosa*, p. 26.

¹²³The Dutch record of the talk cited in Lin Weisheng, "Helanren ju Penghu shimo," p. 15.

in southern Taiwan.¹²⁴ Interestingly, the Fujian authorities tried to resolve the Penghu issue by assisting the Dutch to settle in Dayuan. In fact, the Dutch had visited Dayuan bay earlier and found it not quite desirable. They were glad to have Dayuan, but still had no intention of giving up Penghu.

While the Dutch waited impatiently for trade permit, they had the opportunity to do business with the Chinese smugglers and adventurers in the region. By blaming the Chinese government for the breach of promise,¹²⁵ the Dutch resumed shelling and plundering coastal villages, captured Chinese junks and fishing boats at sea, laid siege to Jinzhou 锦州, blocking the route extending all the way to Manila in the Philippines. The route the Chinese traders used regularly to export silk and other consumer goods to earn the needed Spanish silver.¹²⁶ Even more troubling to the Chinese, the Dutch captured thousands of coastal inhabitants and made them forced laborers to construct facilities on Penghu, and eventually sold them at the slave markets in Batavia. According to the testimony of Governor Pieter de Carpentier of Batavia dated 30 January 1624, no less than half of 1150 Chinese captives in Penghu died of depression, sickness, poverty, or exhaustion. Most of 473 survivals perished on their way to Batavia, and among 98 arrived alive 65 of them were killed by drinking poisonous water.¹²⁷

Aware of the agony that the Dutch brought to the southeast China coast, You Fengxiang 游凤翔, the circuit censor of Nanjing, alerted the Ming government on 23 September 1623 how menace the Dutch occupation of Penghu had posed. “They,” the censor said, “had constructed garrisons, seized our ships and men, and acted just like an enemy.” The censor was deeply worried that the Dutch occupation of Penghu would seriously threatened the nearby Fujian coast, disrupted the shipping lines west to Guangdong and east to Zhejiang, and most likely colluded with Chinese smugglers and pirates.¹²⁸ The Ming officials on the coast experienced high levels of anxiety. Dutch presence, in other words, arose a guanine sense of crisis.¹²⁹

The Ming court had to take the matter very seriously. Its Board of War (*Bingbu* 兵部) passed down the order that the Dutch had to be expelled from the Chinese coast once for all.¹³⁰ Indeed, about a week later, Fujian alerted its entire coast, in particular reinforcing the defense of Xiamen and Quanzhou. Nan Juyi 南居益 replaced Governor Shang with the instruction that war be prepared. Governor Nan,

¹²⁴Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, pp. 27, 28.

¹²⁵*De VOC en Formosa*, p. 28. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, pp. 28–29.

¹²⁶Quan Hansheng. “Mingji Zhongguo yu Feilubin jian de maoyi,” pp. 419–434.

¹²⁷*De VOC en Formosa*, pp. 29–30. Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, pp. 29–30; Zheng Chenggong *shoufu Taiwan shiliao xuanbian*, pp. 71–82; Yang Yanjie, *Helan shidai Taiwanshi*, p. 26.

¹²⁸See You Fengxiang, “Nanjing Huguangdao yushi You Fengxiang zou,” in *Mingji Helanren qinju Penghu caandang*, pp. 3–4.

¹²⁹Refer to *Ming Qing shiliao*, vol. 2, ce. 7, p. 629.

¹³⁰See *Ming shilu minhai guanxi shiliao*, p. 96; Chang T’ien-tse. *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514 to 1644*, pp. 113–17.

who tired of the Dutch capriciousness, suspected a conspiracy behind the request of trade, would not even like the Dutch to use Dayuan as base. He was only willing to trade with the Dutch in Batavia.¹³¹ To prepare for the worst, he dutifully followed the order to pursue military option. He wanted to redress the coastal inhabitants' hatred for the Dutch brutality.¹³²

The Dutch expectedly found the new governor hard to crack, but they had no intention of giving in. While Governor Nan placed his coast on alert, the Dutch resorted to war preparedness as well. The senior commercial agent Christian Franszoon together with a fleet of eleven ships sailed from Batavia to Penghu on 23 June 1623. When he learnt that the Chinese officials insisted on the Dutch withdrawal from Penghu and return of all Chinese captives as the preconditions for trade talk, Franszoon was suspicious and regarded the Chinese as playing "deceiving tectics." In particular, the Dutch suspected that China in effect wanted to monopolize trade and neither Penghu nor Dayuan was the real concern.¹³³ The mutual misunderstanding over trade made neither side act in good faith.

In September 1623, the Dutch decided to use force, if necessary, in response to the Chinese "treachery." Under Reijersz's instruction, on October 25, the Dutch show-off force at Pagoda Island in Zhangzhou Bay blocked the route of Chinese vessels to Manila in order to press the Fujian authorities for trade. If the Chinese refused to negotiate, then the Dutch would use force to achieve their goal. Governor Nan through the Chinese traders lured the Dutch to Xiamen for negotiation. On November 17, Franszoon and his party of 30 landed in Xiamen to sign agreement, which had been negotiated on board of a Dutch ship. After having received initial warm welcome, however, they were captured after being intoxicated at the dinner party. Meanwhile the Fujianese naval commander Wang Mengxiong launched an attack on the Dutch ships anchoring in the harbor of Xiamen. As a result, one of the two Dutch ships was sunk, as Governor Nan reported, and 52 prisoners were taken, including Franszoon.¹³⁴ All the prisoners were decapitated in Xiamen, with the exception of Commander Franszoon who was brought to Beijing for execution.¹³⁵ It was clearly an act of brutal revenge for killing and capturing the Chinese on the coast and at sea by the Dutch.

In retaliation, Reijersz raided the coast from Zhangzhou to Guangzhou beginning from 21 January 1624. This time Governor Nan was well prepared, not only reinforcing defense but also planning an assault on Penghu. The Chinese placed Penghu under encirclement from 20 February 1624 on. In May, Governor Pieter de Carpentier of Batavia sent Martinus Sonck to Penghu to replace Reijersz. Before Sonck and his two warships arrived at Penghu, Commander Yu Zigao 俞咨皋 and

¹³¹Lin Weisheng, "Helanren ju Penghu shimo," p. 26.

¹³²See Nan Juyi, "Fujian xuanfu Nan Juyi youzou," in *Mingji Helanren qinju Penghu candang*, pp. 5–6. Cf. Yang Yanjie, *Heju shidai Taiwanshi*, p. 27.

¹³³*De VOC en Formosa*, pp. 31–33.

¹³⁴See *Ming Qing shiliao wubian*, vol. 1, p. 13. *De VOC en Formosa*, pp. 39–40, 41.

¹³⁵*Ming Qing shiliao yibian*, vol. 7, p. 629.

his troops had already landed on August 16 and closed in quickly. Ten days later, under the pressure of the overwhelmingly large Chinese forces, the Dutch dismantled their garrison and left with their ships.¹³⁶ The Chinese celebrated the expulsion of the Dutch from the Penghu islands and rewarded a score of brave fighting men.¹³⁷ As well they rejoiced that Penghu did not become another Macau. Moreover, the Chinese determined to strengthen Penghu's defense by setting up a permanent command post and increasing 1169 guards.¹³⁸ Now, the total defense force, land and sea, consisted of 2104 men and 49 ships.¹³⁹

According to the Dutch, however, they pulled out from Penghu only in exchange for their use of Dayuan (Taiwan) as their entrepôt, with the understanding that the Fujianese were allowed to take residence there. The Dutch company soon established in Taiwan "a colony of about twenty five thousand able-bodied men, besides women and children".¹⁴⁰ Subsequently, Taiwan emerged to be Dutch East India Company's valuable commercial entrepôt between Japan and Southeast Asia.¹⁴¹ The Dutch continued to seek direct trade on the Chinese mainland, but practically had no success. Thwarted by the Chinese officials, the Dutch turned to private Chinese traders whom they found far more friendly and cooperative. These private Chinese traders, mostly Fujianese, had been active in Asian waters since the fifteenth century. Although the Ming government had imposed a maritime interdict, it became totally ineffective after 1587. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Sino-Japanese sea route had been a most profitable one. In spite of the Chinese government's suspicion toward Japan and the Japanese government's seclusion policy, this trade went on with little interference. The Chinese merchant vessels known as "Tang ships" called on Japanese ports regularly. In the 1610s the Japanese port of Hirado had already seen the rise of a large community of Chinese traders. By cooperating with these traders the Dutch were able to cash in on the profitable trade and participate indirectly in the China trade that had been denied to them. The volume of the trade had increased rapidly since 1576. The profit from the trade amounted to 20,000 teals of silver in 1583 compared to 10,000 teals in 1576. The total tonnage of seagoing ships, not including illegal vessels, reached 36,000 tons in 1587. From 1613 to 1640, an average of 60–80 Chinese junks sailed to Japan yearly. By 1630 the total tonnage of Chinese vessels in Asian waters jumped to 40,000 tons.¹⁴²

¹³⁶*MingQing shiliao wubian*, vol. 1, p. 13; *De VOC en Formosa*, pp. 45–46; *Batavia Daily* 1, p. 68. Cf. *Mingji Helanren qinju Penghu candang*, pp. 9–10.

¹³⁷*MingQing shiliao yibian*, vol. 7, p. 624.

¹³⁸Cf. *MingQing shiliao yibian*, vol. 7, pp. 603–07.

¹³⁹See Fang Hao, *Taiwan caoqi shigang*, p. 161.

¹⁴⁰de Beauclair, ed. *Neglected Formosa*, p.14; *Mingji Helanren qinju Penghu candang*, pp. 9–10, 16, 19–30.

¹⁴¹Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch*, pp. 51–60.

¹⁴²See *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao*, pp. 103–09; Yung-ho Ts'ao, "Chinese Overseas Trade in the Late Ming Period," pp. 429–58, 434, 532; Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben*, pp. 113–123; cf. Yamawaki Teijiro *Kinsei Nitchu boeki-shi no kenkyu*.

The Dutch's premier Chinese agent was Li Dan 李旦. Sources about Li Dan's life are extremely sketchy. In many ways, he was a successor to Wang Zhi, Xu Hai, and other seafaring merchants back in the sixteenth century. He was said to have been active in trade in Manila in his early years. Later, in the 1600s, he emerged as a rich man. His wealth was obviously built on trade with south China. Eventually, he became the Chinese leader in Hirado.¹⁴³ Apparently he went for business contacts to the Dutch-held southern Taiwan three times before he died in 1625. The historian Iwao Seiichi 岩生成一 identified Li Dan with the "China Captain," Andrea Ditties or "Tojin Captain" mentioned frequently in Dutch, English, and Japanese sources.¹⁴⁴ If Iwao is right, Li was more than a commercial agent. He was an extremely successful seafaring merchant in his own right. The Dutch account shows also that he had once represented the company to negotiate with the Chinese authorities for a trade agreement. This, however, is doubtful. For Li surely knew that the Chinese government prohibited its subjects from establishing private relationships with foreigners. Li Guozhu 李国助, Li Dan's son, known as Augustine Iquan among the Europeans, retained his business connection with the company. The Lis were, of course, not the only Chinese traders with whom the Dutch made contacts. Many such names must have vanished from history. But most of them, it appears, made huge profits.¹⁴⁵ And the one who followed Li Dan's steps and stirred up much greater trouble and influence was none but Zheng Zhilong from southern Fujian.

¹⁴³Refer to. Goodrich and Fang, eds. *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, vol. 1, p. 872.

¹⁴⁴Iwao Seiichi. "Kinsei Nisshi boeki ni kansuru suryoteki kosatsu", vol. 2, pp. 981–1020; 1958, 27.

¹⁴⁵Ts'ao, "Chinese Overseas Trade in the Late Ming Period," pp. 436, 450; Thompson, ed., *The Diary of Richard Cooks*, vol. 2, p. 42.

China's Conquest of Taiwan in the Seventeenth Century

Victory at Full Moon

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