

The Maritime East Asian Networks in the Song-Yuan Period

NAKAMURA, Tsubasa

Introduction

In the post-1980s period, Japanese history scholars criticized the notion of pre-modern Japan as an island nation isolated from Asia; rather, its history has come to be seen as synchronous with that of the continent (Tsukamoto, 1980; Amino, 1982; Tanaka, 1982). Since the 1990s, therefore, studies by Japanese scholars into the history of maritime Asia, especially the “maritime East Asia,” have progressed rapidly (Arano, Ishii, and Murai (ed.), 1992–1993, 2010–2015; Momoki (ed.), 2008). Initially, the scholars of maritime Asian history criticized national history too much: they did not pay sufficient attention to the importance of the governmental institutions (Amino, 1982; Tanaka, 1982). Recent studies, however, suggest that the governments that ruled China, the Korean peninsula, and the Japanese islands provided the basic structure of trade and commercial networks in the maritime East Asia from the eleventh to the fourteenth century (especially, Yamauchi, 2003; Enomoto, 2007; Watanabe, 2012). According to these studies, unlike short-distance, small-volume trade, commerce across the East China Sea involved long distances with a large amount of cargo. Thus, maritime merchants sought appropriate business contacts to reduce risks and costs. This is the reason why the protections provided by the governments, which were also big customers, were indispensable to foreign trade. Therefore, government ports such as Ningbo and Quanzhou in China, the mouth of the Ryesong River (礼成江) in Goryeo, and Hakata in Japan demonstrate the extremely strong centripetal force in East Asia.

Based on these discussions, this paper proposes a view on the specific role of the international order and national politics in the formation of the maritime East Asia. First, I discuss the relationships between these governments and maritime merchants from the ninth to the thirteenth century (Section 1). Second, I examine what, if any, changes marked this relationship in the Song-Yuan transition (Section 2).

1. The Relations between Governments and Maritime Merchants in the East Asian Sea Area

1. 1. The formation of the maritime East Asian networks

The maritime East Asia networks were first formed in the ninth century. Adversely affected by abnormal weather and other natural disasters, many Koreans immigrated to the Chinese coastal areas to avoid famines and epidemics in the early ninth century. By the 830s, they had constructed Korean towns and established trade networks (Reischauer, 1955). Ennin, a Japanese monk of the Tendai sect at Enryaku-ji Temple, went to China in 838 CE with an official diplomatic mission to the Tang Dynasty. He studied the scriptures and esoteric teachings of the Tang monks. While abroad, he was supported by the Korean merchants at Dengzhou on the Shandong Peninsula.

These Korean networks were the pioneers of trade routes those in the maritime East Asia. From the ninth century, these Koreans assimilated with the Chinese, and Chinese merchants in the coastal areas, especially Zhejiang and Fujian, started to sail across the East China Sea, becoming the main actors in China-Japan trade. In fact, the Korean merchants were gradually supplanted by their Chinese counterparts during the ninth century. The expansion of Chinese merchant activity to the East China Sea was also the result of social and economic developments in Jingnan, which was stimulated by the population shift from regions of northern China to the south of the country after the An-Shi Rebellion (755–763 CE).

1-2. The symbiotic relations between governments and maritime merchants in East Asia

As above, from the middle of the ninth century, Chinese merchants began to participate in commerce in the maritime East Asia. However, the scale of China-Japan trade in the ninth and the tenth centuries should not be overstated. In addition, governmental control of foreign sea trade was extremely limited, and the collection of

customs duties and regulation of the migration of maritime merchants were incomplete. Moreover, the piracy and human trafficking that began in the early ninth century continued to pose serious problems.

From around 1000 CE, economic ties in the maritime East Asia began to be strengthened. This change was strongly related to the evolving situation in East Asia. In relation to China, the political situation in East Eurasia became stable by the end of the tenth century under the alliance between the Northern Song and the Khitai Empire from 1005 CE. Because of this stabilization, socio-economic development in southern China accelerated.

The Song and Goryeo Dynasties in Korea established international commerce control institutions in government ports to promote maritime trade. In the Song-Yuan period, the institution responsible for controlling Song-Japan trade was *shibosi* (市舶司) in Mingzhou (明州; Ningbo today) (Kuwabara 1923; Fujita, 1932). During the migration process, the maritime merchants had to go through *shibosi*; thus, the government controlled their mobility, collected customs in-kind, and purchased imported goods. Whilst these control systems may appear to have been unfavorable to the maritime merchants, management and control were the price to pay for the protection provided by the government. After the eleventh century, the maritime merchants who were engaged in the Song-Japan trade regarded Mingzhou as a place to base their business operations (Enomoto, 2007; pp.30–39). The maritime merchants seldom challenged governmental control and regulation; rather, they took advantage of the system. Thus, the revenue from maritime trade provided a key contribution to national finance.

On the Korean peninsula, the Goryeo Dynasty strengthened the royal authority and established the centralized bureaucracy by the middle of the eleventh century. In such a context, Goryeo designated the mouth of Ryesong River as the governmental port. According to *History of Goryeo* (高麗史), Chinese merchants came from Song to Goryeo every year from 1012 CE. This reflects the fact that the Goryeo Dynasty established an institution to control emigration and immigration, and that Song-Goryeo trade expanded. In fact, we can see in *History of the Song* (宋史) that Chinese settlements formed in Gaegyeong (開京), the capital of the Goryeo Dynasty.

Aside from Goryeo, Chinese settlements were also established in Hakata, Japan in the middle of the eleventh century. Moreover, as Song-Japan trade developed, from the middle of the twelfth century, the Chinese settlements began to expand into the Japanese settlements that were located next to them (Oba, 1999, 2001, 2006). In such a situation, the relationship between the Chinese merchants and the Japanese grew closer, and Chinese merchants in Hakata developed deep roots in Japanese society. One example is Xie-Guoming (謝國明), one of the most famous Chinese merchants in Hakata. Guoming not only led the Chinese merchants who were engaged in Song-Japan trade in the middle of the thirteenth century, but was also patron of temples and shrines in Hakata and Kyoto. In addition, he had a strong connection with the Kyoto Court, including the most powerful aristocrat, Kujo-Michiie. With his help, Guoming succeeded in securing a great business opportunity related to Zen Buddhist temples in Japan and the Song in 1243 CE.

The maritime merchants under governmental control did not dedicate themselves solely to commerce. They also prepared the groundwork for diplomatic relations, as evidenced by the contacts between the Goryeo and Song Dynasties (Hara, 1999; 2006; Kondo, 2009; Mouri, 2009). The Goryeo Dynasty had been under the tributary system of the Song Dynasty since 960 CE. The Song Dynasty, however, gave no military aid to the Goryeo Dynasty in its war with the Khitan because of the Song-Khitan alliance of 1005 CE. The Goryeo Dynasty confronted a Khitai invasion into Gaegyeong in 1011 CE and began to pay tribute to the Khitan from 1022 CE. As a result, the Goryeo Dynasty prioritized its relationship with the Khitan over relations with the Song Dynasty, to which it stopped paying tribute in 1030 CE. However, the Emperor of the Song Dynasty, Shenzong (神宗), sought a rapprochement with the Goryeo Dynasty in the late 1060s in order to oppose the Khitan; he succeeded in reestablishing diplomatic relations between the two Dynasties in 1071 CE. At this time,

the maritime merchants in Fuzhou were the mediators between the Song and Goryeo Dynasties. The merchants invited Munjong (文宗), King of Goryeo, to bring a tribute to Shenzhon in 1068 CE, since they realized that *Munjong* wanted to reenter the tributary system of the Song Dynasty.

2. The Song-Yuan Transition and the Transformation of the Maritime Asian Networks

2. 1. The South China Sea trade and the “Pax Mongolica”

Since the collapse of the Uighur Empire in 840 CE, no unified authority had appeared on the Mongolian Plateau, the heartland of the route across Eurasia. In the thirteenth century, however, the Mongols, led by Genghis Khan, had expanded rapidly and had destroyed the Dynasties of Jin (in 1234), Xixia (in 1227), and Southern Song (in 1276). They expanded widely in Eurasia, from the Korean Peninsula to the Russian Plain or West Asia. The unification of much of the Eurasian land mass under the Mongols is now regarded as the “Pax Mongolica,” which promoted interregional exchanges through the “Silk Road” or Indian Ocean route (Abu-Lughod, 1989).

The Yuan government was more actively involved in maritime trade than the Song Dynasty had been. In the case of the maritime Southeast Asia throughout the South China Sea, two points should be emphasized (Sugiyama, 1995; Yokkaichi, 2000, 2002, 2006). First, the Mongol court and its local governments more positively employed the local elites that were responsible for marine transport than had the Song government. A symbiotic relationship existed between the Yuan government and the maritime merchants, not unlike that of the Song period. In Quanzhou, Muslim merchants were present along with their Chinese peers (Kuwabara, 1923; Mukai, 2007, 2009, 2013). Certainly, the major impetus for this development came from the trade links between Muslim merchants and local elites that had been built during the Southern Song period. However, the policy of the Yuan government to appoint those who were not Chinese, including Muslims and Uighurs, as financial bureaucrats encouraged the expansion of the Muslim community in Quanzhou. Second, in the Yuan period, unlike in the Song era in which only the central officials and the local governments controlled international trade, members of the imperial family also frequently participated in financing commerce. According to the *History of the Yuan* (元史), there was a system through which the government offered ships to and invested finance in merchants in exchange for a post-enterprise payment of 70 percent of the merchant’s sales.

2. 2. The Song-Yuan transition and the maritime East Asia: relations between the Yuan and Goryeo Dynasties

All of the above Yuan commerce initiatives were not, however, related to the maritime East Asia, but instead focused on the maritime Southeast Asia. The difference between the two is important. From the ninth century to the fourteenth century, the maritime exchanges of the East China Sea were much smaller in scale than those of the South China Sea (Mori, 1948). The former’s trade, therefore, had less political autonomy than that of the latter; if necessary, governments were able to limit the interchanges of its merchants in the East China Sea. The Qing Dynasty, for instance, prohibited the departure of Chinese into the East China Sea area and the entry into China of foreigners arriving from there. In comparison, the Qing adopted a different policy for the South China Sea. As a result, from the end of the seventeenth century, the Chinese migrated toward Southeast Asia, where their presence greatly increased (Haneda (ed.), 2013).

What kind of transformations did the maritime networks in the maritime East Asia undergo during the Song-Yuan transition? We cannot ignore that fact that the importance of sea routes for domestic transport increased in the Yuan period. As in the Southern Song period, the central region of Yuan’s economy was the southern coastal area. However, unlike in the Song period, the Yuan Dynasty built Dudi (Beijing today) as the capital of the empire and maintained a sea route for domestic transport to Zhigu (直沽; in Tianjin) from Ganpu (漕浦; in Shanghai) (Sugiyama, 1995). With this system of marine transport, merchant activity in the Chinese

coastal region grew, activating trade between the Yuan and Goryeo Dynasties (Morihiro, 2013). For example, a merchant at Dacang (大倉; in Suzhou), named *Yin-Jiuzai* (殷九宰), received an investment from the government of Yuan and engaged in trade with Goryeo (Uematsu, 1997). Moreover, the Yuan government established stations for *jamci* (a system of transportation, called post station system) on the west coast of the Korean Peninsula at the end of the thirteenth century. When *jamci* stations were abolished in the early fourteenth century, a civil route that linked Zhigu to the west coast of the Korean Peninsula continued to function (Morihiro, 2013). According to *Laoqida* (老乞大), the textbook on Chinese language for Korean, some merchants voyaged to the Goryeo Dynasty from Zhigu during the Yuan period. Thus, as in the maritime South East Asia, the marine route linked China and the Korean Peninsula more closely in the Yuan period than it had done during the Song period. What about Yuan-Japan trade? When considering this matter, we should note Korean-Mongol relations as another factor influencing closer relation between the Goryeo Dynasty and the Mongol Empire to which it was subject; in fact, the kings of Goryeo married Mongolian princesses and became members of the Mongol imperial family (Morihiro, 2013).

2. 3. The Song-Yuan transition and the maritime East Asia: Relations between the Yuan and Goryeo Dynasties and Japan

When a Mongol diplomatic mission arrived in Japan in 1268 CE, the Japanese government, which comprised the imperial court at Kyoto and the Kamakura shogunate, feared an invasion by the Mongols and the Goryeo Dynasty. As a result, the Japanese government refused the Mongols' demands, despite their attempted invasions of 1274 and 1281 CE. The war between Japan and the Mongol-Goryeo alliance provoked a transformation in international relations within the maritime East Asia.

First, we examine relations between Japan and the Goryeo. Although diplomatic relations did not exist between these two governments, merchants from Dazaifu and Hakata frequently visited Gimhae(金海), which is located on the southeast coast of the Korean Peninsula, from the middle of the eleventh century (Mori, 1948 etc.). According to historical documents however, strained diplomatic relations resulted in no Japanese merchants arriving in Gimhae from 1272 CE to the middle of the fourteenth century. As a result, the Mongols gave the Goryeo Dynasty front line status in the attack on and defense against Japan; they established a military organization on the coastal area of the Korean Peninsula at the end of the thirteenth century (Morihiro, 2013). Moreover, the kings of the Goryeo Dynasty also shared this militant perspective. According to a document sent to the Mongol emperor by Chungnyeol (忠烈王), the Goryeo King, in 1302 CE, the King declared his role as commander-in-chief of the defense against Japan. Thus, diplomatic relations between Japan and the Goryeo were cut after the Mongol/Goryeo invasions of Japan.

In contrast, since the Mongol government actively promoted international trade in the South China Sea, many Japanese historians have argued that Japan-Yuan trade was more prosperous than that of Japan-Song (Sugiyama, 1995; Haneda (ed.), 2013 etc.). Indeed, Yuan-Japan trade still continued. Although the maritime merchants' traffic was interrupted by Yuan government just after the war broke out, it was restored after the 1290s. This view, however, does not pay sufficient attention to the differences between the environments of the merchants engaging in Yuan-Japan trade in the Song and the Yuan periods.

Unlike during the Song Dynasty, Japan was potentially hostile to the Yuan government (Enomoto, 2007; Nakamura, 2013). In addition to making the southeastern coast of the Korean Peninsula a front line for Japan, coastal defenses of the Zhejiang Province were also increased in 1303 and 1304 CE. The maritime merchants from Japan, including Chinese merchants, were called "Japanese merchants" ("倭商") by the Yuan officers, regardless of their ethnicity. They were distinguished from the merchants who came from Korea or other parts of the Chinese coast (Enomoto, 2007; Nakamura, 2013). For example, "Japanese merchants" were prohibited from entering the city area of Qingyuan (慶元; Ningbo today), and the custom taxes of Yuan-Japan trade were

higher than those of Goryeo-Yuan trade. Under these circumstances, dissatisfaction gradually increased among the “Japanese merchants,” and eventually, in 1309 CE, they set fire to the sulfur that they exported to burn down Qingyuan City. In reaction, the Yuan government restricted “Japanese merchants” to the port of Dinghai (定海; in the Zhoushan Archipelago), an outpost of Qingyuan. Moreover, due to the conflict in 1335 CE, the Yuan government excluded “Japanese merchants” from government ports entirely. Thus, Yuan-Japan trade, which was often interrupted for short periods, was unstable.

Consequently, the Chinese merchants who were called “Japanese merchants” by the Yuan officers, and based in ports on the Chinese coast, withdrew from China-Japan trade during the Yuan period. In fact, the presence of Chinese merchants in Hakata had already weakened by the end of the thirteenth century. Moreover, the Chinese merchants in Hakata came to be assimilated with their Japanese hosts. According to the local records of Wenzhou government edited in the Ming period (弘治温州府志), two captains who looked Chinese drifted to Wenzhou from Japan in 1318 CE, but they could no longer speak Chinese.

In these ways, the maritime Asian networks of Chinese merchants were transformed during the Yuan period. At the same time, the Japanese government began to support Japanese merchants in Hakata as successors to the Chinese merchants. In fact, the Kamakura shogunate made contracts with privileged merchants and managed some ships from the 1320s at the latest (Nakamura, 2013). “The Shinan shipwreck” illustrates relations between the merchants in Hakata and the Kamakura shogunate more vividly than anything else. This ship sank en route from Qingyuan to Hakata in 1323 CE, and was discovered in Shinan (新安), on the southwest coast of Korea, in 1976. In this wreck, strips of wood with the names of sailors on board were found, and all of the names identified were Japanese ones. This means that the ship had been operated by merchants who were based in Japanese society. Even more importantly, there are 41 strips of wood inscribed with the words, “for the public use of Tofuku-ji Temple.” In my opinion, that means the Shinan wreck had been sent to Yuan to raise funds to reconstruct Tofuku-ji Temple, in compliance with the wishes of the Kamakura shogunate. In addition, the Kamakura shogunate sent ships on several occasions to raise funds to reconstruct temples in the fourteenth century, to meet the demands of merchants in Hakata who were applying for protection.

In reality, although Yuan-Japan trade may have been necessary for Japan, it was not essential for the Yuan government. Moreover, some in Yuan wished to abolish this trade because of their distrust of “Japanese merchants.” Whilst it is surely a fact that Yuan-Japan trade continued despite the war, we cannot regard it as simply an extension of the trade between Japan and the Song Dynasty. International relations in the East Asian Sea area during the Song-Yuan transition led to changes in the maritime Asian networks. Although relations between the Yuan and Goryeo Dynasties became closer, those of Japan’s relationships with the Goryeo Dynasty and the Yuan Empire were cut or weakened. Above all, although maritime merchants forged symbiotic links between the peoples of the East China Sea area, these were altered by the transitions in international relations.

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