

Maritime Interactions between China and India: Coastal India and the Ascendancy of Chinese Maritime Power in the Indian Ocean

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I. INTRODUCTION

The ascendancy of China as a maritime power was apparent in the late thirteenth century, when battleships spearheaded the Yuan court's (1271–1368) military offensives against Japan (in 1274 and 1280) and the kingdoms of Champa (in 1281) and Java (in 1292–93) in Southeast Asia. The advances in shipbuilding and navigational technologies attained during the preceding Song dynasty (960–1279) facilitated these naval assaults by the Yuan forces. Chinese vessels, which were previously unknown in the Indian Ocean, also entered the shipping and commercial lanes between China and southern Asia in the thirteenth century. Chinese diplomats and merchants frequently ventured into the Indian Ocean ports to promote long-distance trade, display their naval prowess, and propagate the virtues of Chinese civilization.

This paper examines the maritime interactions between China and India in this context of the emergence of China as a naval power during the Song dynasty through to its peak in the early Ming period. It shows that while for most of the first millennium the Chinese dynasties remained disinterested in actively participating in maritime exchanges, during the second millennium

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economic needs, the rivalry among the Mongol empires, and the desire of the early Ming rulers to propagate Chinese civilization brought about changes to the Chinese engagement with its maritime frontier and the regions beyond. The Indian coast, which was already linked to the Chinese coast through trade and Buddhist networking, became a key destination for traders, ships, and diplomats from Song and Yuan China. During the early Ming period these exchanges became more complex due to the attempts by Zheng He 鄭和 (c. 1371–1433) and his armada to interfere in local disputes among the South Asian kingdoms, especially in Bengal and on the Malabar coast.

II. MARITIME INTERACTIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

Before the seventh century, the southern coastal region of China was a neglected frontier. It was, as Hugh Clark has pointed out, “a boundary against which they abutted and which marked the end of their expansion.”¹ Active participation by Chinese traders and court representatives in maritime commerce and diplomacy between the eleventh and mid-fifteenth centuries changed this perception. Chinese ships, laden with merchandise, traders, and soldiers (accompanying the armada led by Zheng He), made frequent trips to the Indian subcontinent, where the Chinese seafarers congregated with Hindu, Muslim, and Nestorian traders. Representatives from the Chinese court ventured into the ports in southern Asia to forge diplomatic alliances and, at times, interfere in local politics. Indeed, by the late thirteenth century, the South Asian ports had emerged as an important destination for Chinese embassies and seafaring traders.

Indian ports had been important transshipment centers for trade between China and the markets in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea since at least the first century BCE. For instance, Chinese silk yarn that reached India was shipped to Rome through Barbarican and Barygaza.² In the same way, Roman merchandise such as coral and glass entered Chinese markets through Indian ports. Maritime trade between Indian ports and the Chinese coast continued into the first few centuries of the Common Era.³ And, although Chinese authorities did not formally endorse maritime trade until the late Tang (618–907) dynasty, the impact of maritime trade on the local economy was apparent during the Southern Dynasties period (420–579). Shufen Liu has pointed out that in the fourth and fifth centuries, the Eastern Jin (317–420) and Liu-Song (420–479) dynasties launched several attacks on the kingdom of Linyi 林邑 (present-day southern Vietnam) in order to

protect their commercial interests. Liu suggests that because of the thriving maritime trade in the coastal regions of China, the Southern Dynasties period witnessed an “impressive” commercial and urban development.⁴ Indian ports and the maritime exchanges between India and coastal China made a considerable contribution to this economic growth.

Already during the Qin (221–206 BCE) and Former Han (202 BCE–23 CE) periods, exotic items such as rhinoceros horns, ivory, pearls, and incense were reaching the Chinese coast, especially the ports in Jiaozhi 交趾 (present-day northern Vietnam), Hepu 合浦 (in present-day Guangxi), and Panyu 番禺 (present-day Guangzhou), from India through Southeast Asia.⁵ Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–86? BCE), the author of *Shi ji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), reports that during the Han dynasty Guangzhou was a flourishing trading outpost. Another court historian, Bangu 班固 (32–92), describes the port as a place to accumulate great wealth through the exchange of foreign commodities that attracted traders from the Chinese hinterland.⁶

Some of the foreign commodities (such as glass, amber, and agate) entering Hepu and Guangzhou during this period have been discovered in tombs belonging to local elites, who may have been the main consumers of these imported goods. The Chinese scholar Zhao Shande 趙善德 suggests that early maritime trade also had a significant impact on the production of agricultural goods and handicrafts in Guangzhou, contributed to the commercialization of the city, and led to the growth of commercial exchanges between the coastal region and the hinterland.⁷ By the Jin period (265–420), the availability of imported goods had become so widespread that even the commoners were able to afford and use foreign jewelry and other luxuries.⁸ Traders from India, Parthia, and the Roman colonies are known to have frequented the markets in Guangzhou as early as the Han dynasty. These traders, some of whom came from Arikamedu in southern India, marketed Chinese silk yarn and garments that they had procured at the ports in coastal China in India and Rome.

The spread of Buddhist ideas to China enhanced the commercial links between the coastal regions of India and China. Buddhist images interspersed with Daoist motifs found on the boulders of Mount Kongwang 孔望山, in the coastal region of Jiangsu province, indicate the presence of Buddhist traders, either Indo-Scythians or Parthians, who may have reached the region through the maritime route in the late second century.⁹ As Xinru Liu has convincingly demonstrated, the transmission of Buddhist doctrines to China led to the development of an interdependent and reciprocal relationship between Buddhist monks and merchants traveling between India and

China. Merchants regularly assisted the growing number of Buddhist monks traveling the overland and maritime routes to China, met the growing demand for ritual items, and actively financed monastic institutions and proselytizing activities. Buddhist monks and monasteries, in turn, fulfilled the spiritual needs of the itinerant merchants and helped introduce new items in the stream of commodities traded between India and China. The Buddhist teaching of *saptaratna* (Ch. *qibao* 七寶, “seven jewels”),¹⁰ for example, created and sustained the demand for commodities such as pearls, lapis lazuli, and coral exported from India.¹¹

This interdependent network of long-distance trade and the transmission of Buddhist doctrines facilitated the movement of monks, merchants, and merchandise between the coastal towns of India and China. South Asian monks, such as Qiyu 耆域 (Jivaka?)¹² and Jiamoluo 迦摩羅 (Kumara?), reached Guangzhou on mercantile ships during the Western Jin period (265–316) and helped establish some of the earliest Buddhist monasteries in the area. This included the famous Guangxiao Monastery 光孝寺, founded by a monk from Kapiśa called Tanmoyeshe 曇摩耶舍 (Dharmayaśas?) who arrived in Guangzhou during the Eastern Jin period.

The intimate connection between seafaring merchants and the Buddhist community also can be discerned in the biography of the renowned Sogdian monk Kang Senghui 康僧會 (d. 280). Kang’s ancestors, we are told, lived in India and engaged in commercial activities. His father migrated to Jiaozhi, apparently with the intention to profit from maritime trade, where Senghui grew up and became a Buddhist monk.¹³ A similar story is reported in the sixth-century Buddhist text *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (Collections of records concerning the translation of the Tripiṭaka). According to the work, the wife of an Indian expatriate in Guangzhou called Zhu Pole 竺婆勒 (Bhallaka?) gave birth to a son called Jinjie 金迦 (Kin̄ka?), who later became a monk under the apprenticeship of Dharmayaśas.¹⁴ The connection is apparent, as well, in the records concerning the South Asian “ship owner” (*bozhu* 船主) Nanti/Zhu Nanti 難提/竺難提 (Nandin?). Nandin, who traveled frequently between southern Asia and the coastal regions of China, not only provided passage to China for the famous Kaśmīri monk Guṇavarman, he also helped two groups of Sri Lankan nuns travel to the Chinese coast. Nandin seems also to have contributed to the transmission of the doctrine by translating Buddhist texts into Chinese.¹⁵

The above episodes regarding the arrival and presence of Buddhist monks in Guangzhou during the third and fourth centuries not only illustrate the growing maritime interactions between India and China, they

also indicate the existence of Indian settlements in coastal China. In fact, the association between the seafaring merchants and the itinerant monks seems to have played an important role in the development of Buddhist doctrines and monasteries in Guangzhou and their spread into the hinterland. Additionally, the prospects of accumulating wealth and the presence of Buddhist monasteries in the region attracted Chinese immigrants from the north and triggered the process of urbanization and commercialization of Guangzhou.¹⁶

The formation of the interdependent network of long-distance trade and the transmission of Buddhist doctrines eastward toward China was paralleled by the emergence of Southeast Asian kingdoms as key players in Indian Ocean commerce. The *Liang shu* 梁書 (History of the Liang [Dynasty]) reports the trips of Chinese envoys to the kingdom of Funan in the middle of the third century, where they witnessed flourishing maritime trade and shipbuilding activities. The Chinese records of the Southeast Asian kingdom also describe the presence of Indians, both merchants and religious preachers, at the ports controlled by the king of Funan. The kingdom of Funan was not merely a transit point for Sino-Indian trade. Rather, as scholars such as O. W. Wolters and Kenneth Hall have pointed out, Funan facilitated maritime trade between India and China by improving the administrative structure and other amenities needed for the shipping of goods through its ports. The kingdom also developed its own trading and diplomatic relations with India in the west and China to the east.¹⁷

In the fifth century, a shift in the trade route, from the Isthmus of Kra to the Strait of Malacca, resulted in the decline of Funan and the emergence of Śrīvijaya, located on the island of Sumatra, as the major participant in the maritime trade across the Bay of Bengal and in the South China Sea. Similar to the role played by Funan, Śrīvijaya not only facilitated trade between India and China, it also developed its own commercial and diplomatic relations with both India and China.¹⁸

The participation of Southeast Asian polities in maritime commerce stimulated interactions between the coastal regions of India and China in several ways. First, the improvements in port facilities (including the protection against pirates) and shipbuilding technologies attained by the Southeast Asian kingdoms made it easier and safer for merchants to transport luxury and bulk commodities to their destinations in coastal India or China. Second, the encouragement of commerce by the Southeast Asian kingdoms attracted merchants from India, who established various guilds (in areas such as the Malay Peninsula, the ports controlled by Funan and Champa, and in

the islands of Sumatra and Java) that developed into important staging points for Indian trade with China. Third, the Southeast Asian kingdoms introduced their own commodities into the streams of goods transported between India and China, making maritime commerce more diverse and lucrative. Fourth, many of the Southeast Asian ports became centers for Buddhist teachings, which contributed to the strengthening of the interdependent network of commerce and the transmission of Buddhist doctrines noted above.

The advent of Muslim merchants from the Middle East in the eighth and ninth centuries further invigorated the maritime contacts between India and China. These merchants competed with their non-Muslim Southeast Asian and Indian counterparts in procuring and supplying goods to various coastal kingdoms in the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea. More important, they reinforced the maritime trading networks that linked the ports in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean to the towns in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea. As a result, the Indian peninsula, which due to the movement of monsoon winds was the natural divide between the eastern and western parts of the Indian Ocean, fortified its position as the key transit point in the east–west trade.

Because of the increasing demand for Chinese goods (especially porcelain) in the Middle East and the liberalized economic policies of the Tang court, coastal China, especially Guangzhou, developed into a thriving hub for seafaring merchants. In order to oversee the growing numbers of foreign merchants and the blossoming maritime trade, in 714 the Tang court appointed a special official known as the *shiboshi* 市舶使 (commissioner for trading with foreign ships). Initially, the commissioner was in charge of simply procuring foreign commodities on behalf of the Tang court. Starting in the latter half of the eighth century, however, when the court was forced to raise funds from internal and external commerce due to declining financial resources in the aftermath of the An Lushan 安祿山 rebellion of 755, but especially under the Song dynasty, the officer took on other duties, including the collection of taxes on foreign trade, registration of the names of foreign traders, and enforcing the laws on the export of contraband products.¹⁹

Indeed, the eighth century was a watershed in regard to China's participation in Indian Ocean commerce. The period not only marked the beginning of Chinese administration of maritime trade, it also witnessed a surge in the presence of foreign merchant communities in coastal China. By some accounts, the foreign population in Guangzhou in the eighth century may have been between 100,000 and 200,000.²⁰ Arabian, Persian, Indian, and Southeast Asian merchants settled in a designated area for foreigners

in Guangzhou (*fanfang* 蕃方) and pursued various religious traditions, including Buddhism, Brahmanism, Islam, and Manichaeism.²¹ The impact on coastal China due to the surging maritime trade and the court's interest in administrating and promoting it was tremendous. Manufacturing industries, marketing structures, and monetary investment all developed rapidly in Guangzhou. These developments were replicated in new ports such as Fuzhou 福州 and Quanzhou 泉州 (both in present-day Fujian province).²² Some scholars have even proposed that the eighth century was the beginning of an urban and commercial revolution in China, leading to a transition of Chinese history from the premodern to the modern era.²³

While maritime commerce deserves credit for the development of coastal China, it is equally important to note that the Chinese courts during the subsequent periods became increasingly dependent on maritime trade to meet their financial needs. This is particularly true of the Song court, which suffered successive defeats in wars with its semi-nomadic northern neighbors, the Khitans, Tanguts, and the Jurchens. The peace treaties signed by the Song government with the northern victors required the payment of a large amount of silver, silk, and tea as annual tribute.²⁴ In order to raise sufficient funds to meet the requirements of the peace treaties, the Song court turned to maritime commerce. The government enacted new laws to oversee commercial activities, established customs offices to enforce these laws, and facilitated trade by supplying cash and developing a credit system for itinerant merchants. The duty collected through the Bureau of Maritime Commerce reached about 540,173 strings of cash. In addition, by re-exporting commodities obtained from the maritime trade to the northern kingdoms, the Song court was able to establish huge trade surpluses which offset the burden of tribute it paid under the peace treaties.²⁵

The Song court's dependence on maritime trade for fiscal needs was amplified in the twelfth century, when the invasion of the northern territories by the Jurchens forced the court to withdraw to southern China. During the Southern Song period (1127–79), the collection of duty through the Bureau of Maritime Commerce reached about 2,000,000 strings.²⁶ Furthermore, the Chinese court and merchants undertook a more active role in maritime trade and the construction of ocean-going ships. Before the Southern Song period very few, if any, Chinese merchants and ships had ventured beyond the South China Sea. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as the following sections will demonstrate, witnessed a rapid development of the Chinese shipping industry and the proliferation of Chinese trading diasporas across the Indian Ocean.

III. CHINA'S ENTRY INTO INDIAN OCEAN SHIPPING

The Chinese had a long history of constructing rafts and boats,²⁷ but the vessels they built were not seaworthy and were mostly used on inland rivers and canals. Consequently, through to the end of the first millennium CE, ships of Persian/Arab, and South and Southeast Asian origin dominated the maritime lanes between China and the ports in the Indian Ocean. Chinese sources abound with notices of such foreign ships transporting people and goods between overseas ports and coastal China.

The third-century Chinese writer Wan Zhen 萬震 reports the existence of ships called *bo*, the largest of which were 150 feet long and could carry six to seven hundred people and about 260 tons of cargo.²⁸ The Chinese sources also refer to “Kunlun” 崑崙 ships, which, according to an eighth-century Buddhist work, in addition to their cargo could transport 1,000 people. The work includes an account of how these Kunlun ships were constructed:

With the fibrous bark of coconut [tree] (*yezi* 椰子), they make cords which bind the parts of the ship together. And they caulk them with a paste made of *gelan* 葛覽 (olive?), stopping up the openings and preventing the water from coming in. Nails and clamps are not used, for fear that the heating of the iron would give rise to fires.

[The ships] are constructed by assembling [several] thickness of side-planks, for the boards are thin and they fear that they would break. [The ships] are several tricents long, and divided fore and aft into three sections. Sails are hoisted to make use of the wind, and [indeed, these ships] cannot be propelled by the strength of men [alone].²⁹

Modern scholars, including Pierre-Yves Manguin, have pointed out that the ships noted above were of Southeast Asian origin, the so-called “stitched-plank” vessels.³⁰

A slightly different type of ship also frequented the Chinese coast in the first millennium. These were somewhat smaller vessels of Indian or Arab origin. The hulls of these ships were made of teak timber planks, which were sewn together with coconut coir or vegetable fiber. Resin or fish oil was applied to prevent leakage. These ships were less sturdy and more prone to the ravages of weather than their Southeast Asian counterparts. Even with such shortcomings, these vessels seem to have been frequently used by mariners to travel between southern Asia and the Chinese coast. Faxian 法顯 (337?–422?), the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who returned from India by the maritime route

in the middle of the fifth century on this type of ship, provides an intriguing account of the precarious nature of shipping and navigation on the Indian Ocean. Sometime in 411, Faxian boarded a mercantile ship in Sri Lanka that was on its way to Southeast Asia. The “large ship” (*dabo* 大舶), according to Faxian, accommodated more than 200 people and towed a small rescue boat. On the third day of the voyage, the sailors encountered tumultuous seas, caused by a typhoon, and the vessel started leaking. This forced the merchants to unload their precious cargo and make an unscheduled stop to repair the leaks. According to Faxian, it took the ship ninety days to reach Java.³¹

Faxian’s journey from Java to China was no less trouble-free. After five months in Java, the Chinese pilgrim seems to have boarded a ship similar to the one he took from Sri Lanka. This ship, which was sailing toward the Chinese coastal town of Guangzhou, had 200 people on board and carried provisions for fifty days. Just like the preceding phase of his journey, Faxian’s vessel encountered strong winds and drifted away from its intended course. After about three months of drifting, the ship, to the surprise of the bewildered sailors, reached the shores of northeast China, hundreds of miles away from its planned destination. Recapitulating the perils of sea travel, Faxian writes,

On the seas (hereabouts) there are many pirates, to meet with whom is speedy death. The great ocean spreads out, a boundless expanse. There is no knowing east or west; only by observing the sun, moon, and stars was it possible to go forward. If the weather were dark and rainy, (the ship) went as she was carried by the wind, without any definite course. In the darkness of the night, only the great waves were to be seen, breaking on one another, and emitting a brightness like that of fire, with huge turtles and other monsters of the deep (all about). There merchants were full of terror, not knowing where they were going. The sea was deep and bottomless, and there was no place where they could drop anchor and stop. But when the sky became clear, they could tell east and west, and (the ship) again went forward in the right direction. If she had come on any hidden rock, there would have been no way of escape.³²

The dangers of sea travel between southern Asia and China continued into the latter half of the first millennium. In early eighth century, the South Indian monk Vajrabodhi boarded one of the thirty-five “Persian ships” (*Posi bo* 波斯船) that sailed from Sri Lanka toward China. By the time Vajrabodhi reached China, only one ship, the one on which the monk was traveling, had survived the treacherous journey.³³

Archaeologists have recently excavated one of these Persian/Arab-Indian

vessels in Southeast Asia.³⁴ The wreckage of the ship, which has been dated to the ninth century, was discovered by fishermen near the Indonesian island of Belitung. The hull of the ship seems to have been approximately 20–22 meters long and about 5.1 meters wide in the center. Archaeological reports indicate that the hull planks had been “sawn and were stitched edge-to-edge with rope passing right through the planks.”³⁵ Based on the timber-construction technique, the hull form, the lack of dowels for edge-joining, and the remains of the iron and wooden grapnel-type anchor, it has been suggested that the vessel was “an Indian ship supplying the Middle East, or an Indian-built ship owned by Arabs.”³⁶ The excavation has also revealed that the cargo carried by the ship consisted mostly of ceramics and other objects of Chinese origin,³⁷ indicating not only that the ship was sailing from China to ports in India or the Persian Gulf, but also demonstrating the pattern of direct maritime trade between southern Asia and China during the ninth century.

There is no archaeological or conclusive textual evidence for the presence of Chinese vessels in the Indian Ocean before the tenth century. The principal reason for the absence of Chinese ocean-going vessels in the Indian Ocean during the first millennium may have been the relative lack of interest in maritime trade among the Chinese rulers and court officials. As outlined above, until the eighth century the Chinese court seems to have been content with the foreign luxuries available in the coastal regions. It was only during the Song dynasty that unprecedented attention was given to the administration of maritime trade and policies were implemented to raise revenue from international commerce.

The Song court also expended considerable resources to develop a naval fleet. Lo Jung-pang has detailed the development of the Chinese shipbuilding industry and its connections to economic circumstances and military needs during the Song period.³⁸ Lo points out that the shift of the Song capital from Kaifeng to the coastal town of Hangzhou after the Jurchen invasion, the need to protect and patrol the waterways, and the “superiority of enemy cavalry” necessitated the establishment of a “strong and mobile” naval force.³⁹ But, because of the mounting economic deficit, according to Lo, the Southern Song court could only accomplish this by collaborating with seafaring merchants. The Song court did this by providing economic incentives to traders and military protection to seagoing ships against pirates. It also occasionally bought and loaned mercantile ships from private ship owners and converted them for military use. “The navy grew,” writes Lo, “*pari passu*, as commerce thrived and it was the opportune ascendancy of both the navy and seaborne commerce that set China on the course of maritime expansion

in the twelfth century.”⁴⁰

The Song court’s decision to establish shipyards at various coastal towns, including in present-day Hangzhou, Guangzhou, and Mingzhou, provided further impetus to the development of the Chinese shipbuilding industry. Although these shipyards mostly produced vessels for the Song navy, they were instrumental in advancing the seaworthiness and the carrying capacity of Chinese ships by improving the designs of hulls, rudders, and propulsion mechanisms. Initially, the Chinese seem to have constructed their ocean-worthy ships on Southeast Asian models. As Manguin explains, these so-called “hybrid” ships of the “South China Sea tradition” combined the shipbuilding traditions of the Chinese and Southeast Asia:

[T]heir planks are always fastened by iron nails to the frames, but they may also be dowelled together by wooden pegs; some have a single, axial rudder while others have quarter rudders; their holds are separated by bulkheads, but these are not structurally essential and kept watertight as in the Chinese tradition (all have waterways with limber holes hollowed out of the bulkheads); all their hulls are V-shaped and have a keel that plays an essential structural role, a striking difference with the traditional flat-bottomed, keel-less (Northern) Chinese build.⁴¹

According to Manguin, the emergence of these hybrid ships may have resulted from the Chinese familiarity with Southeast Asian vessels used by foreign traders frequenting coastal China, the expertise of building seaworthy ships that may have been passed on to the Chinese by the Southeast Asian settlers, and the know-how acquired by Chinese traders frequenting Southeast Asian ports.⁴²

Already in the early twelfth century, large Chinese ships of more than thirty meters in length, with nailed hulls, multiple masts, a carrying capacity of over one hundred tons along with a crew of at least sixty people, were sailing across the seas surrounding China.⁴³ Written sources fail to make clear whether any of these Chinese ships, navigated by the Chinese, played a major role in the transportation of commodities to the Indian coast before the thirteenth century. The early-twelfth-century work *Pingzhou ketan* 萍洲可談 (Talks from Pingzhou) suggests that foreign ships, including those from Śrīvijaya, dominated the shipping lanes between China and the kingdoms along the Indian Ocean.⁴⁴ Zhou Qufei 周去非 (c. 1135–c. 1189), the author of another Chinese work on maritime exchanges known as the *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答, seems to have been unaware of Chinese trading ships venturing to the Indian coast. Zhao Rugua 趙汝适, who held the position of

Superintendent of Maritime Trade and wrote the famous work called *Zhufan zhi* 諸藩志 (Description of the barbarous people) in c. 1225, does not make explicit reference to China's entry into Indian Ocean shipping either.⁴⁵

A vessel excavated from Quanzhou Bay, which seems to have sunk some time after 1271, provides the first concrete evidence for China's entry into the shipping sector of Indian Ocean commerce.⁴⁶ The thirteen compartments of the sunken ship contained a cargo mainly of import items, including spices (such as black pepper, frankincense, and ambergris), sandalwood, tortoiseshells, glassware, and textiles. While some of these products seem to have been exported from the ports of Southeast Asia, others (ambergris, for example) originated as far west as the eastern coast of Africa.

Indication that Chinese sailors may have navigated some ships of this kind comes from the record of a Mongol diplomatic mission to southern India in 1281. The *Yuanshi* 元史 reports that the Mongol mission led by Yang Tingbi 楊庭璧, which sailed on a ship from Quanzhou, encountered unfavorable wind patterns around Sri Lanka (perhaps in the Gulf of Mannar) and was recommended by the "sailor" (*zhouren* 舟人) Zheng Zhen 鄭震 and others to make an emergency landing at the Ma'bar kingdom.⁴⁷ The fact that Zheng Zhen, clearly of Chinese origin, is mentioned as a "sailor" and not a "merchant" (*shangren* 商人) seems to suggest that he was not merely a passenger, but held a position of command on the vessel.

A decade later, Marco Polo provides the first eyewitness account of Chinese vessels sailing between coastal China and southern Indian ports. Marco Polo, who embarked at Quanzhou in 1292 for his journey across the Indian Ocean, describes in detail the ships engaged in transporting goods between Quanzhou and India. These ships, built with fir and pine wood, with nailed hulls, and having multiple masts and cabins, were capable of carrying a load of as much as 1,860 tons.⁴⁸ Almost half a century later, the Moroccan traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reports seeing thirteen Chinese ships anchored in the harbor at Calicut and remarked, "On the sea of China travelling is done in Chinese ships only."⁴⁹ Evidently, by the first half of the fourteenth century Chinese vessels were no longer a rarity along the shipping lanes between India and China.

In fact, the discovery of a boat in the Thikkal-Kadakkappally region of Kerala, tentatively dated to between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century, seems to indicate that the shipbuilding skills of the Chinese may have reached the Indian coast.⁵⁰ Similar to the contemporary Chinese ships, the Thikkal-Kadakkappally boat is flat-bottomed, lacks a keel, and reveals the use of iron fastenings.⁵¹ While some scholars have identified it as a Chinese ship,⁵²

recent analysis of the timber indicates that the vessel was built locally.⁵³ Perhaps the Chinese (or Southeast Asian) sailors frequenting the Indian coast introduced the design to the local ship builders. Since the Thikkal-Kadakkappally boat is the only indigenous vessel of its kind excavated on the Indian coast and because written sources fail to specify the use of similar ships by Indian sailors, the impact of Chinese shipbuilding technology on the local region cannot be fully ascertained.

IV. MARITIME CHINA AND THE INDIAN COAST

The prospect of profit and the capability to make trans-oceanic voyages led to the proliferation of Chinese traders in the major ports of the Indian Ocean. In the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Chinese seafaring merchants from the Fujian province were frequenting markets in Japan and Korea. However, as Billy K. L. So and others have argued, the travels of Chinese merchants at this time were strictly regulated by the state, requiring that they register and obtain permits from the Bureau of Maritime Trade before departing Chinese ports. During the second half of the eleventh century, the Song court liberalized many of its restrictions on Chinese merchants venturing abroad. As a result, Chinese traders became active participants in Indian Ocean commerce and, unlike in the preceding periods, their trips to Southeast and Southern Asia in the twelfth century were recurring and organized.⁵⁴

In fact, by the thirteenth century, Chinese seafaring traders, with support from local officials at port towns and the Song court, had established a mechanism to fund, support, and widen maritime commerce. Chinese ports, such as Guangzhou and Quanzhou, developed shipyards to build and repair ships, set up facilities to load and unload commodities from the sea-going vessels, and instituted management procedures to recruit and pay labor and crew. Chinese merchants thus joined Middle Eastern, Indian, and Southeast Asian seafarers as one of the major ethnic groups engaged in marketing and transporting commodities across the Indian Ocean.

These seafaring Chinese traders also began establishing diasporic communities at foreign ports. Zhu Yu 朱彧, in his *Pingzhou ketan*, suggests that Chinese traders, whom he calls *zhufan* 住番 (lit. “living abroad”), may have been residing at Southeast Asian ports during the Song period.⁵⁵ Other traders were voyaging to the Persian Gulf through India. According to Zhou Qufei, “Chinese seafaring traders planning to go to Dashi (i.e., the Persian Gulf) changed to smaller boats in Kollam.”⁵⁶ Indeed, the Southeast Asian and

the Indian coasts were the two most important transit points for Chinese traders engaged in Indian Ocean commerce. The two regions provided the seafaring merchants opportunity to repair their ships (as in case of Śrīvijaya) or transfer to a new one (as in the case of Kollam), and procure local and foreign goods.

Consequently, it seems, some Chinese traders settled at these ports expressly to trade in local goods or engage in transshipment trade. Li Tao 李濤 (1115–84), in the *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 (Continuation of the comprehensive mirror for the aid in government), has the following notice about Chinese settlers in Jiaozhi:

People from Fujian and Guangnan have pursued commerce in Jiaozhi, and we have heard that some have stayed there to do business. Henceforth, we will permit the families of those merchants who have stayed with them to express their concern [to the Zhaotaosi 招討司], and we direct the Commission to advise them that if they are able to return themselves [to the empire] the Commission will render them assistance.⁵⁷

Eyewitness accounts of Chinese settlements at foreign ports come from the works of Zhou Daguan 周達觀 and Wang Dayuan 汪大淵 (c. 1311–?). Zhou, sent to Cambodia as an envoy of the Yuan court in 1296, reports the presence of Chinese residents, some of whom married local women. The existence of Chinese settlements in Cambodia is corroborated by Wang Dayuan, who accompanied Chinese seafaring traders across the Indian Ocean in the 1330s and returned to write a travelogue called *Daoyi zhilüe* 島夷誌略 (Brief records of the island barbarians). Wang's record also indicates that by the early fourteenth century the Indian coast had become a key destination for Chinese merchants.

Not only were the Chinese involved in mercantile activity across the Indian Ocean, they also frequently participated in maritime diplomacy; launched several naval raids beyond their southern shores; and engaged in trans-oceanic “civilizing” policies by bestowing titles on foreign rulers, exacting tributes, and meddling in the internal affairs of kingdoms in South and Southeast Asia. This transformation of China into a maritime power and the fact that the Indian coast had emerged as its new frontier can be discerned from the activities of the Chinese maritime voyagers to the Coromandel, Malabar, and Bengal regions between the thirteenth and the mid-fifteenth centuries.

1. The Coromandel coast

Maritime links between the ports in the Coromandel region of southern India and the Chinese coast may have existed as early as the first century CE, when, as noted above, Roman and Chinese goods were frequently transported across the Indian Ocean. The Chola rule over the Coromandel coast from the ninth to the thirteenth century strengthened the trading links between ports such as Nāgapattinam and the coastal towns of Guangzhou and Quanzhou in southern China. Nāgapattinam, for example, is mentioned as the port of departure for the diplomatic mission from the Cholas to the Song court in 1015.⁵⁸ Chinese traders made frequent visits to this port, and, based on Wang Dayuan's account, possibly established a temporary guild there in the thirteenth century.

Wang Dayuan, who visited Nāgapattinam some time in the 1330s, reports seeing a pagoda, constructed or financed by Chinese traders. "In the plains of Badan 八丹 (i.e., Nāgapattinam)," Wang writes, "surrounded by trees and rocks, is a pagoda constructed with mud bricks. [It is] several meters high. Chinese characters written [on it] say: 'Construction completed in the eighth lunar month of the third year of Xianchun 咸淳 [reign era] (1267). It is said, people from China visited the place that year and wrote [the characters] on the stone and engraved them. Up to the present time, they have not faded.'⁵⁹

Later European travelers to Nāgapattinam also noted the existence of a similar pagoda and underscored its connection to Chinese traders.⁶⁰ In 1615, a Portuguese Jesuit named Manuel Barradas reported that the structure was "believed by these people [of Nāgapattinam] to have been made by . . . [the Chinese] when they were lords of the commerce of India: it is of brick, and despite been [*sic*] neither inhabited nor repaired for many centuries still is in its majesty, and in perfect condition."⁶¹ In the eighteenth century, François Valentijn, an employee of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), refers to the monument as "Pagood China."⁶²

In 1846, a British officer named Walter Elliot wrote a detailed description and drew a sketch of the pagoda. Noting that the structure was about 30 meters in height, he writes that it was a "four-sided tower of three stories, constructed of bricks closely fitted together without cement, the first and second stories divided into corniced mouldings, with an opening for a door or window in the middle of each side."⁶³ Buddhist objects discovered nearby in the latter half of the nineteenth century seem to indicate that the

structure was associated with Buddhism. As to the architectural features of the monument, John Guy writes that it “does not conform with any known Indian architectural type. Rather, this style of tower has its most immediate prototype in the Buddhist pagodas of Chinese architecture of the Song and Yuan periods.”⁶⁴

Wang Dayuan, however, fails to mention meeting Chinese merchants at Nāgapattinam. Marco Polo, who visited the Coromandel coast in the early 1290s, also did not report seeing Chinese traders in the area. It seems that the Chinese traders may have vacated the port sometime between 1267, the date in the inscription mentioned by Wang Dayuan, and the 1290s, when Marco Polo reached the Coromandel coast. The Song court's battles with the invading Mongols in the 1270s, especially in the coastal regions, could have played some role in the withdrawal of Chinese merchants from Nāgapattinam, or prevented them from departing the Chinese ports. A Chinese desertion of Nāgapattinam due to military skirmishes in coastal China and their absence through to the time Wang Dayuan reached the Coromandel coast seems to imply that the merchants who built the above-mentioned pagoda did not establish permanent settlements at the Indian port. Rather, they may have been sojourners, who regularly sailed between the coastal regions of China and India. Most probably, these Chinese traders lived in Nāgapattinam until the arrival of the southwest monsoonal winds, when they embarked on the return trip to China or Southeast Asia.⁶⁵

After 1277, when the Mongols took control of the major ports in coastal China, the new government and local officials tried to revive maritime trade. Between 1280 and 1296, for example, multiple missions were sent by the Yuan court to southern India to promote trading relations. In fact, the last quarter of the thirteenth century marks the beginning of an aggressive maritime policy undertaken by the Mongol court that was executed through the display of military might and a flurry of diplomatic missions.

Unlike the preceding Song dynasty, which also promoted maritime trade but mostly by inviting foreign traders and tribute carriers and offering them various incentives, the Yuan emissaries traveled beyond the shores of China expressly to exact tributary missions from kingdoms in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. Foreign rulers who failed to submit to the Yuan court were often threatened with military repercussions. In 1281, for example, after repeated demands by the Yuan court that the king of Champa (present-day southern Vietnam) personally lead one of the tributary missions to China, Khubilai sent an armada of one hundred naval ships under the command of general Sogatu 唆都 against the Southeast Asian kingdoms.⁶⁶ Then in 1293,

the Mongols launched a naval attack on the island polity of Java.⁶⁷ Before this, in 1274 and 1281, Khubilai had tried to invade Japan.⁶⁸ Clearly, during the Yuan period, the seas did not pose an obstacle for the expansionist policies of imperial regimes located in China.

The fact that the maritime interest and influence of the Yuan court extended to the Indian coast is reflected in the diplomatic missions of Yang Tingbi to southern India between 1280 and 1283. Yang's main destination was Kollam on the Malabar coast, which had emerged as the major transit point for merchants traveling between the Chinese ports and the Persian Gulf. Yang was dispatched to Kollam four times, but failed to reach the south Indian kingdom on one occasion, when his entourage was forced to disembark on the Coromandel coast (see below). Yang Tingbi's visits were very successful. Not only did he secure "submissions" and promises of tributary missions from the Kollam ruler, but a number of other South and Southeast Asian polities and merchant communities agreed to recognize the Mongol regime in China.⁶⁹

Additionally, Yang's missions seem to have enticed seafaring merchants to return to coastal China. A bilingual inscription found in Quanzhou, for example, indicates that traders from southern India had returned to coastal China shortly after Yang Tingbi's first mission. Written in Tamil and Chinese, the inscription bears the date April 1281 and notes the installation of an idol of Siva in a Brahmanical temple at the Chinese port for the "welfare" of the Yuan ruler.⁷⁰ The diaries of Marco Polo, Wang Dayuan, and Ibn Battūta also demonstrate that commercial relations between India and China expanded rapidly over the next few decades.⁷¹

It seems that Yang Tingbi and the Yuan court were also involved in defusing a political struggle within the kingdom of Ma'bar, which had replaced the Cholas on the Coromandel coast in the late thirteenth century. In 1281, when Yang Tingbi disembarked at the port city of Kayal on the Coromandel coast because of unfavorable winds, he was secretly informed of political discord within the Ma'bar kingdom. The *Yuanshi* gives the following account of the episode:

In the fifth lunar month (May–June, 1281), two persons hastily came to the lodge [where Yang Tingbi was staying].⁷² In private, on behalf of their leader, they communicated the real reason [for not revealing the land route to Kollam]: "I implore your superior court to bless me. I will serve the emperor with all my heart. My envoy Zhamaliding 札馬里丁 (Jamāl ud-Dīn?) has [already] visited the [Yuan] court. My clerk has also gone to [meet] the sultan [of Kayal?]. [However,

I have been] accused of insubordination. The sultan has confiscated my gold and silver, [impounded my] land and [other] property, and [arrested] my wife and slaves. Moreover, [he] wants to have me killed. I have been able to escape [execution] by making excuses. At present, the sultans [of Ma'bar], five brothers in all, have assembled in the Jiayi 加一 (Old Kayal) region and are planning to clash with Kollam. When [they] heard that Celestial (i.e., Chinese) envoys had come (to Ma'bar), the people were told to portray their kingdom [i.e., Ma'bar] as poor and lowly. These are all lies. All the gold, pearls and precious objects of the Muslim kingdoms are produced in this country. Moreover, Muslim [merchants] all come here to trade. It is known that various kingdoms [in this region] are willing to submit [to the Yuan court].⁷³ If [the present ruler of] Ma'bar surrenders, my envoys, carrying letters [from me], will go and summon these kingdoms. They can all be persuaded to submit [to the Yuan court]."⁷⁴

The person who secretly conversed with the Chinese envoy probably wanted the Yuan court to protect him from one (or more) of the co-rulers of Ma'bar in exchange for the acknowledgement of submission from, and possibly trading rights in, kingdoms located in southern India. This person has been identified as a local Muslim official named Sayyid, who was "at odds" with the rulers of Ma'bar. The Yuan court granted asylum to Sayyid and sent envoys to bring him to the Mongol court. Sayyid arrived in China in 1291 and was bestowed a Korean wife by Khubilai Khan. After his death in 1299, Sayyid was buried in Quanzhou.⁷⁵

Why the Yuan court agreed to grant asylum to the Ma'bari native and what it intended to gain from the defection of Sayyid is difficult to ascertain from the available sources. Perhaps the Yuan court believed that Sayyid would be able to provide strategic information, both political and economic, regarding coastal India. The Yuan court, it seems, was not concerned about the ramifications of its decision since the focus of Chinese mercantile interest had shifted from the Coromandel coast to Kollam on the Malabar coast. In fact, embassies continued to be exchanged between the two regions, with envoys from Ma'bar arriving at the Mongol capital in 1294, 1296, 1297, and 1314. This episode, in addition to the Yuan court's naval activities in East and Southeast Asia and the spread of Chinese diasporic communities, makes it evident that in the last quarter of the thirteenth century China had become a major maritime power in the Indian Ocean.

2. The Malabar coast

As can be discerned from Chinese records from the Yuan and Ming periods,

by the late thirteenth century the Malabar coast of India had emerged as the main destination for Chinese traders and diplomats traveling to southern Asia. Kollam, the southernmost port on the Malabar coast, was not only a transit point for Chinese traders venturing to the Persian Gulf, it was also a location where merchants from other Indian Ocean emporia congregated. Thus, in 1282, when Yang was on his third mission to southern India, the Chinese ambassador had an audience with the king of Kollam and made it a point to meet representatives of the local Syrian Christian and Muslim communities as well.

Marco Polo also underscores Kollam's status as a leading emporium in Indian Ocean commerce during the last quarter of the thirteenth century. He reports that at the port there were "many Christians and Nestorians and Saracens and many Jews." Additionally, according to Marco Polo, Kollam was a major producer and exporter of pepper and indigo, and an important transshipment center. "And again," he writes, "I make you know that the merchants come to this kingdom with their ships in numbers bringing many goods from Mangi and from Arabie and from the Levant and make there very great gain of this merchandise which they bring in from their country and which they carry away afterwards with their ships to their own country, of the merchandise of this kingdom."⁷⁶

In the 1340s, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who was traveling to China as a representative of the Delhi Sultanate, mentions that Kollam was "the nearest of the Mulaibār towns to China and it is to it that most of the merchants [from China] come."⁷⁷ He also records seeing local Chinese merchants assisting a group of Chinese diplomats who were shipwrecked near Kollam.⁷⁸

After the middle of the fourteenth century, the rapid ascent of Calicut and Cochin relegated Kollam's position on the Malabar coast. The emergence of Calicut has been noted in various contemporary sources. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa calls Calicut "one of the chief ports" in Malabar. "It is," he points out, "visited by men from China, Jāwa, Ceylon, the Maldives, al-Yaman and Fārs, and in it gather merchants from all quarters. Its harbour is one of the largest in the world." Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, as noted above, also mentions seeing Chinese ships in Calicut. The Chinese ships, which according to him were built in either Quanzhou or Guangzhou, passed the rainy seasons at Calicut.⁷⁹ Chinese sources confirm the growing importance of Calicut in Indian Ocean commerce. Wang Dayuan writes that Calicut was the "most important of all maritime centers of trade. It is close to Sengjiala 僧加刺 [Siṃhala, i.e., Sri Lanka] and is the principal port of the Western Ocean."⁸⁰

The brisk diplomatic exchanges between the Chinese court and Calicut

during the subsequent Ming period,⁸¹ Chinese sailors' charts, and accounts of admiral Zheng He's voyages indicate that Calicut continued to be a strategic location on China's maritime frontier through to the mid-fifteenth century. Diplomatic relations between the Ming court and Calicut were established soon after the Yuan government was overthrown, and peaked during the Yongle 永樂 period (1403–24) when admiral Zheng He made multiple visits to the Indian port. In fact, Calicut may have been the principal destination for Zheng He and his entourage during their maiden trip in 1405.

The Ming court under the founding ruler Taizu 太祖 (i.e., the Hongwu 洪武 emperor, r. 1368–99) revived and emphasized the Confucian rhetoric of the Sinocentric world order in its relations with foreign polities.⁸² The Hongwu emperor did not resume the militarist policies of the Yuan court toward some of the Indian Ocean kingdoms; "he sought, instead," as Wang Gungwu explains, "to obtain their symbolic acknowledgement of China's cosmological centrality and their acknowledgement that his succession to power was legitimate."⁸³ The emperor also developed, for the first time in Chinese history, a strategy to deal with maritime polities. In 1373, the Hongwu emperor wrote,

The overseas foreign countries like Annan [Vietnam], Champa, Korea, Siam, Liuqiu [the Ryūkyū islands], the [countries of the] Western Oceans [South India] and Eastern Oceans [Japan] and the various small countries of the southern *man* [barbarians] are separated from us by mountains and seas and far away in a corner. Their lands would not produce enough for us to maintain them; their peoples would not usefully serve us if incorporated [into the empire]. If they were so unrealistic as to disturb our borders, it would be unfortunate for them. If they gave us no trouble and we moved troops to fight them unnecessarily, it would be unfortunate for us. I am concerned that future generations might abuse China's wealth and power and covet the military glories of the moment to send armies into the field without reason and cause a loss of life. May they be sharply reminded that this is forbidden. As for the *hu* and *rong* barbarians who threaten China in the north and west, they are always a danger along our frontiers. Good generals must be picked and soldiers trained to prepare carefully against them.⁸⁴

Clearly, the Ming ruler was aware of his naval prowess and, as the *Da Ming hunyi tu* 大明混一圖 (The amalgamated map of the Great Ming [Dynasty]) indicates,⁸⁵ the reach of maritime China, but was concerned about military exploits beyond the Chinese shores by future rulers of the dynasty. Perhaps he believed that the use of military force against the Indian Ocean polities would be a diversion from the real threat posed by the Mongols and other

Inner Asian tribes.⁸⁶ Consequently, the Hongwu emperor tried to incorporate the polities within the reach of the Ming navy into the symbolic Confucian world order. He ordered that the mountains and rivers of some foreign kingdoms “receive the rites of sacrifice together with those of China.” The list of these kingdoms, which numbered twelve in 1375, ranged from Korea and Japan in East Asia, to Śrīvijaya and Java in the Southeast, and the “Cholas” in Southern Asia.⁸⁷ The purpose, it seems, was to underscore the notion of “showing nothing was left out [of the Sinicized world]” (*shiwuwai* 示無外) and demonstrate the symbolic Chinese suzerainty over the foreign polities.⁸⁸ The concept was not new to the Chinese, but the Hongwu emperor made a conscious decision to emphasize the rhetoric rather than pursue full-fledged conquest of the maritime world with his powerful naval force.

Hongwu’s son, Emperor Chengzu 成祖 (i.e., the Yongle emperor, r. 1403–24), who usurped his uncle Emperor Huidi 惠帝 (r. 1399–1402), seems to have adhered to his father’s advice against the colonization of Indian Ocean polities. Nonetheless, he did not shy away from displaying the naval prowess of the Ming empire. He aggressively promoted the Confucian rhetoric of the Chinese world order and allowed his representatives to interfere in the internal affairs of foreign polities. The aggressive maritime policies of the Yongle emperor are evident in Zheng He’s seven expeditions across the Indian Ocean and several other naval missions that branched out of these famous voyages.⁸⁹ One of the main goals of these naval missions, as Wang Gungwu has noted, was to communicate “a picture of Ming China’s superior place in the world.”⁹⁰ The end of the “world” when Zheng He sailed on his maiden voyage in 1405 was the Indian coast.

In fact, Calicut was the terminus of Zheng He’s first two expeditions.⁹¹ Solicitation of tributary missions, enfeoffment of titles to native rulers, and overseeing trading activities between Chinese and local merchants were some of the main tasks carried out by the members of these expeditions. Tributary missions from Calicut often accompanied Zheng He and his entourage to the Chinese court, where they presented tribute of local products to the Chinese emperor. The Chinese ruler, in turn, customarily invited the envoys from Calicut, along with other foreign representatives, to lavish banquets and conferred titles and return gifts. On one occasion, in October 1405, the ruler of Calicut, a person named Shamidi 沙米的 (or Shamidixi 沙米的喜), reportedly traveled to China and had an audience with the Yongle emperor.⁹² Although it is doubtful that the Indian ruler actually made this trip to China, such records of tributary missions led by rulers of foreign kingdoms, especially when a new emperor ascended to (or usurped) the

throne, were employed to legitimize the transition of power. Together with the normal tributary missions, these accounts served the general purpose of demonstrating China's symbolic suzerainty over foreign kingdoms.

The enfeoffment of the title of "king" to foreign rulers had a similar function. The Yongle emperor, we are told, enfeoffed Shamidi as the "king" of his kingdom when the latter visited China. In 1407, according to Ma Huan 馬歡 (died c. 1460), the Ming court "ordered the principal envoy the grand eunuch Cheng Ho [Zheng He] and others to deliver an imperial mandate to the king of this country and to bestow on him a patent conferring a title of honour, and grant of a silver seal, [also] to promote all the chiefs and award them hats and girdles of various grades."⁹³ On the one hand, this act of bestowing title to the king of Calicut through special envoys represented the ambition to portray the Chinese emperor as the sovereign leader of the known world. On the other hand, however, the Chinese court may have learned about the influence of Muslim traders (of Arab origin) in Calicut, and thus sought to create their own clout within the Indian kingdom.

Ma Huan reports that the majority of the Hindu king's (the Zamorin, i.e., "Ocean King") subjects in Calicut were Muslims. They also held the top two positions at the port and administered "the affairs of the country." According to Ma Huan, the Muslims and the Hindu king also came to an understanding regarding their eating habits: "The king of the country and the people of the country all refrain from eating the flesh of the ox. The great chiefs are Muslim people; [and] they all refrain from eating the flesh of the pig. Formerly there was a king who made a sworn compact with the Muslim people, [saying] 'You do not eat the ox; I do not eat the pig; we will reciprocally respect the taboo'; [and this compact] has been honoured right down to the present day."⁹⁴

Muslims, especially those invested in foreign trade, also funded the expansionist policies of the Zamorin in the region. Some of these merchants had been lobbying the Zamorin to invade Cochin, which was quickly becoming the main rival port on the Malabar coast. Sometime in the late fifteenth century, the Zamorin did in fact occupy Cochin and install his representative as the king of the port-city.⁹⁵ The Chinese trading community and the Ming court, both of which were aware of the influence Muslim traders exerted in Calicut, probably also knew and were concerned about this rivalry between Calicut and Cochin. It was perhaps in order to prevent a military confrontation between Calicut and Cochin that the Ming court, in 1416, granted special status to Cochin and its ruler Keyili 可亦里.⁹⁶

As part of his fifth expedition, Zheng He was asked to confer a seal upon Keyili and enfeoff a mountain in his kingdom as the *zhenguo zhi shan*

振國之山 (mountain which protects the country). The Yongle emperor even composed a proclamation that was inscribed on a stone tablet carried to Cochin by Zheng He. The proclamation, preserved in the *Ming shilu* and translated by Geoff Wade, reads as follows:

The civilizing influences and Heaven and Earth intermingle. Everything which is covered and contained has been placed in the charge of the Moulder, who manifests the benevolence of the Creator. The world does not have two ultimate principles and people do not have two hearts. They are sorrowful or happy in the same way and have the same feelings and desires. How can they be divided into the near and the distant! One who is outstanding in ruling the people should do his best to treat the people as his children. The Book of Odes says: "The Imperial domain stretches for thousands of li, and there the people have settled, while the borders reach to the four seas." The Book of Documents says: "To the East, extending to the sea, to the West reaching to the shifting sands and stretching to the limits of North and South, culture and civilizing influences reach to the four seas." I rule all under Heaven and soothe and govern the Chinese and the yi. I look on all equally and do not differentiate between one and the other. I promote the ways of the ancient Sagely Emperors and Perspicacious Kings, so as to accord with the will of Heaven and Earth. I wish all of the distant lands and foreign regions to have their proper places. Those who respond to the influences and move towards culture are not singular. The country of Cochin is far away in the Southwest, on the shore of the vast ocean, further distant than the other *fan* countries. It has long inclined towards Chinese culture and been accepting of civilizing influences. When the Imperial orders arrived, the people there went down on their hands and knees and were greatly excited. They loyally came to allegiance and then, looking to Heaven, they bowed and all said: "How fortunate we are that the civilizing influences of the Chinese sages should reach us." For the last several years, the country has had fertile soil, and the people have had houses in which to live, enough fish and turtles to eat, and enough cloth and silk to make clothes. Parents have looked after their children and the young have respected their elders. Everything has been prosperous and pleasing. There has been no oppression or contention. In the mountains no savage beasts have appeared and in the streams no noxious fishes have been seen. The sea has brought forth treasures and the forests have produced excellent woods. Everything has been in bountiful supply, several times more bountiful than in ordinary times. There have been no destructive winds, and damaging rains have not occurred. Confusion has been eliminated and there is no evil to be found. This is all indeed the result of the civilizing influences of the Sage. I possess but slight virtuous power. How could I have been capable of this! Is it not the elders and people who brought this about? I am now enfeoffing Keyili as king of the country and conferring upon him a seal so that he can govern the people. I am also enfeoffing the mountain in the country as "Mountain Which Protects the Country." An engraved tablet is to be erected on this mountain to

record these facts forever. It will also be engraved as follows: The high peak which rules the land, guards this ocean state, It spits fire and fumes, bringing great prosperity to the country below, It brings rain and sunshine in a timely way, and soothes away troubles, It brings fertile soil and drives off evil vapours, It shelters the people, and eliminates calamities and disharmony, Families are joyful together, and people have plenty throughout the year, The mountain's height is as the ocean's depths! This poem is inscribed to record all for posterity.⁹⁷

The composition of a proclamation for a maritime polity by the Yongle emperor in addition to the enfeoffment of mountains in a foreign polity was a rare step. Only three other kingdoms, Malacca (in 1405), Japan (in 1406), and Brunei (in 1408), received this privilege. "All were intended," as Wang Gungwu explains, "to commemorate the enfeoffment of mountains, and the sealing of closer relations between his empire and the four countries concerned."⁹⁸ The kingdom of Malacca, which was founded in the beginning of the fifteenth century, received the inscription because it sought protection from the Chinese court. According to Wang, the Yongle emperor enfeoffed the mountain in Japan "in recognition of Japan's help in curbing Wako piracy on the Chinese coasts."⁹⁹ Brunei was given the honor because its ruler had come to the Ming court in person. Wang, however, is not sure why Cochin received this special attention. "As for Cochin," he writes, "we do not know why it desired a special relationship. Perhaps it was helpful to the Cochinese in trade and pleasing to Yong-lo personally; it certainly did neither country any harm. Cheng Ho may have favored the move in order to safeguard one good port on the way to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea."¹⁰⁰

If finding a "good port" were indeed one of the reasons for granting the special honor, then Calicut would have been a better choice. Not only did Calicut and the Ming court have intimate diplomatic relations, it was a more important port on the Malabar than Cochin. Rather, this exceptional status must have been granted because the Ming court decided to support, as it did in case of Malacca,¹⁰¹ an emerging port (i.e., Cochin) over Arab-dominated Calicut. Clearly the Zamorin took issue with the decision of the Ming court to espouse his local rival. Diplomatic missions from Calicut to China declined after 1416 and it ceased to be one of the main destinations of Zheng He's remaining two expeditions.¹⁰²

Additionally, the relationship between the Zamorin and the Chinese merchants either sojourning in or traveling to Calicut seems to have deteriorated. In the early sixteenth century, the Portuguese traveler Joseph of Cranganore provided the following report on Chinese merchants in Calicut:

These people of Cathay are men of remarkable energy, and formerly drove a first-rate trade at the city of Calicut. But the King of Calicut having treated them badly, they quitted that city, and returning shortly after inflicted no small slaughter on the people of Calicut, and after that returned no more. After that they began to frequent Mailapetam, a city subject to the king of Narsingha; a region towards the East, . . . and there they now drive their trade.¹⁰³

The skirmish between Chinese traders and the Zamorin to which Joseph refers is believed to have taken place in the mid-fifteenth century. Some have suggested that it was the Muslim traders who, “with the powerful aid of the Zamorin massacred the Chinese inhabiting the ports of Malabar.”¹⁰⁴ Others have speculated that this incident may have involved Zheng He, who was critically injured during the conflict and died in Calicut or on his way back to China in 1433.¹⁰⁵ Although the dates, causes, and extent of Zheng He’s involvement in this incident are speculative, it seems evident that Chinese traders had withdrawn, at least temporarily, from the Malabar coast.

3. Bengal

The withdrawal of Chinese merchants from Calicut did not terminate the mercantile relationship between China and other coastal areas of India. As Joseph of Cranganore suggests, some of the Chinese traders may have relocated to the Coromandel coast. There seem to be other Chinese traders who continued to operate from the ports in Bengal in eastern India. The *Yingzong shilu* speaks of a Chinese merchant called Song Yun 宋允, who, as the deputy envoy of the mission from Bengal, visited the Ming court sometime in mid-1439. Song Yun, we are told, sought funds to repair his damaged ship and requested protection from the Ming ruler. “As Yun was Chinese and had been able to bring a foreign country to China,” the *Yingzong shilu* records, “the Emperor approved both his requests.”¹⁰⁶ In a record for 27 May 1446, the *Yingzong shilu* provides additional detail about this Chinese trader representing Bengal:

The Ministry of Rites memorialized: “The Samudera person Aiyān 霽淹 has advised that his uncle Song Yun came to the capital to offer tribute to the Court in the first year of the Zhengtong reign (1436/37). However, he was murdered by the *fan* person Daxi 打昔 and others from the country of Java. Song Yun’s wife Meimeidawai 眉妹打歪 complained to officials and Daxi was punished in accordance with the law. At this time, Meimeidawai, her female attendants (女使人) and so on are still residing in Guangdong (Alt: Guangxi) and, as they have

no relatives, it is very difficult for them to clothe and feed themselves day by day. They are alone and have no one to depend on. It is requested that the three offices of Guangdong be instructed to have them sent back to their country.” This was approved.¹⁰⁷

Apparently, Song Yun was member of a Chinese diasporic network that extended from Java to Bengal. He seems to have married a non-Chinese woman, who had at some point settled in Guangdong. The report of his murder explains why Song Yun, perhaps because of rivalry among seafaring traders, sought protection from the Ming court in 1439.

The *Yingzong shilu* also includes an entry regarding another Chinese working on behalf of the kingdom of Bengal. The work reports that in the tenth lunar month of the third year of the Zhentong reign era (November 1438),

The Auxiliary Ministry of Rites memorialized: “The interpreter Chen Deqing 陳得清 and others from the country of Bengal has advised that they have long been travelling far away from their homes and that their bags are empty. They have thus requested that cotton clothing to protect them from the cold of winter be conferred upon them.” As the Emperor felt that people from afar should be very well-treated, he ordered the Auxiliary Ministry of Rites to not restrict themselves to the regulations, but to confer on these people cotton clothing and other items for keeping out the cold.¹⁰⁸

The presence of Chen Deqing, and perhaps other Chinese like him, in Bengal might explain how Bengali script and a list of more than two hundred Bengali words transcribed in Chinese found their way into the sixteenth-century work *Siyi guangji* 四夷廣記 (Extensive records of the four barbarian [regions]). Compiled by Shen Maoshang 慎懋賞, the *Siyi guangji* provides a detailed record of Bengal, much of it borrowed from various Ming sources, including *Yingyai shenglan* 瀛崖勝覽, *Xiyang chaogong dianlu* 西洋朝貢典錄, and *Shuyu zhoubi lu* 殊域周咨錄, followed by a discussion of Indian script (where Bengali script and their pronunciations are supplied) and a list of Bengali words in Chinese transcriptions. Chinese interpreters may have used this list, which includes words related to terrestrial objects, types of clothing, names for birds and animals, etc., as a lexicon.¹⁰⁹

These Chinese records of Bengal in the *Ming shilu* are important because they provide names of Chinese natives settled or sojourning in Bengal during the Ming period. Similar notices are lacking for the Chinese traders and interpreters arriving from southern India.¹¹⁰ Together with the Bengali-

Chinese lexicon, they reveal the importance of Bengal in the maritime world of the Chinese in the fifteenth century, even though Admiral Zheng He did not make special trips to the region during any of his seven voyages across the Indian Ocean.¹¹¹

The fact that Bengal was already an important destination for Chinese traders during the Yuan period can be discerned from Wang Dayuan's account of the Indian kingdom. Calling it Pengjiala 朋加剌, he writes:

The Five Ranges 五嶺 (i.e., Rajmahal Hills) have rocky summits and are covered by a dense forest. The people [of the kingdom] reside around these [hills]. [The people] engage in plowing and sowing throughout the year, so there are no wastelands. The rice fields and arable lands are spectacular. Three crops are harvested every year. Goods are all reasonably priced. During the ancient times, it was the capital of Sindu.

The climate is always hot. The customs [of the people are to be] extremely pure and honest. Men and women cover their head with a fine cotton cloth and wear long skirts.

The official tax rate is twenty percent. The kingdom mints silver coins called Tangjia 唐加 (i.e., tangka), two of which weigh eight hundredths of a *tael* (i.e., Chinese ounce), that is circulated and used [by the government]. They can be exchanged for more than 11,520 pieces of cowrie shells. The lightness of the coins is convenient and very beneficial to the people.

[The kingdom] produces [fabrics such as] *bibu* 苾布 (*bairami/bafta*), *gaonibu* 高你布 (*kain* cloth?), *tuluojin* 禿羅錦 (*malmal*), [and also] kingfishers' feathers. [The Chinese traders] use southern and northern [varieties of] silks, pentachrome taffetas and satins, cloves, nutmegs, blue and white China-ware, white tassels and such things [to trade with native merchants].¹¹²

As P. C. Bagchi has pointed out, the Ming records of Bengal confirm Wang Dayuan's description of the kingdom and the trading goods.¹¹³ Indeed, modern scholars have underscored the role of Bengal as a key trading partner of the Chinese. Haraprasad Ray, for example, has suggested that Bengal may have been exporting as many as sixty items, including cotton and horses, to China during the Ming period.¹¹⁴ The kingdom was also part of a trading network that linked the Southeast Asian islands of Java and Sumatra to the kingdoms of Jaunpur, Delhi, and Tibet. Thus, while the Coromandel and Malabar coasts may have been vital to the Chinese because they formed part of a trading network that extended to the Middle East, Bengal provided the Chinese an access to the South Asian hinterland.

The porcelain fragments found along the route from the Bay of Bengal to the Delhi Sultanate, for instance, indicate Bengal's role as an entrepôt for

Chinese goods destined for markets in the Indian hinterland.¹¹⁵ The itinerary of the Chinese mission visiting the Delhi Sultanate in 1412 similarly illustrates the position of Bengal as the gateway to the Indian hinterland. The Chinese embassy seems to have disembarked at Bengal and taken the route along the river Ganges, passing through Jaunpur, to Delhi.¹¹⁶

The Chinese even got involved in the dispute between Bengal and its neighbor the Jaunpur Sultanate. In 1420, the king of Bengal complained to the Ming ruler that Jaunpur forces had carried out several military raids on its territory. In response to the complaint, the Ming court dispatched the eunuch Hou Xian 侯顯 and others “with Imperial orders of instruction for them (i.e., Bengal and Jaunpur), so that they would both cultivate good relations with their neighbors and would each protect their own territory.”¹¹⁷ The entourage led by Hou Xian arrived in Bengal in August or September 1420 and was welcomed with a grand reception. It was Hou Xian’s second visit to the region and this time he seems to have brought along Chinese soldiers, who were all presented silver coins by the ruler of Bengal. The entourage then proceeded to Jaunpur to convey the Yongle emperor’s message to resolve the territorial dispute peacefully.

Bengal’s request to intervene in the local dispute and the Chinese emperor’s swift response to the appeal demonstrates the influence the Ming court seems to have had beyond its shores during the first half of the fifteenth century. The rulers of Bengal undoubtedly knew about the Chinese military interventions in other Indian Ocean polities. Bengal had sent at least eight embassies to the Ming court before 1420 and the traders from the region were actively engaged in commerce across the Bay of Bengal. These Bengali diplomats and traders must have been familiar with the naval prowess of the Ming court. In 1406–7, Zheng He had fought and defeated the menacing pirate Chen Zuyi in the Strait of Malacca; in 1411 the Chinese admiral captured the Sri Lankan ruler Vijaya Bahu VI and took him back to China; and in 1414 he defeated the usurper Sekander and resolved a civil war in Semudera.¹¹⁸ The court in Bengal may also have been aware of the Chinese backing for Cochin in 1416.

A significant political transition within the Bengal Sultanate could have been another reason that prompted the Indian ruler to seek help from the Yongle emperor. In fact, the military conflict between Bengal and Jaunpur had resulted from the usurpation of the throne by a local Hindu noble named Raja Ganesh. Probably a descendent of the former, non-Muslim, ruling family of Bengal, Raja Ganesh deposed the Turko-Muslim ruler and, in 1415, installed his twelve-year-old son as the new king. The son, because of pressure

from the local Muslim nobility and the neighboring Sultanate of Jaunpur, converted to Islam and took on the name Jalāl ud-Dīn Muhammad. To seek recognition of his rule, Jalāl ud-Dīn is reported to have contacted the Timurid ruler Shah Rukh and the Abbasid Caliphate in Egypt. He seems also to have made a request—similar to the one made to the Ming court—that Shah Rukh help him fend off the military threat from Jaunpur.¹¹⁹

Chinese sources do not specify whether the title of king was bestowed on the Bengali king through the Hou Xian mission of 1420. However, an imperial edict, a strong contingent of Chinese soldiers, and precious gifts for the king, his family, and officials were part of the entourage. By dispatching this powerful mission to Bengal, the Ming court seems to have provided Jalāl ud-Dīn an opportunity to demonstrate his diplomatic capabilities and assure many of his wealthy Muslim citizens, many of whom invested in maritime trade across the Bay of Bengal, that trading ties between Bengal and China would continue. Not only did Jalāl ud-Dīn successfully rule over Bengal for the next thirteen years, but diplomatic and commercial links between the two regions grew until the Ming court, in the mid-fifteenth century, decided to reverse its policies regarding the maritime voyages.

It is also evident that while Hou Xian went to Jaunpur to communicate the Yongle emperor's suggestion of peaceful negotiations, the Chinese had limited influence over Jaunpur. They were unable even to exact a tributary mission from the Indian kingdom. Chinese sources underline the distance between the Indian kingdom and China as a way to explain the absence of tributary missions from Jaunpur. Because the kingdom is "very far from China," they note, "no envoys have ever come to pay tribute to the court."¹²⁰ In reality, the landlocked kingdom had no need to engage in trade with the Chinese, nor did it feel threatened by the Ming armada anchored far away from its borders. One can also argue that the Ming court had no interest in getting involved in an armed conflict with a kingdom that was beyond its maritime realm and contributed little to China's foreign trade.

V. CONCLUSION

The studies on Chinese frontiers have hitherto emphasized the northern and northwestern borderlands of ancient China. The China–Inner Asian frontier, for example, has been the subject of numerous studies undertaken by Chinese and Western scholars. These works examine the encounters, both peaceful and violent, between the Chinese dynasties and the Inner Asian

tribes and polities, the patterns of interaction between the agrarian and nomadic communities, or the cultural, economic, and religious exchanges that transpired along these frontiers. The importance of the Inner Asian borderlands has been underscored in Owen Lattimore's *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, the representative work on China's inland frontiers. Lattimore is somewhat dismissive of the complexity and significance of China's maritime frontier. "Maritime factors in Chinese history," he writes, "acting often over remarkably great distances, are recognizable from a very early period and there is no need to discount their importance, but it is clear that this importance was of a secondary order."¹²¹ As a result, Lattimore has very little to say about the military encounters and interventions beyond the Chinese coasts.

Such views on the "secondary" role of China's maritime frontier and the continued fascination with the Inner Asian silk route fail to do justice to the dynamic and vibrant interactions between the Chinese and foreign peoples on and beyond the southern coast of China. This lopsided emphasis on the Inner Asian frontier, for instance, has hindered the study of the spread and influence of early Buddhism in the coastal regions of China. It has also limited the proper understanding of the Chinese perception of and influence on maritime polities and the contribution of the maritime frontier to the premodern Chinese economy and culture. The Chinese imperial court and official scribes also paid little attention to the foreign communities and commercial interactions along the coastal regions of China. Thus, the historical literature on the maritime frontier of China is fragmentary and, until the Yuan period, accounts of what lay beyond the frontier are mostly based on secondary accounts. Indeed, the limited records on the cross-cultural exchanges at the Chinese coast give the impression that the maritime frontier was of secondary importance to the Chinese.

Only recently have scholars, led by Hugh R. Clark, called for a "greater attention to the Chinese maritime frontier and its contribution to China's later imperial culture." Clark has demonstrated how the presence of foreign traders in Quanzhou affected local culture, agricultural patterns, and the economy.¹²² John Chaffee, on the other hand, has addressed the issue of social integration among the Muslim communities settled in Quanzhou during the Song and Yuan periods.¹²³ Both studies highlight the intricacy and importance of the cultural and economic interactions on China's maritime frontier. In fact, detailed examinations of China's maritime frontier will continue to reveal that the research on the coastal regions is of equal significance to the studies on the inland frontiers.

Especially from the tenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries, the maritime frontier drew significant interest from the Chinese courts and traders. During the Song period, the Chinese court encouraged and raised substantial revenue from the trading activities along the coastal region. The attention given to coastal trade not only augmented cross-cultural exchanges on the maritime frontier, it also resulted in the development of Chinese shipbuilding and navigational technologies. The succeeding Yuan court used these technological developments to further its imperialistic goals by dispatching naval fleets to kingdoms in Southeast Asia. Additionally, Chinese merchants and diplomats traveled to various Indian Ocean ports and established a vast trading diaspora that collaborated and competed with the Southeast Asian, Indian, and Muslim networks.

The Chinese diaspora continued to flourish during the first half of the Ming period, even though private overseas trade was often prohibited and condemned by the court.¹²⁴ Instead, the Hongwu and Yongle emperors used their superior naval force to bring the polities along the Indian Ocean within the folds of the rhetorical Chinese world order. This entailed granting of special titles to the rulers of foreign polities, overseeing of trade between Chinese and native traders at foreign ports, and sometimes forcefully removing “hostile” leaders from power. In the context of the Chinese world order, these were considered “civilizing” measures. Although the Chinese never occupied the Indian Ocean polities, the notion of civilizing foreigners is comparable to the one employed by the later European colonizers. It likewise asserted the superiority of their own civilization over those of foreign polities as a rationale to enforce changes within them.

Unlike in the previous periods, cross-cultural encounters between the Chinese and foreigners did not merely take place at the Chinese ports. Rather, China’s maritime interests and reach had extended far beyond its coasts. While the Indian coast was a key destination for diplomats, traders, and ships from China, the reach of the Yuan and Ming courts extended further, to the Persian Gulf and the eastern coast of Africa. At the Indian coast, Chinese traders and diplomats mingled with local merchants and with seafarers from the Middle East and Europe. The Yuan and Ming courts sent representatives to solicit tributary missions and, at times, tried to intercede in local affairs. It is also apparent that the Indian rulers and traders were aware of the maritime prowess of the Chinese court and the lucrative Chinese diaspora. The frequent tributary missions from the Indian kingdoms to the Chinese court, the Malabari native Sayyid’s desire to defect to China, and Bengal’s petition for help from the Ming court in its dispute with Jaunpur are all indicative of

this perception of China as a maritime power.

One issue that remains unresolved regards the existence of Chinese settlements on the Indian coasts. It is certain that Chinese traders made frequent voyages to the Coromandel and Malabar coasts and to the ports in eastern India. However, there is no concrete evidence that the Chinese traders established permanent settlements in any of the Indian ports. Unlike the Chinese settlements in Southeast Asia, there are no records of long-term Chinese residents marrying local women or the presence of Chinese descendants operating in the region during the later periods. Trading diasporas, as Philip D. Curtin has noted, usually included two types of merchant communities: those “who moved and settled and those who continued to move back and forth.”¹²⁵ The Chinese seafarers frequenting India, it seems, belonged to the latter category.

It is possible that some of these traveling Chinese merchants and their networks operated from their guilds in Southeast Asia, a result perhaps of the Ming court’s prohibition on private overseas trade. In fact, members of Chinese diasporic communities may have found it easier and more profitable to operate from Java, Malacca, or other ports in Southeast Asia. Not only did they have easy access to the Chinese and Indian coasts, they could evade the regulations imposed on private Chinese seafarers by the Ming court. In addition, as residents of foreign ports, these overseas Chinese traders benefited from participating in the tributary system emphasized by the Ming rulers. Kenneth R. Hall has discussed in detail the connection between the expansion of overseas Chinese diasporas and the prohibition of private trade by the Ming court. “While the Ming had prohibitions on Chinese traveling abroad,” Hall writes, “they were frequently willing to ignore these restrictions and welcomed the overseas Chinese visitors who they regarded as acting in agency with the court’s interests in ‘bringing tribute to the court.’” Hall also points out that the Southeast Asian rulers welcomed the Chinese settlers because of “their ability to favorably negotiate with the Chinese court on behalf of Southeast Asia’s rulers.”¹²⁶

While the Southeast Asian ports were ideal locations for overseas Chinese traders, at the Indian ports they had to compete with other well-entrenched foreign traders. Moreover, Indian rulers (as in the case of the Zamorin of Cochin) may have been less enthusiastic, compared to their Southeast Asian counterparts, in granting special privileges or status to Chinese merchants. For Chinese traders, such as Song Yun, it may have been more convenient to sojourn to the Indian coast with the northeastern monsoon winds (between December and March) and return to Southeast

Asia with the onset of the southwestern monsoon (between April and August). Thus, the Chinese traders present at the Coromandel and Malabar coast and those entering the ports in eastern India may not have found it necessary to establish permanent settlements and raise families at the Indian ports. This would perhaps explain the absence of archaeological and textual evidence for long-term Chinese settlements on the Indian coast, despite the abundant references to the presence of Chinese ships, traders, and diplomats in South Asia between the thirteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries.

NOTES

Sections of this essay have previously appeared in my article entitled “The Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks to Southern Asia, 1200–1450,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49, no. 4 (2006): 421–53.

¹ Hugh R. Clark, “Religious Culture in southern Fujian through the Middle Period (750–1450): Preliminary Reflections on Contact Across a Maritime Frontier,” *Asia Major* 29, nos. 1–2 (2006): 211–40, see 213. Clark has further developed the idea of the Chinese maritime frontier in his recent article “Frontier Discourse and China’s Maritime Frontier: China’s Frontiers and the Encounter with the Sea through Early Imperial History,” *Journal of World History* 20, no. 1 (March 2009): 1–33.

² See Lin Meicun 林梅村, “Zhongguo yu Luoma de haishang jiaotong” 中國與羅馬的海上交通 [Maritime contacts between China and Rome], in *Han-Tang Xiyu yu Zhongguo wenming* 漢唐西域與中國文明 [The western regions and the Chinese civilization during the Han and Tang (Dynasties)], ed. Lin Meicun (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), 307–21; and Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600–1400* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and the University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 160–1.

³ See *Liang shu* 54 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976): 789–99; Adhir K. Chakravarti, “Supplement XII: Early Sino-Indian Maritime Trade and Fu-nan,” in *Early Indian Trade and Industry*, ed. D. C. Sircar (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1972), 101–17; Paul Pelliot, “Les grands voyages maritimes chinois début du 15e siècle,” *T’oung Pao* 30 (1933): 237–314, see 265–71; and Joseph Needham, Wang Ling, and Lu Gwei-djen, *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 4, Physics and Physical Technology, Part III: Civil Engineering and Nautics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971): 449–50.

⁴ See Shufen Liu, “Jiankang and the Commercial Empire of the Southern Dynasties: Change and Continuity in Medieval Chinese Economic History,” in *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 35–52.

⁵ *Shi ji* 129 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996): 3268; Ying-shih Yü, *Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), chap. 7; Heather A. Peters, “Towns and Trade: Cultural Diversity and Chu Daily Life,” in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, ed. Constance A. Cook and John S. Major (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), 99–117; and Liu Shufen, *Liuchao de chengshi yu shehui* 六朝的成市與社會 [The cities and society during the Six Dynasties (Period)] (Taipei: Taiwan xueshengju, 1992), 318–20. On the findings at Hepu, see Wu Zhuanjun

吳傳鈞, ed., *Haishang Sichou zhilu yanjiu: Zhongguo Beihai Hepu haishang Sichou zhilu shifagang lilun yantao lunwen ji* 海上絲綢之路研究：中國合浦海上絲綢之路始發港理論研討會論文集 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2006).

⁶ *Shiji*, 129: 3268; and *Han shu* 28b (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996): 1670. For a detailed study of China's maritime trade during this and later periods, see Wang Gungwu, "The Nanhai Trade: A Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31, no. 2 (1958): 1–135.

⁷ See Zhao Shande, "Handai haishang Sichouzhilu de xingqi he xingcheng" 漢代海上絲綢之路的興起和形成 [The emergence and development of the maritime silk route during the Han Dynasty], in *Guangdong haishang Sichouzhilu* 廣東海上絲綢之路 [The maritime silk road in Guangdong's history], ed. Huang Qichen 黃啟臣 (Guangzhou: Guangdong jingji chubanshe, 2003), 21–68.

⁸ Liu, *Liuchao*, 319.

⁹ For a recent study of these images, see Marylin M. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia, Volume One: Later Han, Three Kingdoms, and Western Chin in China and Bactria to Shan-shan in Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 27–47.

¹⁰ The list of seven jewels (or seven precious objects) differs slightly from text to text. Usually they include gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, coral, pearl, and agate. Other items that are sometimes included in the list are amber, carnelian, and diamond. Buddhist texts, such as *Mahāvastu* and the *Lotus sūtra*, describe the seven jewels as objects that a patron can offer as donations or adornments to the Buddha and his reliquaries in order to obtain supreme merit. In another, and perhaps earlier, context, the seven jewels in Buddhism denoted the things a righteous king possessed as symbols of his authority, status, and wealth: wheel, elephant, horse, gem, queen, householder, and a minister. See Liu's detailed discussion of the concept of seven jewels and its impact on commercial activities, in *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges, AD 1–600* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), chap. 4.

¹¹ Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*, 175.

¹² Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554), *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 [Biographies of eminent monks], T. 2059 (50): 388a–c.

¹³ On early Buddhism and Buddhist monks in Guangzhou and Jiaozhi, see Luo Xianglin 羅香林, *Tangdai Guangzhou Guangxiaosi yu Zhong Yin jiaotong zhi guanxi* 唐代廣州光孝寺與中印交通之關係 [The Guangxiao Monastery and Sino-Indian relations during the Tang Dynasty] (Hong Kong: Zhongguo xueshe, 1930); and Huang Guoxin, "Wei Jin Nanbei chao haishang sichouzhilu de chubu fazhan" 魏晉南北朝海上絲綢之路的初步發展 [The early development of the Maritime Silk Road during the Wei-Jin-Northern and Southern Dynasties (Period)], in Huang, *Guangdong*, 69–108.

¹⁴ Sengyou 僧祐 (443–518), *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, T. 2145 (55): 40c.25–41a.28. See also Erik Zürcher, "Tidings from the South: Chinese Court Buddhism and Overseas Relations in the Fifth Century AD" in Antonino Forte and Federico Masini, eds., *A Life Journey to the East: Sinological Studies in Memory of Giuliano Bertuccioli (1923–2001)* (Kyoto: Scuola Italiana di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 2002), 21–43, esp. 31.

¹⁵ See Zürcher, "Tidings from the South," 31–32.

¹⁶ For the growth in population in Guangzhou from the Qin to the Southern Dynasties periods, see Hu Shouwei 胡守爲, *Lingnan gushi* 嶺南古史 [Ancient history of the Lingnan (Region)] (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1999), chap. 12. Commercialization in the region is discussed by Liu Shufen in her "Jiankang and the Commercial Enterprise." A detailed study of the Buddhist links between India and China through the maritime route will appear in a separate essay.

¹⁷ See W. O. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce: A Study of the Origins of Sri Vijaya* (Ithaca: University of Cornell Press, 1967); and Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development of Early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985), chap. 3.

¹⁸ Śrīvijaya, in fact, may have tried to control the flow of commodities between Southern Asia and China. This seems to have resulted in a massive naval raid on the Śrīvijayan ports by the Chola kingdom in 1025. On this issue, and the maritime exchanges between Song China and southern India, see Tansen Sen, “The Military Campaigns of Rajendra Chola and the Chola-Srivijaya-China Triangle,” in *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia*, ed. Hermann Kulke, K. Kesavapany, and Vijay Sakhuja (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 61–75.

¹⁹ For detailed studies on the establishment and evolution of the post of shiboshi, see Kuwabara Jitsuzō, “On P’u Shou-keng: A Man of the Western Regions, who was the Superintendent of the Trading Ships’ Office in Ch’üan-chou towards the End of the Sung dynasty, together with a General Sketch of the Arabs in China during the T’ang and Sung Eras,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of Toyo Bunko* 2 (1928): 1–79, and 7 (1935): 1–104; Shiba Yoshinobu, “Sung Foreign Trade: Its Scope and Organization,” in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 89–115; and Wang Zhenping, “T’ang Maritime Trade Administration,” *Asia Major* 4, no. 1 (1991): 7–38.

²⁰ See Li Qingxin 李慶新, “Sui Tang Wudai haishang sichou zhi lu de fansheng” 隋唐五代海上絲綢之路的繁盛 [The flourishing maritime silk route during the Sui-Tang-Five Dynasties (Period)], in Huang, *Guangdong*, 109–224, see 207. See also John Chaffee, “Diasporic Communities in the Historical Development of the Maritime Muslim Communities of Song-Yuan China,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49, no. 4 (2006): 395–420, esp. 396–97.

²¹ Regarding the possible establishment of the *fanfang* in Guangzhou during the Tang period, see Li Qingxin, “Sui Tang,” 206–10.

²² For the impact of maritime trade in the development of Quanzhou, see Angela Schottenhammer, “Local Politico-Economic Particulars of the Quanzhou Region during the Tenth Century,” *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 29 (1999): 1–41.

²³ See, for example, Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past: A Social and Economic Interpretation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).

²⁴ Shiba Yoshinobu, “Sung Foreign Trade: Its Scope and Organization,” in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 89–115.

²⁵ Shiba, “Sung Foreign Trade.”

²⁶ Hugh R. Clark, “The Politics of Trade and the Establishment of the Quanzhou Trade Superintendency,” in *Zhongguo yu haishang sichou zhi lu* 中國與海上絲綢之路 [China and the maritime silk road], ed. Lianheguo jiaokewen zuzhi haishang sichou zhi lu zonghe kaocha Quanzhou guoji xueshu taolunhui zuzhi weiyuanhui 聯合國教科文祖雙海上絲綢雙路綜合考察泉州國際學術討論會組織委員會 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1991), 375–93, see 387–90. See also Li Donghua 李東華, *Quanzhou yu Woguo zhonggu de haishang jiaotong* 泉州與我國中古的海上交通 [Quanzhou and China’s maritime communications during the Medieval period] (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1986), 128; Paul Wheatley, “Geographical Notes on Some Commodities Involved in Sung Maritime Trade,” *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 32, no. 2 (1961): 1–140; and, more recently, So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions*, 69–70.

²⁷ For detailed studies on the history of Chinese shipbuilding, see Needham et al., *Science and Civilisation in China* 4.3; and Gang Deng, *Chinese Maritime Activities and Socioeconomic Development, c. 2100 B.C.–1900 A.D.* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997).

²⁸ This description first appeared in Wan Zhen’s now lost work *Nanzhou yiwu zhi* 南州異物誌 [Records of the strange goods from the southern province]. Sections of his book, including his notice on *bo*, can be found in the eighth-century encyclopedia *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 [Imperially reviewed encyclopedia of the Taiping (xingguo reign period)]. See Li Fang 李昉 (925–96), *Taiping*

yulan 769 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992): 3414. See also Needham et al., *Science and Civilisation*, 4.3: 600–601; Wang Gungwu, “The Nanhai Trade,” 38. More recent discussions on this record can be found in the following two articles by Pierre-Yves Manguin: “The Southeast Asian Ship: An Historical Approach,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11 (1980): 253–69; and “Trading Ships of the South China Sea,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 36 (1993): 253–79. While Needham equates the 10,000 bushels tonnage of these ships to 260 tons, Manguin suggests that it should be around “600 tons deadweight.”

²⁹ Huilin 慧琳, *Yiqie jing yinyi* 一切經音義, T. 2128 (54): 712a.18–20. Translation here is by Needham et al., with minor stylistic changes. See Needham et al., *Science and Civilisation*, 4.3: 458–59.

³⁰ Although archaeological evidence has not yet validated the existence of the large Southeast Asian ships described in Chinese sources, Manguin writes that “considering the technical precision and the internal consistency of these descriptions, and the overall agreement with the evidence provided with archaeological data,” he has no doubt about the accuracy of the Chinese records. See Pierre-Yves Manguin, “Southeast Asian Shipping in the Indian Ocean during the First Millennium A.D.,” in *Tradition and Archaeology: Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean*, ed. Himanshu Prabha Ray and Jean-Francois Salles (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), 190.

³¹ Faxian, *Gaoseng Faxian zhuan* 高僧法顯傳, T. 2085: 865c.26–866a.13.

³² *Gaoseng Faxian zhuan*, T. 2085: 866a.7–13. Translation here is by James Legge in *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms: Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of his Travels in India and Ceylon (A.D. 399–414) in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline* (1886; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.), 112–13.

³³ Yuanzhao 圓照, *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 [A catalogue of (the texts concerning) Buddhist teachings newly fixed during the Zhenyuan (reign period)], T. 2157 (55): 876a. 22–b.9.

³⁴ See the following two articles by Michael Flecker: “A 9th-century Arab or Indian Shipwreck in Indonesian Waters,” *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 29, no. 2 (2000): 199–217; and “A Ninth-Century AD Arab or Indian Shipwreck in Indonesia: First Evidence for Direct Trade with China,” *World Archaeology* 32, no. 3 (2001): 335–54.

³⁵ Flecker, “A Ninth-Century,” 337–38.

³⁶ Flecker, “A Ninth-Century,” 353. On textual evidence of Indian shipping during this period, see Ranabir Chakravarti, “Seafarings, Ships and Ship Owners: India and the Indian Ocean (AD 700–1500),” in *Ships and the Development of Maritime Technology on the Indian Ocean*, ed. David Parkin and Ruth Barnes (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 28–61.

³⁷ For a detailed study of the objects found at the wreck site, see John Guy, “Early Asian Ceramic Trade and the Belitung (‘Tang’) Cargo,” *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 66 (2001–2): 13–27.

³⁸ See the following works by Lo: “The Emergence of China as a Sea Power during the Late Sung and Early Yuan Periods,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (August 1955): 489–503; and “Maritime Commerce and its Relations to the Sung Navy,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 12 (1969): 57–101.

³⁹ Lo, “The Emergence of China,” 489–90.

⁴⁰ Lo, “Maritime Commerce,” 100.

⁴¹ Pierre-Yves Manguin, “Trading Ships of the South China Sea: Shipbuilding Techniques and their Role in the History of the Development of Asian Trade Networks,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 36 (1993): 271.

⁴² Manguin, “Trading Ships,” 272–74.

⁴³ See, for example, the c. 1124 work by Xu Jing 徐兢 (1093–1155?) *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 宣和奉使高麗圖經 [Illustrated text of the embassy to Korea during the Xuanhe (reign period)],

which describes ships used in the diplomatic interactions between China and Korea.

⁴⁴ See Zhu Yu 朱彖, *Pingzhou ketan* 萍洲可談 2 (*Congshu jicheng* edition, Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1975), 18–19.

⁴⁵ It should be noted that the *Lingwai daida* makes mention of “Guangbo” 廣舶, which some scholars have taken to mean “[Chinese-made] ships [from] Guangzhou.” However, it perhaps only stands for “ships from Guangzhou.” Thus, the relevant sentence in the *Lingwai daida* (90) should read: “Ships from Guangzhou [take] forty days to reach Lanli 藍里 [i.e., present-day Banda-Aceh in the Sumatra island of Indonesia].” A similar sentence in the *Zhufan zhi* (68), probably copied from the *Lingwai daida*, reads, “Ships from Quanzhou 泉舶 [take] forty days to reach Lanli.” Almut Netolitzky is correct when he translates the passage in *Lingwai daida* as: “Die Schiffe, die von Kanton kommen, erreichen nach 40 Tagen Lamuri.” See *Das Ling-wai tai-ta von Chou Ch'ü-fei: eine Landeskunde Südcinas aus dem 12. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), 40.

⁴⁶ For an extensive study on the vessel excavated at Quanzhou Bay, see Fujian sheng Quanzhou haiwai jiaotong shi bowuguan 福建省泉州海外交通史博物館, ed., *Quanzhou wan Songdai haichuan fajue yu yanjiu* 泉州灣宋代海船發掘與研究 [Excavation and research on the Song-Dynasty ship (found in) Quanzhou bay] (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1987). See also Christopher Wake, “The Great Ocean-going Ships of Southern China in the Age of Chinese Maritime Voyaging to India, Twelfth to Fifteenth Centuries,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 9, no. 2 (December 1997): 51–81.

⁴⁷ *Yuanshi*, 210 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976): 4669.

⁴⁸ A. C. Moule and Paul Pelliot, trans., *Marco Polo: The Description of the World*, 2 vols., (London: George Routledge & Sons Limited, 1938), 1: 354–57. On the carrying capacity of these ships, see Wake, “The Great Ocean-going Ships,” 56–57.

⁴⁹ *The Travels of Ibn Battūta, A.D. 1325–1354. Translated with Revisions and Notes from the Arabic Text Edited by C. DeFrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti; C. F. Beckingham*, 5 vols. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1958–94), 4:813.

⁵⁰ Victoria Tomalin, V. Selvakumar, M. V. Nair, and P. K. Gopi, “The Thaikkal-Kadakkappally Boat: An Archaeological Example of Medieval Shipbuilding in the Western Indian Ocean,” *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 33, no. 2 (2004): 253–63. See also M. V. Nair, V. Selvakumar, and P. K. Gopi, “Excavation of a Unique Sailboat at Kadakkappally, Kerala,” *Current Science* 86, no. 5 (10 March 2004): 709–12; and V. Selvakumar, “Nature and Characteristics of the Sailboat Excavated at Taikkal-Kadakkappally, Alappuzha District, Kerala,” in *Glimpses of Marine Archaeology in India*, ed. A. S. Gaur and K. H. Vora (Goa: Society for Marine Archaeology), 4–14.

⁵¹ Tomalin et al., “The Thaikkal-Kadakkappally Boat,” 259.

⁵² See Lin Meicun, “Zheng He haiwai yiji diaocha” 鄭和海外遺跡調查 [An examination of the historical remains (concerning) Zheng He (found) overseas], *Zijin cheng* 紫禁城 (English Title: Forbidden City), 131 (April 2005): 12–21, see 19.

⁵³ Tomalin et al., “The Thaikkal-Kadakkappally Boat.”

⁵⁴ So, *Prosperity*, chap. 2.

⁵⁵ *Pingzhou ketan*, 19.

⁵⁶ *Lingwai daida*, 91.

⁵⁷ *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian*, 273:16A–B; translated in Clark, “The Politics.”

⁵⁸ See Tansen Sen, “Maritime Contacts between China and the Cola Kingdom (A.D. 850–1279),” in *Merchants, Mariners and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History*, ed. K. S. Mathew (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995), 25–41.

⁵⁹ *Daoyi zhilüe*, 285.

⁶⁰ See “The Lost Temples of Nagapattinam and Quanzhou: A Study in Sino-Indian Relations,” *Journal of the Institute of Silk Road Studies* 3 (1993–94): 291–310. The presence of this structure in the context of Sino-Indian relations also was discussed by V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar in his

“Southern India and China,” *Sino-Indian Studies* 2, nos. 3–4 (October 1946 and January 1947): 157–84.

⁶¹ Manuel Barradas, “Discrição da Cidade de Columbo,” in *Historia Tragici-Maritima*, 2 vols., ed. B. Gomes de Brito (Lisbon: Na Officina da Congregação do Oratorio, 1735–36), 1:276–77; cited in Guy, “The Lost Temples,” 291, from S. Subramanyam’s *Improvising Empire* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 85.

⁶² Guy, “Lost Temples,” 291.

⁶³ Sir Walter Elliot, “The Edifice Formerly Known as the Chinese of Jaina Pagoda at Negapatam,” *The Indian Antiquary* 7 (September 1878): 224–27, see 224.

⁶⁴ Guy, “Lost Temples,” 292.

⁶⁵ Such “semipermanent” communities of foreign merchants were common on the Indian coast, since the Indian peninsula was situated in the middle of the southwestern and northeastern monsoonal winds. The existence of such communities on the Malabar coast, for example, is noted by Richard M. Eaton in “Multiple Lenses: Differing Perspectives on Fifteenth-Century Calicut,” in *Autonomous Histories, Particular Truths: Essays in Honor of John R. W. Smail*, ed. Laurie J. Sears (Madison: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, 1993), 71–85, see 73–74.

⁶⁶ On these two episodes, see Morris Rossabi, “The Reign of Khubilai Khan,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368*, ed. Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 414–89, especially 484–85; and Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 213–19.

⁶⁷ Morris Rossabi writes that in order to “enhance his credibility as a ruler of the Mongol and Chinese worlds” Khubilai Khan “needed to pursue an assertive, even aggressive, foreign policy.” Not only did Khubilai want to expand his domain, he also sought to induce foreign polities to submit to the Chinese state he ruled. See Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 76. Emphasizing the commercial underpinning of the Yuan naval missions, Lo Jung-pang explains, “In contrast to the campaigns on the mainland which were territorial in aim, the purpose of the seaborne expeditions against Japan, Champa, Annam and Java as well as the embassies to the polities of Malaya, Sumatra and Southern India were to force these polities not only to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Mongol khan but also to become units in the vast overseas economic empire with China as the center.” See Jung-pang Lo, “China as a Sea Power, 1127–1368: A Preliminary Survey of the Maritime Expansion and Naval Exploits of the Chinese People during the Southern Sung and Yuan Period” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, 1957), 109. For an extensive study of the Yuan campaigns against the Southeast Asian kingdoms, see chapter 13 of Lo’s dissertation.

⁶⁸ Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 99–103 and 207–12.

⁶⁹ For a detailed study of the diplomatic relations between the Yuan court and India, see Tansen Sen, “The Yuan Khanate and India: Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” *Asia Major* 29, nos. 1–2 (2006): 299–326.

⁷⁰ See T. N. Subramaniam, “A Tamil Colony in Mediaeval China,” in *South Indian Studies*, ed. R. Nagaswamy (Madras: Society for Archaeological, Historical and Epigraphical Research, 1978), 1–52; and Sen, *Buddhism*, 227–31.

⁷¹ See Sen, *Buddhism*, 228–31. In fact, private trade between China and southern India seems to have grown to such an extent that the Yuan court was forced to ban the trade in luxury goods with kingdoms in South India. The prohibition was issued in the second year of the Yuanzhen reign period (1296). See *Yuanshi*, 94:2402–3.

⁷² Liu Yingsheng 劉迎勝 believes that these two persons were the Ma’bar officials Mayindi and Buali. See his “Cong ‘Buali shendao beiming’ kan nan Yindu yu Yuan chao ji Bosi wan de jiaotong” 從不阿里神道碑銘看南印度與元朝及波斯灣的交通 [The interactions between southern India, the Persian Gulf, and the Yuan Dynasty as seen from the funeral inscription of Buali], *Lishi dili*

歷史地理, 7 (n.d.): 90–95, see 93. See also Sen, “The Yuan Khanate.”

⁷³ There may be some truth to the importance of Ma’bar in international commerce reported here. Waṣṣāf, writing about the kingdom, states: “The curiosities of Chín and Máchin, and the beautiful products of Hind and Sind, laden on large ships (which they call junks), sailing like mountains with the wings of the winds on the surface of the water, are always arriving there. The wealth of the Isles of the Persian Gulf in particular, and in part the beauty and adornment of the other countries, from ’Irák and Khurásáas far as Rúm and Europe, are derived from Ma’bar, which is so situated as to be the key of Hind.” See H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians. Volume 3: The Muhammad Period* (1871; reprint New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), 32.

⁷⁴ *Yuanshi*, 97:4669–70. Rockhill’s translation of this passage has numerous errors. See W. W. Rockhill, “Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century, Part I,” *T’oung Pao* 15 (1914): 419–47, esp. 432–33.

⁷⁵ See Sen, “The Yuan Khanate.”

⁷⁶ Moule and Pelliot, *Marco Polo*, 414–15.

⁷⁷ *Ibn Battūta*, 4:817.

⁷⁸ *Ibn Battūta*, 4:812–18.

⁷⁹ *Ibn Battūta*, 4:812–14.

⁸⁰ *Daoyi zhilüe*, 325; translation, with changes to romanization, by W. W. Rockhill, “Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century, Part II, IV: Coasts of India,” *T’oung Pao* 16 (1915): 435–66, see esp. 454.

⁸¹ An excellent study of the diplomatic exchanges between the Ming court and Calicut is Roderich Ptak’s “China and Calicut in the Early Ming Period: Envoys and Tribute Embassies,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1 (1989): 81–111. See also his “Ein mustergültiges ‘Barbarenland’? Kalikut nach chinesischen Quellen der Yuan- und Ming-Zeit,” in *Asia Maritima: Images et réalité Bilder und Wirklichkeit, 1200–1800*, ed. Denys Lombard and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), 79–116.

⁸² See the following articles by Wang Gungwu: “Early Ming Relations with Southeast Asia: A Background Essay,” in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 34–62; and “Ming Foreign Relations: Southeast Asia,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 301–2.

⁸³ Wang, “Ming Foreign Relations,” 303.

⁸⁴ *Huang Ming zi xunlu in Ming chao kaiguo wenxian*, 1686–87; translation, with changes to romanization, from Wang, “Ming Foreign Relations,” 311–12. On Emperor Taizu’s attitude toward foreign kingdoms, including a variant translation of this passage, see Wu Chi-hua, “Basic Foreign-Policy Attitudes of the Early Ming Dynasty,” *Ming Studies* 12 (Spring 1981): 65–80.

⁸⁵ The map dates from 1389 and shows the regions and ports extending to southern Africa. See Cao Wanru 曹婉如, *Zhongguo gudai ditu ji, Mingdai* 中國古代地圖集, 明代 [Collection of ancient maps of China, Ming Dynasty] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1995), plate 1.

⁸⁶ On the Ming court’s relations with Mongols and other Inner Asian states, see Morris Rossabi, “The Ming and the Inner Asia,” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, 221–71.

⁸⁷ The Chola rule ended in 1279. The Chinese sources seem to be using Suoli 瑣里 and Xiyang Soli 西洋瑣里 to refer to the Coromandel coast.

⁸⁸ Wang, “Early Ming Relations,” 54–55.

⁸⁹ Geoff Wade has argued that the Zheng He missions were part of Ming colonial ambition that

included “land-based conquests” and “maritime proto-colonialism.” See Geoff Wade, “The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment,” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 78, no. 1 (2005): 37–58. Indeed, as pointed out later in this essay, the justification to intercede in the local politics of Indian Ocean kingdoms bears a resemblance to the rhetoric of cultural superiority underscored by the later European colonizers of Asian polities. Unlike the Europeans, however, the Chinese did not occupy any of the Indian Ocean polities. Additionally, it is not clear if the skirmishes and battles involving Zheng He formed a part of Ming foreign policy or if the admiral himself initiated them. Thus, while Wade is correct in questioning the depiction of Zheng He’s voyages as missions of peace and friendship, one has to distinguish between the ambition to colonize and the desire to assert cultural superiority through the display of power. On the possible imperialistic goals of the Yongle emperor, within the context of the Zheng He missions, see also Miyazaki Masakatsu 宮崎正勝, *Tei Wa no nankai daiensei: Eirakutei no sekai chitsujo saihen 鄭和の南海大遠征: 永樂帝の世界秩序再編* [Zheng He’s great expeditions to the Southern Seas: Reexamination of the Yongle Emperor’s world order] (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1997), chap. 4.

⁹⁰ Wang, “Early Ming Relations,” 56.

⁹¹ In fact, Wang Ming sees Zheng He’s visits to Calicut as evidence of the economic motivation for the Ming naval expeditions in the Indian Ocean. See his “Reflections on the Study of Zheng He’s Expeditions,” *Ming Studies* 49 (2005): 17–33, esp. 21.

⁹² *Ming shilu* 10 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 1961–66): 711–12. See also, *Mingshi* 326 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996): 8440.

⁹³ J. V. G. Mills, *Ma Huan, Ying-yai Sheng-lan: ‘The Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores [1433]’* (1970; repr., Bangkok: White Lotus Company Limited, 1997), 138.

⁹⁴ Mills, *Ma Huan, Ying-yai Sheng-lan*, 138.

⁹⁵ See A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History* (1967; repr., Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd., 1970), chap. 13; and Pius Malekandathil, *Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime Trade of India, 1500–1663* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), 35.

⁹⁶ According to the *Mingshi* and some other Ming sources, the Indian king, through his envoys, had requested the enfeoffment of the mountain in his kingdom. See, for example, *Mingshi* 326:8441–42. For other Ming (and Qing) records on the proclamation to the king of Cochin, see Xu Yuhu 徐玉虎, “Zheng He xia Xiyang yu zhu fanguo leshi libei xinkao” 鄭和下西洋於諸番國勒石立碑新考 [New examination of the erection of engraved stone tablets at various foreign kingdoms (during) Zheng He’s expedition along the Western Oceans], in *Zheng He yuanshang yu shijie wenming: Jinian Zheng He xia Xiyang 600 zhounian lunwen ji* 鄭和遠航與世界文明: 紀念鄭和下西洋600周年論文集 [Zheng He’s maritime expeditions and world civilization: Collection of essays marking the 600th anniversary of Zheng He’s expedition to the Western Oceans], ed. Wang Tianyou 王天有, Xu Kai 徐凱, and Fang Ming 方明 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2005), 68–96, esp. 83–85.

⁹⁷ *Ming shilu*, 13:1969–71; translated by Geoff Wade in *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource* (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore), <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/2336> (accessed May 17, 2005). See also *Mingshi* 326:8441–42.

⁹⁸ Wang, “Early Ming Relations,” 57.

⁹⁹ Wang Gungwu, “The Opening of Relations between China and Malacca,” in *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, ed. John Sturgis Bastin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 87–104, see 101 n. 4.

¹⁰⁰ Wang, “Early Ming Relations,” 57. See also Wang, “The Opening of Relations,” 100–2.

¹⁰¹ See Wang, “The Opening of Relations.”

¹⁰² Only three embassies, in 1421, 1423, and 1433, seem to have been sent to the Chinese court after the seal was conferred upon the ruler of Cochin. Sources are ambiguous about Zheng He’s trips to Calicut during his fifth and sixth expeditions. During his seventh, and last, expedition,

Zheng He's entourage seems to have stopped at Calicut for only four days on the way to Hormuz. On its way back to China, however, the entourage stayed at the Indian port for about nine days. Scholars generally agree that Zheng He died in Calicut on his way back to China. On the diplomatic exchanges between Calicut and China, see Ptak, "China and Calicut." On Zheng He's possible death in Calicut, see Lin Meicun, "Zheng He jiri ji shenhou shi" 鄭和忌日及身後事 [The day Zheng He died and related problems], *Jiuzhou xuelin* 九州學林 3, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 2–27.

¹⁰³ Sir Henry Yule, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1875), 2:391.

¹⁰⁴ T. K. Krishna Menon, *History of Kerala, Written in the form of Notes on Visscher's Letters from Malabar*, 4 vols. (1924; repr., New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2001), 1:287.

¹⁰⁵ Haraprasad Ray, *Trade and Trade Routes Between India and China, c. 140 B.C.–A.D. 1500* (Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, 2003), 208–9. See also Lin, "Zheng He jiri." While it is generally accepted that Zheng He died in Calicut, the reason for his death cannot be ascertained from available sources.

¹⁰⁶ *Ming shilu*, 24:1046; translated by Geoff Wade, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/949> (accessed April 21, 2005).

¹⁰⁷ *Ming shilu*, 28:2783; translated by Geoff Wade in *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/2059> (accessed April 21, 2005).

¹⁰⁸ *Ming shilu*, 24:916; translated by Geoff Wade in *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/733> (accessed April 30, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ See *Siyi guangji* (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1975): 1331–71. For a partial translation, see Narayan Chandra Sen, "Accounts of Bengal in Extensive Records on Four Foreign Lands," in *Hawai'i Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, ed. Victor H. Mair et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 505–13.

¹¹⁰ Ming sources do mention the names of people who accompanied Zheng He to the ports in southern India. Perhaps the most intriguing of them was Shaban 沙班, a native of Calicut residing in Nanjing, who accompanied Zheng He on his seventh and last voyage across the Indian Ocean. Shaban was a member of one of the battalions of the imperial bodyguard based in Nanjing. After returning to China, Shaban was promoted to battalion vice commander (*fu qianhu* 副千戶). The next seven generations of his family continued to live in Nanjing and served as government officials. For details, see Lin Meicun, "Zheng He jiri," 15–18.

¹¹¹ On the relations between the Ming court and Bengal, see Geo. Phillips, "Mahuan's Account of the Kingdom of Bengala (Bengal)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1895 (July): 523–25; P. C. Bagchi, "Political Relations between Bengal and China in the Pathan Period," *Visva-Bharati Annals* 1 (1945): 96–134; Tatsuro Yamamoto, "International Relations between China and Countries along the Ganga in the Early Ming Period," *The Indian Historical Review* 4, no. 1 (1977): 13–19; and Ray, *Trade and Diplomacy*. None of these works, however, discusses the Bengali–Chinese lexicon found in the *Siyi guangji* or the records of the presence of Chinese natives in Bengal reported in the *Ming shilu*.

¹¹² *Daoyi zhilüe*, 330.

¹¹³ Bagchi, "Political Relations."

¹¹⁴ Ray, *Trade and Diplomacy*, 131.

¹¹⁵ See B. Gray, "The Export of Chinese Porcelain to India," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 36 (1964): 21–36; John Carswell, "China and Islam: A Survey of the Coast of India and Ceylon," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 42 (1978): 25–68; and Ashok K. Das, "Chinese Porcelain at the Moghul Court," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 2 (1991–92): 383–409.

¹¹⁶ See Yamamoto, "International Relations."

¹¹⁷ *Ming shilu*, 14:2226; translated by Geoff Wade in *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource*, <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/2690> (accessed May 2, 2005).

¹¹⁸ For a description of these episodes, see Louise Levathes's *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet on the Dragon Throne, 1405–1433* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹¹⁹ See Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 50–63; and Syed Ejaz Hussain, *The Bengal Sultanate: Politics, Economy and Coins (AD 1205–1576)* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003), 104–15.

¹²⁰ See, for example, *Ming shi* 326 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996): 8447–48. The *Ming shi* and some other Chinese sources report that in the tenth year of the Yongle reign period (1412), the Chinese court sent an envoy to present the king of Jaunpur, named Yibula, various goods. Other Chinese sources, including the *Wubei zhi* and the *Ming shu*, state that Jaunpur responded with a tribute mission to the Ming court.

¹²¹ Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (1940; repr., Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4.

¹²² Hugh R. Clark, “Muslims and Hindus in the Culture and Morphology of Quanzhou from the Tenth to the Thirteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 49–74.

¹²³ See Chaffee, “Diasporic Communities.”

¹²⁴ For a detailed study of the Ming prohibition on overseas commerce and its impact on foreign trade, see Chao Zhongchen 晁中辰, *Mingdai haijin yu haiwai maoyi* 明代海禁與海外貿易 [The prohibition on maritime (commerce) and foreign trade during the Ming Dynasty] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005).

¹²⁵ Phillip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2.

¹²⁶ See Kenneth Hall, “Multi-dimensional Networking: Fifteenth-century Indian Ocean Maritime Diaspora in Southeast Asian Perspective,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49, no. 4 (2006): 454–81.