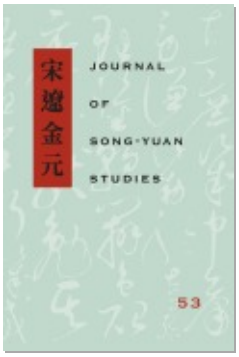
Zhedong Sea Merchants and the China-Japan Trade, ca. 800–1000 ce



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This article aims to highlight the achievements and activities of a network of sea merchants from the Zhedong (Zhejiang) region of China whose members were among the earliest known private traders to arrive in Japan. They were the predominant group of Chinese merchants trading in Japan from the ninth to eleventh centuries, and from approximately 850 to 1000, they were the only sea merchant group known to operate there. Not only were merchants from the Zhedong region instrumental in commercial and religious exchange between China and Japan, they were also adept at navigating through the many political upheavals of the Tang-Song transition. As such, their sudden decline at the end of the tenth century, in tandem with the rise of Fujian merchants in overseas trade, raises questions as to the nature of trade administration at this time. This article will consider the political implications of the rise and fall of merchant networks in Chinese history, as well as present new information that calls into question the idea that Japan was diplomatically isolated throughout the tenth century.

KEYWORDS: China, Japan, trade history, merchant networks, maritime administration

Zhedong Sea Merchants and the China-Japan Trade, ca. 800–1000 CE

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Merchants from China's Zhedong 浙東 region (present-day Zhejiang province) were among the first private sea traders to reach Japan in the early ninth century. They were close partners with merchants in the trade network of Silla 新羅 (Unified Silla 668–935) magnate Chang Pogo 張保皐 (790–841), and in fact, gradually inherited parts of this network after his assassination.[1] From approximately 850 to 1000, these merchants dominated the China-Japan trade like no other merchant group. Not only were they instrumental in transporting ceramics, fabrics, and medicine to Japan in exchange for rare metals

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1. For more on this network, see Ennin, *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*, trans. Edwin O. Reischauer (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), 100–4, 131; Edwin Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), 287–94; Bruce L. Batten, *Gateway to Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 84–86, 112–13; Tanaka Fumio 田中史生, "Kōnan no Shiragi jin kōeki sha to Nihon" 江南の新羅人交易者と日本, in *Zenkindai no Nihon rettō to Chōsen hantō* 前近代の日本列島と朝鮮半島, ed. Satō Makoto 佐藤信 and Fujita Satoru 藤田覚 (Tokyo: Yamakawa shuppansha, 2007), 5–28; Tanaka Fumio, *Kokusai kōeki to kodai Nihon* 国際交易と古代日本 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2012), 27–152; Enomoto Wataru 榎本渉, "Shiragi kaishō to Tō kaishō" 新羅海商と唐海商, in *Zenkindai no Nihon rettō to Chōsen hantō*, 81–94; Enomoto Wataru, *Sōryo to kaishō tachi no Higashi Shina kai* 僧侶と海商たちの東シナ海 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2010), 41–59; and Sujung Kim, *Shinra Myōjin and Buddhist Networks of the East Asian 'Mediterranean'* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019), 37–41.

and minerals, they were also key players in the development of Buddhism there.[2] These merchants escorted some of the most recognized monks in Japanese history, who brought to the archipelago important texts and knowledge that spurred the development of esoteric, Pure Land, and Zen Buddhist practices. Nevertheless, there seems to be little awareness in academic circles of the existence of a distinct group of Zhedong merchants.[3] This article aims to highlight the achievements of Zhedong merchants from the early ninth century to the beginning of the eleventh century. I will demonstrate that these merchants formed cohesive trade networks during the time frame of this essay, and that this group was eventually eclipsed, if not effectively shut out, by merchant groups from coastal regions further to the south following the establishment of Maritime Trade Superintendency (henceforth referred to as *shibosi* 市舶司) offices in Zhejiang at the end of the tenth century. Finally, I will discuss the political implications of such a major change, and how they might factor into our understanding of the Tang-Song transition.

The Economic Development of the Zhedong Region

To understand Zhedong sea merchants in their historical context, we will first briefly examine the economic background of the Zhedong region prior to and during the ninth century. During the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), economic activity was centered in the Central Plain region of northern China, where the majority of the empire's population was located. A sizeable fraction of this population migrated southward into more sparsely populated lands during the upheavals of the Six Dynasties (220–589) period. As a result, great

2. For the goods traded between China and Japan, see Charlotte von Verschuer, *Across the Perilous Sea* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 2006), 50–76. For recent scholarship on interconnections between Buddhism and maritime commerce, see Li Yiwen, "Networks of Profit and Faith: Spanning the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea, 838–1403," (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2017).

3. For some of the major Japanese-language works that discuss the history of sea merchants in East Asia during this period, see Mori Katsumi 森克己, *Nissō bōeki no kenkyū* 日宋貿易の研究 (Tokyo: Shinteiban, 1975); Yamauchi Shinji 山内晋次, *Nara Heian ki no Nihon to Ajia* 奈良平安期の日本とアジア (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2003); Enomoto Wataru, *Higashi Ajia kaiiki to Nihon kōryū: Kyū–jūyon seiki* 東アジア海域と日中交流: 九～一四世紀 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2007); Enomoto, *Sōryo to kaishō tachi no Higashi Shina kai*; Yamazaki Satoshi 山崎覚士, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron* 中国五代国家論 (Kyoto: Bukkyō Daigaku, 2010); Watanabe Makoto 渡邉誠, *Heian jidai bōeki kanri seidoshi no kenkyū* 平安時代貿易管理制度史の研究 (Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 2012); and Tanaka, *Kokusai kōeki to kodai Nihon*.

stretches of farmland were opened south of the Yangzi River, and transportation networks were established to move grain and other commodities across long distances. In fact, four of the five most important seaports during these centuries of political disunion were located in the southern vicinity of Hangzhou Bay, in what is now Zhejiang province. These were: Yongjia 永嘉 (in present-day Wenzhou), Linhai 臨海 (Taizhou), Yinxian 鄞縣 (Ningbo), and Maoxian 鄮縣 (east of Ningbo). All of these ports had foreign ships anchor in their harbors.[4]

After China was consolidated once more under the Sui dynasty (581–618), construction of the Grand Canal connected major inland trade routes to the east coast and linked the highly productive farm regions of the Yangzi delta to Luoyang in the north. Mingzhou 明州 (Ningbo) in effect became the southern terminus of the Grand Canal.[5] The main force behind the rapid pace of commercial and urban growth in this region from the Tang dynasty (618–907) until the end of the Song dynasty (960–1279) was the maturation of the rice economy. Chaos and civil war from the An Lushan rebellion (755–763) once again caused a mass exodus of people further south into areas which had greater agricultural potential, resulting in a gradual shift of China's economic center from northern China to the southeast.[6] By the ninth century, many goods were being produced there on a large scale, including silks, ceramics, and most of the paper used by the Chinese court.[7] It was also during this time that we begin to witness the economic maturation of four prefectures that feature prominently in this essay. Mingzhou, Wuzhou 婺州 (Jinhua), Yuezhou 越州 (Shaoxing), and Taizhou 台州, all located south of Hangzhou Bay, were the hometowns and marketplaces of Zhedong sea merchants from the ninth to tenth centuries, and Mingzhou and Taizhou also functioned as ports for interstate trade routes.

4. Liu Shufen, "The Southern Economy," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 2: The Six Dynasties, 220–589*, ed. Albert E. Dien and Keith N. Knapp (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 349–50. The fifth important port was the city of Guangzhou. Located in the far south of present-day China, much of the maritime trade between China and the known world occurred there.

5. Shiba Yoshinobu, "Ningpo and its Hinterland," in *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. G. William Skinner (Taipei, SMC Publishing: 1977), 392.

6. Richard von Glahn, *The Economic History of China: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 210–26.

7. For paper production, see Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 270, citation no. 3.

The Silla Network and the Zhedong Region

Historians have accredited Silla merchants with pioneering private maritime trade across East Asia.[8] Although the precise period in which their network was active remains unclear, we do know that these Korean merchants played vital roles in facilitating the exchange of goods, people, ideas, and religious practices between states and societies across East Asia during the first half of the ninth century. Emerging sometime after the collapse of central authority in China in the middle of the eighth century, this network spanned the coastal areas of China, the Korean Peninsula, southeastern Siberia, and the Japanese archipelago. Their original headquarters was on the southwestern tip of the Korean peninsula, though in China they formed a series of diaspora communities and monasteries that connected bases on the Shandong peninsula to the Zhedong area via both inland and coastal routes.[9] The Korean tycoon and military officer Chang Pogo oversaw operations of this network at the peak of its influence, until he was assassinated by his rivals in the Silla court in 841. After this time, Chang Pogo's former trade network faced a precipitous decline.

Although it is commonly asserted that Chang Pogo's network of Korean merchants was overtaken by a competing network of Chinese merchants following Pogo's assassination, a wide range of evidence suggests a more nuanced transitional process. In fact, we can see from very early on a close relationship between Silla and Zhedong sea merchants. One of the early connections between these two regions is attested to in an entry in the *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (*History of the Three Kingdoms*, compiled in 1145), which states that inhabitants of Silla fled Korea for Mingzhou in 816 due to the outbreak of famine on the peninsula.[10] Shortly thereafter, there occurs the earliest extant record of private Chinese merchants reaching Japan, which speaks of two Yuezhou merchants arriving in the archipelago in 819 on a Silla trade ship. Within one year, another Silla ship arrived in Japan, and according to the description of one crew member, there were both Chinese and Koreans aboard.[11] What is

8. See, for instance, the secondary works listed in citation no. 1 above.

9. A map for this network is provided in Tsubasa Nakamura, "The Maritime East Asian Network in the Song-Yuan Period," paper presented at the "International Interdisciplinary Conference on Middle Period China, 800–1400," Harvard University, 5–7 June, 2014, 4–5. These communities were self-governed in a way that was very similar to the Muslim communities that concurrently existed in China's southern and eastern ports. See Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels in T'ang China*, 284–85.

10. Kim Busik 金富軾, *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (Tokyo: Rokkō shuppan, 1980), 1:10.240.

11. See the discussion between the monk Ennin and the Korean merchant Hwang Chŏng

notable here is that the earliest known instances of private Chinese merchants operating in Japan shows them doing so in cooperation with Silla merchants, who started to arrive in Japan earlier in the decade. Also in 819, the Zhedong surveillance commissioner reported to the Tang court that Mingzhou was functioning as a connection point to "foreigners from Silla and Japan."[12] It is possible that the voyages discussed here alerted him to the strategic significance of the area.

Chang Pogo's death caused a fracture in the Silla trade network, which resulted in some merchants siding with Pogo's opponents in the Silla court, while others fled to China and continued to trade with Japan from diaspora communities within the Tang empire. From this point onward, the Japanese government ceased trade relations with the merchants who remained on the Korean peninsula, and began to record the Silla merchants who arrived from China as "Chinese" (Tang) merchants.[13] Thus, it is understandable why textual records would suggest that Chinese merchants took control of the sea trade across East Asia, as it becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain the ethnicity of merchants in China from extant sources beyond this point in time. Nevertheless, the voyages of ethnically mixed crews persisted after the death of Chang Pogo, which is apparent in the monk Ennin's 円仁 (793–864) description of the crew that brought him back to Japan in 847,[14] as well as in the monk Enchin's 円珍 (814–891) trip to and from China in the years 853 and 858 respectively.[15] We also know that at least two of the merchants

王請 in Ennin 円仁, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki* 入唐求法巡礼行記 (Heibonsha, 1970), 1:76. Hwang gives the date of 819 for the arrival of this ship, though the *Nihon kiryaku* records the ship as arriving in 820. See *Nihon kiryaku* 日本紀略 (Tokyo: Keizai zasshisha, 1897), 14:435.

12. Enomoto, *Higashi Ajia kaiiki to Nihon kōryū*, 44; and Wang Pu 王溥, *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1991), 2:78.1705–6.

13. Watanabe, *Heian jidai bōeki kanri seidoshi no kenkyū*, 16–37.

14. Ennin, *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki*, 2:305.

15. The Parhae merchant Yi Yŏnhyo 李延孝 (?–877) was accompanied by two Silla merchants from Chang Pogo's trade network on Enchin's trip to China in 853. In 858, Yi Yŏnhyo was in charge of the ship that brought Enchin back to Japan with another mixed crew, though on this occasion the crew appears to have been predominantly Chinese. Many sea merchants were multilingual and could act as interpreters who spoke non-native languages with a high level of proficiency. There is nothing to suggest that one's ethnicity determined one's hierarchical position on a crew. For the 853 trip, see Saeki Arikiyo 佐伯有清, *Enchin* 円珍 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1990), 51–58; and Takeuchi Rizō 竹内理三, *Heian ibun* 平安遺文 (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1964), 1:91. Concerning the 858 trip, see *Tōjin sōbetsushi narabini sekitoku* 唐人送別詩並尺牘 (Senshu Daigaku kodai higashi Ajia sekaishi nenpyō), http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/~off1024/nenpyoushiryou/tojinsoubetu/tojinsoubetu.htm.

on the latter journey were from the Zhedong prefectures of Wuzhou and Yuezhou.

These are the last known instances of Silla merchants participating in the China-Japan trade. However, even as descriptions of "Silla" merchants in Japanese sources cease in the mid-ninth century, recent scholarship has noted that there are other indications that Silla sea merchants remained active.[16] One indication is from the journal of a Silla monk visiting China, who wrote of a sea route between Silla and Mingzhou that was in use at the end of the ninth century. This sea route, with a stopover on the Shandong peninsula, is also indicated in a 901 inscription which states that the restoration of a temple in Dengzhou by a Korean official was funded by profits from trade in Mingzhou. Chinese sources also indicate that there were Silla diaspora communities along coastal Zhedong that existed into the Five Dynasties period (907–979), with a particular concentration in the Taizhou area. Even a decade after the last known instance of Silla merchants arriving in Japan (in 853), we have a record of Silla monks reaching the archipelago aboard a Chinese ship.[17] It would seem that the involvement of Silla merchants in interstate trade persisted for longer than previously believed, and that these merchants continued to operate in partnerships with merchants of the Zhedong area.

Zhedong Merchants

Scholars to date have produced a large body of research on the topic of Chang Pogo and his maritime trade network. However, much less attention has been directed toward the backgrounds and native places of Chinese sea merchants who were active at the same time. A detailed examination reveals that these merchants were from the Zhedong area, and they controlled the China-Japan trade in the century and a half following Chang Pogo's death. It was at this time that they transformed a seldom-used sea route for diplomatic envoys into one of the most significant commercial networks in East Asian history:

16. The following information is from Enomoto, *Higashi Ajia kaiiki to Nihon kōryū*, 45; Tanaka, "Kōnan no Shiragi jin kōeki sha to Nihon," 6–7; and Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 244.

17. Fujiwara no Tokihira 藤原時平, *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 日本三代実録 (Tokyo: Keizai zasshisha, 1914), 7.145. As is evident in *Ennin's Diary*, Silla monks were active in the same diaspora communities in China as Silla merchants.

the Ningbo-Hakata network.[18] All four of the prefectures (Wuzhou, Yuezhou, Mingzhou, and Taizhou) that comprised the main hubs for the China-Japan trade from approximately 850 to 1000 formed a connected body of land south of Hangzhou Bay. These prefectures were all integrated into the economy of the largest city in the region, Hangzhou, which was the capital of the kingdom of Wu-Yue (907–978), and later of the Southern Song (1127–1279) dynasty. Here, I will discuss these four prefectures' economic significance and the merchants that were born or resided within their territory.

We begin with an examination of Mingzhou, a major port city and transshipment center that connected Hangzhou with other port cities across China.[19] In addition to its markets, Mingzhou was a center for the production of alcohol, fabric, ceramics, metallic goods, wood products, and boats.[20] It was also the location of a Kaiyuan temple (Kaiyuan si 開元寺), that was a popular pilgrimage site for Buddhist monks from Japan.[21] After a diplomatic rupture between Japan and Silla in the latter half of the eighth century prevented Japanese

18. On the later efflorescence of this network, see von Glahn, "The Ningbo-Hakata Merchant Network and the Reorientation of East Asian Maritime Trade, 1150–1350," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 74, no. 2 (2014): 249–79; and Enomoto, *Higashi Ajia kaiiki to Nihon kōryū*. Rather than directly crossing the East China Sea, the most common route linking Japan to continental Asia until this time passed along the southern tip of the Korean peninsula, the island of Tsushima, and the island of Kyushu. A less common alternative was to sail along the Ryukyu Islands and Taiwan, which also functioned as a prehistoric crossing point.

19. Shiba, *Commerce and Society in Sung China*, trans. Mark Elvin (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1970), 9; and Hugh Clark, "The Southern Kingdoms between the T'ang and the Sung," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 184. For more on Mingzhou, see Shiba, "Ningpo and its Hinterland." On Mingzhou's local elites during and after the Song dynasty, see Linda Walton, "Kinship, Marriage, and Status in Song China: A Study of the Lou Lineage of Ningbo, c. 1050–1250," *Journal of Asian History* 18:1 (1984): 35–77; Richard L. Davis, *Court and Family in Sung China, 960–1279: Bureaucratic Success and Kinship Fortunes for the Shih of Ming-chou* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986); Richard L. Davis, "Political Success and the Growth of Descent Groups: The Shih of Ming-chou during the Sung," in *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000–1940*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and James L. Watson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 62–94; Richard L. Davis, "The Shi Tombs of Dongqian Lake," *JSYS* 26 (1996): 201–16; and Sukhee Lee, *Negotiated Power: The State, Elites, and Local Governance in Twelfth- to Fourteenth-Century China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014).

20. Enomoto, *Higashi Ajia kaiiki to Nihon kōryū*, 40.

21. Saeki, *Takaoka shinnō nittōki* 高丘親王入唐記 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2002), 164, 174.

embassies from using the sea route to China that passed along the Korean peninsula, Mingzhou became a main port for tributary missions sent across the open sea from Japan. Later, Mingzhou functioned as the primary port for sea merchants sailing to Japan, as well as to states on the Korean peninsula, an arrangement that lasted for many centuries.

To modern historians of East Asia, Mingzhou is easily the most recognizable of the four prefectures discussed here due to its status as a major port throughout a long period of Chinese history. It might then come as a surprise that Mingzhou does not appear to have been a location where, in the early centuries of trade between China and Japan, merchants resided. Perhaps the only merchant from Mingzhou in the time frame of this essay is a man who figures prominently in Japanese records named Zhang Youxin 張友信; however, the attribution for this origin is made only somewhat vaguely in Ennin's diary.[22] Nevertheless, Zhang Youxin is recorded as having sailed to and from Mingzhou on several occasions, so the attribution is plausible. Zhang, who also resided in northern Kyushu for some time (in what is now Karatsu 唐津), was something of a polymath; he is recorded in a variety of sources as a shipbuilder, interpreter, captain, and merchant. While in Japan, Zhang constructed and piloted a ship for Imperial Prince Takaoka's 高丘親王 (799–865?, also known by his Buddhist name Shinnyo 真如) pilgrimage to China in 862.[23]

All indications are that Yuezhou was a major base for Zhedong merchants and craftsmen in the region during the ninth century, while Mingzhou was the port that these merchants sailed to and from (Yuezhou does not appear to have had a major port). As previously noted, the earliest extant record of private Chinese merchants reaching Japan concerns two Chinese merchants from Yuezhou, Zhou Guanghan 周光翰 and Yan Shengze 言升則, who arrived in the archipelago on a Silla trade ship in 819. Perhaps as a means of ingratiating themselves with the government in Heian, they informed the Japanese authorities of a massive uprising led by the renegade general

22. *Nittō guhō junrei gyōki*, 2:305. Rather than stating that Zhang is a "Mingzhou person," a common way of identifying the birthplace of merchants in Japanese records, Ennin describes him as 明州張支 (友) 信, something akin to "Zhang Youxin of Mingzhou." This could likewise describe the port that Zhang sailed from.

23. Ise no Okifusa 伊勢興房, *Zuda shinnō nittō ryakki* 頭陀親王入唐略記 (Senshu Daigaku kodai higashi Ajia sekaishi nenpyō), http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/~off1024/nenpyoushiryou/nittougokaden/nittougoke-sinnnyo.htm.

Li Shidao 李師道 (?–819), which the Tang government was having trouble suppressing.[24] The merchants Liu Shixian 劉仕獻 and Zhan Jingquan 詹景全 (?–877) are described in the same document as Yuezhou people who sailed to Japan in 856, though elsewhere Zhan Jingquan is recorded as coming from Wuzhou—which is an attribution that I am more inclined to support.[25] Considering that Wuzhou and Yuezhou were connected by a series of rivers, it is not unrealistic to think that Wuzhou merchants would reside or do business in the more active commercial hub.[26]

Yuezhou was known first and foremost as the administrative center of Zhedong, though another point of distinction was that the area was a renowned production center over a long period of time. After the An Lushan rebellion shattered the centralized control structure of the Tang empire, Sichuan and the Lower Yangzi region became China's main locations for silk production. Yuezhou was among several prefectures in the region that sent the greatest quantities of silk to the Tang capital.[27] Some of these silks were of the finest quality, as evinced by Emperor Jingzong's 唐敬宗 (809–827, r. 824–827) commissioning of one thousand bolts of twill damasks from workshops in Yuezhou. These fabrics were considered so exorbitant in price that a local official implored the emperor to abandon his mandate.[28] Perhaps most important for the topic of this article are ceramics. Yuezhou kilns were producing extremely high quantities of export ceramics from the middle of the eighth century until they encountered a period of sudden decline in the eleventh century.[29] Not only were high quantities of Yuezhou celadons shipped to

24. *Nihon kiryaku* 14.432. Note that until 821, Mingzhou was administered by the Yuezhou prefectural government. For this reason, these two merchants could have been from either Mingzhou or Yuezhou. On this point, see Enomoto, *Higashi Ajia kaiiki to Nihon kōryū*, 29. Also note that the character Yan (言) seems incorrectly recorded, as it does not appear to be a Chinese surname. Chinese merchant names were often erroneously written in Japanese sources (though quite often the correct character is discernable).

25. *Heian ibun*, 1:105. On Zhan Jingquan's native place, I follow Yamazaki Satoshi who points out that Wuzhou was most likely his hometown, though Yuezhou was the location where he prepared for his departure to Japan. See *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 191, 246–47; and *Tōjin sōbetsushi narabini sekitoku*. Yuezhou was also likely the location where Zhan purchased much of the cargo that he brought to Japan.

26. On these river connections, see Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 189–90.

27. Buyun Chen, *Empire of Style: Silk and Fashion in Tang China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 130–32.

28. Chen, *Empire of Style*, 75–76.

29. Kamei Akinori 亀井明徳, "Tōdai tōji bōeki no tenkai to shōnin" 唐代陶磁貿易の展

Japan—where they were the most common type of imported ceramics—they were also exported to Western Asia and throughout much of Southeast Asia.[30] The prefecture was also one of the main production centers for paper in the Tang empire,[31] which was likewise a minor export commodity. Yuezhou was moreover a location for coin minting after 845, as well as both a sea salt production center and the location of a salt directorate office for the powerful Salt and Iron Commission.[32] As for its religious importance, Yuezhou was the location of two major Buddhist temples, the Longxing si 龍興寺 and the Fahua si 法華寺. The renowned Japanese monks Saichō 最澄 (767–822) and Kūkai 空海 (774–835) both visited these sites on their trip to China, as did Imperial Prince Takaoka.[33] Due to the central role it played both in the production of export goods and as an important religious site, Yuezhou was one of the more significant locations in the history of trade between Japan and China.

Wuzhou is known mainly to scholars of Chinese history as the home region of important Chinese intellectuals and prominent government officials, particularly from the Southern Song period onward.[34] Looking further back in time, we may see that this region was extensively developed by settlers during the Six Dynasties period. Wuzhou became a significant commercial center at this time due to its proximity to Hangzhou Bay and the burgeoning city of Jiankang 建康 (Nanjing).[35] Ceramics were produced here, as were silks and

開と商人, in *Ajia no naka no Nihon shi* 3: *Kaijō no michi* アジアのなかの日本史 3: 海上の道, ed. Arano Yasunori 荒野泰典, Ishii Masatoshi 石井正敏, and Murai Shōsuke 村井章介 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku shuppankai, 1992), 126–28.

30. Kamei, "Tōdai tōji bōeki no tenkai to shōnin," 120–26; and Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 249.

31. Shiba, *Commerce and Society in Sung China*, 104.

32. On coin minting, see Denis Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 181. For salt production and administration, see Twitchett, 175.

33. Saeki, *Takaoka shinnō nittōki*, 163–66.

34. On this topic, see Beverly Bossler, *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, & the State in Sung China (960–1279)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1998); Peter K. Bol, "Neo-Confucianism and Local Society, Twelfth to Sixteenth Century: A Case Study," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, ed. Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 241–83; and Peter K. Bol, *Localizing Learning: The Literati Enterprise in Wuzhou, 1100–1600* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2022).

35. Liu, "The Southern Economy," 335.

other fabrics. Wuzhou textiles dating to the early Tang were even discovered in the far-off region of present-day Xinjiang.[36] In terms of industry, Wuzhou also had fifteen hearths for coin minting by the late Tang.[37] Also noteworthy is a mirror with an inscription stating that it was produced in the "Wuzhou Prefectural Mint" 婺州官鑄造, which was among a range of mainly Southern Song dynasty bronze mirrors produced in the Zhedong region that were recently excavated in Japan. Although this is a unique example, it does suggest that mints in this region were connected either directly or indirectly to the Japan trade at some point in time.[38]

Due to its position as the only landlocked prefecture of the four areas discussed here, the significant role that Wuzhou played in trade between China and Japan has not yet attracted the notice of scholars of East Asia.[39] Yet, from the ninth to eleventh centuries we can trace the origins of more sea merchants to this location than to any other area in China. Starting in the ninth century, we know of three Wuzhou merchants who traded in Japan; the earliest among them being Xu Gongyou 徐公祐. Gongyou traveled to Japan in 847, 849, and 852, and his elder brother Xu Gongzhi 徐公直, hosted the monk Enchin during his pilgrimage in China in 853.[40] At this time, Gongzhi

36. For ceramics production in Wuzhou, see Liu, "The Southern Economy," 349. For textiles, see Valerie Hansen and Helen Wang, "Introduction," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 23, no. 2 (2013): 155–63; and Chen, *Empire of Style*, 28. For silk weaving during the Song dynasty, see Joseph P. McDermott and Shiba Yoshinobu, "Economic Change in China, 960–1279," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 5, Part Two: Sung China, 960–1279*, ed. John W. Chaffee and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 398.

37. Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty*, 180.

38. Chang Lan 苌岚, *7–14 shiji Zhongri wenhua jiaoliu de kaoguxue yanjiu* 7–14 世纪中日文化交流的考古学研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2001), 148–71. This work was brought to my attention via Li, "Networks of Profit and Faith," 103. The vast majority of bronze mirrors from this group were privately produced in Huzhou 湖州 (in northern Zhedong).

39. Two exceptions would be Yamazaki Satoshi, who discussed the connections to this region of three Wuzhou merchants—Zhan Jingquan, Li Da 李達, and Xu Gongyou. See Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 189–94; and Gregory Sattler, "The Ideological Underpinnings of Private Trade in East Asia, ca. 800–1127," *Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University* 6 (2021), 41–60. Most references to the origins of these merchants appear in Japanese primary sources, which is likely why the importance of this region in interstate trade has yet to be noticed by Chinese historians.

40. Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 171–87; Tanaka, *Kokusai kōeki to kodai Nihon*, 142–44; and Saeki, *Enchin* 円珍 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1990), 185–86.

took care of Enchin while he was ill, and in turn, the monk prayed with him and offered religious services during his stay.

Another important Wuzhou merchant was Zhan Jingquan, who, together with the Yuezhou merchant Liu Shixian and two Parhae 渤海 (698–926)[41] merchants, sailed to Japan in 856 and then met with Enchin upon their return to China. There, Enchin entrusted these merchants with a large donation to construct a Buddhist hall at the Guoqing si 國清寺 on Mount Tiantai 天台.[42] The Guoqing si temple complex, it should be noted, was the center of Tiantai Buddhism in China, and Enchin was a key figure in the transmission of Tiantai (Jp. Tendai) Buddhism to Japan. In 858, Zhan and a large group of merchants accompanied Enchin on his return trip to the archipelago. While waiting for favorable winds for their trip back to China, Zhan Jingquan was among several of the merchants who composed poems as they bade farewell to the monk.[43] Zhan remained in contact with Enchin for many years, and carried letters exchanged between Enchin and China-based monks in 864.[44] He returned to Japan in 865, and again in 867. On the latter trip he carried Buddhist paraphernalia to Japan at the request of Enchin, and also made a donation to a Japanese temple with his associate Li Da 李達,[45] who was from Yongkang 永康 county in Wuzhou. In addition to joining Zhan in composing poetry in 858 and making donations to a temple in 867, Li Da brought over one hundred books for Enchin on a trip to Japan in 881.[46]

Considering that Xu Gongyou, Xu Gongzhi, Zhan Jingquan, and Li Da all came from Wuzhou and fostered close links with Enchin over a long period of time, they most likely belonged to a common network of wealthy merchants and local elites. Unfortunately, as Japanese records often only record one or

41. This state was comprised of territory corresponding to modern North Korea, Manchuria, and the Russian Far East.

42. Saeki, *Enchin*, 116; *Heian ibun*, 1:105.

43. *Tōjin sōbetsushi narabini sekitoku*.

44. Saeki, *Enchin*, 174.

45. Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 266; Saeki, *Enchin*, 174; Miyoshi Kiyoyuki 三善清行, *Tendaishū Enryakuji zasu Enchin den* 天台宗延暦寺座主円珍伝 (Senshu Daigaku kodai higashi Ajia sekaishi nenpyō), http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/~off1024/nenpyoushiryou/enchinden/enchinden-850~859.htm; Shikō 志晃, *Jimon denki horoku* 寺門傳記補録 (Senshu Daigaku kodai higashi Ajia sekaishi nenpyō), http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/~off1024/nenpyoushiryou/jimondenkihoroku/jimondenki8-858~882.htm; and Sontsū 尊通, *Chishō daishi nenpu* 智証大師年譜 (Kashihara Keiyō, 1880), 18.

46. Saeki, *Enchin*, 177; and *Tendaishū Enryakuji zasu Enchin den*.

two names of sea merchants on any given voyage (usually among crews of between thirty and seventy men), it is not always possible to plot in detail the networks of associates that the traders maintained. From the final decades of the Tang dynasty and through to the first decades of the Five Dynasties period, the task of tracking the flow of Chinese merchants to and from Japan becomes all the more challenging as rebellions and wars led to prolonged periods without any recorded contact between Japanese officials and continental sea merchants.

Despite these upheavals, Zhedong merchants strengthened their hold on trade with Japan in the Five Dynasties period. This may be attributed almost entirely to the stability and support provided by the commercially oriented state of Wu-Yue. Encompassing much of modern Zhejiang province as well as the southern portion of Jiangsu and, after 945, Fuzhou, the state of Wu-Yue was the wealthiest and longest-lived of the many polities of the Five Dynasties period.[47] Although it was relatively small in size and population, the government of Wu-Yue was able to punch well above its weight in the geopolitical maneuvering between various states in the former Tang domain due to its geographic and economic advantages as well as the efficacy of its diplomatic initiatives. Key to the kingdom's survival was the fostering of relations with the militarily dominant dynasties of northern China; Wu-Yue diplomats were able to use the country's wealth to influence the highest levels of these northern governments. In fact, the arrival of Wu-Yue traders in those states was so frequent that the merchants were permitted to set up trade agencies in port cities to conduct business directly with the local populace. Wu-Yue merchants were even allowed to build their own jails on this non-sovereign soil to enforce debt repayments on the loans they issued.[48] Aside from leveraging wealth for influence, the ruling Qian 錢 family was able to maintain amicable relations by making no claims to imperial rulership and paying tribute to the emperors of the northern dynasties. As for relations outside of China, Wu-Yue conducted diplomacy with Liao 遼 (916–1125), Later Paekche 後百濟 (892–936, located in the southwestern region of the Korean peninsula), Silla, Koryŏ 高麗 (918–1392), Parhae, and Japan, though only in the case of Japan do scholars maintain that merchants, rather than diplomatic envoys,

47. Clark, "The Southern Kingdoms between the T'ang and the Sung," 133, 143.

48. Naomi Standen, "The Five Dynasties," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279*, 78.

were dispatched to the archipelago (ostensibly, they were acting as messengers between both governments). The kingdom was also possibly involved in direct trade with Southeast Asian states.[49]

Of the states that emerged after the collapse of the Tang dynasty, the traders who sailed to Japan were only ever described as coming from Wu-Yue. Unfortunately, along with the lacuna in the historical record regarding those who arrived in the early tenth century, there was a general indifference to recording the local affiliations of sea merchants and envoys even when their presence became more conspicuous in later decades. Although we are as yet unable to ascertain which particular areas of Wu-Yue most of these individuals came from (if indeed they all came from Wu-Yue), one exception would be the case of Jiang Xun 蔣勳. As the most active visitor cited in Japanese records during the Five Dynasties period, Jiang Xun appears in Japanese sources on several occasions as a representative of the Wu-Yue court.[50] Not only was he engaged in trade between Wu-Yue and Japan from 935 to 953, he also carried correspondence between the King of Wu-Yue and leading ministers of the Japanese court in Heian. As I have discussed in my previous work, additional details about Jiang Xun's background can be ascertained from a Chinese funerary inscription which states that he was from Dongyang 東陽 county in Wuzhou, and that he attained one of the highest positions in the Wu-Yue government, that of Censor-in-Chief (*yushi dafu* 御史大夫).[51] Recently, I have uncovered several additional sources that might provide a broader understanding of this figure.

The first among these is another funerary inscription from one of Jiang Xun's descendants that likewise identifies Jiang as an acting Minister of Works and a Censor-in-Chief at the Wu-Yue court.[52] There are some additional

49. On Wu-Yue trade with Southeast Asia, see Yamazaki *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 230–51.

50. The following is from Sattler, "The Ideological Underpinnings of Private Trade in East Asia." For these sources, which record Jiang's name as Jiang Chengxun 蔣承勳, see *Nihon kiryaku* 22.820–21; Shinzei 信西, *Honchō seiki* 本朝世紀 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1898), 8.13; *Heian ibun*, 9:3564; and Fujiwara no Akihira 藤原明衡, *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粋 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1997), 7.170.

51. Sattler, "The Ideological Underpinnings of Private Trade in East Asia," 50–52. Translations of offices and ranks are from Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1985).

52. Li Xiusheng 李修生, *Quan Yuan wen* 全元文 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2004), 55:1692.646–48. This biography is for Jiang Jigao 蔣季高 (1329–1357), the grandson of the Yuan dynasty literatus Jiang Jixiang 蔣吉相 (1274–1321) whose life was the subject of the first biography.

details in this funerary inscription that did not appear in the first. Here, it is asserted that the Jiang lineage established itself in Yixing 義興 county (modern Yixing 宜興, located just to the west of Suzhou) after the fall of the Han dynasty, which is commensurate with a claim to descent from the great clan known as the Jinling Jiang 晉陵蔣氏.[53] Following this, the funerary inscription states that after seventeen generations of living in the coastal county of Linhai (in Taizhou), Jiang Xun was the first of his kin to reside in Dongyang county (in Wuzhou). In addition to noting Jiang Xun's relocation to Wuzhou, here we may also consider that, by no later than the Five Dynasties period, Linhai was the location of a Silla diaspora community and most likely a hub for interstate trade.[54] Thus, we may trace Jiang Xun's lineage to a port city that was connected to interstate sea trade networks since the Six Dynasties period.

The next source to examine is a short biography of Jiang Xun in the Wu-Yue biographies section of the *Shiguo chunqiu* 十國春秋.[55] Although this account presents unique information about Jiang Xun, it is clearly discussing the same individual as the two aforementioned funerary inscriptions, and it in fact corroborates several points. For instance, Jiang Xun's position as an acting minister and Censor-in-Chief is noted, as is his ancestral link to the Wu commandery and his residence in Dongyang county. Of interest here is that Jiang Xun is described as having fled to Dongyang at the end of the Tang dynasty, and identified as having received the prestigious title of 'Grand Master of the Palace with Golden Seal and Purple Ribbon' (*jinzi guanglu dafu* 金紫光祿大夫, given to officials of the second or third rank).

Jiang Xun's name also appears in an entry in the *Xin Tang shu* dated to the

Although these two funerary inscriptions were written approximately four centuries after the death of Jiang Xun, based on the discussion that follows, I am inclined to view the author Huang Jin's 黃溍 (1277–1357) account of the man as accurate and likely based on family and locally-available records maintained over a long period of time. On the production of genealogies in Wuzhou during the period when these inscriptions were written, including Huang Jin's views on the process, see Bol, *Localizing Learning*, 204–28.

53. For the Jinling Jiang's inclusion in Tang dynasty lists of great families, see David G. Johnson, *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), 226. For discussion on such claims, known to scholars of China as 'choronyms,' see 29, 63.

54. Tanaka, "Kōnan no Shiragi jin kōeki sha to Nihon," 6. Beverly Bossler points out that a large portion of prominent Wuzhou families in the Song dynasty moved to Wuzhou during the Five Dynasties period. See *Powerful Relations*, 124.

55. Wu Renchen 吳任臣, *Shiguo chunqiu* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 3: 85.1241–1242.

year 898; a time when warlords were carving out domains throughout much of China.[56] Here, Jiang Xun is mentioned as one of two officers sent by the Kingdom of Wu founder Yang Xingmi 楊行密 (852–905) to engage the navy and land forces of the Wu-Yue founder Qian Liu 錢鏐 (852–932), who was at this time a warlord laying siege to Suzhou.[57] Having failed to relieve the siege and in desperate need of provisions, Wu forces surrendered soon afterward. It is possible that a young Jiang Xun defected to the state of Wu-Yue when this occurred, and gradually worked his way into Qian Liu's inner circle. Although this is a matter of speculation, we do know that Qian Liu aggressively recruited young and talented individuals at this time, and military commanders with a civil education (commonly referred to in contemporary sources as *rujiang* 儒將) were of particular value.[58] This battle was followed later in the same year with a push by Qian Liu's forces to retake Wuzhou, where Dongyang county was located.[59] If the *Xin Tang shu* was indeed discussing the same Jiang Xun that would later rise to prominence in the Wu-Yue court, this would seem to corroborate the *Shiguo chunqiu*'s claim that he moved to Wuzhou at the end of the Tang dynasty. As for Jiang Xun's presence in Suzhou, we might note that the city had long held close commercial links with sea ports in the Zhedong region, and that it was previously in the possession of Qian Liu prior to its conquest by Yang Xingmi.[60]

There is one final item that might shed light on Jiang Xun's role in civil government. The Fukuoka City Museum in Japan has in its possession an ink stone from China with a provenance dating from the tenth to eleventh century,

56. Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), 34.188.

57. This section of the *Xin Tang shu* states: "[Qian] Liu sent [his] navy. [Because Yang Xingmi's commander Tai] Meng's supplies were depleted, Xingmi sent Li Jian and Jiang Xun to engage [them], and the troops of [Qian's officer Gu] Quanwu were defeated." Since this was a naval and land blockade, and Li Jian's biography makes it clear that he commanded land-based troops, the inference is that Jiang Xun was the naval commander. For Li Jian's biography, see Lu Zhen 路振, *Jiuguo zhi* 九國志 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 2000), 1.13.

58. Clark, "The Southern Kingdoms between the T'ang and the Sung," 162.

59. Sima Guang, *Zizhi tongjian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shujiu, 1956), 9:261.8519.

60. On the links between Zhedong ports and Suzhou, see Tanaka, "Kōnan no Shiragi jin kōeki sha to Nihon;" and Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 184–89. Also of interest is the biography of a Suzhou monk which states that, at some time between the years 885 and 888, the monk fled fighting around the city of Suzhou for Mingzhou on a ship piloted by Yuezhou merchants. See Yamazaki, 199.

which was found in the vicinity of the Kōrokan 鴻臚館 (a lodging quarters in northern Kyushu for diplomats, Buddhist monks, and private merchants).[61] On the ink stone is an inscription which states "Hu Chenglian engraves: Xiao Jiang purchased this ink stone" 胡承璉鐫小蔣置此硯瓦.[62] From the tenth to eleventh centuries, there were only two representatives of Wu-Yue surnamed Jiang 蔣 who were recorded as arriving in Japan. One was Jiang Xun, and another was named Jiang Gun 蔣袞 (the latter was recorded as arriving in Japan in 945 and 947, which corresponds to the period of time that Jiang Xun was active).[63] A search through a database of hundreds of thousands of Chinese biographies reveals only one result for the characters "胡承" from the beginning of the ninth century to the eleventh century.[64] This is for a record of a Wu-Yue official from Wuzhou named Hu Chengshi 胡承師, who was an adult at precisely the time that Jiang Xun and Jiang Gun arrived in Japan. We can see then that Hu Chengshi's lifetime corresponds to the lifetime of Hu Chenglian, which suggests they might have been brothers or relatives that shared the same generational signifier of 'Cheng' 承. Although we are unable to know whether this ink stone belonged to either Jiang Xun, Jiang Gun, or one of their relatives, it does attest to the civil skillset that representatives from China held at this time, and possibly serves as an additional link to Wuzhou.

There is something to be said for why a minister of the Wu-Yue court would appear in Japan at the apex of his career. To begin with, we must address assumptions that were made in past historiography and how those

61. The Kōrokan is discussed in detail throughout Batten, *Gateway to Japan*.

62. Fukuoka shi Hakubutsukan 福岡市博物館, ed. *Yomigaere! Kōrokan: Yukikau hitobito to karamono* よみがえれ! 鴻臚館: 行き交う人々と唐物 ('Kōrokan ato hakkutsu 30 shūnen kinen tokubetsu-ten' jikkō iinkai, 2017), 141, 229. I am indebted to the contributor Morimoto Mikihiko 森本幹彦 for suggesting that this item may have belonged to Jiang Chengxun.

63. *Honchō seiki* 8.124; and Fujiwara no Akihira, *Honchō monzui* 7.169. Bruce Batten provides an insightful narration of Jiang Gun's 945 journey to Japan in Batten, *Gateway to Japan*, 105–11. Mori Kimiyuki believes that both names were of the same person, and that 'Gun' 袞 was an erroneous recording of 'Xun' 勳. See Mori Kimiyuki 森公章, *Kodai Nicchū kankei no tenkai* 古代日中関係の展開 (Tokyo: Keibunsha, 2018), 112. Although I do think this is a possibility, 袞 was used as a Chinese given name in this period of time, so it is also possible that the person recorded as Jiang Gun was a relative of Jiang Xun. The latter graph for Xun's given name was also written in Japanese texts as 勲, 勳, and 勛.

64. This information comes from the entry for Hu Chengshi's son, Hu Ze 胡則, in the *China Biographical Database* (CBDB) (Harvard University, Academia Sinica, and Peking University, April 2, 2022), https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cbdb. Hu Ze is of interest because in 989 he became the first resident of Wuzhou to receive a *jinshi* degree. On this, see Bol, *Localizing Learning*, 30.

assumptions might affect our understanding of tenth-century diplomacy and trade. Most of what we know of the commercially-driven diplomatic network of Wu-Yue comes from the records of other Chinese and non-Chinese states rather than from records of the Wu-Yue court. The reason for this imbalance of information might pertain to the difficulty of preserving documents in times of great change and turmoil, though the unflattering inclination of Wu-Yue representatives to subordinate themselves in tributary hierarchies and to bestow honorary titles to gain favorable trade terms is another factor that historians should consider.[65] Whatever the case, what we know of exchange between Wu-Yue and Japan comes to us mainly from Japanese documents that are unfortunately light on details. The assumption of historians to date has been that Jiang Xun and those who followed in his footsteps were merchants entrusted by Wu-Yue kings to send missives and gifts to the Japanese court. In the most basic sense, there is no reason to challenge the notion that these individuals were indeed merchants, but simply addressing them as such is problematic for several reasons. First, it does not appear that these men were actually called "merchants" in the Japanese sources.[66] Although as a matter of respect record-keepers were at times reluctant to use this term, we must still acknowledge that the idea that these individuals were all primarily regarded as merchants has come to us from modern historians. Second, the Wu-Yue representatives who arrived in the years following Jiang Xun's final mission to Japan were, in fact, recorded as "envoys."[67] This accords with the official sources of various other non-Chinese and Chinese states which likewise describe Wu-Yue representatives in their domains as "envoys." Taking this into consideration, the view of recent scholars that Japan had a unique arrangement

65. On Wu-Yue diplomacy, see Edmund H. Worthy, "Diplomacy for Survival: Domestic and Foreign Relations of Wu Yüeh, 907–978" in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 17–44; and Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 230–67.

66. There is one account in the *Honchō seiki* that mentions a "Tang merchant" giving a tribute of two goats in 938, and in the following month the same text talks of the Japanese court providing goods owed from a previous voyage of Jiang Xun. Some scholars have proposed that Jiang Xun was the "Tang merchant," though this is a point of speculation. It is not clear if Jiang Xun joined this mission, and there were commonly multiple traders on each ship that reached Japan. Moreover, when Jiang Xun's name is mentioned in regard to the goods owed, he is referred to as a "Tang person" rather than a "Tang merchant." See Kuroita Katsumi 黒板勝美, *Shintei zōho kokushi taikei* 新訂増補国史大系 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1999), 9.7, 10–11.

67. See *Nihon kiryaku* 23.869 and 23.875, for arrivals in the years 957 and 959, respectively.

with the Wu-Yue court, which entailed only private merchants arriving as representatives of their state, does not align with what we know about Wu-Yue diplomacy and it is not supported by evidence. Finally, the act of sending a ranking minister of the Wu-Yue court abroad to engage in diplomatic affairs was not unprecedented. In 927, a Wu-Yue minister traveled to the Korean peninsula—also with a missive from the king of Wu-Yue—in an attempt to broker a peace agreement between its trade partner Later Paekche and the ascending kingdom of Koryŏ.[68] The reason for dispatching a minister to Japan is perhaps best interpreted in relation to how this move would result in favorable trade relations for Wu-Yue. Sending a high-ranking official demonstrated that the Wu-Yue court regarded its relationship with the Japanese court as a matter of considerable importance. This is evident on close examination of Jiang Xun's final trip to Japan in 953. In this year, the Wu-Yue king Qian Chu 錢俶 (929–988, r. 947–978), a fervent Buddhist, formally asked the Japanese court to provide copies of hundreds of Mahayana Buddhist texts that were lost during the collapse of the Tang dynasty.[69] An interesting detail of Qian Chu's request is provided in the thirteenth-century Chinese Buddhist history work *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀. It states "Since the chaos and disorder of the late Tang, sutras were lost or destroyed. Therefore, many texts were overseas. As a result of this, the Wu-Yue king [Qian Chu] sent ten envoys (*shi* 使) to Japan to request [copies of] those texts. They returned, and the king had a temple built at Luoxi."[70] As Japanese records indicate that Jiang Xun was the leader of the group from Wu-Yue that arrived in 953, we can infer that he was the leader of the embassy discussed in the *Fozu tongji*.

Thus, the Wu-Yue representatives were not simply merchants, but official envoys as well. It is certainly plausible that some who traveled to Japan from Wu-Yue were private merchants deputized for their role (most likely the subordinates of the envoys, though perhaps even some of the envoys themselves).

68. Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 234–35; *Samguk sagi* 2:50.856.

69. This event is discussed in extensive detail in Benjamin Brose, "Crossing Thousands of Li of Waves: The Return of China's Lost Tiantai Texts," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 29, no. 1 (2008): 21–62. See also Enomoto, "Nyū Tō sō, nyū Sō sō no jidai" 入唐僧・入宋僧の時代, in *Nihon kodai kōryūshi nyūmon* 日本古代交流史入門, ed. Suzuki Yasutami 鈴木靖民, Kaneko Shūichi 金子修一, Tanaka Fumio 田中史生, and Ri Sonshi 李成市 (Bensei shuppan, 2017), 213; and Mori Kimiyuki, *Kodai Nicchū kankei no tenkai*, 107–8, which both also date this mission to the year 953.

70. Zhipan 志磐, *Fozu tongji* (CBETA, digital edition, 2002), 4.107.

As was common for Chinese officials in this period, some envoys likely had humble origins as merchants or military commanders before taking on more important positions in their government. Nevertheless, the case of Jiang Xun indicates that the leaders of these missions were men who held a certain degree of stature within a Wu-Yue government that had evolved from a loose system of warlord rule into a complex civil bureaucracy. The attainment of their positions through various channels based on merit typifies the pragmatic approach to governance, trade, and diplomacy that prevailed in the competitive economic and political environment of tenth-century China.

As we move on to the Song dynasty, we see in more detail the intricacies of a Zhedong merchant network persisting after the Song conquest of China in the late tenth century. This group, comprised of merchants from Wuzhou and Taizhou, appears connected by their dealings with the Japanese monks Chōnen 奝然 (938–1016) and Genshin 源信 (942–1017). Chōnen, later to become the abbot of Tōdaiji 東大寺, began his journey to China in the year 983.[71] The two merchants who brought Chōnen to Japan, Chen Renshuang 陳仁爽 and Xu Renman 徐仁滿 are described in a Japanese source as "Wu-Yue merchants."[72] Thus although we do not know the precise location of their hometowns, we do know that they were from the Zhedong region. These two merchants brought Chōnen to Taizhou; though not long after their arrival, Chōnen was summoned to the capital city of Kaifeng for an audience with Song Emperor Taizong 宋太宗 (939–997, r. 976–997). After this, he traveled back to Taizhou, where he embarked on a return trip to Japan with a local sea merchant named Zheng Rende 鄭仁德 in 986.[73]

In 987, a merchant by the name of Zhu Rencong 朱仁聰 arrived in Japan with a Chinese monk from the Shuixin si 水心寺 temple in Hangzhou, named Qiyin 齊隱.[74] One year later, both of these individuals met Genshin in Kyushu,

71. Tuo Tuo 脫脫, *Song shi* 宋史 (henceforth *SS*; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 491.14131. For Chōnen's life and his journey to Japan, see Wang Zhenping, "Chōnen's Pilgrimage to China, 983–986," *Asia Major* 7, no. 2 (1994): 63–97; and Li, "Networks of Profit and Faith," 59–66.

72. Although this was recorded four years after the capitulation of Wu-Yue to the Song empire, Japanese officials still identified the merchants as coming from this particular region.

73. Wang, "Chōnen's Pilgrimage to China," 85.

74. Taigai Kankeishi Sōgō Nenpyō Henshū Iinkai, ed. 対外関係史総合年表編集委員会, *Taigai kankeishi sōgō nenpyō* 対外関係史総合年表 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1999), 115. On Genshin's life, see Robert F. Rhodes, *Genshin's Ōjōyōshū and the Construction of Pure Land Discourse in Heian Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), 107–80.

whereupon Genshin presented the Chinese monk with a collection of Buddhist texts that he had written, and requested that Qiyin distribute them upon his return to China.[75] Less than one month later, and with Genshin's books in hand, Qiyin joined several of Chōnen's disciples, the Taizhou merchant Zheng Rende, what would seem to be another Taizhou merchant named Zhou Wende 周文德, and a Wuzhou merchant named Yang Renshao 楊仁紹 on a journey back to China.[76]

At this point, we once again see a clear web of connections between Japanese monks, Zhedong merchants, and Chinese Buddhist institutions.[77] One particularly strong connection was formed between Genshin and the Buddhist community in Wuzhou—even though the monk never traveled to China. In 989, the Shuanglin si 雙林寺 temple in Wuzhou was recorded as having received Genshin's books via the aforementioned Wuzhou merchant Yang Renshao.[78] Yang sailed to Japan once more the following year—again with Zheng Rende, Zhou Wende, and Chōnen's disciples—and brought with him correspondence for Genshin from a Yunhuangshan 雲黃山 monk in Wuzhou named Xingchan 行辿. Letters and texts were sent between these two monks over the next two years, with Zhou Wende and Yang Renshao continuing to act as intermediaries.[79]

There is one more Zhedong prefecture that needs to be discussed in detail here, and its significance in the history of exchange between China and Japan cannot be overstated. Along with Mingzhou, Taizhou was one of the two Zhedong prefectures with ports that were integrated into overseas trade routes. From the ninth to tenth centuries, ports there were frequented

75. Enomoto, *Sōryo to kaishō tachi no Higashi Shina kai*, 104; and *Taigai kankeishi sōgō nenpyō*, 115.

76. *Taigai kankeishi sōgō nenpyō*, 114–15. Zhou Wende's origin is never stated, though he shares the same surname and generational modifier of another Taizhou merchant, Zhou Wenyi 周文裔.

77. As Li Yiwen has pointed out in private correspondence, one additional pattern worth noting is that the merchants 陳仁爽, 徐仁滿, 鄭仁德, 楊仁紹 and 朱仁聰 all have the character '仁' in their given names. I am inclined to see this as a likely indication of kinship relations between some or all of these individuals. See *Taigai kankeishi sōgō nenpyō*, 114–15.

78. *Taigai kankeishi sōgō nenpyō*, 115; Enomoto, *Sōryo to kaishō tachi no Higashi Shina kai*, 104. Enomoto points out that this temple was later designated as one of China's "Five Mountain" temples.

79. Enomoto, *Sōryo to kaishō tachi no Higashi Shina kai*, 108; *Taigai kankeishi sōgō nenpyō*, 114–15.

by ships sailing to and from Japan,[80] and influential Japanese monks such as Saichō, Enchin, and Chōnen passed through its harbors. The reason for much of this traffic was that Taizhou was the spiritual center of the Tiantai Buddhist sect, which had a profound influence on Buddhist learning in Japan. Japanese monks required merchants who could bring them to pilgrimage sites, and merchants in turn were able to use the pretext of escorting monks to gain permission to trade in Japan. Historians have successfully documented many instances of financial dealings between sea merchants and religious institutions in both Japan and China.[81] For these reasons, Taizhou was an important area for both religious exchange and trade; two activities that were often not mutually exclusive.

We have already examined the activities of the Taizhou merchants Zheng Rende and Zhou Wende. Zheng Rende, who made three trips to Japan between 986 and 990, was from Ninghai 寧海 county in Taizhou. Zhou Wende, also active at this time, can be connected to the family of another merchant Zhou Wenyi 周文裔 (962–?) through their shared generational modifier *wen* 文. Like Zheng Rende, the Zhou family, of which three merchants are known to have traveled to Japan, were also from Ninghai county in Taizhou.[82] This family was exceptional in many ways, as they were later able to form connections with Japan's imperial family, as well as the Fujiwara regency. Furthermore, in 1112 a matriarch of the family received posthumous recognition from Emperor Huizong 宋徽宗 (1082–1135, r. 1100–1126).[83] We might also note that the members of the Zhou family were exceptional in that they were the only Zhedong merchants to continue to travel to Japan after the establishment of *shibosi* offices in the region at the end of the tenth century. Finally, there is evidence to indicate that Zhu Rencong was also a native of Taizhou. His first known arrival in Japan in 987 was the same year

80. Nakamura, "The Maritime East Asian Network in the Song-Yuan Period," 7–8.

81. For one particularly well documented instance, see Enomoto "'Itawatashi no bokuseki' to Nissō bōeki"「板渡の墨跡」と日宋貿易 in *Mono kara mita kaiiki Ajia shi: Mongoru-Sōgen jidai no Ajia to Nippon no kōryū* モノから見た海域アジア史――モンゴル-宋元時代のアジアと日本の交流, ed. Yokkaichi Yasuhiro 四日市康博 (Fukuoka: Kyūshū Daigaku shuppan kai, 2008), 39–69.

82. Yamazaki, "Kaishō to sono tsuma: Jūichi seiki Chūgoku no enkai chiiki to Higashi Ajia kaiiki kōeki" 海商とその妻: 十一世紀中国の沿海地域と東アジア海域交易, *Rekishi gakubu ronshū* 歴史学部論集 (2011), 87–99.

83. Yamazaki, "Kaishō to sono tsuma." Much of Yamazaki's work is discussed in Sattler, "The Ideological Underpinnings of Private Trade in East Asia."

that Chōnen returned to the archipelago. In 1954, a text and some items were found inside a Buddhist sculpture that the monk had brought to Japan. One of the items was a belt with an ink inscription that reads "Stepmother Zhu of Taizhou donates [this] belt" 台州朱二娘拾帶子一條.[84] Considering that Zhu Rencong and this sculpture arrived in Japan in the same year and very likely on the same ship, it is possible that Stepmother Zhu was a relative of Zhu Rencong.

The End of an Era

All signs point to the 990s as the major period of change for Chinese sea merchants during the Tang-Song transition. This becomes evident when *shibosi* offices, tasked with the oversight and taxation of sea trade, began to appear in the region. In 989, a *shibosi* office for the Hangzhou Bay area was first established in Hangzhou; however, due to complications that remain unclear, the office was moved to Mingzhou in 992, and then back to Hangzhou in 993. Finally, in 999, *shibosi* offices were established in both cities. Despite a 985 entry in the *Song shi* complaining that people in the Zhejiang area were not paying taxes, followed by a terse statement that "sea trade was prohibited,"[85] it was only after the office was moved back to Mingzhou in 992 that the vigorous activity of Zhedong merchants in Japan came to a sudden stop. For three years, Japanese sources make no mention of the arrival of foreign merchants, until finally in 995 the first of two events transpired that might explain the unannounced end of Zhedong merchant dominance in Japan. In the first event, Zhu Rencong, who had previously traded in Japan without any apparent issues, was accused of a criminal offence in Wakasa 若狭 province. He remained in Japan for many years, apparently to resolve payment disputes with the government.[86] Although Zhu Rencong's place of origin is not stated in extant sources, his role in escorting the Hangzhou monk Qiyin in 987, as well as the inscription on the belt donated by "Stepmother Zhu" together suggest that he was a Zhedong merchant. The second significant event, which occurred in 996, highlights the first known instance

84. Chang, *7–14 shiji Zhongri wenhua jiaoliu de kaoguxue yanjiu*, 156–57.

85. *SS* 5.76; Billy K. L. So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China: The South Fukien Pattern, 946–1368* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 44–45.

86. *Taigai kankeishi sōgō nenpyō*, 114–15. See also Watanabe, *Heian jidai bōeki kanri seidoshi no kenkyū*, 206–30.

in which a private merchant from Fujian province reached Japan. Zhou Shichang (recorded as 周世昌 in Chinese sources, and as Jiang Shichang 羌世昌 in Japanese sources) is described as having come from Jianzhou 建州 (present-day Jian'ou, in northern Fujian province).[87] His arrival marks the beginning of a near-constant flow of Fujianese merchants sailing to Japan that would last for centuries.

Scholars have previously assumed that the cause of Zhu Rencong's predicament was related to his breaching regulations that limited the frequency of sea merchant arrivals in Japan.[88] Nevertheless, his last recorded arrival prior to this time was eight years earlier, which was a much longer pause between voyages than those of his peers. Another issue with this assumption is that Zhu seems to have been punished more strongly than any other merchant of the time; there are very few examples of merchants being stranded in Japan without compensation for as long as Zhu Rencong was. It is true that gold shortages at this time likely hindered the ability of the Japanese court to properly compensate Zhu Rencong, though another possible explanation for the merchant's predicament is that he lacked the paperwork issued by Chinese authorities that would allow him to trade in Japan. As this paperwork was also inspected by Japanese authorities, not possessing it would have placed Zhu in a position in which he would be vulnerable to extortion. Indeed, Zhu Rencong's voyage was not typical of merchant journeys to Japan, as he bypassed Dazaifu in northern Kyushu—home to the traditional government body for inspecting and receiving merchant arrivals—in favor of landing his ship in Wakasa province.

The Fujian merchant Zhou Shichang also appears to have stayed in Japan for an extended period of time. We can only speculate on whether or not he had documentation that legitimized his involvement in the sea trade, though he was recorded as having "washed ashore" on the archipelago, a term that in previous times was applied to new arrivals who the Japanese court was not yet familiar with. During the six years that Zhou Shichang spent in Japan, another Fujianese merchant named Shangguan Yongxian 上官用銛 was allowed to trade, though Zhou Shichang did not join him on his journey back

87. *SS* 491.14136. It is possible that merchants from Fujian arrived in Japan on at least one occasion during the Five Dynasties period. This is suggested by the monk Kanken 寛建 traveling on a merchant ship to Fuzhou in 927. Unfortunately, there is no extant information about the ship's crew. See Enomoto, *Sōryo to kaishō tachi no Higashi Shina kai*, 95–96.

88. Watanabe, *Heian jidai bōeki kanri seidoshi no kenkyū*, 206–30.

to China.[89] Also during his time in Japan, Zhou Shichang composed poetry with Fujiwara no Tametoki 藤原為時, the father of the *Tale of Genji* author Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部, and when Zhou finally returned to China, he is recorded as bringing with him a person with the Fujiwara surname.[90] Zhou Shichang's reception in Japan was clearly more amicable than that given to Zhu Rencong.

There is one final event concurrent with the back and forth relocation of Zhedong *shibosi* offices that is well worth noting. In 992, the same year that the Zhedong *shibosi* office was moved to Mingzhou, a wealthy Fujianese merchant arrived in the port city with an embassy from the Javanese kingdom of Shepo 闍婆.[91] This merchant, named Mao Xu 毛旭, escorted the embassy all the way from Java to China. The *Song shi* states that Mao Xu was able to do this because he had already traded in Shepo on numerous occasions, thus implying familiarity with its leaders. The timing of this event coincides with the cessation of Zhedong merchants trading in Japan; however, even more interesting is the *Song shi* statement that Mao Xu was from the Jianxi 建溪 region of Fujian, which was located within the prefecture of Jianzhou (the birthplace of Zhou Shichang, who arrived in Japan several years later). This means that one of the earliest known Chinese merchants to trade in Southeast Asia was from the same remote inland area as the first Fujianese merchant to trade in Japan—and we know that their commercial activities coincided with significant changes in maritime policy taking place in the 990s. Considering these facts, a picture begins to emerge of what appears to have been rival merchant networks from different regions in southeast China, each vying for preferential treatment from Song officials.

The timing of all of these events suggests that after 992, the new administrators in the Zhedong *shibosi* offices had preferences for certain groups of merchants. Fujian merchants enjoyed a prominent—though not exclusive—position in the trade with Japan for many centuries to come.[92] Yet as

89. Fujiwara no Yukinari 藤原行成, *Gonki* 権記 (Tokyo: Zoku gun sho ruijū kanseikai, 1988), 1:3.50

90. *SS* 491.14136; *Taigai kankeishi sōgō nenpyō*, 117.

91. For Mao Xu and the Shepo embassy, see Claudine Salmon, "Srivijaya, la Chine et les Marchands Chinois (Xe-XIIe s.) Quelques Réflexions sur la Société de l'empire Sumatranais," *Archipel* 63 (2002), 75; James K. Chin, "Junk Trade, Business Networks, and Sojourning Communities," *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 6, no. 2 (2011), 159; and *SS* 489.14092.

92. In considering an argument that Fujian merchants could previously not reach Japan

previously mentioned, one Zhedong family did manage to prosper under these new circumstances. At a time when new networks of merchants were establishing a rapport with Japanese courtiers—as well as establishing permanent trade settlements in northern Kyushu—the Zhou family of Taizhou was able to maintain its favorable position in the Japan trade. We know of at least six instances of Zhou Wenyi trading in Japan between 1012 and 1031. In addition, his son, Zhou Liangshi 周良史 (986–?), arrived in the archipelago at least five times between 1016 and 1034.[93]

How did the Zhou family distinguish itself from other Zhedong merchants? For one thing, they sailed with the same crews as Fujianese merchants, with whom they likely cooperated closely.[94] Another strategy that played to their advantage was the arrangement of marriage alliances with individuals who were in a position to influence trade activity. This is evinced by Zhou Wenyi's marriage to the daughter of a Japanese courtier, and their son Zhou Liangshi's marriage into a Mingzhou literati family.[95] Another crucial factor in their success was their continued presence in Japan. Zhou Liangshi eventually left Taizhou to move to Japan, and was probably among the earliest merchants to set up a Chinese diaspora there.[96] Indeed, the very establishment of such communities in Hakata, Koryŏ, and throughout Southeast Asia at this time demonstrates a major shift in the methods that sea merchants employed in their business operations.[97]

After *shibosi* offices were established in Zhedong, all sea traffic to Korea and Japan was to pass through the inspection of port authorities in Mingzhou or Hangzhou prior to crossing the sea.[98] This essentially ended the role of

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solely due to not having access to Wu-Yue ports, we may recall that while the Song unification of the southeast was achieved in 979, we only see the first instance of a Fujian merchant (Zhou Shichang) arriving in Japan in 996. This delay of seventeen years indicates that other major obstacles prevented Fujian merchants from accessing Japanese markets after the boundaries between Wu-Yue and coastal Fujian dissolved. We should also consider that Fuzhou was conquered by Wu-Yue in 945, though the earliest known Fuzhou merchant to reach Japan was Shangguan Yongxian in 997, one year after Zhou Shichang arrived.

93. Both of their lives are discussed in great detail in Yamazaki "Kaishō to sono tsuma."

94. Fujiwara no Sanesuke 藤原実資, *Shōyūki* 小右記 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967), entry dated Manju 万寿 4 (1027).8.30.

95. Yamazaki "Kaishō to sono tsuma."

96. Yamazaki "Kaishō to sono tsuma."

97. Nakamura, "The Maritime East Asian Network in the Song-Yuan Period," 6.

98. For discussion on the *shibosi*, see Nakamura, "The Maritime East Asian Network in the

Taizhou as an international port city, as we only know of one ship that passed from there to Japan in the following two centuries—and even that ship sailed to Mingzhou prior to its departure.[99] Also noteworthy is that these changes temporally coincided with the steep decline of Yuezhou kilns as well as other kilns in the Hangzhou Bay area.[100] Billy So has noted that Yuezhou's export ceramics faced the steepest decline in production at this time, while the production for domestic markets and the imperial family remained consistent. Concurrent with these trends, Fujian and Guangdong took the lead in making export ceramics.[101] Although scholars have recognized the significance of *shibosi* offices being established in the Zhedong region, it would seem that the impact of these changes was even greater than previously believed.

Conclusion

Zhedong merchants were among the earliest private traders to arrive in Japan. Their activities were supported by the Wu-Yue state in the tenth century, and they remained an influential group until political realignments in the late tenth century disrupted their activities. Although the available evidence suggests that they formed cohesive networks for much, if not all of the time that they were active in Japan, these merchants also worked with other close-knit groups, such as the Korean merchants in Chang Pogo's trade network. Rather than initiating a takeover of the operations of Korean diaspora communities, it would seem that there was a transitional process in which Korean and Chinese merchants continued to operate in the prefectures south of Hangzhou Bay even after descriptions of Korean merchants are no longer apparent in Japanese records. The descendants of Korean merchants would have had every incentive to maintain involvement in the Zhedong merchant networks until the late tenth century when those networks were superseded by merchant groups further south. Indeed, an examination of the Zhou family of Taizhou reveals

Song-Yuan Period;" So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China*, 42–49; Angela Schottenhammer, "China's Emergence as a Maritime Power," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 5, Part Two: Sung China, 960–1279*, ed. John W. Chaffee and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 460–79; and von Glahn, "The Ningbo-Hakata Merchant Network."

99. Nakamura, "The Maritime East Asian Network in the Song-Yuan Period," 7.

100. Schottenhammer, "China's Emergence as a Maritime Power," 500.

101. So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China*, 201.

that marriage across ethnic lines was viewed as a means of establishing close business relationships, so a more apt inference would be that many in China's Silla diaspora communities simply assimilated over time.[102] What is more curious is that although Zhedong merchants were willing to work alongside merchants from Silla and Parhae, they did not noticeably extend this same level of cooperation to merchants from elsewhere in China. Descriptions of Chinese merchants from the provinces where Silla merchants were most active are conspicuously absent from Japanese records. One must conclude that cooperation among merchant groups was determined by certain advantages that each group brought to the table; namely, access to foreign markets and local production centers.

In the years after the Tang empire disintegrated into chaos, Zhedong merchants became essential players in the geopolitical designs of the Wu-Yue state. Their activities were integrated with interstate diplomacy, including that between Wu-Yue and Japan. This more nuanced understanding of interstate exchange at this time challenges the commonly held view among present-day scholars that Japan was in the midst of a centuries-long period of diplomatic isolation.[103] The vague descriptions of Wu-Yue representatives in Japanese records appear to have less to do with record-keepers attempting to frame Japan as diplomatically closed-off as with an uncertainty about how to address and conduct relations with the states that emerged from the ashes of the Tang empire. After all, powerful men continued to claim succession to the Tang dynastic line throughout most of the Five Dynasties period, and there was no precedent for diplomatic engagement with warlords who were attempting to become sovereigns of new dynasties.[104] This sentiment is perhaps

102. Enomoto Wataru arrives at a similar conclusion in "Shiragi kaishō to Tō kaishō."

103. Here, we must note Robert Borgen's argument that the Japanese court was not motivated to maintain a position of isolationism. He points out that the court-sponsored *Engi shiki* 延喜式, compiled in 927, "included detailed provisions for the dispatch of missions to China," which suggests the court had not yet precluded the possibility of sending embassies there. See Robert Borgen, "Monkish Diplomacy: A Case Study in Eleventh-Century Sino-Japanese Relations," in *Contacts Between Cultures, Eastern Asia: History and Social Sciences, Volume 4*, ed. Bernard Hung-Kay Luk (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 1–6; and Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 248.

104. One example of this discomfort was when the overture of a warlord in Wenzhou was rebuffed by the Japanese court in 894. See Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真, *Kanke bunsō* 菅家文草 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1967), 10.586; and Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court*, 241.

best reflected in Japanese records that speak of "Tang" merchants arriving long after the collapse of that empire, and of "Wu-Yue" merchants arriving after the kingdom was annexed by the Song. Indeed, Wu-Yue was at times recorded in Japanese sources as a prefecture or as a region of the Tang empire, though as relations between Wu-Yue and Japan matured, it came to be referred to as a state (*guo* 國, yet still described as a part of "Great Tang").[105] Clearly, the symbolic significance of these states persisted long after their demise.

As for the symbolic value that modern historians once placed on the year 894 (when Japanese officials cancelled what would have been the last embassy to the Tang empire), the significance of this event is perhaps somewhat overstated when we consider that Japanese diplomacy with a long-standing ally clearly continued after that year. Parhae embassies, likewise motivated by commercial exchange, traveled to Japan on numerous occasions from the early eighth century until the year 930, when the Japanese court emphatically ended relations between both states. This occurred when Japanese officials learned that visiting envoys, who had previously represented the Parhae court, had misrepresented their status and were actually disgruntled subjects of a new puppet state set up by Khitan conquerors.[106] The turn of events in which Japan ended relations with a long-standing ally and trade partner closely aligns with the earliest-known instance of a Wu-Yue representative arriving in Japan only five years later, which suggests that Wu-Yue took on a role in Japan's relationship with the outside world that was previously held by Parhae.

Although archaeological evidence of huge quantities of Yue ceramics in tenth-century Japan demonstrates that the rule of Wu-Yue sovereigns coincided with a high point of success for Zhedong merchants operating in Japan, the historical documents are muted for much of the activity that transpired there at this time; instead, we see more textual evidence of a high frequency of trade toward the end of the tenth century. This trade was cut off suddenly when regulatory bodies were established in the Zhedong region in the early

105. *Nihon kiryaku* 23.869.

106. Of interest in this incident is that despite the initial warm reception that the 930 embassy received, a "Tang guest" informed the Japanese court that Parhae was recently conquered by the Khitan and that this embassy was misrepresenting itself. See *Shintei zōho kokushi taikei*, 12 (*Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記), 204. For an overview of the history of diplomatic relations between Parhae and Japan, see Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court*, 227–40. On early diplomacy between Parhae and Japan, see Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in Multi-Polar Asia: A History of Diplomacy and War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 93.

Song dynasty, which suggests that Zhedong merchants suffered from a loss of favor among the authorities there.

This leads us to an important observation: every instance of a Chinese sea merchant disclosing his hometown from the beginning of the ninth century until the final decade of the tenth century has his place of origin in the Zhedong area. By my count, this would be eleven merchants; six from Wuzhou, three from Yuezhou, one from Taizhou (if we consider Jiang Xun a person of Wuzhou), and one from Mingzhou. If we include those merchants described as coming from "Wu-Yue," both before and after the kingdom was annexed by the Song empire, this number would increase to sixteen. The additional merchants who are described as sailing to Japan from Zhedong ports, associating with monks, officials, and merchants from that area, and in one instance, sharing the same surname and generational modifier as a Zhedong merchant, suggests that this number should be even higher. There is not a single clear-cut case to my knowledge in the documentary record of a Chinese sea merchant who was originally from elsewhere in China at this time.[107]

107. Although Xu Gongzhi is described at different times with both the petty official title 婺州衙前散將 and 蘇州衙前散將 ("Honorary Commander in the Prefectural Office" of Wuzhou and Suzhou respectively), Yamazaki Satoshi puts forth the argument that this merchant was from Wuzhou and later invested his profits from the sea trade into land ownership in the Suzhou area. Tanaka Fumio suggests instead that Xu Gongzhi was from Suzhou, though this position is based heavily on contingencies. Since the evidence presented thus far links Xu Gongzhi to Wuzhou three years before he was residing in a newly-purchased Suzhou estate, I am inclined to support Yamazaki's position. As for other possible examples of merchants located outside of the Zhedong area, we can consider one man who had the same administrative title as Xu Gongzhi. In the *Tōjin sōbetsushi narabini sekitoku*, a merchant named Cai Fu 蔡輔 includes the location of Rongzhou 容州 (in eastern Guangxi province) in his title, though scholars are not in agreement as to how this attribution should be interpreted. From my observation of the text, in one instance it is clearly recorded as 大唐容管道衙前散將, but in two other instances when the same title is recorded, the third character is written in a way in which it could be interpreted as either 客 or 容 (in the fourth instance, the text is too damaged to form an assessment). When we consider that two other merchants in this text wrote '唐客' in their titles, the use of the character 客 in Cai Fu's title would seem apt. However, I am more inclined to accept Yamazaki's interpretation that the title describes a position in Rongzhou because this part of the text appears to be written by Cai Fu himself (as opposed to being a transcription error), and also because the term *guandao* 管道 would seem out of place, whereas *Rong guan* 容管 would not. That said, as there are no other attributions of Chinese sea merchants from this area or anywhere nearby for centuries, we should also consider the possibility that Cai Fu received the title for an office in that area but was not originally from there. I am obliged to Nicolas Tackett for suggesting this final point. For Xu Gongzhi's titles, see Yamazaki, *Chūgoku godai kokka ron*, 171–87. For Cai Fu's title, see 247. For Tanaka Fumio's

Localities attributed to Chinese merchants in the Japan trade

MERCHANT NAME(S)	PLACE(S) OF ORIGIN	YEAR(S) ARRIVED IN JAPAN
Zhou Guanghan and Yan Shengze	Yuezhou	819
Zhang Youxin	Mingzhou	847, 851, 861, 863(?)
Xu Gongyou and Xu Gongzhi*	Wuzhou, Suzhou	847, 849, and 852
Liu Shixian	Yuezhou	856
Zhan Jingquan	Wuzhou, Yuezhou	856, 858, 863, 865, 867
Li Da	Yongkang county (Wuzhou)	858, 867, 881
Cai Fu	Rongzhou	858
Jiang Xun	Linhai county (Taizhou), Dongyang county (Wuzhou)	935, 936, 938(?), 953
Zheng Rende	Ninghai county (Taizhou)	986, 988, 990
Yang Renshao	Wuzhou	988, 990
Zhou Shichang	Jianzhou	996
Shangguan Yongxian	Fuzhou	997, 1002, 1003(?)

NOTE: Xu Gongzhi is never recorded as having arrived in Japan, and the sources only show him handling business while in China.

Korean sources also provide some indication for how Zhedong merchants fared after the tenth century.[108] From 1015 to 1029, the home regions of merchants are more explicitly identified in these sources (as we see designations such as "Quanzhou person," "Guangnan person," and so forth). Of some interest here is that Jiangnan merchants (likely indicating merchants from the area of present-day Suzhou) are noted as having arrived in the years 1018 and 1027. There are also five arrivals from Quanzhou merchants, two from Fuzhou merchants, and two from Guangnan (approximate to present-day Guangdong province) merchants. From 1031 to 1161, there were two merchant arrivals from Taizhou, five from Mingzhou, and six from Quanzhou. Some caution might be warranted in assessing these later arrivals. A close inspection

counterargument, see Tanaka, *Kokusai kōeki to kodai Nihon*, 144–46. Finally, the *Fusō ryakki* talks of an unnamed "Yangzhou person" (*Yangzhou ren* 揚州人) who was entrusted to procure sutras in China for the monk Enchin. This could possibly be a faulty rendering of *Wuzhou* 務州 (sic), as it is known that the Wuzhou merchant Li Da was procuring sutras for Enchin in around 882. See Kōen 皇円, *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 (Tokyo: Keizai zasshisha, 1906), 22.640–41.

108. The following data comes from Mori Katsumi 森克己, "Nihon Kōrai raikō no Sō shōnin" 日本·高麗来航の宋商人, *Chōsen gakuhō* 朝鮮学報 9 (1956): 224–25.

shows that the home regions of merchants are no longer emphasized in these descriptions, and merchants are instead given designations that seem to indicate the ports from which they departed. All of the locations mentioned in the documentary record from this point onward are major port cities. As Enomoto Wataru 榎本渉 has pointed out, *shibosi* offices required merchants to register at the office of the area from which they departed China.[109] Thus a Fujianese captain stopping at a port in the Hangzhou Bay area would have had his paperwork registered at the Mingzhou *shibosi*. If the early portion of this list is a more reliable indicator of the locations where merchants resided, then we may conclude that overseas trade from sea merchants from the four prefectures highlighted in this essay declined for some time, though Zhedong merchants located close to the Fujian border did find some success in the Korean trade. It remains unclear exactly when Zhedong merchants reestablished a significant presence in the Japan trade, though further research will likely yield some insight on the question.

All of this is not to say that Chinese sea merchants were exclusively from the Zhedong area until the end of the tenth century, but rather that Zhedong merchants formed a cohesive network and dominated the Japan trade for an extended period of time. In fact, much of the available evidence indicates that these merchants were able to weather the most chaotic periods of political disturbance throughout the Tang-Song transition. For instance, Zhan Jingquan wrote that civil disturbance within the Tang empire prevented him from traveling to Chang'an on the monk Enchin's behalf in 863, though it did not prevent him from traveling to Japan the following year.[110] Even when rebels had captured various port cities in the Zhedong area in the midst of the Wang Ying 王郢 rebellion (875–877), four voyages are recorded as having set out for Japan in the years of 876 and 877.[111] And while the Huang Chao 黃巢 rebellion (874–884) devastated the sea ports of Fuzhou and Guangzhou, the Zhedong region was spared much of the damage—largely due to the protection afforded by the future Wu-Yue king Qian Liu's militia. Indeed, the merchant Bai Zhizhen 柏志貞 arrived in Japan at the peak of the rebellion

109. Enomoto *Higashi Ajia kaiiki to Nihon kōryū*, 43–46.

110. *Heian ibun*, 9:3458.

111. In addition to the shipwreck in 877 that claimed the life of the monk Ensai 円載 and Zhan Jingquan, as well as the ship that brought the survivors back to Japan afterword, a merchant by the name of Yang Qing 楊清 arrived in Japan in 876, and the merchant Cui Duo 崔鐸 reached Japan from Taizhou in 877. For the last two instances, see *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* 29:493–94; and 32:535 respectively. For the Wang Ying rebellion, see Somers, "The End of the T'ang," 752–54.

in 883.[112] Although his home region is not stated, Bai Zhizhen brought with him letters for Enchin by various Guoqing si monks, including one from the disciple of a Yuezhou monk, so we know that he was active in the Zhedong region. If there was a major shakeup in the composition of merchants traveling to Japan, it would have likely occurred in the first three decades of the tenth century, as records of merchant arrivals at this time are few and the details of these individuals are vague. Nevertheless, this vagueness might be either in part or entirely attributed to changes in the practices of record keeping that were occurring in the Heian court at this time. When the documentary record enables us to verify the background of merchants sailing to Japan, they are described as coming from the state of Wu-Yue.

Zhedong merchant dominance over much of the Tang-Song transition raises questions of whether monopolies on maritime trade were enforced at particular times in this period or if certain groups benefitted substantially from the informal support of either local or state authorities. In the late Tang dynasty, state-supported monopolies on salt and tea were administered from the headquarters of the Salt and Iron Commission in the nearby prefectures of Runzhou 潤州 and Yangzhou, so such forms of wealth accrual were quite familiar to local Zhedong officials.[113] We may note that this was a time in which provincial governors amassed greater power over subordinate prefectures and counties, and in Denis Twitchett's view, southern governors were also able to leverage a certain degree of economic power in their dealings with the Tang court.[114] It is certainly possible that political patronage on a provincial level

112. Ono, *Nittō guhō junrei kōki no kenkyū*, 481–82. For the Huang Chao rebellion, see Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy*, 187–234; Robert M. Somers, "The End of the T'ang," in *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 3: Sui and T'ang China, 589–906, Part One*, ed. Denis Twitchett (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 736–45; Schottenhammer, "China's Emergence as a Maritime Power," 443–44; and John W. Chaffee, *The Muslim Merchants of Premodern China: The History of a Maritime Asian Trade Diaspora, 750–1400* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 47–49. Abu Zayd's early tenth century account asserts that 120,000 foreign merchants were killed in Guangzhou, though he goes on to say that "[t]he only reason the number of victims from these four communities happens to be known is that the Chinese had kept records of their numbers." Since this data was derived from tax registers, the large number likely indicates a mass exodus of non-Han peoples in addition to those who died during the massacre. See Abū Zayd al-Sīrāfī, *Accounts of China and India*, Trans. Tim Mackintosh-Smith (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014), 69.

113. On these monopolies, see Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty*, 49–65, 110–20. The Salt and Iron Commission, which oversaw the salt and tea monopolies, had its headquarters in Yangzhou and in Huzhou (in northern Zhedong).

114. Twitchett, "Varied Patterns of Provincial Autonomy," in *Essays on T'ang Society: The*

allowed for the formation of a sea merchant network in Zhedong province in the late Tang dynasty. Additional research may provide more definitive answers to the above questions, however until then, we should consider the conclusions that can be drawn from our current observations. In particular, the prolonged dominance of Zhedong merchants highlights the significance of the change that occurred when they disappeared from the documentary record. Of the major events that took place during the Tang-Song transition, the consolidation of power by the Song rulers brought about the greatest change to the composition of sea merchant networks. It is not quite clear why this occurred nearly two decades after the empire reached the peak of its territorial integrity, though a possible explanation might be that a series of military defeats at the hands of the Khitan armies brought about a change in focus of Song Taizong and his advisors toward consolidating power and revenue sources in the southeastern part of the empire.[115] The revenue collected by *shibosi* offices on the taxation of the sea trade would have likely helped to offset some of the expenses incurred from wars in the north. An alternative or complementary hypothesis would be that these changes were more reflective of the increasing influence that people from Fujian exercised on local and state government, and that such influence resulted from the influx of wealth tied to overseas trade.[116] This theory is supported by the fact that *jinshi* degree recipients from Jianzhou were the most numerous of all the prefectures in the empire soon after merchants from that area began to trade in Japan and Southeast Asia.[117]

Interplay of Social, Political and Economic Forces, ed. John Curtis Perry and Bardwell L. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 97–101.

115. This point was raised by Paul Jakov Smith at the 2022 Conference on Tang-Song Transitions.

116. For additional speculation that maritime commerce played a role in the examination success of candidates from coastal prefectures during the Song dynasty, see Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China: A Social History of Examinations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 152; and Clark, "Overseas Trade and Social Change in Quanzhou" in *The Emporium of the World: Maritime Quanzhou, 1000–1400*, ed. Angela Schottenhammer (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 67–69. Although the statistical peak in which Fujian scholars earned *jinshi* degrees occurred during the Southern Song, the increasing trend of their success was already under way by the end of the tenth century. For the tremendous success of Fujian scholars in the Song civil service examinations, see Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China*, 142–56.

117. For the prefectures that produced the greatest number of *jinshi* holders in the early Northern Song, see Chaffee, *The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China*, 149.