Maritime Exclusion Policy in Ming China and Chosŏn Korea, 1368-1450: Dynastic Authority, National Security, and Trade

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work, and except where otherwise stated, describes my own research.

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ABSTRACT

The Ming dynasty was a special period in China's maritime history. From the beginning, the court implemented strict and consistent restrictions on private navigation, prohibiting its residents from carrying out maritime trade and communicating with overseas people. Almost at the same time, Chosŏn, another important East Asian maritime country, carried out a similar policy. This thesis aims to explain the context of, and the reasons behind, the implementation of the maritime exclusion policy in both Ming China and Chosŏn Korea. It attempts to address a simple but crucial question: why did these two East Asian countries suddenly and simultaneously strengthen their maritime border controls at the turn of the fifteenth century? To answer this question, the thesis surveys primary textual evidence from court discussions on maritime exclusion. By focussing on court debates, this thesis intends to explain maritime exclusion policies from the perspective of central, elite, decision makers and reveal what the Ming and Chosŏn courts understood themselves to have been doing in imposing maritime bans.

Scholarship on maritime border control is voluminous. Scholars have made efforts to decipher the rationales for the policy, primarily interpreting it as anti-piracy strategies, part of a Sino-centric or Korea-centric diplomatic framework, which was later known as the 'tributary system', or a Confucian, value-oriented policy that stressed the stability of a natural economy and suppressed commercial activities. Most historians assume that maritime exclusion was an anti-trade policy that could primarily be explained by non-economic factors, such as security, diplomacy, and ideology. The thesis does not deny that non-economic factors were important, but it argues that economic considerations played a key role in the policy-making process. As will be shown, the Ming and Chosŏn courts strengthened coastal border control partly because they intended to maximize their revenue from maritime trade.

Although the thesis foregrounds economic considerations, it also considers other factors. Ming and Chosŏn had security concerns, but their maritime policies were more a consequence of the courts' worries about geopolitical uncertainty in the overseas world than about piracy. The thesis also demonstrates the role of the maritime exclusion policy in the establishment of dynastic authority, showing how the courts, by implementing control policies, extended jurisdiction over coastal regions, imposed civilian control over their own militaries, and constructed 'tributary systems' that were designed to strengthen monarchic authority over foreign and domestic audiences. In sum, the thesis shows that the decisions to

implement maritime exclusion were motived by multiple practical considerations like trade revenue, national security, and dynastic authority.

Moreover, the thesis also shows how the Ming and Chosŏn differed regarding policies and practices. The Ming and Chosŏn courts implemented similar policies simultaneously, because they faced similar security challenges from nearby maritime countries. They were both newly-established regimes founded roughly at the same time, and they had similar interests in improving their fiscal balance as newly centralized authorities. Although their policies look identical, the two administrations attached importance to different aspects of the policy. The Ming court repeatedly highlighted the ban on Chinese border-exit activities, while the Chosŏn court concentrated on its control over border-entry activities or foreign access to Korea. This was partly explained by the fact that the Ming court had a strong military and was able to impose exclusive control over the high seas and protect its marine business. The Koreans, on the contrary, were at a disadvantage when they met the Japanese fleets on the seas, and thus, they had to tolerate the presence of Japanese visitors in their territory. Finally, the thesis will also show how policies evolved differently in the two countries after their initial developments and follow changes into the mid-fifteenth century.

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Conventions

Romanization:

The choice of romanization reflects existing scholarly convention and is in the interest of legibility. All romanization, except proper names, will be provided in italics. Chinese romanization follows Pinyin. Korean romanization follows McCune-Reischauer. Japanese romanization follows Hepburn. The romanizations of literary Chinese words will depend on the author's country of origin. Proper names will be romanized according to a person's country of origin. Japanese names in *Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok* will be romanized according to the online 'Glossary of Proper nouns', accessed via:
http://esillok.history.go.kr/front/glossary/properNouns/ProperNounsList.do?menuNo=6000000&leftMenuNo=6020000

Ming official titles will primarily be translated according to Charles O. Hucker (1985). Chosŏn official titles will be translated according to Edward W. Wagner (1974) and the online 'Korean History Glossary', accessed via:
http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/gpks/resources-0

In ambiguous cases, such as literary Chinese words in classical texts, Chinese romanization will be listed first, followed by Korean, where relevant.

Use of Chinese characters, translation and romanization:

Chinese characters will be provided for the sake of clarity. All proper names will be provided in Chinese characters, where relevant. The characters of translated official titles will be provided in the footnotes for clarity, with romanization. Both romanization and characters for any specific translated terms will be provided in parenthetical comments, e.g., 'the ban on contacting foreign barbarians (*jiaotong waifan zhi jin* 交通外番之禁)'. Long literary Chinese passages comprising more than one complete sentence will be provided in footnotes without romanization.

Citations:

The *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty* (*Ming shilu* 明實錄) and the *Veritable Records of Chosŏn Dynasty* (*Chosŏn wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄) will be cited according to fascicle (*juan*/*kwŏn* 卷) and pages (e.g., 181:3a) and volume and page numbers of modern copies (e.g., v.6, p. 2735), followed by the date in brackets (e.g., [Hongwu.20:4:gengyin]. The date will be in the order of reign year, lunar month, and date in the Chinese system of

Heavenly Stems). Leap months will be indicated with 'intercalary'. In the case where *shilu* or *sillok* does not give a specific date but notes '[in] this month (C. *shiyue* / K. *shiwŏl* 是月)', *shiyue* / *shiwŏl* will be cited as a date. Likewise, in the case where *shilu* or *sillok* notes '[in] this year (C. *shisui* / K. *shise* 是歲)', *shisui* / *shise* will be cited as a date. In the case where a new *Chosŏn* king was enthroned but his first reign year did not start, '*chŭwiyŏn* 即位年 (the year of enthronement)' will be cited as a year. Fascicle number of all other pre-nineteenth century Chinese, Korean, and Japanese texts will be provided as 'Book.180'.

The term '*Ming'* will be attached in front of the *shilu* title, in order to distinguish these sources from the *shilu* of other Chinese dynasties, such *Qing shilu*. In contrast, the term '*Chosŏn*' will not be attached to the *sillok* title, because the *Chosŏn sillok* is the only surviving *Veritable Records* for Korea.

E.g., 1: *Ming Taizu shilu* 181:3a, v.6, p. 2735 [Hongwu.20:4:gengyin].

E.g., 2: *T'aejong sillok* 13:27b-32a, v.1, pp. 395-397 [Taejong.7:6:kye-mi].

Dates:

All pre-nineteenth century dates are as lunisolar dates or a mix of the lunar and the solar calendars. The year is given as a Christian, solar year, and the month is given in the original lunar calendar system.

Measures:

里 *li*	= 1/3 English mile (Chinese measure)
	= 449.17 m (Korean measure)
石 *shi*	= picul = 133.3 pounds
斤 *jin*	= 1.3 pounds
兩 *liang*	= 1/16 *jin* = 1 tael
錢 *qian*	= 1/10 *liang*
貫 *guan*	= 1,000 cash

Chapter 1

Introduction

From the beginning, Ming China (1368-1644) and Chosŏn Korea (1392-1910) implemented strict border control policies, later known as maritime exclusion (C. *haijin*; K. *haegŭm*), to prohibit domestic residents from privately sailing the seas and contacting overseas peoples. In brief, mairitme exclusion was a border exit and foreign contact control policy.

Ming China's maritime exclusion policy has been intensively discussed by scholars.[1] Historians have explained the implementation of the policy primarily from two perspectives:

[1] Scholarly interest is probably because the exclusion policy is often seen as the starting point of the influential 'isolationist' narrative, which attributes the 'backwardness' of premodern East Asian countries, particularly China, to their 'self-imposed' isolation. The isolationist narrative simplifies matters for contemporary audiences. To the East Asian audiences, the questions are: why did their home countries undergo much suffering and humiliation in the past century and a half, and, why are they now living in a world system dominated by the West? To the non-East Asian audiences, the narrative is an interesting approach to the historic phenomenon known as the European miracle, or more recently framed to as the Great Divergence. Isolation answers why East Asia failed to achieve modernization in the early modern period as the West did. Whatever the question, maritime exclusion seems to be the answer. On the concept of 'the century of humiliation', refer to David Scott (2008), p. 2. For a discussion of 'the European miracle' and 'the Great Divergence', refer to Eric Lionel Jones (1981) and Kenneth Pomeranz (2000).

security-diplomacy concerns and Ming China's anti-commerce governing style. All these intepretations suggest that maritime exclusion was an anti-trade policy, as the Ming court attempted to pursue non-economic goals at the cost of commercial interests.[2] This thesis is different from earlier interpretations in suggesting that maritime exclusion was also economically significant in Ming China's policymakers' blueprint for imperial rule. It argues that maritime exlucison not only furthered the non-economic interests of the empire but also brought about positive revenue to the government, if not the country as a whole.

Besides the economic factors, this thesis also discusses the 'non-economic' concerns that have been neglected before, such as the attempt to establish civilian control of the military, efforts towards into the non-proliferation of firearm technology, and desires to restrain the outflow of precious metals. In addition, this thesis analyses the wider international and geopolitical context, in which the policy was implemented. This thesis argues that the reasons behind the maritime exclusion policy and the contexts of the policy choice were much more precise and complicated than previously supposed. Multiple tasks were to be fulfilled by the Ming court with its coastal border control policy. In all, maritime exclusion was a rational and essential choice for the newly established regime that was struggling with domestic and foreign disorder and chaos in the post-Mongolian world.

At the same time, this thesis also discusses the maritime exclusion policy implemented in Chosŏn Korea. The writing on Chosŏn's coastal border policy is voluminous, but it is usually discused as a part of a broader topic: the 'Korean-Japanese' relations of the period. Most scholars approach the subject of Chosŏn's maritime exclusion policy from three aspects: Chosŏn's polices toward Japan, trade, and individual contacts.[3] Beginning with a

[2] At least two scholars argued that the Ming court carried out the maritime exclusion policy because it tried to monopolize the overseas trade, but neither have provided evidence for augments. See Hou Houpei (1927) and Wan Ming (2014).
[3] Kenneth Robinson (1997), p. 7.

focus on relations with Japan, past studies have concentrated on Chosŏn's regulations on the Japanese access to Korea and have paied little attention to the policy on border exits. This thesis tries to explore the origin of Chosŏn's maritime exclusion policy and explain the policy's role in the construction of the kingdom. It suggests that, like their Chinese counterparts, the Chosŏn policy makers also used maritime exclusion policy to achieve both economic and non-economic goals.

However, it should be noted that the reasons and context behind Chosŏn's policy choice were similar but slightly different from the Ming court's considerations. For expample, the Chosŏn court did not attach as great a significance to border exit control as their Chinese conterparts did. In the process of deciphering the policies, the thesis shows how the Ming and the Chosŏn situations differed and how they were similar regarding policies and practices. We will see how similar contexts and challenges drove the policy makers in the two countries to make similar policy decisions almost simultaneously. We will also see how policies evolved differently in the two countries after the initial developments and follow changes into the mid-fifteenth century. Consequently, it is hoped that a comparative analysis enhances our understanding of both cases.

Although the thesis highlights the economic significance of maritime exclusion policy, the following discussion does not intend to interpret maritime exclusion as a policy that was exclusively backed by economic calculations. Instead, by examining the different functions of maritime exclusion from various angles, including diplomacy, security, politics, finance, and trade, this thesis attempts to present the policy as a product of comprehensive considersations that spanned various situations and challenges. Because the fourteenth (Ming) and fifteenth (Chosŏn) century policies have often been interpreted in light of developments in later centuries, the focus here is on the court discussions that established the policies.

1.2 The policies: From 1371 in Ming China and 1413 in Chosŏn Korea

In 1371/12, four years after the establishment of the Ming dynasty, the first emperor issued a decree, instructing the commander in Zhejiang to 'continue prohibiting the coastal residents from privately sailing the sea'.[4] This is the earliest maritime exclusion order that the Ming materials record. Although the administrations of the previous dynasties had also restricted private sailing on occasion, historians mostly focus on the cases of the Ming dynasty, because this was the starting point of premodern China's consistent implementation of maritime exclusion.

In the following two centuries until the ban was lifted in 1567, the Ming court issued at least sixty-one orders to reaffirm or clarify the ban. Table 1 lists the Ming's maritime exclusion orders issued by 1450.[5] Precisely, the following activities were expressly prohibited. First, exportation of contraband was banned. There was a list of contraband goods recorded in the *Great Ming Code*.[6] According to the list, the Chinese were prohibited to export farm cattle, war materials like horses and weapons, and currencies including coins, cloth, and silk, to the overseas world. Human trafficking was banned as well.[7] Also, the court further interpreted and extended the list of contraband by issuing supplementary edicts from time to time. For example, Emperor Hongwu's order forbade overseas ambassadors from

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[4] *Ming Taizu shilu* 70:3b, v.3, pp. 1300 [Hongwu.4:12:bingxu].
[5] For the decrees issued after this period, refer to Table A in the Appendix.
[6] The *Great Ming Code* (*Da Ming lü* 大明律) was first published in 1368 and revised respectively in 1373, 1376, and 1389. The final version was published in 1397 and this is the version we have now. On the provisions for export control, refer to *Da Ming Lü*. Book. 15, p.117.
[7] The court reiterated the ban on human traffic and forbade the "barbarians (*yiren* 夷人)" to purchase and transport people across border in 1466 (*Xianzong shilu* 29:1b-2a, v.40, pp. 0566-0567 [Chenghua.2:4:jiachen]). The term, *yiren*, used by the court in this edict often referred to the overseas people. This edict is not referred to in Table 1. because it is not an interdict targeting on the Chinese, but the foreigners.

transporting China's steel across the coastal border in 1387.[8] In 1390, he added gold and silver to the contraband list.[9] Emperor Yongle prohibited the export of incense wood from Annam, a newly annexed province at that time, in 1416.[10] Besides, the interdict on the export of war materials was reiterated and reinforced as a ban on possessing or carrying weapons on vessels in 1452.[11]

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[8] *Ming Taizu shilu* 181:3a, p. 2735 [Hongwu.20:4:gengyin]. This edict is not included in Table 1 because it is not an interdict targeting the Chinese, but the foreigners.
[9] *Ming Taizu shilu* 205:4a, v.7, p. 3067 [Hongwu.23:10:yiyou].
[10] *Ming Taizong shilu* 181:2b, v.13, p. 1962 [Yongle.14:10:dinghai].
[11] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 217:5a-5b, v.33, pp. 4635-4636 [Jingtai.3:6:xinsi]. Besides, in 1451, the court forbade the residents in the coastal regions to possess weapons (*Ming Yingzong shilu* .207:7b-8a, v.32, pp. 4452-4453 [Jingtai.2:8:xinsi]). This edict is not included in Table 1 because it is not a direct regulation for maritime affairs.

Table 1. Prohibitive decrees on private seagoing activities in Ming from 1368 to 1451

	Year	Emperor	Prohibited behaviors			Reference
			navigation	Overseas trade	fishery	
1	1372	Hongwu (1368-98)	○			*Ming Taizu shilu* 70:3b, v.3, pp. 1300 [Hongwu.4:12:bingxu]
2				○		*Ming Taizu shilu* 70:7a-7b, v.3, pp. 1307-1308 [Hongwu.4:12:yiwei],
3	1381			○		*Ming Taizu shilu* 139:7a, v.5, p.2197 [Hongwu.14:10:jisi]
4	1384				○	*Ming Taizu shilu* 159:4b, v.6, p. 2460 [Hongwu.17:1:renxu]
5	1390		○	○		*Ming Taizu shilu* 205:4a, v.7, p. 3067 [Hongwu.23:10:yiyou].
6	1393					*Da Ming huidian.* Book 175:1a-2a, v.792, pp. 129-130.
7	1394		○	○		*Ming Taizu shilu* .231:2a-2b, v.8, pp. 3373-3374 [Hongwu.27:1:jiayin]
8	1397		○	○		*Ming Taizu shilu* 252:1b-2b, v.8, pp. 3638-3640 [Hongwu.30:4:yiyou]; *Da Ming lü.* Book 15, p. 117.
9	1398		○	○		*Guangdong Tongzhi.* Book 6:8b, v.5, p. 126.
10	1401	Jianwen (1399-1401)		○		*Guangdong tongzhi*. Book 6:9b, v.5, p. 126.
11	1402	Yongle (1402-24)	○	○		*Ming Taizong shilu* 10:1a-4b, v.9, pp. 0143-0150 [*Hongwu* 35:7:renwu]
12	1404		○	○		*Ming Taizong shilu* 27:4b, v.10, p.0498, [Yongle.2:1:xinyou]
13	1407		○	○		*Ming Taizong shilu* 68:1a-7a, v.11, pp. 0943-0955 [Yongle 5:6:guiwei]
14	1416			○		*Ming Taizong shilu* 181:2b, v.13, p.1962 [Yongle.14:10:dinghai]
15	1431	Xuande (1425-35)	○	○		*Xuanzong shilu* 78:5b-6b, v.20, pp. 1811-1813 [Xuande 6:4:bingchen]
16					○	*Ming Xuanzong shilu*83:3b-4a, vo.20, pp. 1916-1917 [Xuande.6:9:renshen].
17	1433		○	○		*Ming Xuanzong shilu* 103:8b, v.21, p. 2308 [Xuande.8:7:jiwei].
18				○		*Ming Xuanzong shilu* 104:8a-9a, v.21, pp. 2335-2336 [Xuande 8:8:dingwei]
19	1435	Zhengtong (1436-49)			○	*Ming YIngzong shilu* 7:8a, v.22, p.0141 [Xuande.10:7:jichou]
20	1440		○		○	*Ming Yingzong shilu* 65:9b-10a, v.25, pp. 1254-1255 [Zhengtong 5:3:renxu]
21	1442		○			*Ming Yingzong shilu* 93:1a-2a, v.26, pp.1875-1877 [Zhengtong.7:6:xinmao]
22	1449			○		*Ming Yingzong shilu* 179:12b-13a, v.30, pp. 3474-3475 [Zhengtong.14:6:renshen].

Source: author

Second, private deep-sea shipping was prohibited. This ban lasted for nearly two centuries. Not until 1567 did the court partly lift the ban and allow its people to engage in limited overseas trade. To enforce the ban, the court forbade private individuals from selling and consuming foreign commodities from 1394.[12] Also, the court prohibited the possessing or building of sea-going vessels from 1404.[13] Moreover, coastal fishing had been banned temporarily from 1384 to 1437.[14]

Meanwhile, the release of confidential information to foreigners was prohibited. According to the *Great Ming Code*, those who travelled abroad and leaked information to foreigners would be sentenced to death.[15] In 1371/12, Emperor Hongwu issued two edicts to forbid his subjects to 'privately sail the sea' and 'contact foreign states'.[16] These regulations substantially meant a ban on overseas travel. From then on, overseas travel and contacts with overseas people fell under tight restriction.[17] In 1394, the court clarified that people were forbidden to privately contact or collude (*jiaotong* 交通) with foreigners.[18]

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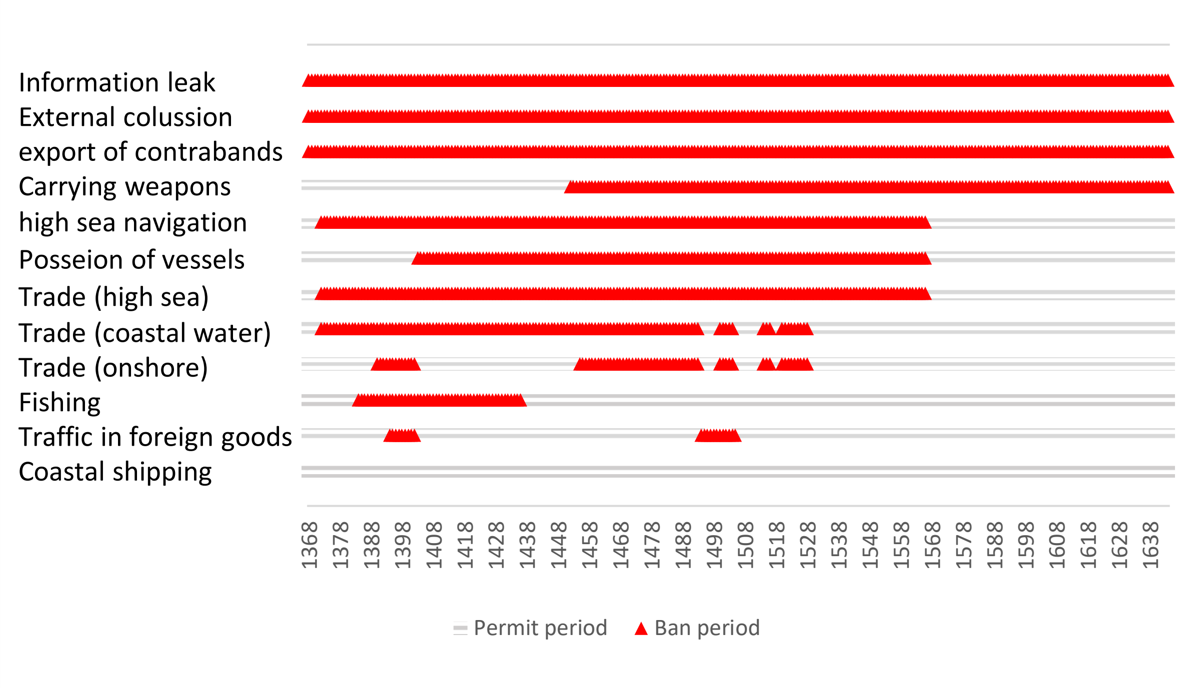
[12] *Ming Taizu shilu* .231:2a-2b, v.8, pp. 3373-3374 [Hongwu.27:1:jiayin].
[13] *Ming Taizong shilu* 27:4b, v.10, p.0498, [Yongle.2:1:xinyou].
[14] The first ban on fishery was issued in 1384/01 on the pretext of piracy defense (*Ming Taizu shilu* 159:4b, v.6, p. 2460 [Hongwu.17:1:renxu]). In 1405, the local governments in some coastal counties stopped levying tax on those who had been fishermen, because their household registrations had been abolished (*Ming Taizong shilu* 46:3b, v.10, p. 0714 [Yongle.3:9:dingsi]). This record suggests that the ban on fishery was still valid at the time. Not until 1437/07 did the court finally lift the ban on coastal fishing (*Ming Yingzong shilu* 32:1a-1b, v.23, pp.0625-0626 [Zhengtong.2:7:gengyin]).
[15] *Da Ming lü*. Book.15, p.117.
[16] *Ming Taizu shilu* 70:7a-7b, v.3, pp. 1307-1308 [Hongwu.4:12:yiwei], 70:9a, v.3, p. 1311 [Hongwu.4:12:bingwu].
[17] The terms for 'overseas travel' in the interdicts include *xiahai* 下海, *chuhai* 出海, *xiafan* 下番, *chufan* 出番, and *churu jiangyang* 出入江洋. The terms for 'foreign contacts' include *tongfan* 通番, *jiaotong waifan* 交通外番, *jiaotong waiguo* 交通外國, *sitong fanguo* 私通番國, *sitong waiyi* 私通外夷, *sitong waijing* 私通外境, *jiaojie yiren* 交結夷人, *yu waiyi jiaotong* 與外夷交通, and *yu yiren jiaotong* 與夷人交通.
[18] *Ming Taizu shilu* .231:2a-2b, v.8, pp. 3373-3374 [Hongwu.27:1:jiayin].

In sum, maritime exclusion in the early Ming period was a border exit and foreign contact control policy, which had two main targets: those who privately sailed the seas and those who privately conteacted the foreigners. Nevertheless, it does not mean that Chinese living in China were excluded from the maritime world completely and permanently. Some activities were permitted. For example, coastal shipping and transportation were legal according to the *Great Ming Code*.[19] People were allowed to sell foreign products nearly throughout the dynastic period. Also, the ban on fishing was abolished in 1437 and from then on fishermen could sail out to sea. These details suggest that the policy was more flexible than previously thought. Chart 1 shows the periods of validity of the specific regulations.[20]

[19] There is a clause in the *Great Ming Code* regulating how a coastal shipping vessel would be punished if it dodged tax. This suggests that coastal shipping and coastal transporation were legally permitted in the Ming period. Also, the court issued several edicts respectively in 1472, 1500, 1506, 1556, 1558, and 1560 to confirm that coastal residents were allowed to carry out coastal shipping and catch fish on the sea (*Ming Xianzong shilu* 108:5b-6b, v.44, pp. 2104-2106 [Chenghua.8:9:jiyou]; *Da Ming huidian*. Book 132:20a-23b, v.791, pp. 346-347; *Ming Wuzong shilu* 17:8a-8b, v.62, pp. 0519-0520 [Zhengde.1:9:renchen]; *Ming Shizong shilu* 442:3a-4a, v.88, pp. 7563-7565 [Jiajing.35:12:guimao]; *Ming Shizong shilu* 460:2b-4a, v.88, pp. 7772-7775 [Jiajing.37:6:jimao]; *Ming Shizong shilu* 482:5b-b6, v.89, pp. 8052-8054 [Jiajing.39:3:bingxu]). For more discussion of this clause, refer to Danjō Hiroshi (2013), pp. 105-111.

[20] Table B in the Appendix shows the target behaviours that were identified in all the sixty-two maritime exclusion orders.

Chart 1. Periods of validity of the interdicts



Source: author

In Korea, the Chosŏn dynasty was established in 1392/07. In his imperial edict upon enthronement, the first king declared that the new regime would govern the kingdom with China's *Great Ming Code*.[21] Legally speaking, the Chosŏn court had implemented the maritime exclusion policy from the beginning of the dynasty, given that the *Code* literally banned unauthorised sailing and exporting activities. However, given the extensive frequency of maritime contact between Koreans and Japanese, often involving piracy as in the thirteenth century, controls over travel and contact were difficult to implement. In 1413/07, while adjudicating the case of a Japanese travelling without permission to an island in Chŏlla province, King T'aejong lamented the general lack of knowledge even among his own subjects regarding controls over travel and instructed the administration to publicize the laws prohibiting residents from sailing with bogus documents (*noin* 路引) and conducting

[21] *T'aejo sillok* 1:42b-50a, v.1, pp. 21-25 [Tajo.1:7:chŏng-mi].

maritime trade.[22] This is but one early instance of the Chosŏn government lamenting the uncontrolled travel of the previous century spilling into the fifteenth century and can be taken as a convenient place to pick up the story of Chosŏn's implementation of a maritime exclusion policy. A key word to note is *noin* (路引), one of three Korean terms (*haenjang* 行狀, *munin* 文引) that referred to travel permits.[23]

Apart from the decree issued in 1413/07 by King T'aejong, another seven entries in the *sillok* illustrate how the Chosŏn court moved towards imposing restrictions on coastal border-exit activities and contacts between residents and overseas visitors in the first half of the fifteenth century (See Table 2). In 1415/06, the court requested officers to 'examine [the marines'] records (憑考) on the day [when they] sailed out', in order to prevent them from 'hunting on the islands and making trouble with the excuse of providing tribute to the court'.[24] In 1422/02, King T'aejong, who was retired but still holding significant power at the time, approved a proposal from the Ministry of Military Affairs (*Pyŏngjo* 兵曹), requiring that private vessels must travel in a group of seven or eight, presumably for security against Japanese pirates, and that they must carry official permits under the supervision of coastal guards and the escort of the marines.[25] Meanwhile, the court requested coastal guards to carry

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22 *T'aejong sillok* 26:8b-9a, v.1, pp. 679-680 [T'aejong.13:7:ŭl-sa]: 減倭人童時羅罪。 時羅欲採藿營生, 擅往全羅道 黑山島, 罪應杖一百。上曰: "此不知律文故也, 宜減等, 贖笞五十。 且國家曾不出令而罔民, 甚不可。 今後令漢城府牓示, **禁其冒受路引, 私自下海興利者**."

23 The key terms in the Korean documents are: 路引; 行狀; and 文引. They all referred to 'permits' issued by the Koreans to control travel, both internally and externally, and will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. Robinson explains these in his PhD dissertation: 'Policies of Practicality'. Kenneth Robinson (1997), pp. 84-92.

24 '進上爲名, 獵於諸島作弊…今後發船日憑考, 以革其弊'. *T'aejong sillok* 29:47b-50a, v.2, pp. 72-73 [T'aejong.15:6:kyŏng-in].

25 '自今私船, 須滿七八隻, 乃許下海。 其所騎軍人及軍器數目具錄, 京江則呈于工曹, 外方則呈于所在官及附近各浦官司, 嚴加覈實, 成給行狀, 以爲恒式。 又於發船之際, 附近各浦傳報都按撫使, 移文各浦, 使之設備.' *Sejong sillok* 15:10a, v.2, p. 475 [Sejong.4:2:mu-sin].

out patrols on the coastal islands and confiscate goods from ships without a valid permit (*haenjang* 行狀).[26]

In 1425/06, the regulations above were referred to again in the *sillok* as a part of a proposal put forward by officials from the Ministry of Works (*Kongjo* 工曹), suggesting that the punishment was too severe for the private vessels without permits (*munin* 文引).[27] A year later in 1426/04, the court impeached several coastal commanders and officials who failed to supervise illegal private sailings.[28] Fifteen days later, King Sejong approved a proposal, in which the legal provision against private sailing in the *Great Ming Code* was referenced. The proposal came from the senior minister of the Ministry of Punishment (*Hyŏngjo Ch'amp'an* 刑曹參判), who suggested commuting the sentence on those who violated the regulations on border-crossing activities.[29] A month later in 1426/05, the court requested coastal guards to track down escaped criminals who might sail out to sea.[30]

In 1438/07, the King approved a proposal from the State Council (*Ŭijŏngbu* 議政府) and the Ministry of Military Affairs, which suggested permitting the residents on three specific islands to catch fish with small boats but highlighted that illegal sailing was still prohibited.[31] In 1440/05, the court approved a proposal from the Provincial Governor (*Kwanch'alsa* 觀察使) of Kyŏngsang-do, who suggested tightening restrictions on the contacts between coastal residents and visiting Japanese. Also, Korean officers and commanders and other Koreans who privately contacted visiting Japanese or purposely

[26] '巡察海島, 其私船無行狀下海者, 沒官, 各浦萬戶、千戶不考行狀過送者科罪.' *Sejong sillok* 15:10a, v.2, p. 475 [Sejong.4:2:mu-sin]. Six months later in 1422/08, the regulations above were referred to in the *sillok* again when King Sejong ordered the punishment of an official for issuing permits without examining the number of seagoing ships. *Sejong sillok* 17:6b-7a, v.2, p.491 [Sejong.4:8:kye-mo].
[27] *Sejong sillok* 28:27b-31a, v.2, pp. 675-677 [Sejong.7:6:sin-yu]. The *sillok* did not tell us whether this proposal was approved by the court.
[28] *Sejong sillok* 32:1a-1b, v.2, p. 17 [Sejong.8:4:chŏng-myo].
[29] *Sejong sillok* 32:8a-8b, v.3, p. 21 [Sejong.8:4:sin-sa].
[30] *Sejong sillok* 32:26b-27a, v.2, p. 25 [Sejong.8:5:ki-hae].
[31] *Sejong sillok* 82:11b, v.4, p. 157 [*Sejong*.20:7:ŭl-sa].

loosened the regulations would be punished according to the legal provision in the *Great Ming Code*.[32]

All these entries above show that Ming China's laws against private sailings were taken into account by the Chosŏn court and strict restrictions on sailing and contact with foreign visitors were put into place in Korea during the first half of the fifteenth century. At the same time, the 1419 military campaign to suppress piracy was launched against Tsushima, elaborate regulations were formulated to control Japanese access to Korea, and the Koreans had to cope with an influx of Japanese refugees. However, it is worth noting that, while the Chosŏn court imposed strict controls on private navigation, it never declared a ban that completely prohibited private maritime trade, as the Ming court did. Rather, as the above entries show, the relevant decrees normally targeted those who did not have a valid travel document. In fact, private vessels were allowed to sail in groups on coastal waters when the Korean marines were present. Moreover, the Chosŏn court did not repeat the law as frequently as its Chinese counterpart. In the period from 1392 to 1450, the Ming court issued sixteen maritime exclusion orders. At the same time, the Korean court extended numerous controls over Japanese and Jurchen access but only issued piecemeal regulations to control Koreans travelling. Moreover, these Chosŏn regulations on private sailing were all issued in the reigns of King T'aejong (1402 -1419) and King Sejong (1419-1450). It seems that the court did not significantly alter the controls in the following half century after the end of King Sejong's reign,[33] even though the policy remained valid during most of the dynastic period.[34]

[32] *Sejong sillok* 22:21a-23a, v.4, pp. 289-290 [Sejong.22:5:chŏng-myo].

[33] *Haedong chegukki* 海東諸國紀 was published in 1471 and iterated the system put into place by Sejong.

[34] A diplomatic letter from Chosŏn to the Tokugawa *bakufu* in 1693 indicated that Korea's maritime exclusion policy was still valid at the time. *Mangi yoram*. *Kunjŏngp'yŏn*, pp. 540-552.

Table 2. Entries in *sillok* referring to Chosŏn's restraints on private seagoing activities, 1392-1451

	Year	King	Reference
1	1413	T'aejong (1400-18)	*T'aejong sillok* 26:8b-9a, v.1, pp. 679-680 [T'aejong.13:7:ŭl-sa]
2	1415		*T'aejong sillok* 29:47b-50a, v.2, pp. 72-73 [T'aejong.15:6:kyŏng-in]
3	1422	Sejong (1418-51)	*Sejong sillok* 15:10a, v.2, p. 475 [Sejong.4:2:mu-sin]
4			*Sejong sillok* 17:6b-7a, v.2, p.491 [Sejong.4:8:kye-mo]
5	1425		*Sejong sillok* 28:27b-31a, v.2, pp. 675-677 [Sejong.7:6:sin-yu]
6	1426		*Sejong sillok* 32:1a-1b, v.2, p. 17 [Sejong.8:4:chŏng-myo]
7			*Sejong sillok* 32:8a-8b, v.3, p. 21 [Sejong.8:4:sin-sa]
8			*Sejong sillok* 32:26b-27a, v.2, p. 25 [Sejong.8:5:ki-hae]
9	1438		*Sejong sillok* 82:11b, v.4, p. 157 [*Sejong*.20:7:ŭl-sa]
10	1440		*Sejong sillok* 22:21a-23a, v.4, pp. 289-290 [Sejong.22:5:chŏng-myo].

Source: author

The implication is that the Chosŏn court probably attached less importance to the maritime exclusion policy than the Chinese did. This was probably because the Koreans faced a much more complex maritime security environment than the Chinese. Japanese pirates had dominated the high seas around the peninsula for more than half a century since the mid-1350s. Therefore, Koreans preferred to conduct trade with overseas visitors on Chosŏn's territory, rather than sail the seas and trade abroad. It follows then that the Chosŏn court did not have to place too much stress on the border-exit controls.[35] Instead, it paid more attention to controlling foreign access to Korea, which has been heavily discussed by historians.

But, still, ocean-going voyages were under strict governmental controls and those who became involved in unauthorised trade and foreign contact were strictly punished. The court allowed its residents to carry out coastal shipping for domestic business, but it discouraged them from entering distant waters. In sum, while the Chosŏn strictly regulated and monitored the private maritime activities, its ban was not as complete as the Ming regulations.

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[35] This point will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

1.3 The terms: '*Haijin*', '*haegŭm*', and '*kaikin'*

Maritime prohibition corresponds to the Chinese term *haijin* 海禁, the literal meaning of which is 'sea ban'.[36] However, it is worth noting that the definition of this term changed over time. *Haijin,* as a term, was not coined until the sixteenth century. At the beginning, there was not a specific term for the ban on private sailing and foreign trade. The first Ming emperor normally made instructions to prohibit private maritime activities without giving names to his orders. In 1390/12, the emperor ordered a reaffirmation of 'the ban on contacting foreign barbarians (*jiaotong waifan zhi jin* 交通外番之禁)' and referred to the interdict with a noun for the first time. This was how the Ming and Chosŏn officials came to refer to the coastal border exit control policies in the following century.[37]

Not until 1521 was the term *haijin* introduced to the Chinese bureaucrats. The earliest attested appearance of the term in the Ming documents was its use in the memorial submitted in 1521/09 from Peng Ze 彭澤 (1459 - 1529), the Ming Minister of Revenue.[38] Probably because *jiaotong waifan zhi jin* or *xiahai tongfan zhijin* 下海通番之禁 was too long for convenient use as a policy title, Peng Ze, or people of his time, picked two characters out of

[36] On the English translation of *haijin* in monographs, Chen Wenshi presents 'sea-faring prohibition'. See Chen Wenshi (1966); 'Maritime prohibitions' is offered by Ronald Toby. See Ronald Toby (1991), p. xviii. It is also adopted by Li Kangying. See Li Kangying (2010); Angela Schottenhamer provides us with 'maritime trade proscription'. See Angela Schottenhammer (2005) and (2007); Danjō Hiroshi uses 'maritime exclusion'. See Danjō Hiroshi (2012).

[37] Similar terms were used formally by the court in 1433/07 ('*sitong fanguo zhi jin* 私通番國之禁'. *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 103:8b, v.21, p. 2308 [Xuande.8:7:jiwei]), 1476/02 ('*tongfan zhi jin* 通番之禁'. *Ming Xianzong shilu* 150:8a-11a, v.45,2747-2753 [Chenghua.12:2:jihai]), and 1494/09 ('*sitong fanhuo zhi jin* 私通番貨之禁'. *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 92:6a-6b, v.55, pp. 1693-1694 [Hongzhi.7:9:jihai]).

[38] In his memorial to the emperor, he wrote: '*qing shenchi linbian pinhai zhu shouchen, fuli miaoman, yanshen haijin, yidu xinduan* 请申敕鄰邊瀕海諸守臣,撫理苗蠻,申嚴海禁,以杜釁端'. See *Ming Shizong shilu* 6:10a-10b, v.70, pp. 0259-0260 [*Zhengde*.16:9:yihai]. Also refer to Danjō Hiroshi (2013), pp. 174-211.

the original phrase to form the neologism *haijin* and named the coastal border control policy with it. From then on until the 1560s, the imperial officials widely used this two-character term to refer to the prohibition that had been carried out from the beginning of the dynasty.[39] It is still unclear when exactly this term was introduced into Korea, but historical records suggest that the Koreans began to use *haegŭm*, the Korean pronunciation of *haijin*, to refer to their coastal border exit control policy from as late as the seventeenth century.[40]

However, the policy was revised in China without changing its name in the late sixteenth century. In 1567, the Ming court partly lifted the ban on private navigation. It formally permitted its people to sail out from designated ports for ocean-going trade after registering with the government. But, at the same time, the court still forbade voyages that did not register or sailed out from undesignated areas. It also punished merchants who violated the state's sanctions on certain foreign countries, such as Japan,[41] the Netherlands, and Portugal.[42] While private sailing and foreign trade were no longer prohibited, the Ming officials continued using *haijin* to refer to their coastal border policies. In the 1587-published official compilation of laws and conventions, *haijin* was adopted to refer to the regulations

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[39] In his letter to the emperor in 1549/04, Zhu Wan stated: in the beginning of [our] state, *haijin* was [implemented] very strictly (國初海禁甚嚴) (*Ming Shizong shilu* 347:5a-6a, v.85, pp. 6285-6287 [*Jiajing*.28:4:xinhai]). Zhu Wan 朱紈 (1494 -1549) was the Censor-in-chief 都御史, who took charge of coastal defense against the incessant piracy of the time. He was famous for his tough stand against the pirates. See Goodrich L. Carrington, and Chaoying Fang (1976), v. 1, pp. 372-375.

[40] The Chosŏn court's earliest adoption of the term that I found is from 1693: '敝邦**海禁**至嚴,制束海民,使不得出於外洋'. See *Mangi yoram*. *Kunjŏngp'yŏn* 萬機要覽.軍政篇. p. 545. The earliest appearance of the term in *sillok* is from 1825. See *Sunjo sillok* 27:38a-43b, v.48, pp. 256-258 [*Sunjo*.25:11:im-in].

[41] *Ming Shenzong shilu* 262:9b-10a, v.107, pp. 4864-4865 [*Wanli*.21:7:yihai. Also see *Dongxiyang kao*. Book 7. In addition, the court strengthened trade sanctions against Japan again in 1612, because it learned that Japan had annexed the Ryukyu Kingdom, which had been Ming's vassal state since the fourteenth century. The Ming court also requested Chosŏn to apply the same sanctions against the Japanese. See *Ming Shenzong shilu* 496:3b-4a, v.118, pp. 9342-9343 [*Wanli*.40:6:gengwu].

[42] On the interaction between Ming China and the Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, refer to John E. Wills, JR. (1998). Also see Wan Ming (2014), pp. 255-313.

for maritime activities.[43] This might be the first use of the term *haijin* in an official publication.[44] At that time, Ming China's *haijin* became a policy against lawbreaking merchants only, rather than a complete prohibition on private sailing and foreign trade after the late sixteenth century.

Further, in the early seventeenth century, when the newly-established Tokugawa *bakufu* imposed its controls over Japan's contact with foreign countries, they used *kaikin*, the Japanese translation of *haijin*, to refer to their policy.[45] Nevertheless, it should be noted that Tokugawa Japan's *kaikin* policy was actually different from Ming China's *haijin* and Chosŏn Korea's *haegŭm* policies. In Ming and Chosŏn, *haijin* and *haegŭm* primarily referred to the controls over the border-exit activities, while the *kaikin* policy in Tokugawa Japan was a general policy that not only limited Japanese contact with the overseas world but also restricted foreign access to Japan. This slight distinction contributes to different definitions of the term, which sometimes causes confusion for modern scholars.

The interest of this thesis lies in the border exit controls in Ming China and Chosŏn Korea. However, our discussions will sometimes cover border entry policy as well. This is because border exit and entry affairs were usually interlinked with each other. In order to supervise and restrain the contact between its residents and overseas visitors, which was a primary function of the maritime exclusion policy, the authorities had to regulate foreign access to their territories. Likewise, the government would sometimes reinforce its control over residents, particularly those who had connections with overseas people, in order to discourage excessive visits from the outside world, as we will repeatedly see in Chosŏn's case. In addition, those who were involved in the exit and entry activities were usually the same groups of people: embassies, merchants, coastal guards, and custom officials. To

[43] *Da Ming huidian*, Book 132.
[44] Danjō Hiroshi (2013), p. 189-198.
[45] Ronald Toby (1991), p. 11.

regulate the behavior of those who were eligible to cross the border repeatedly, border policies were usually made as a composite of exit and entry controls. Given these situations, it is difficult to detach completely border entry policies from a discussion of border exit policies.

Table 3. The changing references to maritime exclusion policy

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2"></th><th rowspan="2">Reference</th><th colspan="3">Prohibition</th></tr>
<tr><th>China</th><th>Korea</th><th>Japan</th></tr>
<tr><td>1371</td><td>Interdict without a proper term</td><td rowspan="6">Border Exits</td><td rowspan="2">-</td><td rowspan="5">-</td></tr>
<tr><td>1390</td><td rowspan="2">‘the ban on contacting foreign barbarians’</td></tr>
<tr><td>1392</td><td rowspan="4">Border Exits</td></tr>
<tr><td>1521</td><td>haijin,</td></tr>
<tr><td>1567</td><td>haegŭm,</td></tr>
<tr><td>1633</td><td>kaikin</td><td>Border entries and exits</td></tr>
</table>

Source: author

1.4.Historiography

Historians active in the first half of the twentieth century noticed Ming China’s maritime exclusion policy. Before the 1950s, Hou Houpei,[46] Wu Han,[47] and Tan Chunlin[48] discussed the *haijin* policy in their studies when they examined China’s maritime history. In brief, they presented two interpretations of the Ming’s *haijin* policy. The first interpretation is that *haijin* was a security-oriented policy that protected the empire from piracy and riots; the second interpreted *hajin* as a special trade policy that helped the Ming court to monopolize

[46] Hou Houpei (1927). Hou Houpei briefly mentioned the Ming’s *haijin* and pointed out the policy was primarily a security-oriented policy to suppress riots along the coast. He also suggested that this interdict might help the court to monopolize trade.
[47] Wu Han (1936). Wu referred to *haijin* in his 1936 paper, which discussed Ming China’s relations with Southeast Asia. In this paper, Wu supposed that *haijin* was implemented to defend the China coast from piracy.
[48] Tan Chunlin (1936). Tan Chunlin published his book about China’s relations with the overseas world before the 1840s. In his book, Tan discussed the Ming court’s diplomatic policy, foreign trade policy, trade institutions, and the *haijin* policy in four chapters respectively. After analysing these polices, Tan concludes that *haijin* was a security-oriented policy and the Ming court carried out this policy, because it had no regard to the revenue from overseas trade.

overseas trade. These works, and Tan Chunlin's book in particular, can be seen as the historiographical starting point for a discussion of the Ming court's *haijin* policy.[49]

In the period from 1950 to 1978, historians began to publish works revolving around Ming China's *haijin*, even though the subject was not yet a focus for most scholars. Sakuma Shigeo published an article about the Ming's *haijin* in 1953, which might be the earliest study exclusively concentrating on this topic.[50] Bodo Wiethoff and Chen Wenshi finished their doctoral dissertations on Ming China's maritime exclusion in 1963 and 1966 respectively.[51] Zhang Weihua published his book about Ming overseas trade, in which he intensively discussed the policy as well.[52] Historians in this period shared opinions with previous

[49] Many other historians of Ming China's maritime history had barely mentioned the policy in their research. For studies of Ming China's maritime history at the time, refer to Zhang Xilun (1935), Uchida Naosaku (1935), Momose Hiromu (1936), Feng Chengjun (1937), Jian Bozan (1941), and Qin Peihang (1941).

[50] Sakuma Shigeo (1953). Sakuma suggested that the reason for the Ming court's enforcement of the *haijin* policy was twofold. First, the Ming authority carried out the policy in order to strengthen the 'tributary system', which was designed to improve the court's authority and promote peace in the international maritime space. Second, the policy was implemented, because it helped to prevent the anti-government forces in the coastal region from colluding with overseas powers and attacking the new empire.

[51] Wiethoff's interpretation of the policy was highly similar to Sakuma's theories, which highlighted the security and diplomatic considerations in the policy-making process. But Wiethoff cautiously pointed out that it was still unknown whether the Ming court implemented the policy deliberately to establish a state monopoly on trade. See Bodo Wiethoff (1963). In his dissertation, Chen Wenshi illustrated how rampant piracy and riots pushed the Ming authority to strengthen its control over the coastal border. Chen's primary contribution to the field is that, by carefully scrutinizing the primary sources and sorting out the materials related to pirate activities, he proved that *haijin* was a security-oriented policy. Thereafter, historians have no objection to this conclusion. In his study, Chen suggested that *haijin* was also a trade policy with which the royal family (*wangshi* 王室) monopolized maritime trade. This argument was actually the same as that made by Hou Houpei in 1927, but neither Hou nor Chen provided evidence to support this claim. Chen also suggested that the Ming court tried to curb inflationary pressure with *haijin*, but, again, he made no further analysis to justify this claim. See Chen Wenshi (1966).

[52] In his book, Zhang gave a preliminary summary of the enforcement of *haijin* in the entire Ming period. Like Sakuma, Zhang discussed *haijin* and the tributary system together and indicated that *haijin* was primarily a security-oriented policy. In a sense, Zhang shared the same opinion with Sakuma, though it seemed that he had not referred to Sakuma's work when he completed his study. What distinguished Zhang from Sakuma was his stress on the role of 'autocratic authority (*zhuanzhi zhengquan* 專制政權)', a term that was widely used within the context of Marxism discourse in China at the time to describe premodern China's

historians and interpreted *haijin* as a security-oriented policy, suggesting that the Ming court closed the empire, because it intended to exclude pirates from the continent. But, meanwhile, they were seemingly reluctant to show their agreement to the argument that *haijin* was a policy to impose a monopoly on foreign trade. Instead, they suggested that *haijin* was a part of the Ming court's diplomatic framework, the 'tributary system'.[53]

As China's economic reform started in late 1978, a large group of historians weighed in with the discussion. Discussing history as a way of providing perspective on the problems of the present, many of them showed their interest in the debate as to whether or not the *haijin* policy hampered China's economic development and process of modernization.[54] In this context, more historians devoted themselves to examining the policy history and explaining the implementation of maritime exclusion in the following two decades. Chang

monarchic authorities. In this way, Zhang interpreted *haijin* as a policy that helped the 'feudal autocratic rulers' to control the 'laboring masses'. See Zhang Weihua (1956).

[53] In 1953, John King Fairbank published his influential work, in which the concept of the 'tributary system' was presented. See John King Fairbank (1953). Fairbank's work might have had an influence on discussions about maritime exclusion in this period, and the prominence of his arguments might partly explain why historians began to interpret the Ming court's *haijin* in light of the the 'tributary system'.

[54] Jiang Xuzhao wrote a historiography on China's maritime trade, giving a brief introduction of the debates at the time. Jiang lists the historians who engaged in the debates and summarises their opinions. Chen Keyun (1980 and 1983), Wang Rigen (2000), Sun Haifeng (2003), and Li Jinming (2006) suggest that *haijin* was a security-orientated policy, which actually had limited impact on China's economy, while Pan Junxiang (1981) and Lin Xiangrui (1981) disagree with this opinion and argue that the policy hit China's coastal economy seriously. See Jiang Xuzhao (2012). On the debate about the 'isolationist nature' of the *haijin* policy, also refer to *Zhongwai guanxishi luncong* (1987).

Pin-tsun,[55] Cao Yonghe,[56] Chen Shangsheng,[57] Ōsumi Akiko,[58] and Li Jinming,[59] in particular, have published articles or monographes to discuss the policy. Most historians followed the analytical pattern established by those who were active in the 1950s and 1960s, suggesting that the Ming authority implemented the *haijin* policy in an attempt to pursue security and diplomatic goals at the expense of economic interests.[60] By highlighting the policy's security and diplomatic functions and discounting its role in trade, historians interpreted *haijin* as an anti-trade policy.

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[55] Chang Pin-tsun (1983). In his thesis, Chang examines how the Ming's 'maritime prohibition…compelled people to smuggling', and argues that the smuggling activities finally 'paved the way for policy change from maritime prohibition to sea opening'. Instead of investigating the topic from the aspect of traditional diplomatic and political history, Chang approached the history from a socio-economic perspective and at a local level, which has proved very inspiring for later research. Also refer to Chang Pin-tsun (2018).

[56] Cao Yonghe (1984). In his article, Cao suggests that *haijin* played an important role in the establishment of the Ming's tributary system, but the strength of his study lies in its careful examination of the correlation between *haijin* and the surviving supporters of several Chinese warlords, who were the hostile rivals for the Ming authority at the time. Cao's article is an important supplement to Chen Wenshi's theory, demonstrating that the Ming court's implementation of *haijin* was a response to not only Japanese pirates but also Chinese anti-government forces.

[57] Chen Shangsheng (1987), (1993), (2015).

[58] Ōsumi Akiko (1990). In her article, Ōsumi illustrates that the Ming's restriction on coastal border was, to some extent, a copy of the Yuan court's policy. This argument was a supplement to Sakuma's theory, indicating the prototype of the Ming's coastal border control policy.

[59] Li Jinming (1990). In his book, Li repeats Chen Wenshi's opinion and highlights *haijin*'s role in defending the coast against marine adversaries. Li also agrees with Sakuma's opinion that the Ming court made monopolistic profits from the overseas trade, but he argues that this practice actually damaged the Chinese economy. However, in his article published in 2006, Li reverses the argument, suggesting that the negative impact of *haijin* on China's overseas trade was actually limited. See Li Jinming (2006).

[60] Historians highlight the state's suppression of private trade and the court's slogan on diplomatic occasions, 'giving more [to foreign guests] and receiving less [from them] (*houwang bolai* 厚往薄來)', and, they conclude that the Ming court pursued non-economic goals at the cost of commercial interests. See Li Jinming (1990) and Chao Zhongchen (2005). For discussions based on this interpretation, refer to Deng Duanban (1986), pp. 132-135; Yang Guozhen, Chen Zhiping (1993), pp. 102-105; Wang Gengwu (1998), pp. 311, 319-325; John Wills, Jr. (1998), pp.333-334; Li Qingxin (2007), pp. 44-54, and Hun-Chang Lee and Peter Temin (2010).

With security and diplomatic factors treated in detail, historians in the past two decades since 2000, like Chao Zhongchen and Danjō Hiroshi, have turned their attention to socio-economic and ideological factors, in order to explore the more fundamental reasons for the policy choices. They break the traditional analytical pattern, which focuses on diplomatic and security issues, and approach *haijin* through the lens of ideas about society, culture, and international relations.[61] Another group of historians discuss the commercial links between China and the overseas world as maintained by the private sector from as early as the late fifteenth century. Edward Dreyer,[62] Lin Renchuan,[63] Andre Gunder Frank,[64] Roderich Ptak,[65] Makoto Ueda,[66] John Eliot Wills, Jr.,[67] Geoff Wade,[68] and Timothy Brook[69] have done much

[61] Chao and Danjō credit feudalistic ideas of governance and a Sino-centric worldview for the implementation of a maritime exclusion policy. Chao suggests that *haijin* was a product of the emperors' 'parochial' mindset to establish a 'feudal' natural economy. He argues that the first Ming emperor 'constructed' a 'feudal natural economy', which had 'a low level of commodity trade', and hence, the country did not have 'a strong demand for overseas trade'. Meanwhile, the emperor had the traditional idea of 'encouraging agriculture and constraining commerce', believing that it was more rational for the empire to rely on the revenue from agriculture than on a commercial tax, and thus, he felt dislike for and decided to restrain overseas, mercantile trade. See Chao Zhongchen (2005). Danjō's book is an outstanding summary and a patient response to most questions over Ming China's *haijin* that historians have intensely discussed for a long time. Specifically, he examines the Yuan's policy legacy, the pirate problems, the relationship between *haijin* and the tributary system, the coastal trade, the relationship between *haijin* and Zheng He's voyages, the legal clauses related to *haijin*, and the political purge that was relevant to the policy. Danjō regards the *haijin* policy and the tributary practices as an organic whole, the '*haikin-chōkō* system 海禁-朝貢システム', and he suggests that this system was a product of the Ming emperors' ideal of strict social hierarchy and a Sino-centric international order in East Asia. Danjō Hiroshi (2013). Also refer to Danjō Hiroshi (1997).

[62] Edward Dreyer (1982), pp. 114-122; Edward Dreyer (2007).

[63] Lin Renchuan (1987), Lin Renchuan (1990), Lin Renchuan (1991). In his studies, Lin discusses the rise of the Chinese private sector in maritime trade after the late fifteenth century. Although his research interest overlaps with Chang Pin-tsun's thesis presented in 1983 to a large extent, Lin has a reputation in the field for showing that China's economy and society had strong commercial contacts with the overseas world after the mid-Ming period.

[64] Andre Gunder Frank (1998).

[65] Roderich Ptak (1998).

[66] Makoto Ueda (2005).

[67] John Eliot Wills, Jr. (1998), (2004), (2010).

[68] Geoff Wade (2009), (2018).

[69] Timothy Brook (2013).

to explore these contacts. These historains, however, have paid more attention to the decline and later collapse of early Ming's trade system in the nid-sixteenth century, when maritime exclusion, or more specifically the ban on private sailing, was partly lifted. By highlighting the private sector's efforts at challenging the government's restrictions, these studies create a narrative of a binary opposition between the anti-trade government and the profit-pursuing private sector. This opposition did exist, and it was one of the reasons that led to the collapse of the trade system in the mid-sixteenth century, but this thesis is not going to concentrate on an opposition between an anti-trade government and a profit-pursuing private sector, because this opposition was more a byproduct of than a reason for Ming China's implementation of the maritime exclusion policy in the mid-fourteenth century.

Historians like Angela Schottenhammer and Li Kangying examine a wider historical context and suggest that maritime exclusion was a part of early Ming China's socio-economic system established by the dynastic founders. Schottenhammer highlights the policy's role in the 'new political-ideological *raison d'état*', a goal of the emperor 'to build up a society characterized by Confucian values'.[70] Besides, she also points out that Ming's 'maritime trade proscription policy' could partly be explained by the first Ming emperor's concern about the danger of private merchants' social and economic influence on his newly established dynasty. She concludes that Hongwu was trying to prohibit trade for private profit while at the same time seeking public profit through trade, and that the maritime trade proscription was not an 'anti-foreign trade' measure, just an anti-private profit measure. This contradiction between restricting profit while seeking profit eventually brought the system down in the sixteenth century, since the private trade became too expansive and too important for the state to control.[71] This thesis agrees with Schottenhammer and closely examines

[70] Angela Schottenhammer (2005). Also refer to Angela Schottenhammer (2007), (2015).
[71] Angela Schottenhammer (2012).

Hongwu's desire to seek profit through his own methods, although the present study does not follow the policy into the sixteenth century to the collapse of restrictions. Li Kangying's monograph provides a more detailed analysis of the relations between Confucian ideology and the policymaking process. He argues that Confucianism, 'a strong stability-orientated ideological conviction', accounted for the long operation of the 'foreign trade prohibition'.[72] In brief, Schottenhammer and Li have interpreted Ming's 'trade proscription' as a part of Ming's grand structure of governing, which could be seen as a product of deeper and wider social and economic concerns.

Aside from Schottenhammer and Lee, most historians mentioned above regard the maritime exclusion as an anti-trade policy. They notice that trade was still proceeding under the official tribute system, but they believe that the official exchange mainly served diplomatic purposes and the volume of trade was not compatible with that in previous dynastic periods. Some historians present opposing opinions regarding the policy's role in trade. Wang Gengwu argues that the Ming court implemented *haijin,* because it attempted to guarantee its profits by excluding Chinese merchants from the trade.[73] Kent Deng shares Wang's opinion and argues that the Ming policy was 'by no means anti-trade'. His arguments rest on an analysis of the Ming emperors' attitudes toward trade.[74] Wan Ming estimates the

[72] Li breaks the conviction into more specific parts: the attempt to redistribute social wealth, the idea of suppressing commerce, the fear of 'unconstrained consumption', the belief in 'the principle of self-sufficiency', the vigilance against silver currency as 'a potential destabilisator', and the 'introverted foreign policy', according to which 'the emperor needed no foreign products and showed no desire for territorial expansion and colonisation'. He argues that these ideological factors were the fundamental reasons for the enforcement of *haijin*. Li's argument is internally consistent, however, his analysis about the origin of the policy is mostly backed by sources from the sixteenth century, when the *haijin* policy was heavily attacked by the pro-trade faction at the court, rather than sources from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, when the policy was established. This preference for the mid-Ming materials weakens the strength of Li's argument to some extent. See Li Kangying (2010).

[73] Wang Gengwu (1991).

[74] Kent Deng (1999), pp. 122-161. Also see Kent Deng (1997). The strength of Deng's studies lies in his careful analysis of marine technologies and the institutions in China's

volumes of trade under the tributary system and suggests that the Ming court did not implement *haijin* to eliminate maritime trade.[75] These studies shed light on our reconsideration of the claim that interprets *haijin* as an anti-trade policy.

Two other scholars' contributions are worth mentioning here. Li Qingxin has looked at the Ming's maritime trade policy and systematically presented relevant historical facts rich in details.[76] Zheng Yongchang provides an innovative approach to the *haijin* policy, by showing us the link between *haijin* and the Ming's involvement in the competition for regional hegemony in Southeast Asia.[77] Li and Zheng's studies show us the other side of *haijin* that previous works did not address.

In summary, historians deciphered the rationales for the policy from various perspectives, such as security concerns, diplomatic goals, ideology, and socio-economic foundations. But there is a question that remains to be answered: whether the Ming court implemented the policy to pursue security and diplomatic and ideological goals at the

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maritime history. Deng's analysis of the case of Ming China is concise and he draws conclusions from his general analysis of the entire history of China's maritime activities, with a limited discussion of historic details. Specifically, he justifies his argument about Ming control primarily through brief reference to the experience of Zhu Yuanzhang before he became the first Ming emperor, the clauses in the Ming codes, and Zheng He's voyages. As a consequence, Deng's evidential base is narrow. Moreover, when he discusses the decline of Ming trade policy, Deng suggests that the decline resulted from the court's failure to understand the importance of collaborating with professional traders, but he provides few details to back this claim. Through a close scrutiny of primary sources and the construction of a wide evidential base, this thesis attempts to fill these gaps.

[75] Wan Ming (1998). Wan presents information on the trading volume conducted by the Ming court. However, trading volumes tell us little about the weight of the trade in China's maritime history. Moreover, Wan's main argument is that Ming China was open to the overseas world, while the Qing was not, even though both administrations implemented similar coastal border control policies. This interpretation has been criticised by scholars like Chen Shangsheng. Although Chen agrees that Wan's work was inspiring, he criticizes Wan for her interpretation and problematic methodology. For comments on Wan's study, see Chen Shangsheng (2002), (2003).

[76] Li Qingxin (2007). Li describes how the Ming's maritime trade policy evolved throughout the entire dynastic period. Although it is not a monograph on the *haijin* policy and Li also interpreted *haijin* as an isolationist policy, it is a useful reference for scholars who are interested in the policy's history.

[77] Zheng Yongchang (2011).

expense of economic interests? More specifically: is maritime exclusion really an anti-trade policy? A goal of this thesis is to examine these different interpretations, respond to the qeustons above, and decipher the rationales behind the policy choices.

To shift here to studies of Chosŏn Korea's *haegŭm* policy, we have to note that these are far fewer in number, as are the scholars who concentrate on this subject. This is primarily because the Chosŏn court did not highlight the ban on border-exit activities like its Chinese counterpart. Instead, the Korean policy makers attached great attention to the border-entry policy to control Japanese access to the peninsula. Naturally, modern historians have paid more attention to how the Chosŏn court managed the foreign visitors. From Yi Hyŏn-jong,[78] Nakamura Hidetaka,[79] and Kawazoe Shoji,[80] who examined the Chosŏn court's diplomatic policies toward the Japanese, to Akiyama Kenzō,[81] Kobata Atsushi,[82] Kim Pyŏng-ha,[83] Tanaka Takeo,[84] and Tamura Hiroyuki,[85] who looked at Korean-Japanese trade, historians referred to border-entry controls when they discussed Chosŏn's foreign and trade policies. Most historians suggest that Chosŏn's border-entry control was a product of a security concern about the Japanese pirate raiders, an appeasement policy that pacified the Japanese authorities, and a trade policy that satisfied the Japanese traders at the expense of Korea's commercial interests. Although border policy was not the focus of their studies, their discussions paved the way for Kenneth Robinson's studies that concentrated on the border-entry policy. In his doctoral dissertation, Robinson presented detail as to how Chosŏn

[78] Yi Hyŏn-jong (1964).
[79] Nakamura Hidetaka (1965).
[80] Kawazoe Shoji (1990).
[81] Akiyama Kenzō (1939).
[82] Kobata Atsushi (1968), (1969).
[83] Kim Pyŏng-ha (1969).
[84] Tanaka Takeo (1959), (1995).
[85] Tamura hiroyuki (1967).

regulated the Japanese access to Korea and interpreted the regulations as 'policies of practicality' that transformed 'raiders to traders'.[86]

In comparison, the border-exit control policy, *hahae t'ongban chi gŭm* 下海通番之禁, is seemingly much less attractive to historians, even though many have referred to this ban in their studies on Chosŏn's foreign and trade policy. Ko Pyŏng-ik's essay first presented in 1964 might be the starting point for the modern discussion on Chosŏn's *haegŭm*. In his essay, Ko focused on the 'isolationist' nature of the policy. He discussed the terminology 'isolationist (*swaeguk* 鎖國)' that was developed by Japanese scholars (J. *sakoku*) to describe Japan's response to the arrival of the Western powers in the seventeenth century and suggested that all three maritime countries in East Asia, including Chosŏn Korea, were avidly practicing *swaeguk* before the second encounter with the West in the nineteenth century.[87]

In the following decades, few historians followed Ko's lead on this subject. Not until the 1990s did historians shift their attention to the policy again.[88] Im Yŏng-chŏng (Lim Young-jung) published an article in 1997 to explain Chosŏn's implementation of *haegŭm* policy. Like his counterparts who work on China's case, Im approached the policy primarily from two aspects: diplomacy and security. As he argues, the reason for the implementation of *haegŭm* in Chosŏn was twofold. First, the newly established Chosŏn authority was heavily influenced by Ming China's diplomatic institutions that highlighted strict border controls. In

[86] Kenneth Robinson (1997); also refer to Kenneth Robinson (1992), (2000).
[87] Unfortunately, we cannot see Ko's explanations for Chosŏn's policy choice. According to the contents list of the essay, Ko has discussed Chosŏn's motivations for implementing the policy in the second half of this essay, but I have had no access to this part of the paper. Only the first half of the essay is accessible in *Chindan hakpo* online through DBpia. See Ko Pyŏng-ik (1966).
[88] This surge of interest might be a result of the mounting sovereignty dispute between South Korea and Japan around the Liancourt Rocks (K. *Dokdo*; J. *Takeshima*) since the 1980s. When Im Yŏng-chŏng (Lim Young-jung) discussed *haegŭm* in his 1997 article, he carefully described Chosŏn's governance of *Ullŭngdo* 鬱陵島, the administration of which has jurisdiction over the Liancourt Rocks nowadays. Im Yŏng-chŏng (Lim Young-jung) (1997a), (1997b).

order to achieve diplomatic recognition from its Chinese neighbour, the Chosŏn court had to integrate with the Ming's tributary system and carry out strict border controls that were similar to the Ming policy. Second, the Chosŏn court had a security concern with Japanese pirates who were constantly harassing its coastal borders. Thus, it had to strengthen its border control policy.[89]

Pak P'yŏng-sik (Park Pyeong-sik) pushed the analysis of Chosŏn's policy to a new direction, discussing the economic and social contexts of the policy choice. By demonstrating the Chosŏn court's concerns about 'the flood of Chinese luxury goods', 'the disordered social classes', 'the aggravation of international payments and government finance', and the collapse of 'the agricultural base, the minor peasants', Pak argues that the Chosŏn government did not aim at suppressing the foreign trade but attempted to 'prevent the revival of social problems' caused by foreign trade since the Koryŏ period.[90] Pak's argument is similar with Chao Zhongchen's and Li Kangying's analysis of Ming China's policy, highlighting the court's intention to protect the natural economy from the impact of trade.

In summary, the existing studies of Chosŏn's *haegŭm* primarily explain the policy through the lens of security and diplomatic history or interpret it as a measure to protect agricultural society. Based on this understanding, Hun-Chang Lee and Peter Temin concluded in 2010 that the '…policy of suppressing private trade…only can be explained by noneconomic factors', and they apply this perception as a theoretical basis for their analysis of Korea's policy. Lee and Temin further suggest that their theory is applicable to the China case.[91]

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[89] Im Yŏng-chŏng (Lim Young-jung) (1997b).
[90] Pak P'yŏng-sik (Park, Pyeong-sik) (2004). Also refer to Pak P'yŏng-sik (Park, Pyeong-sik) (1999).
[91] Hun-Chang Lee and Peter Termin (2010).

Recently, more and more scholars have discussed Chosŏn's border policy in regard to the practice of *haegŭm*. They have shown us the policy details,[92] debated the definition of the terminology,[93] discussed the 'isolationist' nature of the policy,[94] and analysed Ming China's influence on Korea's policy choices.[95] However, these studies have paid little attention to the reasons behind the policy choice. In this thesis, we will examine the above interpretations and explore the reasons for Chosŏn' policy in the same way as we are going to investigate Ming policy.

1.5. Sources

The *Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty* (*Ming shilu* 明實錄) and the *Veritable Records of Chosŏn Dynasty* (*Chosŏn wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄) are the most important sources for the study of maritime history in East Asia during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They are governmental archives compiled by the courts at the time, in which edicts, memorials, internal reference reports (*dibao,* 邸報), and daily records of the life of the monarchs (*qijuzhu,* 起居注) were collected. Through these first-hand materials, we can see information from all over the country, to which the emperors or the kings immediately accessed every day, and the court discussions between the monarchs and their assistants. These two sources, together with the Chinese and Korean law codes, official edited collections of dynastic regulations (*Da Ming huidian* 大明會典 and *Kyŏngguk taejŏn* 經國大典), local gazetteers, and the writings of officials like Sin Suk-ju's *Haedong chegukki* 海東諸

92 Chŏng Chi-yŏn (Jung, Ji-youn) (2006).
93 Kang, Pong-yong (Kang, Bong-yong) (2008); Han Im-sŏn and Shin Myung-ho (2009).
94 Kim, Kyŏng-rok (Kim Kyeong-Lok) (2017).
95 Min Tŏk-ki (Min, Deak-kee) (2011), (2012).

國記, provide the base for our analysis of the Ming and Chosŏn policy-making process in the following chapters.

Information from the Japanese and Ryukyuan sources helps to flesh out the interactions among other maritime powers in East Asia. The *Zenrin kokuhō ki* 善鄰國寶記 is a collection of diplomatic letters exchanged between Japan's policy makers and the Ming and Chosŏn courts. The *Rekidai hōan* 歴代寶案 is a collection of letters sent between the Ryukyuan rulers and their overseas counterparts. These documents remind us of the constant communications and trade over the waters among the courts of Ryukyu, China, Korea, Japan, and other countries. These overseas records provide details that do not appear in Chinese and Korean records.

Additional to the perspective of the government, this thesis has also consulted the writings of individuals in investigating maritime activities. *Yingya shenglan* 瀛涯勝覽, *Xingcha shenglan* 星槎勝覽, *Xiyang fanguozhi* 西洋番國志, and *Geumnam pyohaerok* 錦南漂海錄 are accounts written by Chinese and Korean maritime travellers in the fifteenth century. They offer windows on to private observations. The *Jishilu* 紀事錄, a history written by Chinese soldiers who witnessed the transition between Yuan and Ming, offers a perspective different from the narrative that the *Ming shilu* presents.

This thesis also has drawn from sources published in different periods; for example, Yuan China's law code (*Tongzhi tiaoge* 通製條格) and memorials, Song China's policy documents (*Zhongshu beidui* 中書備對 and *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿), Chinese and Korean histories of different dynasties (*Jianyan yilai xinian yaolü* 建炎以來系年要錄, *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji* 建炎以來朝野雜記, *Song shi* 宋史, *Yuan shi* 元史, *Koryŏsa* 高麗史, *Yuan shi jishi benmo* 元史紀事本末, *Song shi jishi benmo* 宋史紀事本末, and *Ming shi*

明史), Korea's policy documents compiled in the mid-and-late Chosŏn period (*Sŭngjŏngwŏn ilgi* 承政院日記, *Pibyŏnsa tŭngnok* 備邊司要錄, and *Mangi yoram* 萬機要覽), and other relevant records (*Jizuan yuanhai* 記纂淵海, *Baoqing siming zhi* 寶慶四明志, *Pingzhou ketan* 萍洲可談, *Lingwai daida* 嶺外代答, *Daoyi zhilue* 島夷志略, *Shuyu zhouzilü* 殊域周咨錄, *Dongxiyang kao* 東西洋考, *Zhuozhong zhi* 酌中志, *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考, and *Gujin shiwen leiju yiji* 古今事文類聚遺集). These materials help with situating the early Ming and Chosŏn policy-making process in a wider historical context, in order to better understand the policy rationales.

1.6. Chapter outline

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, including the Introduction and Conclusion. They describe Ming and Chosŏn responses to diverse incidents and analyse the courts' concerns about dynastic authority, national security, foreign trade, and other issues during their respective periods of state-building. Chapter 2, 'The establishment of dynastic authority', scrutinizes the two courts' efforts to establish their political authority with the ban on border exits. Controlling egress established jurisdiction, extended controls to the military, and centralized diplomatic power. The first section demonstrates how the Ming court encouraged the locals to register with the government or the military by implementing maritime exclusion, which helped to strengthen its controls over the coastal territory. The second section describes how the courts established civilian control over the military by banning the troops from engaging in overseas trade. The final section illustrates how the royal courts centralized diplomatic power by forbidding their civil servants and generals to establish private contacts with overseas authorities. By highlighting these efforts, this chapter reveals that maritime prohibition contributed to the enhancement of the authority of the newly-established Ming and Chosŏn courts.

Many historians agree that the implementation of maritime prohibition was a response to the incessant Japanese piracy. Chapter 3, 'Geopolitical uncertainty and national security', argues that the concern about national security can help to explain the policy implementations in the two states, but the impact of piracy on the policy-making process was not as significant as previously understood. Rather, international anarchy and disorder were what the courts really concerned themselves with when the policy decisions were made. In this chapter, section one is an assessement of the piracy problem in the implementation of maritime exclusion. The last two sections illustrate the main worry of the Ming and Chosŏn courts: the spectre of international anarchy in East Asia and geopolitical uncertainty caused by domestic upheavals in overseas states.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 describe the Ming and Chosŏn courts' efforts respectively at constructing state-supervised trading systems with border controls, through which the governments could improve their financial situations. Chapter 4 is about Ming China's case. Section one gives a brief introduction to the trade policies implemented by the previous dynasties, indicating the flaws of these polices. Section two discusses how the Ming court tried to overcome those problems of the existing system by strengthening the state's role in trade. Section three discusses why the new trading mechanism declined from the mid-fifteenth century.

Chapter 5 focuses on the development of Chosŏn Korea's trade control policy. Section one discusses how the Korean-Japanese trade started in the early dynastic period and soon became excessive to the kingdom. Section two analyses the court's effort to improve the trade balance by tightening its control over the coastal borders. Section three shows how the

Korean court improved its trade control policies in struggles with those who never tired of finding ways to outwit government restraints.

Chapter 6 attempts to explain the courts' concerns about the outflow of precious metals and the proliferation of advanced military technologies. Section one examines the Ming court's monetary policy implemented from the Hongwu reign and discusses the pressure on Chosŏn to make international payments, suggesting that the courts strengthened export controls for the purspos of maintaining the stability of their monetary system. Section two concentrates on Chosŏn's efforts at obtaining black powder technology (gunpowder) from China and protecting its military technologies from Japanese espionage. By narrating the Korean methods to access and keep the secrets of black powder, this section illustrates the maritime exclusion's role in stopping the proliferation of advanced military technologies in the region.

In the Conclusion, I will summarise the roles of maritime exclusion policies in the state-building processes of both the Ming and Chosŏn dynasties, provide a brief comparison between the Ming and the Chosŏn cases.

Chapter 2

The establishment of dynastic authority

An effective control of border was an exhibition of the exclusive power of a newly-established government over its territory. However, maritime exclusion was much more than just a display of power. Making use of the power to decide who could cross the border and who could not, the courts cemented their ties with different audiences including ordinary people, armies, bureaucratic elites, and foreign powers. This effectively strengthened the authority of the new regimes. Precisely, by prohibiting its people from sailing the sea, the Ming court drove the coastal residents to register as farmers or join the army, which greatly enhaced the court's control over the region. By restricting troops' access to the sea, both courts weakened the economic autonomy of their coastal guards, which helped the central governemnts to establish civilian control over the military. With strict prohibitions on private contacts between officials and foreign authroities, the courts constructed a monarchic-centric international system, in which the monarch was the only legal actor in international relations, and reduced the risks of the collusion between the bureaucratic elites and foreign rivals against the monarch-centred court. Besdies, by gripping the trading channels, the new regimes encouraged overseas powers to recognize and respect their sovereignty in China and Korea.This chapter will discuss how the two newly founded dynasties, Ming and Chosŏn, made use of coastal border controls to establish and reinforce their dynastic authorities.

2.1 Ming's efforts to register coastal population.

As its troop occupied new territory, the Ming court faced a task that was crucial to its further military operations and the stability of the newly-established regime: how to establish an effective administrative management over the occupied region as soon as possible. For a pre-modern Chinese regime, the most effective and common way to achieve this goal was to register the residents as farmers or soldiers. By subdividing and classifying the population of the occupied zone into simply two types of occupations, the new regime could instantly impose control over the people and exploit the labour resources, which would offer a stable rear, sustained provisions, and new military manpower for the frontline. In this way, the regime greatly simplified the process of placing imperial administration at the local level and support the military expansion of the empire. This was basically how the Ming court incorporated the local manpower of new occupied zone into its own force during its expansion by 1372.[96] This division of population by careers went on and became a basic principle to organize the society,[97] when the Ming court shifted its focus from military expansion to empire construction from the early 1370s.[98]

Nevertheless, the coastal region required special attention from the court, because there was a large group of population in this area living by catching fish or conducting waterborne trade and they commonly resisted career changes. The reasons for the coastal residents' reluctance to consider alternative careers were twofold. First, fishery and waterborne trade normally provided a better revenue than agriculture did for the coastal residents, primarily because coastal areas were usually infertile saline soil, on which farmers could hardly get a good harvest. Second, compared with those who lived in the inland areas, it was easier for the coastal residents to dodge the government's compulsion order by escaping to the sea. In other words, from the perspective of the coastal residents, it was economically reasonable and feasible to stick with their original job, rather than start over as

[96] For further discussion about the development of Ming's military system in the state-building period, refer to Edward L. Dreyer (1988).
[97] On Ming's household register system, see *Ming shi*, Book.77, v.7, pp. 1878-1881.
[98] Edward L. Dreyer suggests that 1372 was the year of this transition. See Edward L. Dreyer (1988), pp. 102-105. For a more careful observation of this transition period, refer to John D. Langlois (1988), pp. 107-139.

hopeless farmers. Therefore, large number of coastal residents refused to change their career and continued with waterborne business.

From the perspective of the Ming court, however, this was unacceptable. First of all, this disobedience directly challenged the authority of the new regime. It set a bad example for other audiences that everyone could resist the policies implemented by this government. Second, it was also a big security loophole if there were groups of people out of control wandering along the coastal line and crossing the border as they pleased, particularly given the context that the Ming court had yet pacified the coastal waters. Political exiles, routed troops, pirates, and smugglers were still active on the sea.[99]

Therefore, the Ming court persisted in its plan to register population in the coastal areas. Given that the agricultural sector in this region could hardly support the population transferred from the waterborne business, the court decided to absorb the redundant into the military. In 1371/12, Emperor Hongwu requested Wu Zhen 吳禎, the general who was in charge of the navy and coastal defences, to carry out conscription in the coastal regions. Wu was instructed to pick out landless people, sailors, and surviving supporters of the old regimes and recruit all of them into the army. As a result, some 11,730 men were recruited.[100] This figure suggests that the navy under Wu's control was reinforced seven-fold and the

[99] The routed troops of Fang Guozhen 方國珍 and 張士誠 Zhang Shicheng, two Chinese warlords who governed Fujian and Zhejaing provinces before they were defeated by the Ming's troops, still active on the high sea in the early 1370s and became a threat to Ming's coastal security. These gangs denied the rule of the Ming authority and constantly harassed China's coastal line. Making use of their connections with the coastal residents, they committed piracy and smuggling to support themselves. They sometimes attacked the Ming's supply line on the sea as their previous leaders did to the Yuan government. Some of them even established bases in overseas states and colluded with foreign powers against the Ming court. For further discussion about these gangs and their conflicts with the Ming court, refer to Cao Yonghe (1984), Matsuura Akira (2011), pp. 39–40. Danjō Hiroshi. (2013), pp. 53-60. For further analysis of piracy suppression and border control, see Chapter 3.

[100] *Ming Taizu shilu* 68:2b, v.2, p. 1274 [Hongwu.4:9:gengshen].

newly recruited sailors roughly composed one-third of the local adult male population in Fujian province at that time.[101]

At the end of the conscription decree to general Wu, the emperor added an appendix: 'forbid seashore people to go to the sea privately'.[102] Apparently, the purpose of attaching this ban to the decree was to accelerate the recruitment process. By prohibit private individuals from sailing the sea and carrying out overseas trade, the Ming court left the landless residents few options but to join the army.

This was the first maritime exclusion decree made by the first Ming emperor. Apparently, it was a patch of Ming's conscription system. By banning private navigation, the Ming court drove the coastal residents to join the army. There were multiple benefits. It strengthened the authority of the regime, enhanced the government's control over the coastal region, cut the manpower resources that might have been allocated to the anti-government forces on the sea, and reinforced the court's coastal forces. All these enhanced the court's control over the coastal region and hence strengthened the court's authority over the residents there.

2.2 Civilian control of the military

During wars of dynastic founding, the military enjoyed a high level of autonomous power, because monarchs depended on the army to conquer military opponents. Often, though, monarchs could not fully afford the expenditure. Hence, the founders of both Ming and Chosŏn tacitly allowed the troops in the coastal regions to engage in overseas trade. Nevertheless, during the state-building period, monarchs also attempted to diminish the military's autonomy and tighten control of army since a troop with high autonomous power posed a threat to the security of the royal house and the dynasty. Thus, the Chinese and

[101] Dreyer, Edward L. (1982), pp. 121
[102] *Ming Taizu shilu* 70:3b, v.3, pp. 1300 [Hongwu.4:12:bingxu].

Korean monarchs forbade the coastal guards and marines to carry out overseas trade in an effort to cut off the military from overseas financial sources. This was a significant reason why Ming China and Chosŏn Korea strictly controlled border exits along the coast.

2.2.1 The Ming case

From 1352 to 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, the founding emperor of the Ming, fought against the Mongolians' authority and other Chinese warlords to ascend the throne as the Emperor of China. Zhu's administrative apparatus was primarily his military force. The commanders of every division of the army wielded both civil and military authority over the newly annexed territory. Since 1364, new units called guards (*weisuo* 衛所) were created to garrison the new territories and process increasing troops converted from defeated enemies. The *weisuo* system certified the division ('wings', *yi* 翼) as the highest authority in local administration and granted to the military the power to raise funds to finance itself.

In 1368, Zhu declared the establishment of the Ming and his troops occupied Yuan's capital, Dadu 大都 (present-day Beijing). The main phase of the military conquest was thus over and most of China proper accepted Ming's rule. In the next four years (1368 – 1372), wars continued but were largely confined to the border areas with the Mongolians along the northwest frontiers and the last Chinese warlords in Sichuan. The occupation of Sichuan in 1371 and military setbacks in the battles against the Mongolians in 1372 marked the end of the military phase of dynastic founding.[103]

As military operations declined, the emperor began to shift his concern from wars to other military-related problems. As Edward Dreyer summarises, 'these included gaining full acceptance for Zhu's imperial status from his army and creating a peacetime military system

[103] On the military origins of Ming China, see Edward L. Dreyer. (1988), p.58-106.

that permitted economies but avoided social strains of large-scale demobilization'.[104] In other words, the emperor needed to establish civilian control over the military and secure the troops' absolute loyalty to him.

Emperor Hongwu was alert to threats of military mutiny, which had happened and caused dynastic change on many occasions in past centuries. He had a clear understanding of historic lessons and the threats from the generals who wielded military power.[105] The emperor tightened his grasp over the military through various methods from the late 1370s, when the frontier situation gradually stabilized. He secured the military's loyalty by honouring the generals with noble titles and rewarding foot soldiers with large sums of money.[106] He diminished the generals' power over the troops by persuading them to withdraw from positions of real power and by compiling detailed regulations to punish those who committed minor mistakes.[107] When the generals expressed their willingness to continue to serve the emperor, Emperor Hongwu sensitively took an uncompromising stand and warned them not to take power.[108] On occasions like a victory banquet in 1370, the emperor repeatedly warned his generals not to violate the laws or lose their respect for the emperor, otherwise they might lose their lives.[109] Meanwhile, he assigned military farmlands to each

[104] Edward L. Dreyer. (1988), p.99.
[105] *Ming Taizu shilu* 59:2b-3b, v.3, pp.1150-1152 [[Hongwu.3:12:jiazi], 59:4a-6a, v.3, pp. 1153-1157 [Hongwu.3:12:wuchen]; also see Lorge, Peter A. (2015).
[106] On the conferment of noble titles, refer to *Ming Taizu shilu* 59:2b-3b, v.3, pp.1150-1152 [Hongwu.3:12:jiazi]; also see Edward L. Dreyer. (1988), p.105. On the rewards for foot soldiers at the time, *Ming Shilu* provides detailed records. E.g. *Ming Taizu shilu* 67:6b-7a, v.3, pp.1264-1265 [Hongwu.4:8:bingxu, guisi], 68:2b, v.3, p. 1274 [Hongwu.4:9:gengshen], 68:7a, v.3, p. 1283 [Hongwu.4:10:dingyou].
[107] On the regulations for generals, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 69:1b, v.3, p. 1288 [Hongwu.4:11:gengshen], 69:3a-3b, v.3, pp. 1291-1292 [Hongwu.4:11:yihai].
[108] *Ming Taizu shilu* 59:8b-9a, v.3, pp. 1162-1163 [Hongwu.3:12:dingchou].
[109] *Ming Taizu shilu* 58:8b-10b, v.3, pp. 1138-1142, [Hongwu.3:11:wuxu]. On the similar warnings, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 58:10b, v.3, p. 1142 [Hongwu.3:11:xinchou], 59:1a-1b, v.3, pp. 1147-1148 [Hongwu.3:12:wuwu], 59:1b, v.3, p.1148 [Hongwu.3:12:jiwei], 59:2b-3b, v.3, pp.1150-1152 [[Hongwu.3:12:jiazi], 59:4a-6a, v.3, pp. 1153-1157 [Hongwu.3:12:wuchen].

garrison, avoiding the shock to the society caused by the demobilization of soldiers on a grand scale.[110]

In addition, the emperor prohibited the military from carrying out commercial business. He gave this instruction to garrisons all over China in 1370/12.[111] By doing so, the emperor deprived the military of its financial autonomy and controlled the army by confining its financial sources to the military farmland and state appropriations.

As the battles in the inland areas came to an end in 1371, the emperor started to pay more attention to the coastal regions. In 1371/12, Emperor Hongwu issued a specific decree to the coastal garrisons, forbidding the commanders to dispatch their soldiers to sail the seas and carry out overseas trade. Obviously, it was a reaffirmation of the 1370 ban, which forbade the troops to engage in commercial activities. This was the second maritime exclusion decree issued ten days after the first one by Emperor Hongwu to prohibit unauthorised coastal border exiting.

> …I considered that the sea routes could access the foreign states, thus [I] once prohibited border exit and entry. Recently, [I] learned that the commanders of Xinghua Guard in Fujian, Li Xing and Li Chun, privately sent men to sail the seas and carry out trade. How could the coastal military guards be unaware of what they did? If [we do not] prohibit [these activities], then the civilians will all be seduced by profits and punished by laws. You (officers in the Chief Military Command) must send people to instruct them [that if] there is anyone violating [the law], [he will be] punished according to the laws.[112]

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[110] See Edward L. Dreyer. (1988), pp.104-5.
[111] *Ming Taizu shilu* 59:8b-9a, v.3, pp. 1162-1163 [Hongwu.3:12:dingchou].
[112] ‘朕以海道可通外邦, 故尝禁其往来. 近闻福建兴化卫指挥,李兴,李春私遣人出海行贾,则滨海军卫岂无知彼所为者乎.苟不禁戒,则人皆惑利而陷于刑宪矣.尔其遣人谕之,有犯者论如律’. *Ming Taizu shilu* 69:1b, v.3, p. 1288 [Hongwu.4:11:jiwei].

In this decree, Emperor Hongwu mentioned the case of two Guard Commanders, Li Xing and Li Chun, and defined their business as smuggling. It is interesting to note that the name of Li Chun recurs in the *Ming shilu* three times and his experience testified to the emperor's devices to restrict the military through border controls.

The first record about Li Chun was a case of robbing graves in 1371/11. The local government in Fujian reported a legal case to the emperor, charging Li with robbing graves for money. The report noted Li's title: Assistant Commander (*zhihui qianshi* 指揮僉事, rank 4a). The emperor instructed that Li should be punished according to the law, recover the stolen goods, and re-inter the dead bodies. He also remarked on this event on a wooden monument and erected it beside the tomb as a commandment for the residents.[113] According to the *Great Ming Code*, those who rob a grave and expose the dead bodies are sentenced to death by hanging.[114] In other words, Li would have been sentenced to death, according to the emperor's instruction.

However, Li Chun survived and was mentioned a month later in 1371/12 by Emperor Hongwu in another decree, which is the second record about Li in the *shilu*. The emperor referred to Li again in his decree because Li violated the ban on navigation and dispatched his marines to carry out overseas trade. The strange thing is that Li Chun was now a Commander (*zhihui* 指揮, rank 3a) over his guard. In other words, instead of being executed, Li had been promoted after the case of robbing graves. In the second decree, the emperor ordered the officers in the Chief Military Command (*dadufufu* 大都督府) to warn the coastal guards not to violate the ban, but he did not mention how to punish Li.

[113] *Ming Taizu shilu* 69:1b-2a, v.3, pp. 1288-1289 [Hongwu.4:11:guihai].
[114] Huai Xiaofeng. (1989), pp. 144-5.

The third record about Li Chun in *shilu* was in 1386. According to this record, Li Chun was transferred from Assistant Commissioner-in-chief (*dudu qianshi* 都督僉事, rank 2a) to Regional Military Commissioner (*duzhihuishi* 都指揮使, rank 2a) in Guangdong.[115] In other words, Li survived his second law case in 1372 and he was promoted again and then become a high-ranking general in the military.

The case of Li was unusual. Instead of being punished, he was repeatedly promoted even after he violated laws and prohibitions. A reasonable explanation for his unusual exemption from punishment was that the emperor had tacitly consented to Li's behaviour to finance his troops during wartime. As the emperor shifted his concerns in 1371 from wars to other military-related problems, from inland frontier to the coastal regions, he began to diminish the military's capabilities to raise funds by disciplining the military and limiting the scope of the army's activities. The goal of the emperor was to terminate the army's freedom to make money. To console the coastal guards on losing their financial privileges, the emperor generously pardoned the commanders of 'crimes' and promoted them to higher positions. Further, it is highly possible that Emperor Hongwu was the one who suggested the local government report the case of Li Chun, which provided him with a pretext for taking a stricter grip on the military. In all, Li's experience implies that the emperor was carefully tightening his control over the military in the 1370s and maritime exclusion was a part of his plan.

2.2.2 The Chosŏn case

Similar scenarios unfolded in Korea. Control of border exiting played a role in strengthening Chosŏn's civilian control over its marines. As will be seen in Chapter 3,

[115] *Ming Taizu shilu* 179:6a, v.6, p. 2713 [Hongwu.19:11:yichou].

Japanese pirates began to raid the Korean peninsula in the second half of the fourteenth century. In order to encourage the coastal troops to defend the pirates, Yi Sŏnggye's government promised financial benefits to them. In 1388/8, two months after Yi Sŏnggye dethroned King U and came to power, the new administration proposed the reinforcement of coastal defence. It suggested encouraging farming and fishing in the coastal regions with tax exemptions, while coastal residents were to be held liable for military-related service for the navy, including providing provisions, constructing fortifications, producing weapons, and building warships. Also, the court conferred freehold estates in offshore islands on the divisional generals.[116] The court ordered in 1391 to recruit marines from coastal residents and exempt coastal farmland from tax for the purpose of supplying the navy.[117] In 1392, when Yi Sŏnggye dethroned the last King of Koryŏ and founded the Chosŏn dynasty, his administration reaffirmed this policy. In his edict on ascending the throne, Yi Sŏnggye granted the navy with the right of 'catching fish and [obtaining] salt' without a levy.[118]

In short, under Yi Sŏnggye's rule from 1388, the coastal region became the special economic zone for the coastal guards and marines, whose production, including farming, fishing, and salt, were tax-exempt. In other words, Korea's coastal guards actually monopolized coastal industries and enjoyed a high level of financial autonomy in this period (1388-1394). This financial autonomy also implies that the coastal troops were tacitly allowed to partake in overseas trade. It was in this period (1388-1392) that the number of merchant vessels sailing from Korea to China surged dramatically, even though the piracy issue had not yet been solved completely.[119] Although the Ming court closed its border in

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[116] *Koryŏsa* 82:42b-43b, v.2, pp.814-815 [Sin-U.14:8].
[117] *Koryŏsa* 83:32a-32b, v.2, p.831 [Gongyang wang.1:10].
[118] *T'aejo sillok* 1:42b-50a, v.1, pp. 21-25 [Tajo.1:7:chŏng-mi].
[119] The surge of merchant vessels might be tentatively explained not only by Korea's coastal policy but also by the policy change in Ming China to open ports to the Koreans after 1389. *T'aejong sillok* 6:11b-13a, v.1, pp. 276-277 [T'aejong.3:9:cap-sin].

1392, the maritime trade between the coastal residents in Korea and Ming China continued in the following two years.[120]

The considerations underlying Yi's acquiescence in the coastal troop's economic autonomy were threefold. First of all, it was a way of compensation and encouragement for the navy's defence of the country against raids and attacks from the sea. Second, it alleviated the central government's fiscal burden by allowing the navy to finance itself. Last but not least, the policy helped Yi Sŏnggye to attain the army's support for his military coup in 1388 and the establishment of the new dynasty in 1392. In exchange for acceptance from the military and the powerful clans, Yi Sŏnggye allowed merit subjects, grand clans, and others to retain their own personal armed forces. Meanwhile, members of the royal household commanded their own troops as well. To some extent, Yi Sŏnggye formed a political coalition with the military and the noble clans to support his coup and accession, which was conditioned by autonomy of various militarised groups. The recognition of coastal troop's monopoly of overseas trade was a part of this political deal. Finally in 1392/07, Yi Sŏnggye obtained his throne and became known by his posthumous title T'aejo (r. 1392 – 1398).

Apparently, widespread military autonomy was an expedient measure during the period of dynastic founding and incessant pirate raids. Thanks to such political arrangement, Yi Sŏnggye became the king of Korea but at the cost of diminishing his central government's control over military groups all over the kingdom. Because the coastal guards and navy retained its economic autonomy, the central government was not able to effectively apply its policy to the coast. Central government commands would not be obeyed in the coastal

[120] The Ming government's accusations in 1393 and 1394 about the Korean navy's raids and private communication with Chinese coastal residents exemplified the continuity of the trade. On the 1393 cases, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 230:2a, vo.8, p.3361 [Hongwu.26:10:bingxu], *T'aejo sillok* 3:9a-9b, v.1, p. 43 [T'aejo.2:5:chŏng-myo], 3:10a-11b, v.1, p.44 [T'aejo.2:6:ŭl-hae]; on the 1394 case, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 231:4a, v.8, p.2278 [Hongwu.27:2:guiyou], 231:6b-7a, v.8, pp. 3382-3383 [Hongwu.27:2:jiawu]

regions if the decrees violated the interests of the coastal guards. The local community would even play tricks to resist the decrees in some cases. This explains why the Chosŏn administration did not impose strict border controls on its coasts immediately after its establishment, as the Ming did.

The setbacks for the Korean-Japanese negotiation on piracy issues in 1397 might exemplify this situation. In 1397/1, a group of Japanese pirates came to surrender to the Chosŏn court. To show their sincerity, a pirate chief presented his son and an intimate partner as hostages. However, all five Chosŏn major officials suddently went absent from the talks with the Japanese. The Japanese, thus, regarded it as a sign of a trap, and they retreated immediately and kidnapped several Korean officials.[121] Sincerely hoping for a peace treaty with Chosŏn, the Japanese returned the kidnapped officials in 1397/2 and landed again to restore the talks in 1397/4.[122] Nevertheless, once the pirate chiefs had left for the capital, the Chosŏn navy turned against them and launched an attack on the remaining Japanese in the port city. The Japanese who stayed behind spotted the trick and they fled.[123] One month later in 1397/5, Kyūshū Tandai, Ōuchi Yoshihiro 大内義弘 (1356-1399; r. 1395-1399) dispatched a formal mission to Chosŏn, looking forward to advancing the peace process, but the Chosŏn navy attacked and wiped out the mission without permission from the court. The navy commander even reported their operation as a case of defence against pirates.[124]

These incidents suggest that the Chosŏn military, particularly the coastal troops, was putting obstacles in the way of the normalization between the Japanese and the Chosŏn court.

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121 *T'aejo sillok* 11:1a, v1, p. 99 [Taejo.6:1: pyŏng-chin], 2a, p. 100 [T'aejo.6:1:sin-sa]
122 *T'aejo sillok* 11:4a-6, v1, p. 101 [Taejo.6:2: kyŏng-sul], 11:8b, v.1, p. 103 [T'aejo.6:3:mu-in], 11:9a, v.1, p. 103 [T'aejo.6:4:kye-mi], 11:9a, v.1, p. 103 [T'aejo.6:4:mu-cha]
123 *T'aejo sillok* 11:9a, v.1, p. 103 [T'aejo.6:4:mu-cha].
124 *T'aejo sillok* 11:16a, v.1, p. 107 [T'aejo.6:6:im-o], 11:17b, v.1, p. 107 [T'aejo.6:6:ki-yu]. It worth noting that not all the talks ended in failure. Neotiations in some cases went smoothly and successfully, see *T'aejo sillok* 10:11a, v.1, p. 99 [T'aejo.5:12:kye-sa], 10:11a-11b, v.1, p. 99 [T'aejo.5:12:ŭl-sa], 10:11b, v.1, p. 99 [T'aejo.5:12:pyŏng-o],

The coastal troops thwarted the realization of peace because probably they thought that the reconciliation between Chosŏn and the Japanese would lead to trade recovery, which would damage their economic privilege. Therefore, they deliberately created disputes between the court and the Japanese to make the court rely on them in the matter of security so that they could maintain their monopoly on trade.

King T'aejo made efforts to move away from allowing autonomous military groups as early as 1394, but the process was not proceeding smoothly. In 1394/1, the administration suggested mandating a central government agency, the Directorate for Fisheries and Natural Resources (Sajaegam 司宰監),[125] to manage fishing and salt resources all over the kingdom. It also proposed to re-establish military farmlands and salt flats to supply the army.[126] We do not know whether the court approved this proposal, but, apparently, it was a step towards restricting the military's autonomy in finance and controlling the army's production from military farmlands and salt flats, which were technically under the supervision of the central government. In 1397/10, the court took action by dispatching Investigating Censors (*kamchal* 監察) to each province to register all fisheries and salt flats and evaluate the output of these industries for the purpose of levying a tax. However, the court met with resistance from local governments.[127] In 1398/1, the Provincial Governor (*kwanch'alsa* 觀察使) of Kyŏngsang-do 慶尚道 delivered a memorial in which the deputy director (*chisa* 知事) in Yŏngju 永州 argued that the state engagemnet into coastal industries terrified the residents and caused population drain. He suggested deferring the implementation of the new policy for years.[128] Due to pressure from local government, the court agreed to delay the reform for one year, but

[125] The Sajaegam was first established in 1392 as the Sasugam 司水監.
[126] *T'aejo sillok* 5:2a-2b, v.1, p. 53 [T'aejo.3:1:chŏng-sa].
[127] *T'aejo sillok* 12:6b, v.1, p. 20 [T'aejo.6:10:pyŏng-sul].
[128] *T'aejo sillok* 13:1b, v.1, p. 114 [T'aejo.7:1:ki-mi].

it persisted with registration and continued to send officers to work out an inventory of relevant estates and properties.[129]

The problem was more than that the government decree was not obeyed. Like their counterparts in Ming China, the kings of Chosŏn were alert to the danger of military coups. As mentioned above, the powerful families in Korea were allowed to maintain their private troops in the early Chosŏn period, which was a precondition for their support to the replacement of the Koryŏ dynasty to the Yi dynasty. But this arrangement posed serious threat to the Yi family. The two brutal 'Strifes of Princes' in 1398 and 1400 excemplified this danger.[130]

The events in 1398 and 1400 reminded the rulers about the danger of the existing military system and drove them to initiate a reform by consolidating the royal authority and imposing a stricer grop over the military. The first step the kings took was to weaken the economic autonomy of the coastal guards. On the edict of King Chŏngjong's accession, the court specified that the *Sajaegam* would take charge of fisheries all over the kingdom in order to collect revenues and expenditures under a centralized management.[131] Apparently, this was the continuation of Yi Sŏnggye's reform of coastal garrisons' provision system.[132]

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[129] *T'aejo sillok* 13:10b-11a, v.1, p. 119 [T'aejo.7:4:ki-myo], 13:11a-11b, v.1, p. 119 [[T'aejo.7:4kyŏng-chin].

[130] In 1398/8, the 'First Strife of Princes' burst out. In this power struggle within the royal family, Yi Sŏnggye's fifth son, Yi Pangwŏn 李芳遠, attacked and killed two of his youngest brothers, including the crown prince, Yi Pangsŏk 李芳碩. He then forced his father to abdicate and made his second elder brother, Yi Panggwa 李芳果, the king, known by the posthumous title Chŏngjong (r. 1398 -1400). King Chŏngjong was actually a puppet of Pangwŏn, who wielded real power in the kingdom. In 1400 in the 'Second Strife of Princes', Pangwŏn suppressed the revolt launched by his forth older brother, Yi Panggan 李芳幹. Then, he pressurised King Chŏngjong to abdicate the throne to himself and became known later as the third king, King T'aejong (r. 1400-18). For futher discussion about these two military coups, see Jinwung Kim. (2012), pp. 186-9.

[131] *T'aejo sillok* 15:3a-5a, v.1, pp. 137-138 [T'aejo:7:9:chŏng-hae].

[132] In 1400, King T'aejong took a more aggressive move to institute centralized military control. He abolished private armies of those powerful families. Jinwung Kim. (2012), p. 188.

Further in 1406, King T'aejong launched a reform of the supply system for naval garrisons and the marines. In 1406/3, the capital and its environs suffered famine and the marines, who came from the capital, found that they could no longer support themselves during their service term. Thus, the Provincial Governor (*To Kwanch'alsa* 都觀察使) asked the central administration to supply provisions for the marines. T'aejong took advantage of this opportunity to take over the food supply for the navy. He approved the governor's proposal and ordered to pay the marines every half month until the autumn harvest.[133] Immediately, or in the next month, he stopped the marines from engaging in military farming, catching fish, and foraging offshore on the pretext of releasing the marines from extra labour.[134] By doing so, the kding deprived the military of its right to earn revenue from maritime business.

Unsuprisingly, the reform resulted in strong resistance in the court. Intense debates on the reform continued in the following year, while the king did not give in. In 1407/1, T'aejong ordered to 'severely' prohibit using marines for economic activities.[135] Finally, the king ended the debate in 1407/7 by rejecting the request to recover the old supply system.[136]

Meanwhile, the court began to change the commanders in the front line to increase its control over the local troops. In 1407/3, the King designated three officials from the central government as the new Provincial Army Commanders and Naval Commanders concurrently in the three southern coastal provinces.[137] Three months later, the court established a Navy Superintendent of Post Stations (*Sugun Ch'albang* 水軍察訪) in naval garrisons to supervise

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133 *T'aejong sillok* 11:13b, v.1, p. 352 [T'aejong.6:3:mu-o]. .
134 *T'aejong sillok* 11:17b-18a, v.1, pp. 354-355 [T'aejong.6:4:kyŏng-chin].
135 *T'aejong sillok* 13:1b-2a, v.1, p. 382 [T'aejong.7:1:chŏng-myo]
136 *T'aejong sillok* 14:1a-2a, v.1, pp. 402-403 [T'aejong.7:7:kye-ch'uk]. In 1408/12, T'aejong sent central officials to take over the administration of the salt flats of the navy (*T'aejong sillok* 16:50b-51a, v.1, p. 469 [T'aejong.8:12:chŏng-yu]).
137 *T'aejong sillok* 13:10b, v.1, p. 386 [T'aejong.7:3:chŏng-sa].

the local officers.[138] By sending central officers to the front line, King T'aejong strengthened his controls over military supplies. At the same time, more measures were taken to strengthen the centralized control of the navy. By registering the marines and fleets,[139] sending more central staff to the front,[140] recalling the old commanders,[141] and reorganizing the command system,[142] the King turned the navy on its head and carried out thorough reforms from top to bottom.

In 1415/06, the court issued the ban to forbide the navy from getting involved in maritime business, including catching fish on the high seas.[143] Given the kings' efforts discussed above, this ban was obviously also a step to strengthen court control over the military by imposing a restraint on the troop' finances, as its Ming counterpart did in China.

2.3 Monarchic diplomacy

One of the reasons for the first Ming emperor to strictly control border exit and entry was that he attempted to establish his centralized control over all foreign matters. By simultaneously forbidding unauthorised border exits, refusing unofficial foreign visits, and prohibiting private contacts between imperial officials and foreign states, the emperor had all foreign contacts under his supervision and developed an institution, which is termed 'tribute system' by modern scholars. Such diplomatic institution actually confined international relations to monarchic diplomats and greatly strengthened the emperor's authority over the domestic audience. The Chosŏn court adapted to the Chinese diplomatic principle and

[138] *T'aejong sillok* 13:27b-32a, v.1, pp. 395-397 [T'aejong.7:6:kye-mi].
[139] *T'aejong sillok* 13:27b-32a, v.1, pp. 395-397 [T'aejong.7:6:kye-mi].
[140] *T'aejong sillok* 14:31a-31b, v.1, p. 417 [T'aejong.7:10:kye-mi].
T'aejong sillok 15:1a-2a, v.1, p. 427-428 [T'aejong.8:1:sin-hae], 16:36a-36b, v.1, p. 462 [T'aejong.8:11:kye-ch'uk].
[141] *T'aejong sillok* 15:18a-19a [T'aejong.8:4:mu-cha].
[142] *T'aejong sillok* 14:48a-49a, v.1, p. 426 [T'aejong.7:12:chŏng-hae], 16:36b-37a, v.1, p. 462 [T'aejong.8:11:cap-in].
[143] *T'aejong sillok* 29:47b-50a, v.2, pp. 72-73 [T'aejong.15:6:kyŏng-in].

developed its own ‘tribute system’.[144] To enhance their authority, the Korean kings introduced the rule from the Ming that civil officials should not contact foreigners without their permission. But when they conducted the relationship with foreign countries, the kings had no problems in establishing contacts with the sub-monarch political actors as long as the kingdom would benefit from those contacts. In this sense, the Chosŏn court’s policy was more flexible than that of the Ming. This difference was also reflected in the coastal border control policies of both countries.

2.3.1 The Ming case

The first Ming emperor deeply believed in centralized authority. This style of government was particularly reflected in the reorganization of administrative structures that began in 1380. In order to eliminate the threat from the bureaucratic elites to the emperor and established an emperor-centred political system, Emperor Hongwu began a political purge and reform from 1380. By dismissing the prime minister, Emperor Hongwu removed the most powerful bureaucrat from the government permanently and established a new administrative system with the emperor as the sole centre of power.

The trigger for the purge and political reform was the event that the prime minister, Hu Weiyong 胡惟庸, received the envoys from Champa in 1379 without reporting to the emperor. Emperor Hongwu was enraged at his prime minister and even more furious about the possibility that he was deceived by the powerful officials who were conspiring against him. Emperor Hongwu concluded that Hu Weiyong attempted a coup and ordered to execute Hu and other related officials. To justify the execution of Hu, the court in 1386 alleged that Hu had colluded with the Japanese to plot against the emperor.[145] In the entire 1380s, investigations continued and around fifteen thousand imperial officials were executed. As a

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144 Kenneth Robinson (1997), pp. 25-28.

145 On this accusation of Hu, see Danjō Hiroshi. (2012), pp. 259-67. Wu Han (2015).

result, the whole upper echelon of the central government was abolished, and the emperor concentrated power in his hands.[146]

In this process, the emperor tightened his grip on the diplomatic power as well. He specially introduced a new principle to deal with diplomatic affairs. That is, 'the civil officials have no [right to] contact with foreign [powers] (*renchen wu waijiao* 人臣無外交)'.[147] Making this a diplomatic principle, the emperor forbade imperial officials to contact foreign states and make diplomatic decisions without his permission. By doing so, the emperor actually conferred himself with the exclusive power to conduct all matters pertaining to relations beyond the borders of his empire. Correspondingly, the bureaucrats had not power to make any diplomatic decisions but only had the duty to implement the emperor's decisions. Apparently, Emperor Hongwu regarded the power to conduct foreign affairs as a symbol of imperial supremacy, and, by highlighting the new diplomatic principle, the emperor stopped the bureaucrats from eroding his authority by excluding him from the diplomatic dicision-making process.

Moreover, by implementing the new principle, Emperor Hongwu intended to initiate monarchic diplomacy and form an ally with foreign monarchs. Specifically, the emperor wanted to construct a new framework of international relations, in which monarchs were the sole actors. A basic principle of this diplomatic framework is that there was a sole legitimate government under the leadership of a sole monarch in every state. Accordingly, any international contacts on the sub-monarch levels, including private trade, would be under

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146 On the political reorganization and the purges, see John D. Langlois, JR., (1988), pp.139-81. Charles O. Hucker. (1998), pp. 72-103. Wu Han (2015).

147 Emperor Hongwu brought forward this principle as early as 1379/4 when the local officers in Liaodong reported that Koryŏ attempted to established contacts with them by sending letters and gifts (*Ming Taizu Shilu* 124:1b-2a, v.5, pp. 1990-1991 [Hongwu.12:4:gengshen]). By accusing his prime minister of tempting unauthorized contacts and colluding with foreign states, the emperor highlighted this principle again and made it principle to conduct foreign affairs.

centralized supervision, if not prohibitted. In this way, monarchs would be able to monopolize foreign contacts and strangle challenges from within to their authority by preventing the usurpers from obtaining foreign assistance. Ultimately, this diplomatic framework would vastly strengthen the domestic authority of every monarch.

To preserve the principle of monarchic diplomacy, Emperor Hongwu deliberately refused to receive non-monarchical visits from the overseas world. For instances, he rejected the tributary visits paid by six Japanese clans in Kyūshū in 1374, because 'they paid visits without permission of their king'.[148] Again, the emperor rejected tribute from a Japanese merchant in 1376.[149] In 1380, the emperor rejected tribute from Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. The records noted that the emperor rejected Yoshimitsu's tribute, because of the 'arrogant rhetoric' in Yoshimitsu's letter, but the actual reason was probably that Yoshimitsu was a shogun, or army general, who had no right to exercise the diplomatic right of a monarch, that is, the emperor or the princes of Japan. By doing so, he attempted to inspire other monarchs to follow his example and rejected all non-monarchic visits from foreign countries.

Correspondingly, the Chinese individuals were prohibited from sailing overseas as well. Ten years after the proclamations of the first two maritime exclusion decrees in 1372, the emperor suddenly reiterated the ban on private sailing again in 1381 and, thereafter, he repeatedly confirmed the ban every three or four years. To prevent private individuals masquerading as official envoys, the emperor applied a tally (*kanhe* 勘合) system to identify and verify the identity of foreign missions.[150] With this system, the emperor made foreign

[148] *Ming Taizu shilu* 90:1a, v.4, p.1581 [Hongwu.7:6:yiwei].
[149] *Ming Taizu shilu* 106:3a-3b, v.4, pp. 1767-1768 [Hongwu.9:5:renwu].
[150] The Ming court first conferred tallies (seals) to foreign monarchs. Every tally was issued in halves, with a foreign monarch in possession of one half and the Ming government retaining the other half. When the diplomat arrived with a stamped letter, Ming officials could compare the seal half with their own, and if they matched, then the bearer was legitimate. Likewise, the Ming missions could verify their identity in foreign states with same kind of certificates. For further discussion of this tally system, refer to Jurgis Elisonas, (1998), p. 244.

contacts and trade under his supervision and excluded the non-monarch players from international relations completely. In this way, the emperor seriously implemented the principle of '*renchen wu waijiao*' and established a new international norm in the East Asian world.

To promote the monarchic diplomacy, the emperor also applied an elaborate, constructed system of hierarchic noble titles in international relations. Through proper rituals, particularly the enfeoffment of foreign kings, the Ming emperor and foreign kings verified the international position of each other and came to an agreement on monarchic diplomacy. Accordingly, every monarch had the joint obligation to hold international contacts at the level of monarchs and consciously suppress sub-monarch communication. Besides, the Ming court's exclusive control of the trading channel between China and the overseas world also encourage foreign monarchs to accept Ming's new diplomatic norm and framework.

However, the imposition of his diplomatic ideal on the overseas world caused trouble for the Ming empire, because this ideal somtimes clashed with the actual situations in other countries. For example, the designation of Prince Kaneyoshi, the son of Emperor Go-Daigo 后醍醐天皇 of the Southern Court, as the 'King of Japan' turned out to be a disaster. This decision accounted for the mounting tension between the Ming and Japan in the Hongwu reign (1368 -1398) and the failure to suppress Japanese pirates through diplomatic channels. In 1402, Emperor Yongle's enfeoffment of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu contributed to the reconciliation of Ming with Japanese central powers, but peace was soon hampered in the 1410s because of the same problem: the new shogun refused to accept the title conferred by the Ming.[151]

[151] On the problems and hostility caused by diplomatic issues between Ming and Japan, see Chapter 3.

To some extent, Emperor Hongwu was attempting to construct an East Asian version of the Holy Alliance to defend and secure monarchy. Instead of the nationalists, as in Europe, his opposition were potential usurpers in his empire. The idea of associating diplomacy with the imperial and dynastic authority of the emperor contributed to the stricter control of the coastal border. As long as the Ming emperors believed that the centralized control of foreign contacts was the key to the consolidation of their authority, they would never relinquish their control over the border.

2.3.2 The Chosŏn case

From its communications with Ming, the Chosŏn court learned that the Chinese emperor was promoting monarchic diplomacy by forbidding the imperial officials to established private contacts with foreign powers. The Koreans soon began to conduct the relations with the Chinese based on this principle to avoid enraging the Ming emperors. The court also learned to enhance its control on diplomacy by prohibiting private contacts between the naval officers and the Japanese. However, instead of adhering to the monarchic diplomacy like the Chinese, the Koreans were flexible over the application of the principle. Although it forbade the civil officials to communicate with foreigners, the court did not refuse to establish contacts with the secondary authorities and local powers in Japan.

In 1408/8, King T'aejong's crown prince returned from the capital of Ming and handed over an account of his trip in China to the court. According to his narrative, the crown prince paid a visit and accepted the bestowal of twenty silk clothes from a Chinese prince in Beijing in his return trip. The Chinese prince said to him:

> [As an] imperial servant, [I] have no reason to have private contact with you. [Therefore, I] should not accept your gifts when you came to visit [me]. While I [now]

accept them and will report it to [the emperor], because of your sincerity. Now [you] return [to your country] and say goodbye [to me]. [I] have nothing as a parting souvenir [but] make do with (silk cloth) as gifts.[152]

This is the earliest record in the *Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok* noting the doctrine of 'civil officials having no diplomatic power'. This case implies that the Koreans learned as early as 1408 that the Chinese emperor seriously prohibited contacts between foreigners and his officials. Even the prince cautiously avoided being in close contact with the crown prince from Chosŏn.

The Koreans soon accepted this doctrine as a basis of international law and put it into practice to resist the expansion of foreign influence in the border regions. In 1417/4, Emperor Yongle intended to strengthen Ming's influence in the Liaodong region by sending a troop with two thousand soldiers to build a temple in Luoyan 羅延, (present-day north Changbai Mountain).[153] When they approached the Ming-Chosŏn border, the Chinese commander requested the Koreans to provide food supply for his troop. King T'aejong called for a court consultation to disucss this issue and they finally decided to refuse the Chinese request for provision. In its reply to the Ming commander, the court justified its rejection by citing Ming's diplomatic principle of *renchen wu waijiao*.[154]

A similar case was repeated in 1424. Suffering from raids by the Mongolians and famine, Ming's Jurchen commanders and their clans attempted to force entry into Chosŏn's territory and demanded provisions. The Chosŏn court resisted their entry and rejected their requests. The Koreans expounded on their decision to the Jurchens, saying:

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152 '人臣無外交之義, 來時禮物, 所不當受. 然以世子之誠, 受而奏聞. 今還告歸, 無以爲禮, 聊此爲贈'. *T'aejong sillok* 15:13a-17b, v.1, pp. 433-435 [T'aejong.8:4:kyŏng-chin].
153 *T'aejong sillok* 33:28a-29b, v.2, pp. 156-157 [T'aejong.17:4:sin-mi].
154 *T'aejong sillok* 33:41a-42b,v.2, p. 163 [T'aejong.17:5:ŭl-myo]

Now that you are the residents of the Chinese dynasty, without an imperial decree [from the emperor, I] could not privately contact [you] or send you to [our capital].[155]

The Chosŏn court also applied this principle in order to strengthen its centralized control over foreign contacts and to process relations with the Japanese in the coastal region. In 1421/7, Sōda Saemontarō 早田左衛門大郎, a chief who had real power on Tsushima after the death of Sō Sadashige 宗貞茂 in 1418, tried to establish correspondence with a Naval Commander (*Sugun Toanmusa* 水軍都按撫使) in Kyŏngsang-do by giving fifty pieces of canes as gifts. King Sejong gathered his assistants for a consultation, on which they confirmed the principle that civil officials should not have private contacts with foreigners. Under instruction from the court, the Naval Commander replied to Saemontarō, saying:

[I] have forwarded your letter to our high ministers and [they] are aware of and happy with your generosity. However, from time immemorial civil officials [from different countries] should not have private contacts with each other. It is inappropriate [for me] to accept your gifts. Now [I] report [this] to [the court] and accept [your gifts], only because you are humbly serving our dynasty and your sincerity is highly certain. [I] pay [you] in domestic products of two pieces of tigers' fur and leather and ten pieces of mats, for the cost.[156]

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155 '汝等既是中朝之民, 無聖旨, 不可私交, 難以上送'. *Sejong sillok* 24:9a, v.2, p. 595 [Sejong.6:4:im-sin].

156 '來書已達我使相, 且知厚意, 甚以爲喜. 然自古人臣義無私交, 所惠物件, 似難容受, 祗緣足下恭事本朝, 其誠彌篤, 玆用啓達收納. 仍將土宜虎皮二領、席十張, 就付回价'. *Sejong sillok* 12:24b-25a, v.2, pp. 442-443 [Sejong.3:7:kye-yu].

The Koreans' reply to Saemontarō was basically a copy of the Chinese prince's words to the Chosŏn crown prince in 1408. When a foreign envoy volunteerly paid a visit with gifts, the Ming prince and the Chosŏn commander specially hightlighted the principle of '*renchen wu waijiao*', declined to establish private contact with the visitor, and made it clear that they would inform the court about the meeting. They also returned gifts to the vistors in case the courts interpreted the gifts exchange as bribery. This recation converted the nature of the visits from a private meeting to an official contact, showing the courts that there was nothing dirty going on with these visits. When Saemontarō paid a visit again in 1423/03, the Chosŏn Naval Commander replied to the visitor the same way he did two years ago under the instruction of the court.[157]

These events suggest that the Chosŏn court did not passively accepted Ming's diplomatic principle in order to satisfy its Chinese neighbour. Rather, it established effective supervision over the correspondence pertaining to relations beyond the borders and volunteerly applied the principle of '*renchen wu waijiao*' to regulate the behaviour of the Korean subjects, requesting them to be self-desciplined when they got in touch with foreign visitors. Like its Ming counterpart, the Chosŏn court attempted to establish centralized management of all diplomatic matters, for the purpose of strengthening the authority of the king and preventing collusions against the court. This also partly explains why the Korean court strengthened its coastal border controls in the early 1420s, the same period when the above cases occurred.

Responding to the geopolitical reality in Japan, Chosŏn adopted double standards when it replicated the Ming's doctrine. Although it restricted its civil officials' access to private contacts with foreign countries, the Chosŏn court encouraged the secondary political authorities and local powers in Japan to cooperate with itself on the pacification of piracy.

[157] *Sejong sillok* 19:1b-2a, v.2, p. 519 [Sejong.5:1:byŏng-o]

Because it realized that the central authority in Japan, the *bakufu*, had limited influence on the pirates, the Chosŏn court ceased to send envoys and shifted its diplomatic attention to the chiefs on Tsushima and Kyūshū without hesitation. This was why Chosŏn achieved agreements on the administration of the coastal border with the Japanese authorities on Tsushima, instead of the *bakufu*. We will have further analysis of this theme in Chapter 3 and 5.

Chapter 3

Geopolitical uncertainty and national security

Apart from the establishment and consolidation of dynastic authority, border security was another significant consideration behind the enforcement of coastal border control. Thus, it is essential to understand the geopolitical context in East Asia and the precise challenges that the new regimes were facing from the overseas world.

This chapter argues that regional political uncertainty and international tension in East Asia led to the Ming and Chosŏn courts' insecurity, which pushed the courts to enhance their control over the coast from the very beginning of the dynasties. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section focusses on the impact of piracy on the implementations of maritime exclusion. The second and the third sections will examine the geopolitics in East Asian waters and discuss the international situation that Ming and Chosŏn faced at the time.

3.1 An assessment of the impact of piracy on the implementation of maritime exclusion

The piracy in the fourteenth century, particularly committed by the Japanese, has often been seen as the major reason for Ming's maritime exclusion policy.[158] Basic facts testify to this theory. The Ming authority instituted the excluson policy at the time when China happened to witness a general rise of Japanese piracy (倭寇, C. *wokou*, J. *wakō*, K. *waegu*)

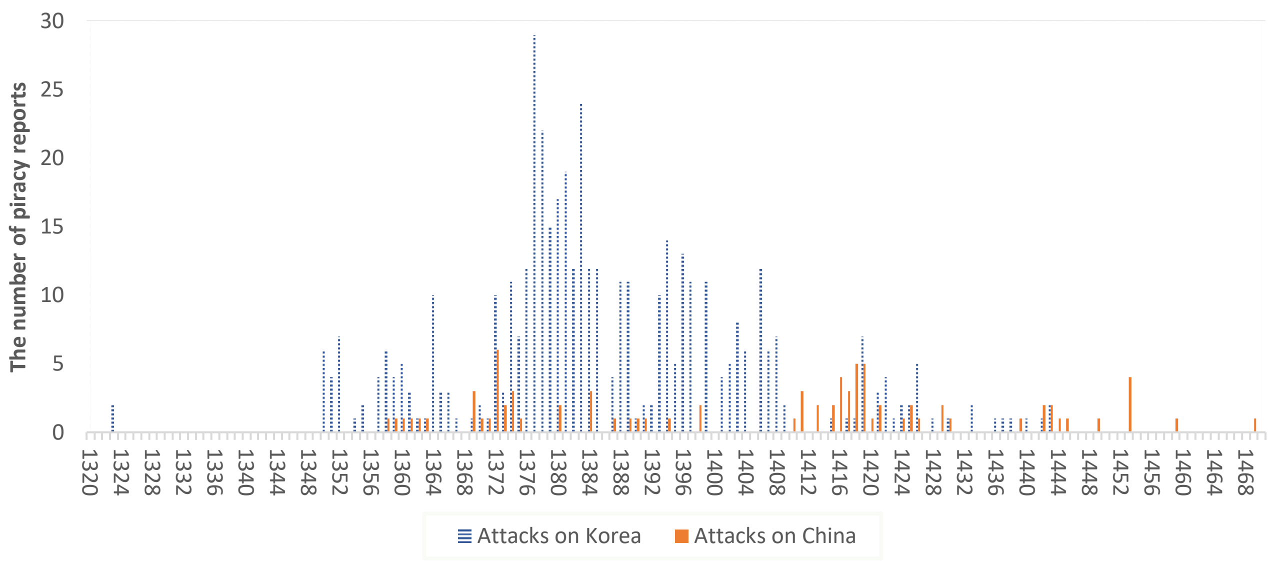
[158] Sakuma Shigeo (1953), Bodo Wiethoff 91963), Chen Wenshi (1966), Zhang Weihua (1956), Chen Xuewen (1983), Cao Yonghe (1984), Li JInming (1990), Chao Zhongchen (2005).

attacks (Chart 2).[159] Even the emperors claimed in some cases that they tightened control over the coastal areas in order to defend against piracy. However, recent scholarship argues that the exclusion policy was not the result of pirate attacks, because the piracy problem was not serious enough for the enforcement of a two-century ban on maritime trade.[160] This leads to a question: to what extent did the piracy problem affect the implementation of maritime exclusion in the early Ming period? The following pages attempt to approach this question by examining the records at the time.

[159] The reasons for the rise of piracy in East Asia in the mid-fourteenth century are various: the turbulent political-economic situation in Japan, natural disasters and regional climate change, and the weak coastal defence in the continental countries that were suffering international conflict and civil wars at the time. For further discussion on this subject, see Ma Guang (2015a), (2015b), (2020).

[160] Li further suggests that piracy in the sixteenth century was a consequence of the maritime trade proscription and not a reason for the policy. For his discussions on the relations between the piracy problem and the maritime exclusion policy, see Li Kangying (2010), pp. 1-20.

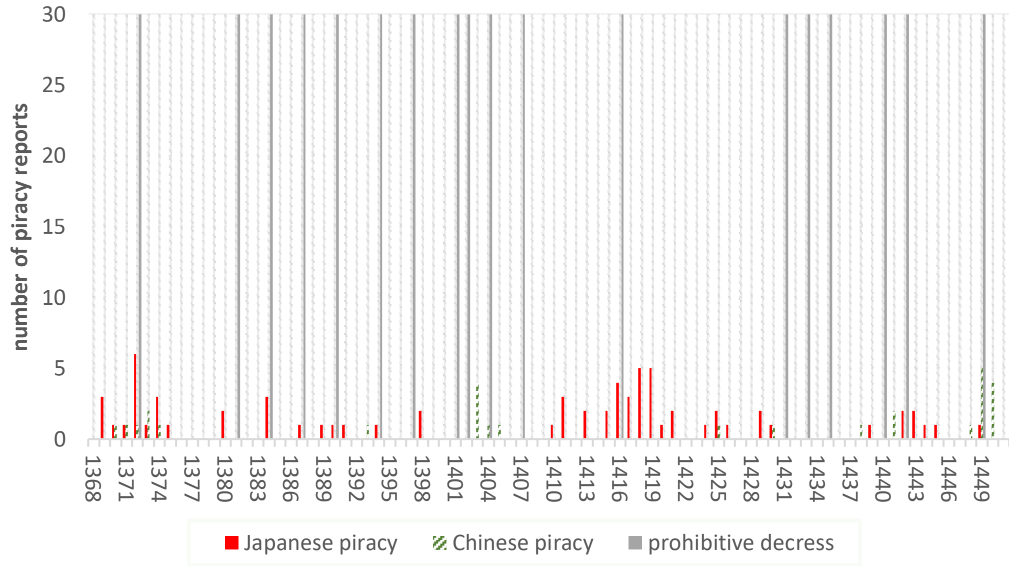
Chart 2. Japanese piracy in Korea and China (1320-1470)[161]



[161] The data for the piracy in China is collected from *Ming shilu*. The Korean data for the period from 1392 to 1451 is collected directly from the *sillok*. The data for the pre-1392 period come from Tanaka Takeo (2012). The figures for the 1392-1450 period in this chart differ from Tanaka Takeo's work probably because I adopt different counting methods. In this chart, all the records with the word 'pirate' in *sillok* are counted, but cases in which the Japanese just 'passed by the waters' or 'were witnessed on the sea' without committing any plundering are excluded. In some cases, the court ordered naval officers to patrol against 'pirates', but we do not know whether the marines encountered any pirates. In other cases, piracy may be noted down twice: the former record refers to the military conflict, while the latter record refers to the court rewarding the marines for defending against the 'pirates. In the chart above, the ambiguous cases and the double counting are excluded. Tanaka's higher count may come from inclusion of ambiguous cases and double counting.

Chart 3 displays the number of piracy reports in China and the year when the court proclaimed and reaffirmed the ban on private navigation during the early Ming period. According to this chart, most prohibitive decrees were issued in the period when the number of piracy reports decreased, such as the period from 1380 to 1408 and the period from 1430 to 1450. On the contrary, the court did not emphasize the ban when the empire witnessed an outbreak of raids.

Chart 3. Piracy and bans on private navigation in Ming China (1368-1451)



Source: author

Let us take a closer look at the cases in Emperor Hongwu's reign. Table 4 below is a chronological list of the reports of Japanese pirates and Chinese pirates who attacked Ming territory in the reign of Emperor Hongwu. It also indicates when the emperor made his eight orders to forbid his people to navigate on the seas. If we divide this reign into two periods, phase one from 1368 to 1375 and phase two from 1376 to 1398, we see a strange contrast. In phase one, the Ming witnessed intensive raids, but it issued only two prohibitive orders in

1372. On the contrary, while the frequency of plundering had dramatically decreased and remained low in phase two,[162] six prohibitive decrees were issued.

Table 4. Reports of Japanese pirates and Chinese pirates in Ming, and the decrees for coastal border control in the reign of Emperor Hongwu (1368-1398)

Year	*wokou* raids		Chinese Pirates		Proclamation of the maritime exclusion policy	
	Month	Times	Month	Times	Month	Order
HW1 (1368)			5	1		
HW2 (1369)	1,4,8	3				
HW3 (1370)	6	1	8	1		
HW4 (1371)	7	1	8	1	12,12	1st,2nd
HW5 (1372)	5,6,6,6,8,8	6	9	1		
HW6 (1373)	7,7	2	1,3	2		
HW7 (1374)	7,7,7	3	4	1		
HW8 (1375)	12	1				
HW9 (1376)						
HW10 (1377)						
HW11 (1378)						
HW12 (1379)						
HW13 (1380)	7,8	2				
HW14 (1381)					10	3rd
HW15 (1382)						
HW16 (1383)						
HW17 (1384)	10,R10,R10	3			1	4th
HW18 (1385)						
HW19 (1386)						
HW20 (1387)	7	1			4	5th
HW21 (1388)						
HW22 (1389)	12	1				
HW23 (1390)	1	1			10	6th
HW24 (1391)	9	1	8	1		
HW25 (1392)						
HW26 (1393)						
HW27 (1394)	10	1	4	1	1	7th
HW28 (1395)						
HW29 (1396)						
HW30 (1397)					12	8th
HW31 (1398)	2,2	2				

Source: *Ming Taizu shilu*.

162 In 1382/11, two coastal guards requested to construct new warships to strengthen defence, but the emperor rejected them and said: ‘why the fuss with a warship in such peaceful times’? The emperor’s comment in 1382 indicates how peaceful it was in the second period. *Ming Taizu shilu* 150:5a, v.6, p. 2365 [Hongwu.15:11:guiyou].

In addition, by carefully scrutinising the dates of the events, we can see that most raids in the latter period occurred after the proclamations of the bans on sailing.[163] An examination of this chronological order of proclamations first followed by raids is that coastal border control was not a product of piracy activities in this reign. If anything, plundering might even have been a result of the controls, which pushed the traders to commit piracy.

What happened in the following period from 1399 to 1451 also justifies a similar conclusion: proclamations first and then piracy. In other words, the proclamations of the prohibitive decrees were perhaps less relevant to piracy than historians believe. For example, the Ming authority only issued one prohibitive decree in the period from 1410 to 1430 when Japanese piracy was at its peak. Even the decree issued in 1416, the only maritime exclusion decree issued in this period, was not aimed at the pirates. Instead, it was an export interdict applied to the newly annexed territory in Annam. In contrast, apart from the cases in 1404, 1442, and 1449, the court proclaimed most bans when the coast was at peace.

The implication was that the Ming court actually did not regard piracy as a real threat to the empire, although it often strengthened coastal defence and border control in the name of repelling the Japanese pirates. For example, the emperor claimed that the 1384 ban on coastal fishery was for the purpose of guarding against the Japanese pirates, but the fact is that the empire experienced only two plundering cases in the previous nine years. Also, in

[163] It worth noting that, although we have the dates when the raids were reported to the central government and the court decided to punish the military officers in charge of coastal defence, we have little idea of when the raid actually occurred. There could sometimes be months, if not years, between a specific raid and the punishment of the people deemed responsible for it at the imperial court. The gap depended on the time required for communications to go back and forth between the provinces and the capital, but also of when the ‘failure’ was brought to light. However, what we can know is that the dates when the court decided to implement the exclusion policy were usually months ahead of the dates when the raids were reported or when the court ordered punishment for those who deemed to have responsibility for the pirate attacks.

1387, the Ming navy launched a large-scale attack against the 'Japanese pirates', but the strange thing was that their actual destination was the waters of Champo (present-day South China Sea), which is far away from the scope of Japanese pirate activities.[164]

A reasonable explanation is that the Ming authority was using the excuse of piracy defence to achieve other goals, for instance, to enhance centralized control over the coastal regions and border or to exclude private merchants from overseas trade. Admittedly, trade interdicts and military mobilizations not only damaged the livelihood of many coastal residents but also required extra taxes and labour. Given the relatively peaceful situation in international politics, the court needed a pretext to justify its warlike policy. In this context, piracy defence was a persuasive excuse. A similar case unfolded in the 1430s when Emperor Xuande turned down a request to lift the ban on coastal fisheries. Although the empire was free from piracy in that period, the emperor insisted that the ban on private navigation was necessary for piracy defence. However, the actual motivation behind the decision might have been to help the governmental fleets increase profits by excluding private actors from overseas trade.[165]

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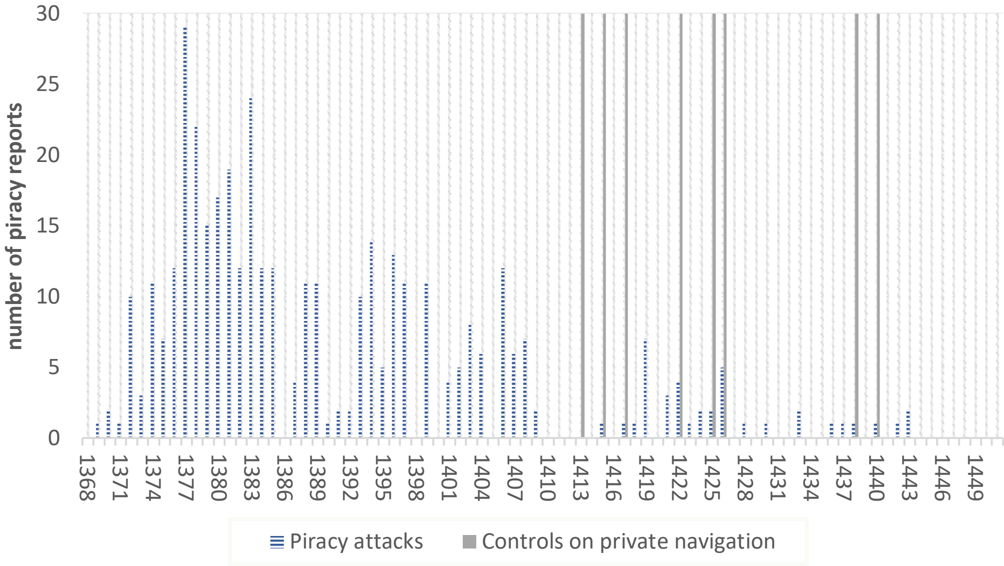
[164] We do not know the reason for this military operation in Champo waters. Perhaps it was a military exercise to strengthen the Ming's international prestige in this region in order to mediate between two hostile states. The frequent diplomatic contacts with Champo and Annam in prior months refer to this supposition. See *Ming Taizu shilu* 179:3b-4a, v.6, pp. 2708-2709 [Hongwu.19:9:jiayin], 179:5a, v.6, p. 2711 [Hongwu.19:9:guiwei], 179:8a-8b, v.6, pp. 2727-2718 [Hongwu.19:12:wushen], *Ming Taizu shilu* 182:3a, v.6, p. 2743 [Hongwu.20:5:bingzi]. Another possibility is that the emperor wanted to secure the coastal regions when he launched an attack against the Mongolians in the north in early 1387. See *Ming Taizu shilu* 179:2a, v.6, p. 2706 [Hongwu.19:8:xinchou], 179:5a, v.6, pp. 2711 [Hongwu.19:10:guimao], 179:6a, v.6, p. 2713 [Hongwu.19:11:jimao], 180:1a-2a, v. 6, pp. 2821-2823 [Hongwu.20:1:guichou], 180:3a-3b, v.6, pp. 2725-2726 [Hongwu.20:2:jiashen], 182:1b-2a, v.6, pp. 2740-2741 [Hongwu.20:5:bingyin], 182:5b-6b, v.6, pp. 2748-2750 [Hongwu.20:6:dingwei]. It was also likely that the Ming attempted to 'pacify' the Chinese or Southeast Asian 'pirates', who might sometimes be also referred to as *wo* 倭 by the Chinese official, though we have no record about piracy activities in the late 1380s in the South China Sea. It was also likely that this operation was a part of the reinforcement of coastal defence caused by the dispute with the Japanese in the Hongwu reign, which we will discuss in the next section.

[165] Chapter 6 will give further analysis on the financial considerations behind the decision.

The cases in Korea provide us with a similar picture (Chart 4). When the Japanese pirates continually attacked the peninsula from the 1392 to the 1400s, the Chosŏn administration did not order restrictions on border entry and exit. In contrast, the court began to tighten its control of the sea borders from 1408, when piracy raids decreased drastically for a decade.

Chart 4. Piracy and Controls on private navigation in Korea (1368-1451).[166]



Only from 1418 to 1426 did the outbreak of piracy raids and the reinforcement of coastal border control occur at the same time. It was in this period that King Sejong settled Chosŏn's policy for coastal border control, in order to regulate commercial and diplomatic exchanges with Japan, which helped 'pacify' the pirates.

Besides, it is worth noting that the Chinese authorities carried out a stricter control of the coastal frontier than was implemented by the Korean authorities, even though the piracy raids were much more violent than in China. In China, private trade was prohibited entirely, while, legally speaking, Korea's private merchants were not forbidden to engage in foreign trade. Also, the Chinese reiterated the ban more frequently than the Koreans.

In sum, the discussion above shows that the outbreaks of piracy and the implementations of maritime exclusion policy did not come hand-in-hand in most cases in the late fourteenth century. The piracy problem was definitely a concern for the Chinese and

166 The data for the period from 1382 to 1451 is collected directly from the *sillok*. The data for the pre-1392 period come from Tanaka Takeo (2012). Also refer to the notes of Chart 1 for a discussion of the differences in data collection.

Korean policy makers at the time, but it was probably not the direct and dominant reason for the policy choice. The weight of piracy in the policymaking process for border security may have been over-estimated in existing scholarship. Nevertheless, security concerns were still a significant factor behind the policy. In the following two sections, we will discuss geopolitics in East Asia as they affected the policy decisions to implement the exclusion policy in Ming China and Chosŏn Korea.

3.2 Ming's tension with overseas states and its ban on private sailing

In the second half of the fourteenth century when the Mongol supremacy in East Asia collapsed, many countries in the region fell into power struggles and even witnessed dynastic transitions. In China, the Ming dynasty expelled the Mongol authority from China proper in 1368. In Korea, Chosŏn replaced Koryŏ in 1392. In Japan, the Northern court under the leadership of the Muromachi *bakufu* ended its confrontation with the Southern Court and unified the country in 1392. In Annam (present-day northern Vietnam), after two coups staged in 1372 and 1388, the Hô 胡 dynasty finally replaced the Trân 陳 dynasty in 1400. In Champa (present-day southern Vietnam), regime change took place in 1391. In Java, political tension between two political leaders, the Eastern King and the Western King, intensified in the 1380s.

This geopolitical situation presented the Ming court, when it was established in 1368, with complex overseas situations. What the new regime faced was a chaotic and violent maritime East Asia full of unsettled neighbors, regimes old and new, with ambitions to expand or feelings of insecurity. Against this backdrop, the Ming court attempted to reestablish a stable international order with China at the centre stage in diplomatic manners. However, obstacles like communicatioin difficulties, erroneous judgements, border disputes, and disagreements on regional hegemony often frustrated the court's plans. These difficulties increased diplomatic tensions and even caused the court concern at potential attacks from the overseas' world. This section attempts to illustrate how diplomatic disputes with overseas' states, including Japan, Korea, Java, and Annam, affected the Ming court's decisions to reinforce its maritime exclusion policy.

3.2.1 Japan

The Ming court tried to establish diplomatic relations with political authorities in Japan as soon as the Ming dynasty was founded. In 1368/12, the emperor sent envoys to its two nearest neigbour countries: Koryŏ and Annam.[167] A month later in 1369/1, envoys set off for Japan, Champa, Java, and other states in present-day Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean area.[168] In the same month when the first envoy sailed out, the Japanese pirates attacked Ming's Shandong province and plundered the residents there.[169] This was the first case mentioned in Ming records of Japanese piracy. As a response, the emperor dispatched another two missions to Japan in 1369/2,[170] requiring the 'King of Japan' to send tribute and suppress pirates.[171]

However, the Ming court's attempts to contact Japanese authorities suffered setbacks. The first envoys sent by the Ming were killed by bandits and thus could not meet anyone who might be identified as the rulers in Japan.[172] We do not know what happened to the

167 *Ming Taizu shilu* 37:22a-23b, v.2, pp. 0749-0752 [Hongwu.1:12:renchen]. The Mongolians bordered with the Ming as well, but they were in military and political confrontation at the time.

168 *Ming Taizu shilu* 38:11a, v.2, p. 0775 [Hongwu.2:1:yimao]..

169 *Ming Taizu shilu* 38:14a, v.2, p. 0781 [Hongwu.2:1:shiyue].

170 Deng Bangfu 鄧邦富, Niu Cheng 牛成 and Chen Jie 陳節 were dispatched first. Yang Zai 楊載 was sent three days later (*Ming Taizu shilu* 39:1a-1b, v.2, pp. 0783-0784 [Hongwu.2:3:bingyin], 39:2a-3a, v.2, pp. 0785-0787 [Hongwu.2:3:xinwei]). We do not know whether the two missions visited Japan together or not, while historians usually regarded Yang Zai as the second envoy dispatched to Japan. Refer to Kawazoe Shōji (1990).

171 *Ming Taizu shilu* 39:2a-3a, v.2, pp. 0785-0787 [Hongwu.2:3:xinwei].

172 Ma Guang (2017).

diplomatic embassy led by Deng Bangfu, but Ming's third envoy successfully arrived in Kyūshū, which was on the main sea route between Southern China and Japan and the location of Dazaifu, Japan's traditional agency for foreign relations. Therefore, Ming's first contact in Japan was with Prince Kaneyoshi of the Southern Court, who had run the Seiseifu in Kyūshū and dominated the region until 1371. However, Prince Kaneyoshi imprisoned the Ming envoy and killed five members of the embassy.[173]

Receiving no response from Japan but suffering further Japanese pirate raids in 1369,[174] the Ming emperor sent a fourth envoy, Zhao Zhi 趙秩, to Japan in 1370/3. It seems that the emperor gleaned information from some unknown sources and he thus assumed that Prince Kaneyoshi was the 'King of Japan'. Therefore, on the new credentials, the emperor specially referred to 'King Ryōkai of Japan (Riben guowang Lianghuai 日本國王良懷)' and strongly accused him of arousing the pirates to plunder. The emperor threatened to resort to violence if 'King Kaneyoshi of Japan' did not impose restraints on piracy.[175]

Regardless of the Ming emperor's threatening letter, Prince Kaneyoshi still took a firm stand against the Ming and detained Zhao Zhi for a year and a half. Not until late 1371 when his political opponent, Imagawa Ryōshun, the Ashikaga *bakufu*'s *tandai*, entered Kyūshū, did Prince Kaneyoshi reverse his attitude. Suffering military pressure from the Northern Court, Prince Kaneyoshi decided to accept Ming's nominal supremacy in East Asia

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173 We do not know the reasons why Prince Kaneyoshi treated the Chinese enovys in this way. Ma Guang suggests that this was probably because Prince Kaneyoshi 'knew little about the new Ming dynasty and mistook it for the Yuan government, which had launched major invasions against Japan on two occasions at the end of the thirteenth century'. See Ma Guang (2015). For further discussion about the experience of these Ming envoys, see Ma Guang (2017) and Damien Peladan (2021).

174 *Ming Taizu shilu* 41:5b-6a, v.2, pp. 0824-0825 [Hongwu.2:4:wuzi], 44:5a, v.3, p. 0866 [Hongwu.2:8:yihai].

175 *Ming Taizu shilu* 50:7a-8a, v.3, pp. 0987-0989 [Hongwu.3:3:shiyu]. There is some doubt that the emperor knew he was contacting 'the Japanese King Ryōkai', given that he did not try to contact Prince Kaneyoshi until 1371/10. It was probably that the emperor had other channels of information, although this is not known for certain.

and pay tribute as a vassal to the emperor. He thereby released the Ming's envoy and dispatched his vassal, the monk Sorai (*seng Zulai* 僧祖來 in Chinese records), to establish a relationship with the Ming. Prince Kaneyoshi also showed his sincerity of suppressing piracy by returning more than seventy Chinese who had been captured from China's coasts by Japanese pirates.

In 1371/08, the Japanese envoy arrived in Ming and was received by the emperor.[176] Emperor Hongwu treated Prince Kaneyoshi as Japan's true ruler and called him 'Japanese King Ryōkai'. Thereafter, he dispatched eight envoys, including two monks, to pay a return visit to Prince Kaneyoshi at Dazaifu. Nonetheless, the diplomatic normalization with Japan did not change Emperor Hongwu's mind about tightening his control of the coastal border. He issued two decrees four months later in 1371/12 to forbid his people to sail the seas and trade with overseas states. The implications were threefold. First, Emperor Hongwu was not solely counting on Prince Kaneyoshi to suppress the pirates. Instead, he proceeded with his established policy to strengthen coastal defence and border control to pacify the coastal waters. Second, the emperor was alert to Prince Kaneyoshi's hidden hostility. Although he accepted Prince Kaneyoshi's tribute, the emperor must have learned from the returning envoy that Prince Kaneyoshi had detained the Chinese envoys and executed some of the members of the mission. Therefore, he received Japan's ambassador on the one hand and enhanced coastal defences on the other hand. Third, the emperor considered imposing controls on the coastal border whatever decision Prince Kaneyoshi made, because of his plan to consolidate control of the coastal regions and strengthen control over the military, as was discussed in Chapter 2.

The fourth Ming mission to Japan arrived in Hakata in 1372/5 when Prince Kaneyoshi had already been chased out of Dazaifu by Imagawa Ryōshun. Therefore, the Ming mission

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[176] *Ming Taizu shilu* 67:6b-7a, v.3, pp.1264-1265 [Hongwu.4:8:guisi].

was not able to meet Prince Kaneyoshi. Instead, they went to Kyoto and negotiated with the Northern Court. After Ashikaga Yoshimitsu detained them for two years, they were sent back to China in 1374/5.[177] Then, Yoshimitsu dispatched a mission to China.

Thanks to these returned envoys, the Ming court finally became aware of the political situation in Japan. In 1374/6, Ashikaga's envoy arrived at the Ming capital and returned 109 Chinese captives to China. The emperor rewarded Japan's ambassadors with exquisite clothes but rejected their tribute. In the edict to the Secretariat (*Zhongshusheng* 中書省), the emperor justified his decision by condemning Japan's cruelty to the Chinese envoys and criticizing their immoral governance, particularly the fact that 'the vassal placed himself over the monarch' in Japan.[178] He also ordered his secretaries to write a letter to Prince Kaneyoshi and urged him to 'mend' the situation. By doing so, the emperor tacitly implied that he recognized Prince Kaneyoshi, rather than the Ashikaga *bakufu*, as the sole representative of Japan.

The reasons for the emperor's preference for Prince Kaneyoshi was probably twofold. First, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Emperor Hongwu was promoting monarchic diplomacy in East Asia, in which monarchs were the sole legitimate rulers in their states and the only actors in international relations. According to this criterion, neither Prince Kaneyoshi nor Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, a *shōgun*, qualified as a monarch in the Ming's international system. Given that Prince Kaneyoshi was a member of Japan's royal family, while Ashikaga Yoshimitsu was just a 'civil servant (*guochen* 國臣)' and a 'military officer' (that is, *shōgun*), the Ming court decided to take a pro-Southern Court attitude. To clarify his tough stance on this issue, the emperor turned back the 1374/6 mission headed by Shimazu Ujihisa 島津久

[177] *Ming Taizu shilu* 89:3b-4a, v.4, pp. 1578-1579 [Hongwu.7:5:jiawu].
[178] *Ming Taizu shilu* 90:1a-2a, v.4, pp. 1581-1583, [Hongwu.7:6:yiwei].

氏,[179] a local clan chief in Kyūshū who was loyal to the Southern Court at that time. Although the Ming preferred to contact the Southern Court, because of Prince Kaneyoshi's identity, the emperor wanted to contact only monarchs. The emperor rejected tribute from the *shōgun* again in 1379 and in 1380/9.[180] Second, the Ming court was concerned about who was better able to suppress piracy, and from the Chinese perspective, it was Kaneyoshi from the Southern Court, the power who appeared to have a stronger control of the coastal areas than his opponent.

In 1374/4, Prince Kaneyoshi resigned the post of *seisei shōgun* and died in 1384.[181] But the Ming court was not aware of this situation and kept up correspondence with 'the prince' in 1376/4,[182] 1379/intercalary 5,[183] 1380/5,[184] 1380/12,[185] 1381/7,[186] and 1386/11.[187] It was probably that Kaneyoshi's successor, Prince Yoshinari (or Prince Ryōsei 良成親王 in the Ming records), whose command post was named *goseisei shōgun no miya* 後征西將軍宮, was the one who contacted the Ming under Kaneyoshi's name after 1372.[188] Whoever kept communicating with the Ming, it seemed that their letters constantly provoked the emperor, probably because they unintentionally did not follow protocol and sometimes did

[179]*Ming Taizu shilu* 90:1a-2a, v.4, pp. 1581-1583, [Hongwu.7:6:yiwei]. .
[180] *Shilu* did not directly note the 1379 mission, but the emperor referred to this mission in his letter to Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1381/7. See *Ming Taizu shilu* 138:2a-4a, v.5, pp. 2173-2177 [Hongwu.14:7:wuxu]. On the 1380/9 mission, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 133:3b, v.5, p. 2112 [Hongwu.13:9:jiawu].
[181] Kawazoe Shōji (1990), p. 426.
[182] *Ming Taizu shilu* 105:3b-4b, v.4, pp. 1754-1756 [Hongwu.9:4:jiashen].
[183] *Ming Taizu shilu* 125:1a, v. 5, p. 1997 [Hongwu.12:intercalary 5:dingwei].
[184] The emperor rejected the tribute this time. *Ming Taizu shilu* 131:8b, v. 5, p.2092 [Hongwu.13:5:shiyue].
[185] The Ming dispatched an envoy to Japan in this case (*Ming Taizu shilu* 134:8a-8b, v.5, pp. 2135-2136 [Hongwu.13:12:shiyue]).
[186] *Ming Taizu shilu* 138:2a-4a, v.5, pp. 2173-2177 [Hongwu.14:7:wuxu].
[187] *Ming Taizu shilu* 179:6a, v.6, p. 2713 [Hongwu.19:11:xinyou].
[188] Kawazoe Shōji (1990), p. 426. Kaneyoshi probably remained in control until his death (or a few years prior), despite leaving the title to Prince Yoshinari. On the evidence that Shimazu Ujihisa used Kaneyoshi's name to trade, see Damien Peladan (2021), pp. 546-549.

not present a proper diplomatic letter bearing Kaneyoshi's seal. The emperor was enraged and turned back the missions in 1380/5, 1381/7, and 1386/11. In 1381/7, the emperor began to suspect that some Japanese merchants were masquerading as Japanese envoys to seek illicit profits from the official exchanges. Thus, he wrote to Prince Kaneyoshi and Ashikaga Yoshimitsu respectively to investigate Japan's envoy who arrived in that year.[189] It seems that this move might have scared the correspondents from sending impostor envoys. From then on, the emperor received no further reply from Japan throughout the rest of the Hongwu reign (1368-1398). When another Japanese monk visited China under Kaneyoshi's name in 1386/11, the court rejected the proffered tribute without hesitation.

Under this context, we see Emperor Hongwu suddenly tighten controls over the coastal borders again in the 1380s, a decade after the first two bans in 1371. Specifically, after he seized the prime ministers' authority over foreign matters in 1380 (see Chapter 2), the emperor reiterated the ban on private navigation and overseas trade in 1381/10,[190] prohibited fishing in coastal waters in 1384/1,[191] and forbade overseas missions to purchase Chinese steel in 1387/4.[192]

The tension with the Japanese stretched down to the 1390s and contributed to the hostility between the Ming and the overseas world, which partly accounted for the trade interdicts proclaimed in the final decade of the fourteenth century. The effect of Sino-Japanese relations on the enforcement of China's border control in the early fifteenth century will be discussed below in the section about the cases in Korea. The reason is that the decision-making process and the three-party diplomacy were intertwined during that period.

[189] *Ming Taizu shilu* 138:2a-4a, v.5, pp. 2173-2177 [Hongwu.14:7:wuxu]. This issue was probably later linked to the Lin Xian affair in 1386. See Wu Han (2015).
[190] *Ming Taizu shilu* 139:7a, v.5, p.2197 [Hongwu.14:10:jisi].
[191] *Ming Taizu shilu* 159:4b, v.6, p. 2460 [Hongwu.17:1:renxu].
[192] *Ming Taizu shilu* 181:3a, v.6, p. 2735 [Hongwu.20:4:gengyin].

3.2.2 Java

The competition for regional supremacy between the Ming and Java in South China had direct impacts on the reaffirmations of the maritime exclusion policy in 1381, 1384, and 1394.[193] Emperor Hongwu attempted to include the states on the South China Sea into his tribute system as early as the 1370s. He took advantage of Srivijava's desire of achieving independence from its suzerain to extend Ming's influence to the region. In 1377, the Ming dispatched a diplomatic mission, protected by more than 300 soldiers, to Srivijava, in order to increase its regional influence. However, this move provoked the Javanese to respond in an aggressive way. To show their determination to defend their suzerainty over Srivijava and protect a sphere of influence, the Javanese murdered the entire Ming mission. Not until 1380/10 did the Ming court realize this incident. It thus detained a Javanese mission for a month to ask questions about the murder case.[194] This tenstion with Java might partly explained the reaffirmation of the ban on private communication with overseas states a year later in 1381/10.[195]

The Javanese attempted reconciliation with China, probably because the Ming's maritime exclusion policy caused economic difficulties for them. In 1382/1, Java sent another mission and compensated the Ming for the murder of the Chinese mission in Srivijaya by presenting a hundred and one slaves.[196] However, for some reasons, the two parties failed to achieve reconciliation. In the following decade, the Javanese envoys did not show up in

[193] Zheng Yongchang gives a detailed description of the conflict between the Ming and Java over the supremacy in the region. See Zheng Yongchang 鄭永常 (2011), pp.21-62. Besides, O. W. Wolters provides us with a detailed discussion about the relationship between Ming China and Srivijaya in the 1370s, which is highly related to the Ming-Java tension in the late fourteenth century. See O. W. Wolters (1970), pp.49-76.
[194] *Ming Taizu shilu* 134:2b-3a, v. 5, pp. 2124-2125 [Hongwu.13:10:dingchou].
[195] *Ming Taizu shilu* 139:7a, v.5, p.2197 [Hongwu.14:10:jisi].
[196] *Ming Taizu shilu* 141:4a, v. 5, p. 2225 [Hongwu.15:1:yiwei]. According to *Ming shi*, another three hundred Javanese slaves, the number of which was approximately equal to that of the Chinese mission murdered in Srivijaya, were presented to the Ming in 1381. See *Ming shi*. Book 324.

China. Not until ten years later did the Javanese pay a visit again. In 1393 and 1394, Java paid a series of peace-breaking diplomatic visits to the Ming. Four tributary groups were dispatched within fifteen months. The frequency of these visits indicated that an intensive negotiation between the two countries was proceeding. However, they seemingly failed to reach any agreements again. The Javanese did not appear for the rest of Zhu Yuanzhang's reign[197]. Two months after the arrival of the third Javanese envoy, the Ming court reiterated the ban on private overseas trade.[198]

In addition, a case of piracy is worth noting. In the summer of 1383, the Ming navy launched an inspection tour of the South China Sea and met 14 foreigners from Jepara (or Shepo 闍婆 in the Ming records), a dependent state of Java.[199] The Ming navy arrested them. Although they were finally released,[200] the sudden appearance of Shepo people inside the Ming defence zone sounded the alarm for the emperor and resulted in an armament increase. Coastal defences were activated and a large number of resources was poured into the defence system: senior generals were dispatched, troops reinforced, soldiers enjoyed greater awards, new fortifications were constructed, and new warships built.[201] The emperor proclaimed the maritime exclusion policy again on 1384/01. According to the new order, even fishing was prohibited.[202]

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[197] *Ming Taizu shilu* 225:3a, v.8, p. 3300 [Hongwu.26:2:bingshen], 230:5a, v. 8, p. 3367 [Hongwu.26:11:dingmao], 232:7b, v.8, p. 3398 [Hongwu.27:4:jiyou].
[198] *Ming Taizu shilu* .231:2a-2b, v.8, pp. 3373-3374 [Hongwu.27:1:jiayin].
[199] *Ming shi* suggests that Shepo may be another name for Java. See *Ming shi* Book 324, v.28, p. 8405. *Ming Taizu shilu* also points out that Brunei was a vassal of Shepo, which implies that Shepo and Java were the same state. See *Ming Tauzu shilu* 67:4a, v. 3, p. 1259 [Hongwu.4:8:guisi].
[200] *Ming Taizu shilu* 155:2a-2b, v. 6, pp. 2413-2414 [Hongwu.16:6:xinmao].
[201] *Ming Taizu shilu* 159:4a, v. 6, p. 2460 [Hongwu.17:1:renxu], 162:2a, v.6, p.2513 [Hongwu.17:5:dingsi], 162:3a-3b, v.6, pp. 2515-12516 [Hongwu.17:6::wuchen], 164:1b-2a, v.6, pp. 2534-2535 [Hongwu.17:6:gengwu], 165:2a, v.6, p. 2543 [Hongwu.17:9:xinhai], 166:4a, v.6, p. 2555 [Hongwu.17:10:guisi].
[202] *Ming Taizu shilu* 159:4a, v. 6, p. 2460 [Hongwu.17:1:wuxu].

The coincidence of the Javanese visits and the proclamations of the maritime exclusion policy suggests a link, even though records do not directly note that there was a link. Apparently, the Ming court was worried about the possible attacks from Java, and this security concen was at least partly the reason that encouraged the empeor to imose stricter control over the coastal border.

3.2.3 Korea

'Korea is often referred to as a model Chinese tributary state'.[203] However, the second half of the fourteenth century witnessed border disputes and even military conflict between Ming China and Korea.[204] Donald N. Clark has given us a general introduction to Ming-Korean relations that emphasises cordial relations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,[205] but the following will focus on the disputes between the two parties and illustrate that, from 1374 to the 1390s, Korea was a hostile 'overseas state' that pushed the Ming to strengthen border control over its coastal regions.

Before 1371, Ming and Koryŏ did not border on each other. The two countries were separated by Yuan's Kaiyuan lu 開元路 or the Kaiyuan district (present-day Liaodong, Jilin, and Heilongjiang, and a part of the northern border region of North Korea), which was still under the rule of a Mongolian local authority. Since they had no border dispute with each other but shared a common goal of excluding the Mongols from their territory, the Ming and Koryŏ formed an alliance to fight against the Mongolians immediately following Ming's establishment in 1368.

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203 Donald N. Clark (1998), p.272.

204 For an introduction to the Ming-Korean territory issue, refer to Nam Eui-hyeon (2012). In addition, David Robinson's work demonstrates how the Koreans responded to the political changes that took place in Northeast Asia in the fourteenth century, when China was under the rule of the Mongols. See David Robinson (2009).

205 Donald N. Clark (1998).

However, this alliance did not last long. In 1371, Liu Yi 劉益, Yuan's Supreme Commander in Liaoyang xingsheng 遼陽行省 (Liaoyang province, current Liaoning province), surrendered to the Ming and Chinese troops took over most of the region. As a result, Ming and Koryŏ began to share a small border. This geopolitical change stirred up Korean worries about Ming's expansion in the region and gave the Koryŏ court an incentive to turn to the Mongols, in order to counterbalance the Chinese. Just three years later in 1374, the anti-Ming faction under the leadership of Yi In-im 李仁任 staged a coup and enthroned an eleven-year-old boy as King U 禑王 (r. 1374-88). The new Koryŏ court resumed relations with the Mongols and distanced itself from the Chinese.[206]

As a result, tensions mounted between the Ming and Koryŏ in the following decade. As a response, the Ming court refused to recognize the new kings of Koryŏ. In 1377/1 and 1384/9, the Ming twice rejected Koryŏ's requests of investiture that amounted to enfeoffment for the former and present kings.[207] In this way, the Ming exerted diplomatic pressure on the Koreans, in an attempt to force them to reverse their pro-Mongolian policy. In 1377/12, the Ming court sent envoys to investigate the succession issue in Korea and exacted tribute of horses, gold, and silver from the Koreans.[208] By doing so, the Chinese intended to keep the pressure on Koryŏ. But they did not expect that the Koreans would attack and murder the entire Chinese mission. The Ming court was in a rage and it requested Koryŏ to dispatch its prime minister to China to explain the incident and offer a humble apology.[209] In the

[206] In the period from 1377 to 1378, Koryŏ adopted the calendar promulgated by Yuan and sent a mission to celebrate the Mongols' New Year festival, which was a clear anti-Ming message (*Koryŏsa* 133:20-3a, v.3, pp. 874-875 [Sin-U.3:2]). Moreover, the new allies planned to attack Ming forces in Dingliao Wei 定遼衛 from both sides in 1377, but Koryŏ finally withdrew from this project (*Koryŏsa* 133:29b-31a, v.3, pp. 879-880 [Sin-U.3:7, 3:9).
[207] *Ming Taizu shilu* 111:3b, v.5, pp. 1842-1843 [Hongwu.10:1:shiyue], 165:2a, v.6, p. 2543 [Hongwu.17:9:jiayin].
[208] *Ming Taizu shilu* 116:6-8a, v.5, pp. 1902-1905 [Hongwu.10:12:shiyue].
[209] *Ming Taizu shilu* 121:4b-5b, v.5, pp.1966-1968 [Hongwu.11:12:shiyue].

meantime, the Ming court rejected Koryŏ's tribute again and again.[210] It refused to normalize its relationship with the Koreans unless they paid a huge amount of tribute to atone their sin to distance from the Ming and become close to the Mongols.[211] Not until 1385 when the Koreans decided to switch allegiance from the Mongols to the Chinese and paid tribute of some 5,000 horses and a large sum of money did the Ming court agree to bestow the title of 'king' upon Koryŏ's monarch.[212]

But the reconciliation was soon disturbed again because of another significant geopolitical change in 1387. In this year, a famine attacked the Mongolian Kaiyuan district and the Mongols in this region suffered a severe shortage of food. The Ming took advantage of this incident and forced Naghachu (M. ᠨᠠᠭᠠᠴᠤ, C. Nahachu 納哈出), the supreme Mongolian Commander in the district, to capitulate to the Chinese. As it occupied the Kaiyuan district, the Ming then had a long land border with Koryŏ. Meanwhile, the successful annexation of the vast Kaiyuan district fuelled the Ming emperor's territorial ambitions. The emperor thus sent troops to cross the Yalu river with plans to take over the entire Kaiyuan district, including the part that the Koreans claimed.[213]

This move escalated the conflict between the Ming and Koryŏ. Responding to China's aggressive expansion, the Koryŏ court sent its troops to the border and pushed the Chinese

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[210] *Ming Taizu shilu* 112:2b, v.5, p. 1856 [Hongwu.10:5:bingxu],128:3a-6b, v.5, pp. 2035-2042 [Hongwu.12:12:shiyue], 140:5b, v.5, p. 2210 [Hongwu.14:12:yichou], 145:1a-1b, v.5, pp. 2273-2274 [Hongwu.15:5:dingsi], 151:2b, v.6, p. 2378 [Hongwu.16:1:wuwu], 157:2b, v.6, p. 2435 [Hongwu.16:10:wuzi], 162:2b, v.6, p. 2514-2515 [Hongwu.17:5:shiyue].

[211] In 1383/10, the Ming extorted large numbers of horses and precious metals from Koryŏ, because the Koreans were 'in arrears for five years' of tribute. *Ming Taizu shilu* 157:2b, v.6, p. 2435 [Hongwu.16:10:wuzi].

[212] On Koryŏ's payment of tribute, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 170:1a, v.6, p. 2581 [Hongwu.18:1:guihai], 170:2b, v.6, p. 2584 [Hongwu.18:1:dingchou], 170:2b, v.6, p. 2584 [Hongwu.18:1:wuyin], 174:1a, v.6, p. 2645 [Hongwu.18:7:guihai], 174:2b-3a, v.6, pp. 2648-2649 [Hongwu.18:7:jiaxu].

[213] *Ming Taizu shilu* 187:6a-6b, v.7, pp. 2807-2808 [Hongwu.20:12:renshen], 189:14a-14b, v.7, pp. 2857-2858 [Hongwu.21:3:xinchou].

troops back to the western side of the Yalu river.[214] The raged Koreans requested the Ming to abandon its garrison in the region.[215] The Ming rejected this request and refused to retreat its troops. To defend his territorial claim, King U launched an expedition to the Ming's Liaodong region in 1388. However, the commander of the expedition, Yi Sŏnggye 李成桂, opposed the operation. On the pretext of avoiding military conflict with the Chinese, Yi staged a military coup against King U. He successfully overturned the rule of the king. By putting King U's seven-year-old son on the throne as King Chang 昌王 in 1388, Yi became the de facto ruler of the kingdom.[216]

Although Yi Sŏnggye showed the Chinese his pro-Ming attitude, his manipulation of the succession of Koryŏ's royal family was a challenge to the Ming's monarch-centred diplomacy, according to which the emperor allied himself with the Koryŏ king and had a duty to support the king against usurpers.[217] But the emperor finally accepted King Chang's tribute, which implies that he recognized the legitimacy of Yi's military coup. Further in 1389, the Ming court exempted the Koreans from the maritime exclusion policy and permitted the Korean private merchants to visit and trade in China by land or by sea with no limit on the scale of trade.[218] Apparently, the emperor was satisfied with Yi Sŏnggye's regime, given Yi's endeavour to stop the expedition against China in 1388.

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[214] Due to Koryŏ's resistance, Ming relocated its frontier garrison, Tieling Wei 鐵嶺衛, to Fengji 奉集 (current Tieling in China) (*Ming Taizu shilu* 189:14a-14b, v.7, pp. 2857-2858 [Hongwu.21:3:xinchou]).

[215] *Ming Taizu shilu* 190:3a-3b, v.7, pp. 2867-2868 [Hongwu.21:4:renxu]. On the location of Tieling Wei, refer to Park Won-ho (2006).

[216] One year later in 1389, Yi Sŏnggye deposed King Chang and enthroned King Kongyang 恭讓王, in order strengthen his power in the kingdom. Another three years later in 1392, Yi Sŏnggye dethroned King Kongyang and founded a new dynasty, Chosŏn.

[217] The Ming showed its concern for rightful succession in Korea when it learned that Yi Sŏnggye enthroned King Chang 1388/10 (*Ming Taizu shilu* 194:2a, v.7, p. 2911 [Hongwu.21:10:gengshen]). In 1389/1, Emperor Hongwu instructed the Commander in Liaodong to send King Chang back to Korea if the king tried to visit China (*Ming Taizu shilu* 195:3a, v.7, p. 2927 [Hongwu.22:1:gengyin]).

[218] *T'aejong sillok* 6:11b-13a, v.1, pp. 276-277 [T'aejong.3:9:cap-sin].

Nevertheless, the territorial dispute was left unsettled and it became a hidden danger for the bilateral relationship between the two countries. In fact, the new Korean regime did not give up Koryŏ’s plan of northward expansion. Yi Sŏnggye, on the one hand, made diplomatic efforts to reconcile with the Chinese in order to gain Ming's recognition of the legitimacy of his rule of Korea; on the other hand, it continued to contend for jurisdiction over the northern region through military action against Jurchen tribes in the frontier. In 1390, Koryŏ's troops crossed the present-day Paektu Mountain and established its administration by founding a Myriarchy (Manhobu 萬戶府) in Haeyang 海洋 (current Kilju-gun in North Hamgyŏng province). Meanwhile, Koryŏ made active efforts to carry out a naturalization policy in the frontier areas to strengthen its control of the new frontier. Most of the aboriginal Jurchen tribes in the region of Yuan's Helan fu 合蘭府 (current Hamhŭng in Hamgyŏngnam-do) had become submissive to the Korean authority by 1392. To avoid directly clashing with the Chinese, Chosŏn drove naturalized Jurchen people to press the Chinese defence lines.[219]

In 1392, Yi Sŏnggye dethroned the last king of Koryŏ and ascended to the throne as the new king of Korea. The new dynasty, Chosŏn, continued the expansion policy. In order to give active cooperation to the Jurchen operations, Yi Sŏnggye even dispatched task forces in the 1390s to collect China’s geographic and military information and harass Ming’s coastal regions in the Liaodong peninsula from the sea.[220]

In 1393, Yi’s secret military activities were exposed and the Ming emperor hence perceived the territorial ambition of Yi Sŏnggye, who was now King T’aejo of Chosŏn.[221]

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[219] Kenneth Robinson (1997).
[220] While the Chosŏn’s sillok denied the accusations made by the Chinese (*T’aejo sillok* 3:10a-11b, v.1, p.44 [T’aejo.2:6:ŭl-hae]), the Ming’s *Shilu* records the cases that the Chinese arrested the Korean soldiers and intelligence agents in China’s territory (*Ming Taizu shilu* 230:2a, vo.8, p.3361 [Hongwu.26:10:bingxu], 230:5a, v. 8, p. 3367 [Hongwu.26:11:dingmao]).
[221] *Ming Taizu shilu* 228:1a-2a, v.8, pp. 3321-3323 [Hongwu.26:6:bingzi].

The emperor thus began to reconsider the Ming's relationship with Korea under the leadership of Yi. To curb the expansion of the Koreans, the Ming court blocked the inland borderline along the Yalu river, established strict border controls over land contact and rejected Korea's envoys in 1393.[222] Meanwhile, it no longer exempted the Koreans from the maritime exclusion policy.[223]

King T'aejo made efforts to settle the crisis by sending his apologies and offering white and black cloth, ginseng, horses, and a gilded saddle as tribute.[224] In addition, 388 Jurchen people, who were subjects of the Chosŏn court, were 'repatriated' as 'escaped Chinese criminals' to the Ming and hundreds more horses and cows were given as gifts.[225] Because of Yi Sŏnggye's submissive attitude and behaviour, Emperor Hongwu ordered the border market along the Yalu River reopened in 1393/11.[226]

However, nine days after the border market was opened, the guards in Liaodong detected and arrested six spies sent by Chosŏn.[227] The emperor was enraged and he seriously considered to break off relations with Chosŏn.[228] Although diplomatic ties were not completely severed, the Ming attitude towards the Koreans reached a new low. In order to press the new Korean authority into being a humble vassal, the emperor persisted in deliberately finding fault with the Chosŏn envoys and requested enormous tribute that the

[222] *Ming Taizu shilu* 229:1a, v.8, p. 3345 [Hongwu.26:7:xinhai]; *T'aejo sillok* 3:4b-5a, v.1, pp. 47-48 [*T'aejo*.2:7:sin-mi], 4:5a-5b, v.1, p. 48 [T'aejo.2:8:ŭl-hae].
[223] *Sillok* records that the Ming emperor permitted the Koreans to visit China by sea in 1389. It also records that there were two sea-going vessels sailing to the Ming in 1392 (*T'aejong sillok* 6:11b-13a, v.1, pp. 276-277 [T'aejong.3:9:cap-sin]). From then on, it witnessed that no Korean ship was officially allowed to visit the Ming.
[224] *T'aejo sillok* 3:10a-11b, v.1, p.44 [T'aejo.2:6:ŭl-hae]; *Ming Taizu shilu* 229:7a, v.8, p. 3357 [Hongwu.26:9:renshen];
[225] *T'aejo sillok* 4:5a-5b, v.1, p. 48 [T'aejo.2:8:ŭl-hae]; *Ming Taizu shilu* 230:4a-4b, v.8, pp. 3365-3366 [Hongwu.26:11:bingchen].
[226] *Ming Taizu shilu* 230:4b, v.8, p. 3366 [Hongwu.27:11:wuwu].
[227] *Ming Taizu shilu* 230:5a, v. 8, p. 3367 [Hongwu.26:11:dingmao].
[228] *Ming Taizu shilu* 231:4a, v.8, p.3278 [Hongwu.27:2:guiyou].

Koreans could hardly bear.[229] This diplomatic tention with the Koreans in the 1390s might partly explain the sixth maritime exclusion decree issued in 1394/1.[230] Although the ban itself was not aimed at the Koreans specifically, it is obvious that the Koreans would be refused entry to the Ming by sea because of the decree.

In sum, during the reign of Emperor Hongwu (1368-1398), the diplomatic relationship between China and Korea became tense. The poor relationship with the Koreans, which was categorised as an overseas state, increased the Ming's hostility towards the outside world and motivated the Ming court to tighten control of the coastal borders. Not until the reign of Emperor Yongle (1402-1424) did the two countries reach reconciliation and a compromise on a border issue that gave seven towns to Chosŏn.[231] From then, the Ming court re-opened the port of entry along the Yalu River, but it never allowed Korean individuals to visit China by sea again.

3.2.4 Annam

The relationship between Ming and Annam was seriously plagued by the legitimacy issues caused by the usurpations and the dynastic transition that occurred in Annam. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ming's tributary diplomacy was established on the basis of mutual

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[229] *Taizu shilu* records the Ming deliberately making things difficult for the Koreans. see *Ming Taizu shilu* 243:4a-4b, v.8, pp. 3533-3534 [Hongwu.28:12:jiyou], 244:1b, v.8, p. 3538 [Hongwu.29:1:yihai], 246:5a-5b, v.8, pp. 3575-3576 [Hongwu.29:7:dingchou], 249:1a-1b, v.8, p. 3605-3606 [Hongwu.30:1:bingchen], 250:1a-1b, v.8, pp. 3615-3616 [Hongwu.30:2:bingxu], 253:2a, v.8, p. 3649 [Hongwu.30:5:renxu], 255:5a-5b, v.8, pp. 3685-3686 [Hongwu.30:10:jiachen], 257:1a-2a, v.8, pp. 3709-3711 [Hongwu.31:4:gengchen]. *Sillok* also records instances when the Ming court repeatedly rejected the entry of Chosŏn's envoys and maltreated the Korean ambassadors by requesting them to return to Korean on foot (*T'aejo sillok* 4:7b-8a, v.1, p.49 [T'aejo.2:9:ki-mi], 4:10b-11a, v.1, pp. 50-51 [T'aejo.2:9:kye-hae], 4:11a, v.1, p. 51 [T'aejo.2:9:sin-mi], 4:11a-12b, v.1, p. 51, [T'aejo.2:10:ki-hae]). On the Ming's excessive demands for tribute, see Donald Clark (1998), p. 290-3.

[230] *Ming Taizu shilu* 231:2a-2b, v.8, pp. 3373-3374 [Hongwu.27:1:jiayin].

[231] On the normalization between the two dynasties, see Donald Clark (1998), p. 279.

endorsement of legitimacy between monarchs. The deliberate maintenance of the diplomatic system and relevant rituals involved the authority of every monarch in the system. Accordingly, monarchs, particularly the emperor of Ming, had the responsibility to support, or even safeguard, the throne of a foreign monarch whose legitimacy had been accepted and recognized through formal diplomatic procedures that bestowed a title (*cefeng* 册封). In addition, the Ming emperor also had the right and duty to dispatch imperial envoys to witness and confirm every transition of power from the old king to his legal heir in the vassal state.

However, when a transition of power in a vassal state did not take place in a normal way, things became tricky for the Ming. In Annam, abnormal transitions of power happened one after another in 1369, 1388, and 1400. Besides, the Annamese always concealed the truth of the coup from the Ming court, in order to achieve China's recognition of the legitimacy of the new rulers. This had repeatedly put the Ming court in an embarrassing situation, when a coup was exposed several years later and the Chinese finally realized that they had been deceived into recognizing the rule of an usurper, making the Ming court have no alternative but to accept the established facts.[232]

But what happened after 1400 really angered the Ming court. In 1400, Hồ Quý Ly 胡季犛 staged a coup, dethroned the last King of the Trần 陳 dynasty, declared himself the first king of the new Hồ dynasty, and renamed the state from Đại Việt 大越 to Đại Ngu 大虞. But Hồ told the Ming that he ascended the throne as a nephew of the king of Trần. The Ming Emperor Yongle, who also came to power through a military coup, thus bestowed a title on

[232] The Ming court learned the 1369 coup in 1372 and the 1388 coup in 1393. Although it terminated the relationship with Annam immediately to show its stance against usurpation, the court restored relations with its Annamese neighbour a few years later. For the Ming's response to the 1369 coup in Annam, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 72:2a, v.3, p. 1327 [Hongwu.5:2:bingxu], 77:2b-3a, v.4, pp. 1412-1423 [Hongwu.5:12:renchen], 78:7a-7b, v.4, pp. 1433-1434 [Hongwu.6:1:shiyue]. For its response to the 1388 coup, see *Ming Taizu shilu*194:6b, p. 2920 [Hongwu.21:12:shisui], 227:2a, v.8, p. 3314 [Hongwu.26:4:bingshen].

Hồ Quý Ly in 1403. But the coup was exposed in 1406 because a surviving male member of the Trần's royal family escaped to China and asked the Ming court for justice on the Ming court. Given his duty to support a foreign royal family, which had entered into a subject relationship with the Ming emperor, Emperor Yongle requested Hồ Quý Ly to abdicate the throne. Hồ, on the one hand, promised the Ming that he would pass the throne to this Trần royal kinsman. But, on the other hand, he sent troops to ambush the Ming army at the border and murdered Trần Thiêm Bình in 1406.

This incident seriously challenged the authority of the Ming court and the diplomatic framework it deliberately established. As a response, the Ming immediately launched a military expedition to Anname in the same year, which saw Annam incorporated into Ming's territory for two decades.[233] Peace was resumed after 1426 when Chinese troops retreated, but mutual hostility took root. All these unpleasant experiences heightened Ming's suspicions, hostility, and vigilance against the Annamese. It put Annam on the list of Ming's potential overseas enemies, pressing the Ming authorities to carry out strict control over both land and coastal borders.

Besides, the Ming court had once implemented maritime exclusion in Annam, when it extended its jurisdiction to this country. In the edict announcing Ming's annexation of Annam in 1407, the court proclaimed that its maritime prohibitions were extended to this newly incorporated territory.[234] Further in 1416/10, the court reissued the order prohibiting the export of Annam's incense wood, the region's staple export good.[235]

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[233] On the relationship between Ming and Annam, see Wang Gungwu (1998), pp. 301-332.
[234] *Ming Taizong shilu* 68:1a-7a, v.11, pp. 0943-0955 [Yongle.5:6:guiwei].
[235] *Ming Taizong shilu* 181:2a, v.13, p. 1962 [Yongle.14:10:shiyue]. The written records do not note the reason behind this interdict. Given the fact that Zheng He's fleet arrived a month later in 1416/11 (*Ming Taizong shilu* 182:3a-3b, v.30, p.1963 [Yongle.14.11:wuzi]), the court implemented this ban probably because it intended to manipulate the price of overseas incense wood that Zheng He brought back and maintain a gross profit margin by limiting the supply of like product. For further discussion the relation between Ming's trade policy and maritime exclusion, see Chapter 4.

In addition, two other factors are worth noting. First, Ming China and Annam had a dispute on maritime border and it became severe from the 1450s because increasing number of the Annamese coastal residents sneaked into the Ming court's exclusive oyster beds to fish for pearls.[236] Second, the geographic location of Annam mattered as well. Annam was the first stop on the sea route from China for those who wanted to visit states in present-day Southeast Asia. It was also a place of production for timber and incense, which were in huge demand in China. When unauthorised private overseas trade arose in the mid-fifteenth century, Annam was one of the priority destinations for Chinese smugglers. These situations pushed the Ming court to tighten up its coastal border control, and it reiterated the ban on private navigation in 1460, 1472, and 1476.

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As discussed above, the Ming court was facing a dangerous geopolitical situation in East Asia from the beginning. The court was in disputes with most of its major overseas neighbors about subordinate relationship, border issues, regional supremacy, and international norms. The tension between China and different states were mounting alternatively in different time periods and thus the Ming court had to remain highly vigilant and mindful of the threats posed by potential attacks from its overseas rivals, which kept the court in a state of nerves consistently. Against this backdrop of geopolitical rivalries and hostility, the Ming court had to maintain strict supervision and controls over its coastal border for decades.

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[236] The problem of poaching pearls became severe in the late 1450s. On the relevant records about the pearls problem, see *Ming Yingzong shilu* 279:7b-8a, v.36, pp. 5980-5981 [Tianshun.1:6:dingwei], 307:1b-2a, v.37, pp. 6462-6463 [Tianshun.3:9:jiashen], 312:3a-4a, v.37, pp. 6545-6547 [Tianshun.4:2:jiayin], 317:4b-5a, v.37, pp. 6614-6615 [Tianshun.4:7:jichou], 317:6a-6b, v.37, pp. 6617-6618 [Tianshun.4:7:jiawu], 319:1a-1b, v.37, pp. 6641-6642 [Tianshun.4:9:jiaxu], 325:3a-3b, v.37, pp. 6717-6718 [Tianshun.5:2:gengyin], *Ming Xianzong shilu* 69:7a, v.42, p. 1373 [Chenghua.5:7:gengxu].

3.3 Political uncertainty related to Japan and Chosŏn's border control

Admittedly, the Chosŏn court strengthened centralized control of its coastal borders partly because of its attempt to reduce the risk of piracy. However, simply concluding that the policy was a response to Japanese piracy is insufficient to explain decisions taken. It should be noted that behind the outbreaks of pirate raids in different periods were profound changes in geopolitics in East Asia. Given this understanding, the essence of Chosŏn's enhancement of border control was actually a response to the uncertainty of geopolitics in East Asia and the political situation in western Japan. The following pages will examine the political upheavals of East Asia and illustrate how the Chosŏn administration reacted to pressures from the international community with the reinforcement of coastal border controls.

3.3.1 The initiation of coastal border controls and triangular relationships from 1402 to 1418: Korea sandwiched between China and Japan

The Chosŏn court enhanced its control of coastal troops during T'aejong's reign (1400-1418), which allowed the court to initiate border control policies in the coastal regions. In contrast to previous studies that emphasise the piracy issue as the most important factor in the implementation of Chosŏn's border control policies, we should consider a wider picture. The complex international situation, specifically, the mounting tension between Korea and Japan caused by the rising Chinese-Japanese confrontation, stimulated the initiation of strict administration over the coastal borders in the 1410s.

Before going into the discussion, a brief review of the international situation in East Asia in the 1390s is helpful. Prior to the fifteenth century, Ming China, Chosŏn Korea, and Ashikaga Japan had to find a comfortable way to deal with each other. As mentioned above, the first emperor of Ming failed to get along with his Japanese and Korean neighbours, because he could not identify a proper diplomatic partner in Japan nor come to a compromise on border disputes with the Koreans. In terms of Korean-Japanese relations, talks between the Chosŏn court and the chiefs and powers in Tsushima and Kyūshū started from 1396, but negotiations suffered setbacks, because the Korean navy thwarted the negotiations as explained in Chapter 2. The Chosŏn court did not come into direct contact with the *shōgun* until 1398. Although things went well at the beginning as Ashikaga Yoshimitsu promised to suppress pirates and launched a six-month military operation on the 'pirates in the three islands',[237] communication was soon interrupted by the Ōei disturbance in Japan in 1399. In short, the relationship between these three countries had yet to be improved by 1400.

Geopolitics in East Asia witnessed a significant change after 1402 when Ming China reached reconciliation with Ashikaga Japan and Chosŏn Korea respectively. The changes in the political situation in each country accounted for the normalization of the relationships. In Ming China, Zhu Di 朱棣, the fourth son of the first Ming emperor, overturned the rule of his nephew, Zhu Yunwen 朱允炆, Emperor Jianwen 建文 (r. 1399-1401), through the 1399-1402 Jingnan Rebellion (靖難之役) and ascended the throne as Emperor Yongle 永樂. Desperate for international recognition to the legitimacy of his rule, Emperor Yongle completely reversed his father's uncompromising foreign policy and tried to achieve normalization with the Ashikaga *bakufu* and the Chosŏn court. A similar situation unfolded in Chosŏn Korea as Yi Pangwŏn ascended as King T'aejong in 1400 through two military coups, the Muin Chŏngsa 戊寅靖社 in 1398 and the Kyŏngjin Chŏngsa 庚辰靖社 in 1400, during which he forced his father and elder brother to abdicate.[238] Likewise, he needed international recognition, especially from Ming China. In Japan, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, the third Ashikaga *shōgun*, suppressed Ōuchi Yoshihiro's rebellion in the Ōei disturbance and

[237] *Chŏngjong sillok* 1:12b-13b, v.1, pp. 148-149 [Chŏngjong.1:5:ŭl-yu].
[238] On the power struggles within the royal household, see Jinwung Kim (2012), pp. 186-9.

strengthened his authority in Kyūshū by 1399. In the interest of further consolidation of the authority of the Ashikaga *bakufu*, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu was also interested in establishing a formal relationship with Ming China.[239]

In this context, the Ashikaga *bakufu* recognized China's supremacy in international relations and entered the Ming's international system by sending a tributary mission and accepting the bestowal of a title from the Ming emperor. Correspondingly, Emperor Yongle happily accepted Japan's tribute and recognized the *shōgun* as the true ruler of Japan by conferring the title of 'King of Japan' on Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, although by then, Yoshimitsu was no longer *shōgun*. In the meantime, Ming and Chosŏn achieved normalization as they peacefully solved their territorial dispute. Emperor Yongle agreed to a compromise that reckoned with ceding the territory of seven towns, which was claimed to be 'the graveyard of the ancestors of Chosŏn's royal family'.[240]

There was still one problem yet to be solved: the Japanese pirates. The Ashikaga *bakufu* had extended its influence into Kyūshū after the Ōei disturbance, but that did not completely stop piracy. When the *bakufu* and the Ming court entered into good relations from 1402, the *shōgun* gave a promise to the Ming to suppress Japanese pirates. To show his sincerity, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu dispatched a delegation to China and presented the captured pirates and even boiled twenty of them publicly in the Ming capital in 1405/3.[241] In fact, Ming had indeed been free from pirate attacks until 1408.

However, it seems that peace in Ming China was achieved at the expense of the coastal security of Chosŏn Korea. During the same period from 1402 to 1408, the Korean kingdom suffered increasing numbers of pirate raids. According to the intelligence collected

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239 On Ashikaga Yoshimitsu's motivation to reconcile with the Ming, see Kawazoe Shōji (1990), pp. 434-438.

240 *T'aejong sillok* 7:20b-21b, v.2, p. 287 [T'aejong.4:5:ki-mi], 10:13b-16a, v.1, pp. 337-338 [T'aejong.5:9:kyŏng-sul].

241 *Mingshi*. Book 322.

from Japan by the Korean envoy, pirate raids were increasing in Korea because Ming China and Ashikaga Japan had reached a secret agreement to confine pirate activities to Korea's coast. In 1404/10, Chosŏn sent Yŏ Ŭison 呂義孫 to visit Japan.[242] In Japan, Yŏ met Ming's envoys, who arrived in Japan via Chosŏn three months earlier,[243] and heard from them that the Ming envoy requested Japan to attack Korea.[244] This information indicated a possible cooperation between China and Japan on the pirate issue. Evidently, they sold out the Koreans. The Chinese-Japanese agreement and the Ming court's preference towards the Japanese were also shown in the different ranks of the envoys at the Ming court. The *sillok* notes the ranking issue with slight sadness that the Ming ranked the Japanese envoy above the Chosŏn envoys at the tributary ceremony.[245] Although the *bakufu* and the local authorities in Kyūshū, Tsushima, and Iki also made promises to the Koreans to suppress piracy,[246] the violence was escalating along the coast of Korea during the first decade of the fifteenth century.

Geopolitics experienced a sudden change by 1410. In 1408, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu died and his son, Ashikaga Yoshimochi, who ascended as the fourth *shōgun* at the age of nine in 1394, came into power. Unsatisfied with being in a subordinate relationship with China, the new *shōgun* completely reversed his father's pro-Ming foreign policy and terminated the trade relationship with the Ming.[247] Nevertheless, Yoshimochi was not going to implement an isolationist policy that separated Japan from the East Asian continent. Instead, he attempted to achieve a diplomatic balance by enhancing Japan's relations with the Koreans. This policy

[242] *T'aejong sillok* 8:25b, v.1, p. 313 [*T'aejong*.4:10:kye-sa].
[243] *T'aejong sillok* 8:1a, v.1, p. 301 [*T'aejong*.4:7:ŭl-sa].
[244] *T'aejong sillok* 11:9a-9b, v.1, p. 350 [*T'aejong*.6:2:mu-cha].
[245] *T'aejong sillok* 11:1a-1b, v.1, p. 346 [T'aejong.6:1:chŏng-yu].
[246] The bakufu's envoys visited Chosŏn in 1405, 1407 and 1408 respectively. See *T'aejong sillok* 9:27a, v.1, p. 330 [T'aejong.5:6:shiwŏl], 13:10b, v.1, p. 386 [T'aejong.7:2:sin-hae], 16:31b, v.1, p. 459 [T'aejong.8:10:im-in].
[247] George Bailey Sansom (1961), p.142.

reversal was shown by the changes in the intensity of piracy in the following decade. In the period from 1408 to 1418, the Japanese pirates disappeared from Korea's coast but showed up again along the Chinese coast more frequently. It is worth noting that the coastal peace resulted in commercial prosperity and a boom in the Japanese population along Chosŏn's coast from 1409 to 1412.[248] In fact, Chosŏn functioned as a market for the Japanese pirates to deal in the booty they robbed from China, which was noted in the court debate in 1416 on the break in trade.[249]

The concentration of raids on Korea's coast in the 1400s and the diversion of Japanese pirates from the Korean peninsula to China's coast in the 1410s suggests that the Ashikaga *bakufu* had a substantial influence on Japanese pirates in the first two decades of the fifteenth century. Yet the question remains: why did the *bakufu* not completely stop the piracy? An obvious explanation is that the *bakufu* and the local powers, which had direct influence on the pirates, were in a loose subordinate relationship and the latter enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. Hence, what the *bakufu* could do was no more than impose restrictions on the scope of plundering. Another explanation is that the *shōguns* had no strong impulse to stop the piracy. Instead of banning piracy, the *shōguns* might be interested in inciting the pirates to harass their foreign enemies in order to achieve diplomatic goals.

We now have a basic understanding of the foreign policy changes in Japan in these two decades and how they led to the changes in the scope of Japanese piracy. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the Chosŏn court did not initiate coastal border control in the 1400s when it was suffering severe pirate raids. Instead, it began to tighten border exit and entry

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[248] For records noting the commercial link with Japan in this period, see *T'aejong sillok* 22:10b-11a, v.1, pp. 595-596 [T'aejong.11:7:kap-sul], 24:8b-9a, v.1, p. 646 [T'aejong.12:8:sin-yu], 28:19b, v.2, p. 34 [T'aejong.14:9:ŭl-hae], 28:36b-37a, v.2, p. 43 [T'aejong.14:10:pyŏng-sin], 35:3a-7a, v.2, pp. 199-201 [T'aejong.18:1:kap-cha].
[249] *T'aejong sillok* 32:15b-16a, v.2, p. 131 [T'aejong.16:9:ŭl-mi].

step by step in the 1410s when the Japanese pirates were pulling back somewhat from Korean waters.

One of the major reasons for Chosŏn to enhance coastal border control in the 1410s was the diplomatic pressure from the Ming court. As the new Ashikaga *shōgun* became hostile towards the Ming and pirate raids became more rampant after 1409 in China, the tension between the two countries was mounting. The Chinese began to impose pressure on Chosŏn and forced its peninsular counterpart to form an anti-Japan alliance and support its punitive expedition on Japan in 1413.[250]

The request from the suzerain put Chosŏn in a dilemma. On the one hand, it worried about the revival of pirates if it terminated the commercial contact with Japan. On the other hand, it was afraid of enraging its suzerain if it was found to maintain political and commercial links with the Japanese.[251] Chosŏn learned that the Ming had mobilized a one-million-strong force on the northern border and a three-thousand-ship fleet in its coastal ports. Although it was said that these forces were aimed at the Mongols and the Japanese, the Chosŏn court did not know whether the Ming would unleash its anger and launch a military attack on Korea if it refused to line up with the Chinese.[252] Given Ming's huge and strong ground force and navy at that time, the Chosŏn court really did not want to enrage its Chinese neighbour and take the risks stemming from turning down the Ming request at this sensitive moment.[253]

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[250] *T'aejong sillok* 25:16b-17b, v.1, pp. 666-667 [T'aejong.13:3:ki-hae].

[251] This worry was expressed in the court in 1415 when the court heard that the pirates gave the Ming a hard blow in the Chinese port of Lüshun 旅順 and in 1417 when the Japanese requested timber for vessel construction. A similar concern was voiced in 1418, when the Chosŏn court learned that Japanese pirates would launch a large-scale attack on Ming China. *T'aejong sillok* 30:7b-8a, v.2, p. 77 [T'aejong.15:7:mu-o], 33:52a-52b, v.2, p. 168 [T'aejong.17:intercalary 5:kap-sul], 35:34b-35a, v.2, p. 210 [T'aejong.18:3:kyŏng-o].

[252] *T'aejong sillok* 26:5a, v.1, p. 678 [T'aejong.13:7:ŭl -mi], 26:7b-8a, v.1, p. 679 [T'aejong.13:7:kye-mo].

[253] Yi Kyuch'ŏl (2009).

Attempting to keep a balance between the Chinese and the Japanese, the Chosŏn court decided to take the middle way. It maintained contacts with Japan in order to disarm the Japanese, but, in the meantime, it diminished and concealed this relation from the Chinese.[254] In this context, coastal border control became a way to make clear its position to the Chinese. Every time it found the tension between the Chinese and the Japanese intensifying, Chosŏn reinforced coastal defences or imposed more limitations on contacts with Japan.

The process began in 1413/3 when the Ming envoy informed Chosŏn of its hostile posture towards Japan. Four months later, Chosŏn prohibited unauthorized private navigation and maritime trade. Another four months later in 1413/11, a comprehensive vessel administration policy was applied, including a regulation that every vessel, either domestic or foreign, along the coast, must be registered with the government.[255] The court also cancelled a mission to Japan in order to clarify its position.[256] In 1415, communication between the Chosŏn court and the *bakufu* was terminated. In the meantime, the Koreans reinforced their navy by introducing Chinese shipbuilding technology when it learned that the Ming coast had been plundered.[257] Realizing that Japanese forces planned to plunder the Ming coast in 1416, the court reduced the grain supply to the Japanese immigrants and discussed stopping purchases of Chinese spoils from the Japanese.[258]

As the crisis escalated, the Korean court gradually leaned towards the Chinese, while its relationship with the Japanese worsened. In 1418, the Chosŏn court tightened controls on visiting Japanese and immigrants[259] and shared military intelligence with Ming. By

[254] Min Deak-Kee (2018).
[255] *T'aejong sillok* 26:44a-45a, v.1, pp. 697-698 [T'aejong.13:11:mu-sul].
[256] *T'aejong sillok* 27:7a-8b, v.2, p. 4 [T'aejong.14:2:ŭl-sa]
[257] *T'aejong sillok* 30:37a, v.2, p. 92 [T'aejong.15:11:im-cha]. It worth noting that this was not the starting point of Chosŏn's experimentation with foreign shipbuilding techniques, which was an ongoing process that had started earlier and continued afterwards.
[258] *T'aejong sillok* 32:15b-16a, v.2, p. 133 [T'aejong.16:9:ŭl -mi].
[259] The court decided to not give any more supplies to Japanese settlers who made a living for themselves in Korea. *T'aejong sillok* 35:34b-35a v.2, p. 210 [T'aejong.18:3:kyŏng-o].

repatriating the Chinese who had escaped from the pirates, it notified the Chinese about the new movement of the Japanese at the risk of exposing its contacts with the Japanese.[260] This move helped Ming's troops to have the upper hand in the battle of Wanghaiwo 望海渦 (present-day Jinzhou 金州 in Liaoning) and dealt a hard blow to the Japanese in 1419.[261] Hence, the Ming tacitly neglected to blame the Koreans for their contacts with Japan. Correspondingly, the Chosŏn court received complaints from its Japanese partners.[262] As the Korean-Japanese trade came to a standstill, the Japanese islanders suffered unprofitable years and started planning to plunder the Korean coast again.[263] In 1419, the Tsushima islanders claimed that they did not have enough provisions for their operations in China and launched raids on several Korean harbour towns. Responding to this violence, Chosŏn launched a large-scale punitive attack on the pirates' base on Tsushima as an act of revenge, which is known in Korea as the Kihae Eastern Expedition (Kihae Tongjŏng 己亥東征) or in Japan as the Ōei Invasion (Ōei no gaikō or 応永の外寇).[264] A probable consideration behind this fierce response was an urge to demonstrate Chosŏn's anti-Japanese stance in front of the Chinese.[265]

It was in this context when Chosŏn initiated its centralised control over the coastal border exit and entry. When Ming and Japan quarrelled with each other in the 1410s, Chosŏn was caught in the crossfire. In an attempt to avoid conflict with either side, Chosŏn tried to

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[260] *T'aejong sillok* 33:47a-49a, v.2, pp. 166-167 [T'aejong.17:intercalary 5:kap-cha], 35:17a-17b, p. 206 [T'aejong.18:2:pyŏng-o], 35:18a-18b, v.2, p. 207 [T'aejong.18:2:kyŏng-sul], *Ming Taizong shilu* 209:1b, v.14, p. 2124 [Taizong.17:2:xinmao].
[261] *Ming Taizong shilu* 213:2a, v.14, p. 2143 [*Taizong*.17:6:wuzi].
[262] Yoshimochi scolded Chosŏn's ambassador in 1420 because Korea lined up with the Ming against Japan. *Sejong sillok* 10:3a-3b, v.2, p. 410 [Sejong.2:10:kye-mo].
[263] *T'aejong sillok* 31:24a-24b, v.2, p. 109 [T'aejong.16:3:pyŏng-chin], 33:55a-56b, v.2, p. 170 [T'aejong.17:intercalary 5:kye-mi].
[264] For an introductions to this military operation, refer to Carter J. Eckert, Ki-baik Lee, Young Ick Lew, Michael Robinson, Edward W. Wagner (eds.) (1990), p. 123; Kawazoe Shōji (1991), pp. 440-2; Damien Peladan (2021), p. 579.
[265] Yi Kyuch'ŏl (2009).

apply equidistant diplomacy by maintaining contacts with both sides. However, as the tension was mounting, the Chinese exerted increasing diplomatic pressure on the Koreans. Responding to this stress, Chosŏn had to adopt increasingly stricter border policies to distance itself from the Japanese. This process inevitably aroused resentment and pushed the impoverished Japanese islanders to resort to violence as is exemplified by the 1419 raids. The military conflicts in turn pushed the Koreans to strengthen their administration of the coastal borders and enhance their coastal defences in the 1420s, which we will discuss next.

3.3.2 The unpredictable political situation in western Japan and Sejong's enhancement of border control

Responding to the outbreak of pirate raids in 1419, the Chosŏn court shifted its diplomatic focus from the Chinese-Japanese confrontation to pirate activities. In such a context in the 1420s, the court enhanced coastal border controls, including regulations on exits and restraints on entries. The considerations behind this policy were twofold. First, by restricting private exits from the border, the court attempted to prevent its residents from being attacked from the sea. Second, because it controlled foreign trade by restricting border exit and access, the court could use the right of trade as a bargaining chip in dealing with the Japanese authorities and request them to restrain piracy.

On the surface, Chosŏn's enforcement of border controls in the 1420s was a response to the incessant Japanese pirate attacks. Kenneth Robinson gives an elaborate analysis of how the Chosŏn court 'converted raiders from traders' with its border control policy.[266] Through a close examination of the context of the interactions between the court and the Japanese, the following suggest that Chosŏn's coastal border control was more than a precaution against

[266] Kenneth Robinson (1997).

raiders; it was a response against the security threat posed by the political uncertainty in Japan.

3.3.2.1 The 1419 attacks from Tsushima and Chosŏn's response

As discussed above, the coast of Korea had enjoyed peace with sporadic pirate raids from 1408 to 1418, however, peace was interrupted by the sudden outbreak of attacks from Tsushima from 1419. The reasons for the 1419 piracy were twofold. First, the trade-dependent economy on Tsushima suffered severe damage in the late 1410s due to the trade interdiction implemented and upgraded by the Koreans from 1413, and, thus, the islanders had to live on more frequent piracy. Originally, the islanders were aiming at the coast of China, because of the international events we mentioned above. However, due to a widespread famine in Japan between 1419 and 1421 and Chosŏn's strict and lasting trade embargo,[267] the Japanese islanders suffered a shortage of grain. The shortage was so severe that their food supply could not even hold out to support their next navigation to, and piracy in, China. This was also the excuse the islanders made to the Koreans to explain their plundering in 1419.[268]

Second, a power-transition crisis burst out on Tsushima in 1418 after the death of Sō Sadashige 宗貞茂, the chief of the Sō clan and the *shugo* of Tsushima, so that the islanders lost all restraint and targeted the Koreans. Sō Sadashige died in 1418/4,[269] however, his son, Todokumagawara 都都熊瓦,[270] later known as Sō Sadamori 宗貞盛, was still young at the time and he left Tsushima and stayed with his protector, the Shōni, for seven or eight

[267] On this famine in Japan, see William Farris (2006), pp. 110-111.
[268] *Sejong sillok* 4:1b-2b, v.2, pp. 314-315 [Sejong.1:5:sin-hae]
[269] *T'aejong sillok* 35:32a-34a, v.2, pp. 214-215 [T'aejong.18:4:kap-chin]. Also refer to Araki Kazunori (2017), pp. 55-56.
[270] The correct name is Tsutsukumamaru 都都熊丸. But in the Korean records, the last character is misrecorded as wara 瓦 .

years.[271] Tsushima was thus under the control of Sōda Saemontarō 早田左衛門大郎, a powerful pirate chief who had real power on Tsushima, and other Sō clan members. As a result, Tsushima was now a group without a powerful leader.[272] Probably because of the absence of a powerful clan chief, some islanders could not keep themselves within the bounds of discipline when they passed by Korea on the way to China in 1419.

The political crisis on Tsushima and the following pirate raids not only posed a security challenge to the Koreans. It also exposed a problem of Chosŏn's foreign policy: the Koreans lacked a formal diplomatic arrangement to suppress piracy and maintain the peace across the Korea Straits. Although the court had actively reinforced its coastal forces and effectively reduced the pirate raids with a passive defence, they could not root out piracy. In other words, the pacification of the coast of Korea actually depended on the goodwill of the Japanese. When the Japanese took a friendly attitude towards the Koreans as they did from 1408 to 1418, the peninsula was exempted from piracy. On the contrary, when the Japanese authority, or a faction of local islanders, became aggressive, the Koreans had to passively suffer as cases in the 1400s and 1419 exemplify.

Two reasons can help explain this situation. First, because its Chinese suzerain had openly expressed hostility to the Japanese in 1413, the Chosŏn court could no longer proceed with formal diplomatic communications with the *bakufu* and blatantly seek help from the *shōgun* on the piracy issue. Second, the *bakufu* was, in fact, not able to fulfil its promise to suppress piracy. This was determined by the political system in medieval Japan. Although it tried its best to suppress local powers in western Japan after the civil war between the two

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[271] The exact dates of his leaving and return are unclear in the *sillok*. According to a Tsushima envoy's words in 1420/11, Sadamori had been in Kyushu for a while (*Sejong sillok* 10:9a-10a, v.2, pp. 414-415 [Sejong.2:11:chŏng-myo], 10:15b-16b, v.2, pp. 416-417 [Sejong.2:11:ki-myo]); his return was prior to 1426/5. Besides, as Sadamori stated in 1426, he was absent from Tsushima for seven or eight years, suggesting that he might have left in 1419 (*Sejong sillok* 32:23b-24b, v.3, pp. 28-29 [Sejong.8:5:kap-in]).

[272] *Sejong sillok* 10:9a-10a, v.2, pp. 414-415 [Sejong.2:11:chŏng-myo].

courts ended in 1392, the Muromachi *bakufu* failed to impose a sustainable centralized administration over the local regions as its counterparts did on the peninsula and the continent. Instead, the *bakufu* mainly relied on local powers to exert influence on the residents there. Powerful clans like the Ōuchi and the Shōni in Kyūshū assumed the posts of *shugo* and seized real power at the local level. In other words, even though the Ashikaga *shōgun* became the 'true ruler' of Japan after 1392, his authority over the local regions was limited, indirect, and fragile. This feudal-like system contributed to political uncertainty in western Japan. Military conflicts burst out one after another between the local powers and the *bakufu* or among the clans as they struggled for supremacy over the region, while the *shōgun* was incapable of stopping the disputes nor could he pacify the region. The Ōei disturbance in 1399, the succession issue on Tsushima in 1419, and the civil war on Kyūshū from the late 1420s to the 1440s testified to the *bakufu*'s limited control over the region. Moreover, the decline of the *shōgun*'s authority that stemmed from the sudden death of Ashikaga Yoshimochi in 1428/2 weakened the *bakufu*'s influence on the islanders even further. Power struggles and the attempts to revive the *bakufu*'s authority preoccupied the later *shōgun*s, making them disinterested in intervening in foreign affairs and controlling piracy.

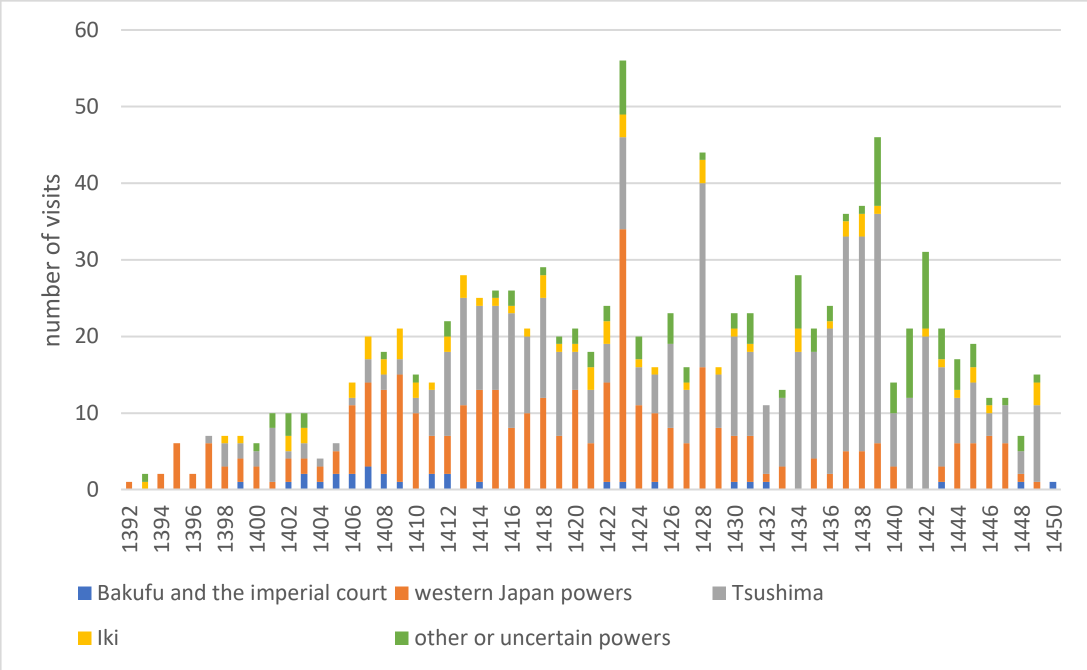
The situation created difficulties for the Koreans. For one thing, the Koreans suffered increasing pirate raids, since the regional wars destroyed social order and economy and forced the islanders to make a living by plundering their neighbours. For another, the Chosŏn court found its attempts to solve the piracy problem through diplomatic negotiation with the *bakufu* were in vain. After all, the *shōgun* had been named 'the king of Japan' by the Chinese.

The 1419 incident and the following pirate raids pushed Chosŏn to take a more aggressive solution. At first, the court resorted to violence and launched the Kihae Eastern Expedition. The Korean troops achieved victory at the beginning but suffered a crushing defeat and retreated from Tsushima at the end. Given the heavy logistics burden and its disadvantage in naval warfare, the court terminated further military operations and turned to a diplomatic solution.[273]

Contacts with the *bakufu* and the powers in Kyūshū and Tsushima proceeded simultaneously in the 1420s. The court sent a diplomatic mission, or envoy for returning courtesies (*Hoeryesa* 回禮使), to the Ashikaga *bakufu* again in 1420.[274] The *bakufu* was happy to resume diplomatic connections with Chosŏn, while it could neither pacify the political crisis on Tsushima nor impose direct, effective constraints on the pirates. The Koreans were soon aware of the *bakufu*'s incapacity and, thus, terminated sending envoys to the *bakufu* in 1425.[275] The Kyūshū powers would probably have been willing to help, but they were soon preoccupied in the civil war that started in 1423 and lasted until 1443, which further exacerbated the difficulties for the Koreans. In terms of the case of Tsushima, becaue of the absence of Sō Sadamori, the Chosŏn court could hardly find a chief who was accepted by all factions on the islands to negotiate a valid peace deal.[276]

[273] It worth noting that King T'aejong, who had abdicated in favour of Sejong in 1418 but still held the reigns of military affairs, threatened to launch further military operations against Japan, and the project was not completely abandoned until his death in 1422.
[274] *Sejong sillok* 6:8b, v.2, p. 347 [Sejong.1:12:sin-mi], 10:3a-3b, v.2, p. 410 [Sejong.2:10:kye-mo].
[275] After hearing the report of Pak Sŏsaeng in 1429, the Chosŏn court came to a final conclusion that dealing with the *shōgun* was 'ineffective if the purpose was the suppression of piracy'. See Jurgis Elisonas (1991), pp. 242-3. After King Sejong's reign (1418-1450), Chosŏn no longer sent envoys to the Ashikaga *bakufu*.
[276] For a discussion on the contacts between Tsushima and Chosŏn in the period from 1419 and 1426, see Araki Kazunori (2017), pp. 57-70.

Chart 5. Japan's envoys to Chosŏn (1392-1450)



Source: author

In this context, the Chosŏn court had no other option but to adopt a wait-and-see policy and, in the meantime, it strengthened its control over border exit and entry along the coast. In the early 1420s, the court, under the leadership of King Sejong, set forth a series of regulations to strengthen the administration on border-crossing activities. In 1422/02, the system of sailing registration was implemented. All vessels could only sail the seas after registering themselves with the government. At the same time, private vessels had to sail in a convoy of more than six. [277] Private vessels that sailed alone or without governmental permission were prohibited. A specific administrative order was issued four months later in 1422/08 to press slack officials to promote and carry out the new system.[278] This restriction was reaffirmed in 1425/06.[279] Meanwhile, the court punished the officials who did not

[277] Sejong sillok 15:10a, v.2, p. 475 [Sejong.4:2:mu-sin].
[278] *Sejong sillok* 17:6b-7a, v.2, p.491 [Sejong.4:8:kye-mo].
[279] *Sejong sillok* 28:27b-31a, v.2, pp. 675-677 [Sejong.7:6:sin-yu].

implement the regulations,[280] and it urged the marines to intensify inspecting the seas for unauthorized private sailings.[281]

In addition to restraining domestic residents from exiting the coastal border, the court also strengthened controls over foreign access to Korea. In the 1420s, the court improved the tally system that was established as early as 1407. The original measure was to request Japanese chiefs to issue their people with official documents, *haengjang* 行狀 (passport or short introductions).[282] Foreign visitors would be allowed to cross Chosŏn's border only if they carried the valid documents. From the 1420s, the court recognized some Japanese chiefs and conferred on them custom-made copper seals, *injŏn* 印篆 (seals) or *tosŏ* 圖書 (copper seals). These chiefs could issue travelling documents, called *munin* 文引 (seal document) or *sŏgye* 書契 (diplomatic letter), which were sealed with those copper seals. Only those who held these sealed travelling documents would be received in Korea.[283] In the Sejong reign (1418-1450), the court only conferred seven seals on the Japanese chiefs in 1420, 1423, 1434, 1442, 1448 and 1449 respectively.

By imposing strict control on border exits and entries, the court protected its residents by isolating the residents from pirates. Also, it exerted economic pressure on the Japanese powers to force compliance with the Korean court's wishes. By cutting off the commercial links, the border control policy functioned as a trade embargo, with which Chosŏn created economic difficulties for Tsushima and pressed the islanders to talk.

The situation took a favourable turn in 1426 as the powers on Tsushima achieved political reconciliation and resumed negotiations with Chosŏn. According to the report

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280 *Sejong sillok* 32:1a-1b, v.2, p. 17 [Sejong.8:4:chŏng-myo].
281 *Sejong sillok* 32:26b-27a, v.2, p. 25 [Sejong.8:5:ki-hae].
282 *T'aejong sillok* 14:10a-11b, v.1, p. 407 [T'aejong.7:7:mu-in].
283 According to the regulation made in 1439/10, those who came with *munin* were allowed to enter and trade at harbours, while those who carried *sŏgye* were permitted to visit the capital. *Sejong sillok* 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin]

submitted in 1426/5 by Yi Ye 李藝, who returned from Iwami Province and passed by Tsushima, the political order on Tsushima was restored as Sadamori returned to the island and had support from Sōda Saemontarō and other pirate chiefs. The new chief of the Sō and his colleagues promised that they would 'work together to suppress pirates and be submissive [to the authority of Chosŏn] forever'. Yi's report also indicated that the economic difficulties caused by Chosŏn's economic sanctions performed a decisive role in facilitating the reconciliation between the chiefs and their submissive attitude. As a pirate chief testified, 'the incapacitated and helpless people' and 'women and children' had lived in poverty, and they were 'extremely happy' that the Korean envoy showed up and that 'there was hope of resuming relations again'.[284] It was probably that, under the strong pressure of the suffering islanders, the chiefs promoted negotiations with the Koreans in an attempt to restore trade.

The chiefs also acted in their interests. Instead of pushing for free trade and navigation, Sadashige proposed to institute a system of travel certificates to administer the cross-strait activities. He told Yi Ye that, in order to prevent multiple and various people from harassing the coast of Chosŏn, Tsushima's chiefs would issue travelling documents, or *noin* (K.) 路引, to envoys and merchants. Meanwhile, Sadashige suggested to the Chosŏn court not to receive the Japanese vessels that did not hold the *noin* issued by Tsushima's chiefs.[285] The implication of this proposal was that Sadashige, Saemontarō, and other chiefs planned to monopolize the right to manage the trade with Korea. Although there was still political division among the chiefs in Tsushima,[286] they agreed on their respective shares of the trade, which partly explained their reconciliation. From the perspective of both the chiefs

[284] On Yi Ye's report of his 1426 trip, see *Sejong sillok* 32:23b-24b, v.3, pp. 28-29 [Sejong.8:5:kap-in].
[285] *Sejong sillok* 32:23b-24b, v.3, pp. 28-29 [Sejong.8:5:kap-in].
[286] According to the record in *sillok*, as late as 1439, the allegiances of the Tsushima islanders were split among Sadashige and his three brothers. See *Sejong sillok* 85:6b-7a, v.4, pp. 201-202 [Sejong.21:4:kap-o]

and the commoners of Tsushima, this was a win-win arrangement: the residents improved their living through trade and the chiefs strengthened their authority and profited from their control of trade. Once Chosŏn accepted this deal, the chiefs' right to administer trade was endorsed by the Koreans.

With the islanders' promise to suppress piracy, the Chosŏn court approved this deal, but it imposed further regulations on trade. When Sadashige forwarded his proposal to the Koreans, he expected that, because he promised to restrict his people, Chosŏn would allow Tsushima's licensed vessels to freely navigate and trade in Korea's coastal waters. However, that was beyond what the court would tolerate. Although the court agreed to the islanders' trading with Chosŏn, it confined trade to three designated harbour towns that were close to Tsushima. From the perspective of Chosŏn, three trading ports were enough for Korean-Japanese trade and those who attempted to go beyond these three sites must be treacherous criminals. Therefore, the court requested Tsushima to forbid its people to visit Chosŏn's territory outside of the three designated ports in 1426/11 and instructed the coastal garrisons to arrest Japanese vessels that sailed in forbidden areas.[287]

The 1426 agreement marked a shift of emphasis in Chosŏn's border control policies from limiting Korean residents from exiting the coast to regulating Japanese access to Chosŏn. With this policy, the Chosŏn court maintained peace along its coast by encouraging the Tsushima islanders to develop a unified foreign policy that abandoned plundering and turned to legal exchange for their living. Such an arrangement laid the foundations for the decline of piracy and sustained trade across the Tsushima Straits. This policy was so successful that it witnessed a dramatic decline of Japanese pirates and long-term peace on the southern Korean coast after 1426.

[287] *Sejong sillok* 34:11b-12a, v. 3, p. 50 [Sejong.8:11:ŭl-myo].

In the following two decades, the relationship between the Korean court and the powers on Tsushima became closer and closer. The increasing frequency and expanding proportion of Tsushima's envoys to Chosŏn after 1426, as shown in Chart 5, indicates this tendency. Simultaneously, the scope of Tsushima's power on the cross-strait affairs was expanding. From the 1440s, aside from the Korean-Tsushima trade, the Koreans began to entrust Tsushima with the right to manage all Japanese access to Korea.

3.3.2.2 Kyūshū's civil war from 1423 to the 1440s, the refugee crisis, and the 1443 treaty

The expansion of Tsushima's administrative power on trade was more than a natural result of the process of the normalization between Chosŏn and Tsushima. In fact, it was a response to the refugee crisis caused by the civil war in Kyūshū. As early as the eleventh century, Japanese immigrants began to live in Korea. Thanks to Chosŏn's naturalization policy, which attempted to pacify raiders, the number of Japanese immigrants steadily increased until the turn of the fifteenth century.[288] From the very beginning, the Chosŏn court placed no limitation on the number of immigrants and paid little attention to the growth of the Japanese population. Even the Korean-Tsushima agreement in 1426 did not specify how many Japanese were allowed to stay in Korea. This laid up trouble for the future.

As Chosŏn opened the three harbours, Pusanp'o, Naeip'o, and Yŏmp'o, to Tsushima according to the 1426 agreement, the islanders were attracted to do business and even reside in the three harbour towns, particularly Naeip'o in Kyŏngsang-do. As a result, the Japanese population rapidly expanded in the 1430s. According to the reports submitted from Naeip'o, there were around 600 Japanese merchants residing in the harbour town in 1434 and 360 of

[288] Kim Bo-han offers a discussion on the increase of the Japanese population in Korea in the Koryŏ and early Chosŏn periods. See Kim Bo-han (2010).

them had arrived in the past ten years.[289] The rapid growth was regarded as a serious hidden danger and the court was urged to send the resident Japanese population back to Tsushima in 1435.[290] Thus, the court took moves to curb the increasing business with the islanders by prohibiting the Japanese merchants from holding weapons in 1435/07,[291] and, it also came to conclude a supplemental agreement in 1436/03 with Tsushima about the number of Japanese residents in Korea.[292] According to the new supplemental agreement, the court imposed a fixed quota, 206, on the Japanese who were allowed to reside in the three harbour towns. The other 378 islanders were sent back to Tsushima.

However, the plan could not keep up with change. A great change took place during Kyūshū's civil war in late 1436. In 1423, the Shōni and the Ōuchi began to fight for supremacy in Kyūshū. The military conflict intermittently lasted until 1443, ending in the victory of the Ōuchi.[293] The Koreans were well aware that the military conflicts on Kyūshū might give them troubles:

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[289] *Sejong sillok* 64:11b-14b, v.3, pp. 558-559 [Sejong.16:4:mu-chin], 65:17a-18b, v.3, p. 585 [Sejong.16:8:ki-yu].
[290] *Sejong sillok* 68:24a-27a, v.3, pp. 633-634 [Sejong.17:6:mu-sin], 69:5b-6b, v.3, p. 642 [Sejong.17:7:ki-ch'uk].
[291] Sejong sillok 69:5b-6b, v.3, p. 642 [Sejong.17:7:ki-ch'uk], 69:2a-2b, v.3, p. 640 [Sejong.17:7:chŏng-ch'uk].
[292] Sejong sillok 71:14a, v.3, p. 669 [Sejong.18:3:ŭl -mi].
[293] In summary, as far as the Chosŏn court knew, the Kyūshū region was in political turmoil in these periods:1425-28, 1430-38, and 1440-43. According to Korean records, the first civil war between the Shōni clan and the Ōuchi clan lasted three years until 1428, when the Ōuchi clan achieved a temporary victory (*Sejong sillok* 42:17b-18a, v.3, p. 155 [Sejong.10:11:kap-sul], 42:21b, v.3, p. 157 [Sejong.10:12:sin-myo]). It was reported in 1430/5 and 1431/8 that the war restarted and the Shōni clan was defeated (*Sejong sillok* 48:21b-22b, v.3, pp. 237-238 [Sejong.12:5:mu-o]) but successfully fought back and killed the lord of the Ōuchi clan (*Sejong sillok* 53:14a-14b, v.3, p. 335 [Sejong.13:8:kye-mo]). The *sillok* noted in 1433/7, 1436/12, and in 1439/7 that the court knew Kyūshū was still at war (*Sejong sillok* 61:14b-18a, v.3 pp. 494-496 [Sejong.15:7:kye-yu], 75:25b-26b, v.4, p. 45 [Sejong.18:12:chŏng-hae], 86:7b-8a, v.4, pp. 225-226 [Sejong.21:7:mu-o]). In 1438/6, the court began to discuss the Ōuchi clan's supremacy in Kyūshū, Iki, and Tsushima (*Sejong sillok* 81:20b-21a, v.4, pp. 148-149 [Sejong.20:6:im-sul]). Ōuchi Mochiyo 大内持世 (1394-1441), the lord of the clan, sent envoys and tried to establish relations with Chosŏn in 1440. He promised to search for the Korean deserter in Kyūshū (*Sejong sillok* 89:22a-23a, v.4, p. 309 [Sejong 22:8:kyŏng-o]). However, he was murdered the next year, resulting in a political struggle within the clan and

> The Japanese pirates on Tsushima and Iki rely upon Japan for cloth and food. Recently, the traffic [from Japan to Tsushima and Iki] was struck due to military conflicts. [We do] not know whether [the pirates] will scurry to our border like a rat, if they are in a shortage of cloth and food.[294]

This concern partly explains why Chosŏn agreed to lift sanctions against Tsushima and come to an agreement with the Sō clan, a vassal of the Shōni, in 1426. As long as Tsushima's economy was stable and the Shōni could maintain the military balance in Kyūshū with the Ōuchi, the 1426 agreement was enough to prevent the Japanese from assaulting Korea's coast. As the above quotation point out, Chosŏn witnessed limited number of pirate attacks in the early 1430s as the balance maintained.

However, the balance was broken in late 1436, as the Ōuchi gained the upper hand in Kyūshū and forced the Shōni clan to retreat to Tsushima Island, the territory of its vassal. As the Shōni's routed troops and war refugees fell back to Tsushima, thousands of hungry Japanese squeezed themselves onto several small, infertile islands.[295] Given the loss of the foothold in Kyūshū and the poverty in Tsushima, it was impossible for the Shōni camp to

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the re-appearance of civil war with the Shōni clan. As *sillok* noted, the Shōni clan made efforts at revenge but failed and retreated to Tsushima again in 1442 (*Sejong sillok* 96:19b, v.4, p. 415 [Sejong.24:6:kap-chin]). The contacts between the Ōuchi clan and Chosŏn did not resume until 1443/12 when the new clan lord, Ōuchi Norihiro 大内教弘 (1420-1465) dispatched envoys to Chosŏn (*Sejong sillok* 102:35b-36b, v.4, pp. 529-530 [Sejong.25:12:sin-myo], 102:39b, v.4, p. 531 [Sejong.25:12:kyŏng-cha]). This contact lasted until the end of Sejong's reign.

[294] '對馬,一歧倭賊衣食一仰于日本,近日本因兵塞路,若衣食乏絕,則鼠竄我邊境,未可知也'. *Sejong sillok* 31:25a, v.3, p. 13 [Sejong.8:3:kye-hae].

[295] The Chosŏn court learned the Shōni's troop retreated to Tsushima as early as 1436/12. See *Sejong sillok* 75:25b-26b, v.4, p. 45 [Sejong.18:12:chŏng-hae]. In 1442, the court learned that another 5000 routed troops of the Shōni retreated to Tsushima. See *Sejong sillok* 96:19b, v.4, p. 415 [Sejong.24:6:kap-chin].

support the population independently with the limited resources from the Tsushima islands. Naturally, they turned to their Korean neighbours. Traditionally, plundering, a low-cost and profitable business, was what the Koreans were most worried about,[296] and the Koreans knew this should have been the first choice of the desperate Japanese. However, the Shōni camp did not launch another wave of piracy against Korea. This was probably because both the Shōni and the Sō did not want to make another enemy by infuriating the Koreans. In this particular context, they could not afford a two-front war with both Chosŏn and the Ōuchi clan at the same time.

Hence, the Shōni and the Sō decided to take a more peaceful and moderate move: to scrounge free meals off the Koreans. In specific, aside from directly asking for famine relief, the Shōni and the Sō kept sending their people to Korea in the name of 'reporting information on pirates or Japanese politics', 'paying tribute', or 'doing business'. But, in fact, what these 'messengers', 'envoys' and 'merchants' presented mostly were unimportant information and unsalable and useless items. Then, these visitors would stay on Korea's territory, live off the governmental treatment according to the convention on diplomatic reception, and delay their return as long as possible with all kinds of excuses. Technically, the Japanese did not break the 1426 or 1436 agreements with Chosŏn. The two previous agreements designated the anchor harbours and imposed a quota on Japanese immigrants, but they did not forbid the Japanese legal entries with valid travel documents. Nor did the agreements specify exactly how long the Japanese visitors were allowed to stay. Thus, the Tsushima chiefs issued travel documents without restraint and turned a blind eye to, if not encourage, the flood of refugees into Korea. When the Korean envoy questioned him about the excessive issuances of travel documents, Sō Sadamori frankly stated that:

[296] *Sejong sillok* 75:25b-26b, v.4, p. 45 [Sejong.18:12:chŏng-hae].

> My island is suppressed by the Ōuchi clan, and, [we] can depend on nobody but your highness. Also, the Japanese escaped from [Kyūshū] to my territory. [As] the chief of the island, [I] cannot dismiss them. [Therefore,] it is imperative to issue them with *sŏgye* under the circumstances.[297]

In other words, the Shōni and the Sō made use of the loopholes in the 1426 and 1436 agreements to acquire relief grain from Chosŏn. As a consequence, large numbers of the Shōni's routed troops and war refugees entered Korea through legal approaches from the late 1430s. Table 5 presents some figures on the Japanese who got access to Chosŏn from 1424 to 1444.

[297] '我島迫於大內殿, 無所歸處,專仰上德.且倭人等逃匿出來, 投我陸地, 島主不得還黜, 其給書契, 勢不獲已也'. *Sejong sillok* 86:27b-31a, v.4, pp. 236-237 [Sejong.21:9:ŭl-myo].

Table 5. The number of Japanese visitors in the three ports prior to 1450

Date	Japanese Population			Locations/Comments	reference
	people	households	ships		
1430			20+	Japanese vessels at Pusan and Yŏmp'o	*Sejong sillok* 48:3b-5a, v.3, pp. 228-229 [Sejong.12:4:sin-sa]
	100+			Merchants in Pusan and Yŏmp'o.	
1424 -34	360			Visited Naeip'o	*Sejong sillok* 65:17a-18b, v.3, p. 585 [Sejong.16:8:ki-yu].
1434	600 +			Visited Naeip'o	*Sejong sillok* 64:11b-14b, v.3, pp. 558-559 [Sejong.16:4:mu-chin].
1435			4-500	Visited Naeip'o	*Sejong sillok* 69:5b-6b, v.3, p. 642 [Sejong.17:7:ki-ch'uk]
		500± *		Applied for settlement	
1436	253			Volunteered to leave from Naeip'o	*Sejong sillok* 71:14a, v.3, p. 669 [Sejong.18:3:ŭl-mi].
	96			Volunteered to leave from Yŏmp'o	
	29			Volunteered to leave from Pusan	
	206			Volunteered to stay in the Samp'o (Pusanp'o, Naeip'o, and Yŏmp'o)	
	60			An agreement with Sō Sadamori to permit his merchants to stay	
1438	3000+			Refugees arrived from Tsushima in the first half of the year	*Sejong sillok* 81:21b-22a, v.4, p. 149 [Sejong.20:6:ŭl-ch'uk]
1439	1300+			The estimated number of incoming visitors	*Sejong sillok* 85:6b-7a, v.4, pp. 201-202 [Sejong.21:4:kap-o].
	Several thousand			Visits within a month	*Sejong sillok* 85:29a-29b, v.4, p. 213 [Sejong.21:5:mu-o]
	10,000±			Resident Japanese	*Sejong sillok* 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin].
	200+			Immigrants in Naeip'o	*Sejong sillok* 87:33b-34a, v.4, pp. 154-155 [Sejong.21:11:ki-sa]
	150			Immigrants in Pusan	
1440		60+		Families living in Pusanp'o	*Sejong sillok* 88:13b-14b, v.4, p. 267 [Sejong.22:2:kyŏng-chin].
	6,000			Merchants visiting Pusanp'o	
1444		1		Allowed merchants dispatch by Sō Moriie 宗盛家 to stay in Pusanp'o	*Sejong sillok* 106:18b-19b, v.4, p. 592 [Sejong. 26:11:pyŏng-cha]

Source: *Sejong sillok*

As Table 5 indicates, the Chosŏn court estimated in 1439/04 that there might be 1,300 Japanese entering Korea in the current year. However, thousands of Japanese flooded into Korea just in the next month (1439/05). By 1439/10, more than 10,000 Japanese visited and stayed. It seems that this was just the beginning. In 1440/02, another 6,000 Japanese merchants arrived in Pusanp'o,[298] which was not the most popular destination among the three ports.[299] That is to say, the number of the people entering Pusanp'o, the less popular destination for the Japanese, in the month 1440/02 was nearly 17 times more than that in Naeip'o, the most popular destination, in the decade from 1424 to 1434, and 30 times more than the quota imposed in 1436 on all the three designated ports. While the *Sillok* do not put a figure on the Japanese arrivals in total during this period, there is no doubt that the total number of the arrivals was higher than that shown above. The Chosŏn court must have been terrified of the actual figures.

This put Chosŏn in a dilemma. If the court took a laissez-faire attitude toward the flood of refugees, it meant that Chosŏn had to support the additional population with its vulnerable economy, which was just recovering from rampant piracy and a high frequency of natural disasters in the 1420s. Meanwhile, the endless refugees put huge pressures on public order in the coastal regions. In addition, the Koreans risked being seen as involved in the internal affairs of Kyūshū and, thus, offending the Ōuchi clan, the new hegemon in the region, if Chosŏn consistently supported the Japanese arriving from Tsushima. However, if the court completely sealed the border and rejected the Japanese refugees, it might drive the islanders to an impasse and make them commit piracy again, which was the last thing the

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[298] *Sejong sillok* 88:13b-14b, v.4, p. 267 [Sejong.22:2:kyŏng-chin].

[299] When the provincial governor (Kamsa 監司) of Kyŏngsang-do complained about the expanding Japanese population in Naeip'o in 1435/07, he pointed out: 'the number of staying Japanese in Pusanp'o and Yŏmp'o are small. Thus, there is no need to be worried'. See *Sejong sillok* 69:5b-6b, v.3, p. 642 [Sejong.17:7:ki-ch'uk].

Koreans wanted.[300] These concerns were discussed and exposed in a court debate in 1436/12.[301]

If the Ōuchi could defeat the Shōni and the Sō at one stroke and pacify the whole of western Japan speedily, Chosŏn might have been able to reach a new agreement. Any new agreement with the Ōuchi could have been similar to the two it achieved with Tsushima in 1426 and 1436. Then, the refugee crisis might have been solved in a short space of time. Nonetheless, things did not develop in this direction. The chief of the clan, Ōuchi Mochiyo 大内持世 (1394-1441), was murdered in the Kakitsu Rebellion (Kakitsu no ran 嘉吉の乱) in 1441. This incident interrupted the Ōuchi's plan to attack Tsushima.[302] As a result, the two camps were locked in confrontation across the Tushima strait as late as 1443.[303]

From the perspective of the Koreans, in the late 1430s, they had no idea how long this confrontation and refugee crisis would last. But the Chosŏn court assured itself that neither did it want to press the Japanese on Tsushima too hard, which might trigger a new wave of piracy, and nor did it prepare to fully support the Japanese refugees forever. As a response, the court strengthened its control over the border as a precautionary measure warding off the hovering danger of piracy. Meanwhile, it tried to achieve a new agreement with Tsushima to curb the Japanese arrivals. Specifically, Chosŏn negotiated limitations with Tsushima on the number of visitors. Two agreements were reached in 1439 and 1443.[304] The 1443 agreement

300 For the court's concern about piracy, see *Sejong sillok* 37:1a, v.3, p. 81 [Sejong.9:7:chŏng-hae], 75:25b-26b, v.4, p. 45 [Sejong.18:12:chŏng-hae];
301 *Sejong sillok* 75:25b-26b, v.4, p. 45 [Sejong.18:12:chŏng-hae]
302 *Sejong sillok* 104:7b-9b, v.4, pp. 552-553 [Sejong.26:4:ki-yu].
303 Diplomatic contacts between Chosŏn and the Ōuchi resumed in 1443/12, which implies that the Ōuchi had achieved a degree of control of the situation across the Tsushima Strait by then. See *Sejong sillok* 102:35b-36b, v.4, pp. 529-530 [Sejong.25:12:sin-myo].
304 On the 1439 agreement, refer to *Sejong sillok* 85:20b-21b, v.4, pp.208-209 [Sejong.21:4:kap-chin], 86:40a-42a, v.4, pp. 242-243 [Sejong.21:9:kap-sul], 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin]. On the 1443 agreement, *sillok* does not directly note it in the 1443 records, but the agreement was mentioned in the 1444/intercalary 7 record (*Sejong sillok* 105:22a-23b, v.4, pp. 577-578 [Sejong.26:intercalary 7:ki-hae]).

was later known as the Kyehae Agreement 癸亥條約 in Korea or Kakitsu Agreement 嘉吉條約 in Japan. Historians often refer to this agreement as a symbol of the legitimation of Korean-Japanese trade, because it set a precise quota on visiting ships from Tsushima (fifty per year) for the first time. In fact, trade had been licensed as early as 1426 when the court approved Sadamori's proposal. The essence of the 1439 and 1443 agreements was a limitation on Chosŏn's acceptance of Japanese war refugees. Through these two agreements, the court extended the scope of application of Chosŏn-Tsushima agreements to administrating access to Korea from Kyūshū and other parts of Japan. Simply put, Chosŏn made Tsushima a middleman to administer all Japanese access to Korea. This explains the expansion of Tsushima's administrative power over Japanese-Korean trade in the late 1430s and 1440s.

Although the Ōuchi finally achieved dominance over the Kyūshū region in around 1443, the clan did not reach a comprehensive agreement with Chosŏn as the Sō had in the previous two decades. This was mainly because the Ōuchi immediately concentrated on the power struggles related to the Ashikaga *bakufu* and paid little attention to develop a consistent trade relationship with Korea or to engage in security cooperation with the Koreans.[305] While the Ōuchi sent six missions to visit Chosŏn after 1442 (1443/12,[306] 1444/07,[307] 1445/02,[308] 1446/06,[309] 1447/12,[310] and 1448/03,[311]), these envoys showed more

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305 The Chosŏn court learned from its envoys returning from Tsushima in 1446/06 that war had broken out across Kyūshū. See *Sejong sillok* 113:32b-33b, v.4, p. 700 [Sejong.28:9:kap-sul].
306 *Sejong sillok* 102:35b-36b, v.4, pp. 529-530 [Sejong.25:12:sin-myo],103:9b, v.4, p. 537 [Sejong.26:1:sin-mi].
307 *Sejong sillok* 105:4a-5b, v.4, pp. 568-569 [, Sejong.26:7:chŏng-sa]
308 *Sejong sillok* 107:8b-9a, v.4, p. 605-605 [Sejong.27:2:chŏng-mi], 107:10b-11a, v.4, pp. 606-607 [Sejong.27:2:kye-ch'uk], 107:11b, v.4, p. 607 [Sejong.27:2:pyŏng-chin], 107:13a, v.4, p. 608 [Sejong.27:2:ŭl-ch'uk], 107:15a-15b, v.4, p. 609 [Sejong.27:3:pyŏng-cha].
309 *Sejong sillok* 112:18a, v.4, p. 622 [Sejong.28:6:kap-in].
310 *Sejong sillok* 118:15a, v.5, p. 47 [Sejong.29:12:pyŏng-sul].
311 *Sejong sillok* 119:13a-14a, v.5, p. 54 [Sejong.30:3:chŏng-yu]

interest in increasing their personal income than in discussing a general agreement on commerce and security. The only newsworthy story about these missions was that, in 1445/04, the Ōuchi envoys gathered in groups and climbed over the wall of the Japan House at night to visit prostitutes and to carry out smuggling.[312] As an envoy told the crown prince in 1447/12, 'the internal turbulence' kept the chief busy so that he had no time to cultivate bilateral relationships.[313]

Similar things unfolded in the communications between the Chosŏn court and the Ashikaga *bakufu* in the 1440s. As the situation pacified across the Tsushima Strait from the mid-1440s, Chosŏn sent an embassy to Japan in 1443/02,[314], which was the last *t'ongshinsa* arrived the Ashikaga *bakufu*.[315] The *bakufu* paid a return visit in 1443/11.[316] Another three Japanese missions arrived in Korea in 1448/01[317] and 1450/01.[318] But, what the Chosŏn court learned from these communications and Japanese messengers from other regions was that the current *shōgun* had no capability to regulate the traffic across the Korea Strait.[319] Even the

[312] *Sejong sillok* 108:6b, v.4, p. 615 [Sejong.27:4:kyŏng-sul], 108:6b-7a, v.4, pp. 615-616 [Sejong.27:4:im-cha].
[313] *Sejong sillok* 118:15a, v.5, p. 47 [Sejong.29:12:pyŏng-sul].
[314] *Sejong sillok* 99:18b-19b, v.4, p. 463 [Sejong.25:2:chŏng-mi].
[315] Chosŏn sent 15 missions to the Ashikaga *bakufu* during the Muromachi period (1336 - 1573). Seven were dispatched in the Sejong reign. The missions departed in 1420, 1423, and 1424 were called *hoeryesa* 回禮使. The other four departed in 1428, 1432, 1439, and 1443 were called *t'ongshinsa* 通信使. In 1443/12, the court intended to dispatch another *t'ongshinsa* to Japan, but the plan was finally cancelled. See *Sejong sillok* 102:36b-37b, v.4, p. 530 [Sejong.25:12:im-chin], 102:38a-39a, v.4, p. 531 [Sejong.25:12:chŏng-yu], 102:39b-40b, v.4, pp. 531-532 [Sejong.25:12:im-in], 102:41a-42a, v.4, pp. 532-533 [Sejong.25:12:chŏng-mi].
[316] *Sejong sillok* 102:25b-26a, v.4, pp. 524-525 [Sejong.25:11:ki-sa].
[317] *Sejong sillok* 119:2a-2b, v.5, p. 48 [Sejong.30:1:mu-sul].
[318] *Sejong sillok* 127:1b-2a, v.5, p. 155 [Sejong.32:1.im-o].
[319] In 1443/10, the last *t'ongshinsa* returned from Japan and updated the court on the current situation in Japan. According to this report, Chosŏn was aware of the incapability of the current *bakufu*. See *Sejong sillok* 102:6b-8b, v.4, pp. 515-516 [Sejong.25:10:kap-o]. Besides, the court also learned from the Japanese merchants, Sō Kin, who visited Korea in 1447/05, that the new Ashikaga *shōgun* was only thirteen years old. The implication was that the new *shogun* was too young to control the political situation effectively. See *Sejong sillok* 116:19a-21b, v.5, pp. 24-25 [Sejong.29:5:pyŏng-chin].

missions dispatched in the name of the *shōgun* were actually managed by the powerful local clans and wealthy households from western Japan.[320] The major concern of these 'envoys' was to make a bargain with the Koreans and to get a better price for their products.[321] Against this backdrop, the Chosŏn court gave up hope of establishing a sustainable system to maintain order across the strait with any Japanese power other than those on Tsushima.[322] Chosŏn devoted itself to maintain a good relationship with Tsushima in order to ensure that the bilateral institution for trade and contacts ran smoothly.

In addition, it worth noting that border controls were much more than the supervision of exits and entries. As the contacts between Korea and Tsushima became more frequent and flourishing in the Sejong's reign, disputes on specific issues emerged. Therefore, the court formulated further regulations to deal with specific issues. The additional regulations include measures to distinguish forged certificates from valid certificates, lists of contraband goods, precautions and punishments against smuggling, limitations on the number of crew on each vessel, quota limits on annual visiting ships, designated scope of fishing areas, and replies to the Japanese requests to open more trading ports. There were also regulations on market

[320] In 1448/07, Chosŏn's bureaucrats found that two out of three mission vessels were actually merchant ships. See *Sejong sillok* 121:2a-3b, v.5, p. 78 [Sejong.30:7:ki-ch'uk]. In addition, the Japanese envoy, who arrived Korea in 1450, frankly stated that most of the commodities they brought belonged to the chiefs, not the *shōgun*. See *Munjong sillok* 1:27b-28a, v.6, p. 228 [Munjong.*chŭwiyŏn*:3:mu-chin].
[321] *Sejong sillok* 120:11a-11b, v.5, p. 63 [Sejong.30:4:im-o], 120:22a-22b, v.5, p. 68 [Sejong.30:5:mu-sul], 120:26a-26b, v.5, p. 70 [Sejong.30:6:chŏng-sa], 121:2a-3b, v.5, p. 78 [Sejong.30:7:ki-ch'uk], 127:39a-39b, v.5, p. 169 [Sejong.32:intercalary 1:kyŏng-sin], *Munjong sillok* 1:27b-28a, v.6, p. 228 [Munjong.*chŭwiyŏn*:3:mu-chin].
[322] The Korean court dispatched another two missions to Ashikaga Japan in 1459 and 1479 respectively, but neither successfully reach their destination. In1459/05, Sejo sent a *t'ongshinsa to* Japan, but the mission perished in the shipwreck and thus it failed to reach Japan. See *Sejo sillok* 17:14b-18a, v.7, pp. 342-344 [Sejo.5:8:im-sin], 19:1a-1b, v.7, p. 361 [Sejo.6:1:sin-sa], 19:2a-2b, v.7, p. 362 [Sejo.6:1:key-mi]. In 1479, another *t'ongshinsa* was dispatched by Sŏngjong, but this mission did not arrived Japan because the ambassador fell sick after he landed Tsushima and the governor of Tsushima refused to escort the mission. See Sŏngjong sillok 100:3b, v.10, p. 2 [Sŏngjong.10:4:kyŏng-in], 101:9a-10b, v.10, pp. 34-35 [Sŏngjong.10:7:mu-cin], 101:10b-11b, v.10, p. 35 [Sŏngjong.10:7:ki-sa].No *t'ongshinsa* was dispatched to Ashikaga Japan thereafter.

prices, settlements of resident envoys and merchants, applications for immigration, secret military technology transfer, and the routes and rules for visitors to the capital. In the process of conducting these matters, the court developed and improved a set of regulations in Sejong's reign (1419-1450) to administer Japanese access to Chosŏn.[323]

As the court modified and filled the policy with more details, step by step, Chosŏn's control over its coastal border transformed from measures to separate Japanese pirates from coastal residents into a policy to supervise and administer the cross-border flows of population, commodities, capital, and information. The combination of these rules and other regulations governing Korean residents who exited the country were institutionalized in Sejong's reign and contributed to Chosŏn's coastal border control policy.

Both Chosŏn and Tsushima benefited from this institution. For the Koreans, they had a buffer zone that warded off the flood of Japanese refugees caused by the political upheavals in Japan. It saved the court's time and energy from following up the complex political changes in Japan and reduced risks from making blind contacts with new emerging powers and negotiating about piracy suppression all over again. What the Koreans had to do was to maintain political stability in Tsushima by assuring the islanders the right to trade. Tsushima not only made additional profits as an intermediary agent between the Koreans and the Japanese but also strengthened its position in both Chosŏn's and Japan's political systems respectively. In their commercial and political interests, the Tsushima powers tried their best to guarantee good behaviour of the Japanese visitors to Korea. Thanks to their endeavours, the Koreans and the Japanese were at peace for nearly two centuries, even though Japan fell into the chaotic Sengoku jidai 戦国時代 (1467-1600) after the mid-fifteenth century. In short, by entrusting the Tsushima chiefs in the 1430s with the task of administrating Japanese access to Chosŏn from other parts of Japan, the court built up Tsushima as a buffer zone that

[323] More details on the reception for Japanese visitors, refer to *Haedong chegukki*.

absorbed the negative impacts on Korea caused by turbulence in Kyūshū and Honshū. The 1592 war interrupted the peace, but the two countries soon achieved normalization under the help of Tsushima and under almost the same arrangements but with a few revisions.[324]

Despite the continuing social and political upheavals in Japan from the fourteenth century, Chosŏn achieved its goal in coastal border security during Sejong's reign and successfully maintained the peace for centuries with only sporadic disruptions. Behind this achievement was the enforcement of the coastal border controls. With such a policy, Chosŏn not only 'converted the raiders to traders', it also induced the islanders to act as a buffer to shelter Korea from the political uncertainties in Japan. Hence, border control, as a part of the arrangements between Chosŏn and Tsushima, was instituted and became a long-term national policy in Korea.

3.4 Summary

The second half of the fourteenth century witnessed political upheavals and power transitions in almost every state around East Asian waters, leading to international anarchy on the seas. Attempting to construct a Sino-centric world order, the Ming tried to impose its diplomatic framework and norms on overseas states, which, in return, aroused antipathy and stirred up reactions from some foreign monarchs. The Koreans were not only forced to respond to economic demands from the Tsushima islanders but were also passively compelled to engage in the confrontation between Ming China and Ashikaga Japan and respond to the endless political turmoil in Japan. Such an international situation posed severe threats to the border security of the two newly established authorities, Ming China and Chosŏn Korea. Responding to such threats caused by foreign political uncertainties, both

[324] On the normalization after the 1592 war, see James Lewis (2003).

courts enforced coastal border controls, later called the *haijin* (Ch.) or *haegŭm* (K.) policy, to strengthen border security.

Given the remarkable, incessant, and rampant pirate activities in this century, historians have generally believed that the piracy issue created the decisive impetus to the implementation of coastal border controls. Admittedly, piracy posed a threat to both Ming China and Chosŏn Korea. However, the piracy issue alone was far from sufficient to drive the Chinese empire and the Korean kingdom into carrying out such strict border control policies. In other words, coastal border control was much more than a piracy-centred policy.

After considering the geopolitics of East Asia at the time and examining the events of international politics, this chapter suggests that, instead of piracy, international hostilities and uncertainties gave rise to more serious security concerns and pushed the Ming and Chosŏn courts to strengthen centralized control over their coastal borders. By restricting border exits, the Ming and Chosŏn courts protected their residents from adverse impacts from the overseas world. By controlling foreign access to their homeland, both administrations used foreign trade as a bargaining chip in diplomatic negotiations in an attempt to appease hostile overseas opponents. With the combination of these measures, Ming China and Chosŏn Korea tried to defend their coastal border from political uncertainties and foreign hostilities.

The similarities ended here. The main distinction between Ming and Chosŏn policies is that private navigation and trade were completely prohibited in Ming China, while licensed cross-border activities and trade were allowed on a limited scale in Chosŏn Korea. It turns out that, in terms of piracy suppression, Chosŏn's partial trade restrictions were more effective than Ming policy. The Chosŏn court appeased aggressive islanders on Tsushima and built up a buffer zone to absorb adverse pressures exerted from a chaotic Japan. As a result, the outbreaks of pirate raids dramatically decreased after 1426 when Chosŏn approved Sadamori's proposal of licensed trade and nearly ceased altogether after 1443 when an annual quota was imposed to regulate the Korean-Japanese trade. If we regard Tsushima as Chosŏn's buffer zone against the impact of the political uncertainties in Japan, then we might consider that Chosŏn also functioned as a buffer for Ming China. Although Japan fell into political disorder again after the outbreak of the Ōnin War in 1467, as it did in the fourteenth century, Chosŏn's security policy was still successful and worked consistently to protect Korea, as well as China, from Japanese pirates. While Japanese pirates plundered the coast of the continent sporadically, 'they had become more of a nuisance than a threat by the mid-sixteenth century.[325]

[325] Jurgis Elisonas (1991), p. 244.

Chapter 4

Ming China's trading system

It is commonly assumed that Ming authorities carried out the maritime exclusion policy to suppress maritime trade, regardless of economic gains or losses, because of the non-economic considerations of exclusion, such as coastal security and diplomatic influence. Thus, most modern historians dismiss the economic function of Ming China's trading system and see maritime exclusion as a 'commerce-suppressing' policy that 'could not be explained by economic factors'.[326] Scholars like Danjō Hiroshi even suggest that Ming's implementation of *haijin* was a retrogression in the history of maritime China.[327]

However, this perception is not accurate. The following will argue that maritime exclusion was a part of Ming's trading system, which was a product of deliberate economic considerations by policy makers in the court. The purpose of this new trading system was twofold: to reform the previous system and prevent the trade magnates from squeezing out the small business owners and encroaching on government revenue from maritime trade, and, to establish a state monopoly on maritime trade, which not only generated more revenue for the court but also improved the trade balance of China. Moreover, this chapter will also discuss the decline of this system in the mid-fifteenth century and argue that the system collapsed not because Ming China lost money in maritime trade. Rather, it was because of irreconcilable fiscal conflicts between the emperors and the bureaucracy.

[326] Lee, Hun-Chang, Peter Temin (2010).
[327] Danjō Hiroshi (2013). Also see Li Kangying (2010).

4.1 Trade policy in history and the disadvantages of the pre-Ming trading system

Overseas trade had been a channel of extra revenue for Chinese governments from the Tang dynasty. As early as the beginning of the eighth century, the Tang court appointed a special attaché, Maritime Trade Commissioner (*shiboshi* 市舶使), to levy taxes on maritime trade.[328] This appointment indicates that maritime trade had been brought into line with the state management by then.[329] Historians have also noticed the Monopoly Tax Commission (*quehuo wu* 榷貨務) in the Min 閩 Kingdom (909-945).[330] The title of this agency and relevant records implies that the Min administration directly intervened in maritime trade to some extent.[331]

4.1.1 Song policy

During the Song dynasty, the Chinese government developed a general framework to govern maritime commerce. At the beginning of the dynasty, the Song court monopolized the business. In the reign of the first emperor, the court prohibited private engagement in maritime commerce, and it imposed absolute control on the resale of overseas products. But, in 982, the second emperor lifted the ban on private maritime trade and levied tax on the business. From then on, the Song court began to manage the trade with a regular taxation

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[328] In 714/12, the court appointed Zhou Qingli 周慶立 as the Maritime Trade Commissioner (*shiboshi* 市舶使) (*Cefu yuan gui*, Book 101:17a, v.2, p. 1209 [Kaiyuan.2:12]; also refer to *Jizuan yuanhai*, Book 34:17b-20a, v.236, pp. 749-751, and '*Tiju shibo* 提舉市舶' in *Gujin shiwen leiju yiji*, Book 13:13b-15b, v. 929, pp. 583-584. This is the earliest record of the position of Maritime Trade Commissioner. In the above primary sources, there are general descriptions about how the maritime trade benefitted the court.

[329] For a discussion about state management on maritime trade before the Song period, see Angela Schottenhammer, (2015), pp. 437-450, 460-461.

[330] *Shiguo chunqiu*, Book 95, v.3, p. 1377.

[331] Angela Schottenhammer, (2015), p. 464. In her article, Angela Schottenhammer misquotes the title of the agency as '*Chüeh-i-wu*' and thus she translates it as 'Monopoly Exchange Office'.

system. This general framework of trade governed China's economic relations with the overseas world until the late fourteenth century.[332]

In practice, the court administrated maritime trade by imposing three sorts of levies on imported goods. The first levy was called 'state monopoly (*guoque* 國榷)'. Specifically, the court designated several kinds of luxury commodities, such as frankincense and ivory, as state-monopolized products (*quehuo* 榷貨). When merchant ships arrived in China, they had to hand over these goods to the government without being paid. Then, the government resold these goods to the Chinese market to gain cash revenue.[333] In short, the court monopolized the resale of certain luxury goods. According to an official report in 1078, the resale of frankincense alone accounted for about 60 percent of the total governmental revenue from maritime trade.[334]

The second levy was a normal tax (*choujie* 抽解 or *choufen* 抽分) on all the other goods. Generally, this tax rate fluctuated around 10 percent. The third levy was 'official purchase (*guanmai* 官買)' or 'harmony purchase (*hemai* 和買)'. The government would make a compulsory purchase of the 'fine goods (*lianghuo* 良貨 or *xihuo* 細貨)', like rhinoceros horns and pearls, from the maritime merchants who visited China. Normally, the court bought 40-60 percent of the 'fine goods'.[335] It worth noting that the government always

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[332] This does not mean that maritime trade was proceeding without restrictions. The Song administration imposed bans on the export of contraband, particularly precious metals like copper coins and silver. On the role of metals in Song's maritime trade, see Angela Schottenhammer (2001).

[333] According to the decree issued in 982/07, the court monopolized eight kinds of overseas commodities and the private sector was allowed to trade another 37 kinds of 'medicines'. *Song huiyao jigao*, Book. 86:2a-2b, v.4, p. 3350.

[334] This is the only case indicating the proportion of the revenue from the resale of monopolized goods to the total governmental revenue. On the revenue from the resale of frankincense from 1076 to 1078, see *Zhongshu beidui*, pp. 226-227. On the total revenue from maritime trade in 1078, see *Song shi*, Book 186, v.7, pp. 4541-4568.

[335] *Song shi*, Book 186, v.7, p. 4559. Also see *Wenxian tongkao*, Book 20:42a-42b, v.610, p. 462; and *Gujin shiwen leiju yiji*, Book 13:13b-15b, v. 929, pp. 583-584. Also see *Wenxian*

made a purchase at extremely low prices.[336] Table 6 shows the tax rates for the three kinds of levies in the Song period.

tongkao, Book 62:11b-13a, v.611, pp. 426-427; *Gujin shiwen leiju yiji*, Book 13:13b-15b, v. 929, pp. 583-584*; Song shi*, Book 186, v.7, p. 4566.

[336] *Pingzhou ketan*, Book 2:2a.

Table 6. Levies on imported goods in the Song period (960-1276)

	State monopoly		Tax		Official purchase	
	Products	Share of market	Products	Tax rate	Products	Purchase ratio
960-982	All kinds of commodities	100 percent				
Post-982	Pearls, hawksbill turtles; rhinoceros horns; ivory; wrought iron; coral; agate; frankincense	100 percent	37 kinds of 'herbs'			
991			common goods		common goods	50 percent
1023-1063			common goods	10 percent	common goods	30 percent
1119	Frankincense, ivory	100 percent	pearls, borneol	10 percent	Pearls, borneol	?
			hawksbill turtle; sappanwood;	30 percent	hawksbill turtles; Sappanwood;	?
1144			aromatics	40 percent		
1147			clove; eaglewood; cardamom; borneol;	10 percent		
Pre-1164			rhinoceros' horns and ivory	20 percent	rhinoceros' horns and ivory	40 percent
			pearls	10 percent	pearls	60 percent
1205	Frankincense	100 percent				
Pre-1226			Fine goods	20 percent		
			Rough goods	13.33 percent		
1226			Common goods	6.67 percent		

Source: Song shi, Book 186, v.7, pp. 4541-456; *Pingzhou ketan*, Book 2:1a-2a; *Baoqing siming zhi*, Book 6:2b-3b, pp. 78-79.

In order to impose an effective control over the trade, the Song court established special agencies, Maritime Trade Superintendency (*shibo si* 市舶司), over the commercial ports to tax merchant vessels. Besides, the court also carried out supplementary regulations to regulate trade. For example, it requested merchants to register their vessels, crews, freight, and destinations with the administration and prohibited unlicensed navigation;[337] it dispatched patrol vessels to check the sea-going ships on the water and punished smugglers;[338] and it composed a list of contraband goods and forbade the export of coins and precious metals.[339] As many scholars have pointed out, Song's trading system achieved great success, because it not only boosted the trade but also generated revenue for the government.[340]

However, the Song trading system actually had one major flaw, which finally corrupted the system. Specifically, the system failed to stop local governments and certain individuals from extracting revenue from the trade with their power and privilege. The overexploitation of maritime trade resulted in the shrinkage of government revenue and an unrestrained growth of maritime power that ultimately damaged the authority of the court.

A gazette of Qingyuan 慶元 (present-day Ningbo) describes how the local government exploited maritime merchants by imposing exorbitant and multifarious taxes and levies, which caused a fall of of trade in the port. According to the 'conventional regulations (*jiuli* 舊例)', when a merchant ship arrived in the port, the local government first collected all the goods on the vessel and split the goods into fifteen portions. Then, the officials of the

[337] *Song shi*, Book 186, v.7, pp. 4541-4568. *Song huiyao jigao*, Book 140:10b-11a, v.6, p. 5469, 140:20b-21a, v.6, p. 5474.
[338] *Song huiyao jigao*, Book 140:20b-21a, v.6, p. 5474;
[339] *Song shi*, Book 180, v.7, pp. 4398-4340. For further discussion about the Song's maritime trade policy, see Fujita Toyohachi (2015).
[340] For further discussion of Song China's maritime trade, see Lo (1958); Paul Wheatley (1959); Hugh R. Clark (1991); Billy K. L. So (2000); Angela Schottenhammer (2015).

Maritime Trade Superintendency would take one portion or 6 percent of the total goods. This was the tax collected for the central government. After that, the local offices took their shares in proper order. Specifically, the head longshoreman (*gangshou* 綱首), who was charge of unloading, packing, shipment, and distribution of the goods, took a portion (6 percent) as a freight charge; the prefectural government took three portions (18 percent) as local tax; two other local offices (*zuting* 倅廳) took a portion (6 percent) respectively.[341] In short, these local departments took 36 percent of the total goods, which was six times more than the tax collected by the central government.[342] While the central government realized these 'bad habits' by the local government, the precise figures of these multifarious local taxes and expenses were invisible in the court's official records. In other words, the tax burden on maritime merchants was much heavier than what we see from Table 6.

The heavy local taxes discouraged private merchants to carry out maritime trade, and thus, the local government suffered a decrease of tax revenue. In order to receive regular income, the local officials would force the private merchants to sail out. Sometimes, they even imposed a mandatory quota on the business volume.[343] These practices seriously damaged the interests of private merchants and thus further suppressed the trade and the tax base.

Apart from the local governments, privileged figures also posed a threat to Song's maritime trading system. It was common at the time that many of these powerful figures

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[341] The government of Qingyuan was a prefecture-level (*fu* 府) government, which had jurisdiction over the sub-prefecture-level governments (*zhoujun* 州郡). *Zuting* was the branch office of the sub-prefecture-level government in the trading port.

[342] *Baoqing siming zhi, Baoqing siming*, Book 6:2b-3b, pp. 78-79.

[343] *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu*, Book 186 [Shaoxing.30:10:jiyou] (this fascicle is missing in the modern version. For the text of this fascicle, refer to https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=464983&remap=gb (last accessed in 2/11/2020)). For the further discussion about the impacts of local levies on maritime trade in the Song period, see Billy K. L. So (2000), pp. 87-107.

engaged in maritime trade and assigned the trade to their family members or henchman as agents. These commercial agents usually acted for the magnates in the industry, making use of their advantageous political privilege and sufficient capital to squeeze out regular merchants from the business. That constituted unfair competition and caused large-scale bankruptcy of small traders. As more and more regular merchants withdrew from maritime trade, the government would see its tax base shrink. In addition, the magnates usually dodged import duty and commercial tax with their advantage of being connected to the powerful. This tax evasion also corrupted the system and encroached on government revenue. A memorial submitted in 1160 describes how the military officers, the nobles, and the eunuchs (*jiangshuai guijin* 將帥貴近) forcibly seized businesses (*rangduo xiangqing* 攘奪相傾) from the regular merchants, dodged taxes, and finally sabotaged the trading system.[344]

The court tried to put the local authorities and the privileged groups under restraints, but it achieved no success. Finally, Song's trading system degenerated into farce. China witnessed a decline in regular trade and the court saw a shrinkage of governmental revenue in the early thirteenth century.[345]

In contrast, the influence of the powerful private households in maritime trade rapidly expanded, which led to a disastrous result. The story of Pu Shougeng exemplifies how the success of a maritime merchant became a nightmare for the dynastic authority. Pu Shougeng 蒲壽庚 (1245-1284) was a Chinese Muslim merchant. Pu's family moved to Quanzhou, one of the most flourishing trading ports in Song China, in the early thirte enth century. This

[344] *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu*, Book 186 [Shaoxing.30:10:jiyou] (this fascicle is missing in the modern version. For the text of this fascicle, refer to https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=464983&remap=gb (last accessed in 2/11/2020)).
[345] Billy So (2000), pp. 87-107. The reasons for the decline of maritime trade in the Song period were complicated. Various factors, including the Song's financial polices and the changing geopolitical situations in Korea, Japan, Jin (the state in Northern China), and Southeast Asian states, affected this process. For further discussion of this decline of trade, see Angela Schottenhammer (2005).

family ran its business so successfully that Pu Shougeng was appointed as the head of the Maritime Trade Superintendency in Quanzhou in 1250. In 1274, Pu was even promoted as the chief administrator and supreme commander of Fujian province. Having the financial, political, and military powers of the province at his disposal, Pu actually became the king without a crown in Fujian. However, Pu turned his back on the Song court when it desperately needed his help. In 1276, the Mongolian troops captured the Song capital city. The remaining Song court and troops planned to establish a new base and designate a new capital city in Quanzhou, whereas Pu refused to extend a helping hand. Instead, he surrendered to the Mongolians. Thus, the Song court had no alternative but to keep running. The court-in-exile expropriated Pu's vessels and goods as provisions. To exact revenge, Pu executed thousands of Song royal family members, scholar-officials, and soldiers in Quanzhou.[346] Witnessing a local official ordering a massacre of members of the royal family was a disaster without parallel in China's history. The spectacle became a serious lesson from which the latter Chinese authority took heed.

4.1.2 Yuan policy

Against this backdrop, the Yuan court made sweeping reforms to the trading system. After it destroyed the Song administration and annexed south China in the late 1270s, the Yuan authority at first followed the Song's conventions to conduct maritime trade, but it tried to make changes from the 1280s. The court carried out two new policies. First of all, it prohibited residents, particularly aristocratic and bureaucratic households, from sailing and trading abroad.[347] The interdiction was proclaimed and reiterated in 1284, 1303, 1314, and

[346] On Pu Shougeng's deeds, see '*er wang zhi li* 二王之立' in *Song shi jishi benmo*. For further discussion of Pu Shougeng and his deeds, see Jitsuzō Kuwabara (1923); Luo Xianglin (1955); Zhuang et al. 1989: ch. 4, cited from Kent Deng, (1997), p. 159.
[347] *Yuan shi*, Book 94, v.8, pp. 2401-2403; *Tongzhi getiao jiaozhu*, pp. 533-547.

1322 respectively.[348] Historians regard this as the Yuan-version maritime exclusion policy.[349] Meanwhile, the court dispatched official-funded vessels (*guanben chuan* 官本船) to conduct overseas trade. In practice, the administration designated some residents to manage the fleets and conduct business, and it also provided them with vessels and start-up funds.[350] When the fleets returned to China, the administration acquired 70 percent of the income and the merchants took the remaining 30 percent.[351]

These reforms were apparently aimed at the drawbacks of the Song's trading system. By confining the business to the government and ordinary merchants, the Yuan court intended to ally itself with the small business owners against the magnates and aristocratic factions. In this way, the court not only secured its share in the business, but also protected the interests of the smaller merchants and suppressed the expansion of the privileged class and the trade magnates.

However, the Yuan court failed to sustain its reforms. The trade ban was lifted in 1294. In 1303 and 1314, the court reiterated the ban, but it again dropped the ban in 1323. After that, no ban was ever reinstated over the rest of the dynasty. In short, the combination of maritime exclusion and the official-funded vessels came into force only in two time periods, from 1284 to 1292 and from 1303 to 1323.[352]

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[348] *Tongzhi tiaoge jiaozhu*, pp. 533-547.
[349] Ōsumi Akiko (1990); Shigeo Sakuma (1953); and Danjō Hiroshi (2013). pp. 20-23.
[350] *Yuan shi jishi benmo*, Book 1:42b-45b.
[351] According to *Yuan shi jishi benmo*, the Yuan court selected trade conductors specially from the ordinary people (*min* 民). See *Yuan shi jishi benmo*, Book 1:42b-45b. On the specific regulations, also see *Yuan shi*, Book 94, v.8, pp. 2401-2403.
[352] Ōsumi Akiko, Shigeo Sakuma, and Danjō Hiroshi suggest that the trade bans were in effect in four periods: 1292-1294; 1303-1308; 1311-1314; and 1320-1322. They make this conclusion based on records in *Yuan shi* about the repeated establishment and abolishment of the Maritime Trade Superintendency in Quanzhou. See Ōsumi Akiko (1990); Shigeo Sakuma (1953); and Danjō Hiroshi (2013). pp. 20-23.

After 1323, the Yuan administration lifted the trade ban permanently and reverted to the Song system. In general, the court levied a 7-20 percent tax on the imported goods. Table 7 indicates the time periods when private maritime trade was prohibited and when it was permitted. It also shows the tax rate or the government's share in the business during the Yuan dynasty.

Table 7 Maritime trade policy and tax rate in the Yuan period (1260-1368)

Time period	Trader	Tax rate/government's share in trade	
		Fine products	Rough products
1276-1283	Private merchants	10 percent	6.6 percent
1284-1292	Official-funded vessels	70 percent	70 percent
1293-1303	Private merchants	?	?
1303-1323	Official-funded vessels	20 percent	14.3 percent
1323-1368	Private merchants	?	?

Source: *Yuan shi*, Book 94, v.8, pp. 2401-2403.

The written records do not explain the reversals of the Yuan policy. Poor management and pressure from the privileged class are two possible answers, but we may never know without new materials. Nevertheless, Yuan China's coastal waters fell under the control of the private sector soon after the trade ban was lifted, and the Yuan authority paid for the policy change, which led to the state's excessive dependence on private merchants for financial resources. From the 1350s, two Chinese rebellious warlords, Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 (1321-1367) and Fang Guozhen 方國珍 (1319-1374), arose in the coastal regions. They respectively controlled Zhejaing and Fujian provinces, where the tax payers contributed the majority of governmental revenue to the Yuan court at the time.[353] Both warlords came from families conducting waterborne trade and developed their armed forces from pirate gangs. By controlling coastal transportation and maritime trade in south China, Zhang and Fang choked the economic lifeline of the central government and forced the court to tolerate their

353 The saltworks under the control of Zhang earned about one third of the empire's tax revenue. Frederick Mote (1988), p.31.

autonomies in the south. By withholding tax payment from the southern province to the central government, the two warlords accumulated great wealth, with which they expanded their troops and became two of the four top rebellious powers in south China in the 1360s. Their practices severely weakened the might of the Yuan authority, particularly its fiscal health. Fiscal weakness accelerated the fall of the Yuan authority in China in the second half of the century.[354] Even after the establishment of the Ming dynasty in 1368, the remaining forces of these two warlords continued plaguing China's coastal region for decades, which was another factor that promoted the Ming's implementation of the maritime exclusion policy (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Since the Yuan administration did not implement maritime exclusion consistently, modern scholars pay little attention to the policy in this period. However, there is no doubt that the Yuan practice had great immediate and far-reaching significance and provided a lesson to the early Ming policy makers about governing maritime trade.

4.1.3 The early Ming dynasty's policy

While the Song and Yuan adminstrations 'accelerated the process of commercialization of the China Sea' to increase government revenue from trade,[355] the Ming authority took a different path from its precedessors. The early Ming administration established a state-dominated trade system, in which trade was possible only under the official tributary system. One reason for this change was probably because the early Ming

[354] For further discussion about the importance of the maritime transportation line for the Yuan court and the impacts from Zhang and Fang on Yuan's fiscal ability, see Makoto Ueda (2005), pp. 61-66; Frederick Mote (1988), pp. 29-37; Edward Dreyer (1988), p. 64; Fan Hua (2009), pp. 30-38.
[355] For further discussion about the 'commercialization of the China Sea' in this period, refer to Angela Schottenhammer (2001), (2012).

policy makers were aware of the flaws of the existing system and intentionally guarded against repeating the mistakes made by their precedessors.

The early Ming maritime trade system was comprised of three pillars: maritime exclusion, tributary trade, and official trading missions. On the implementation of the maritime exclusion policy, historians have been active. In brief, the Ming court issued the first *haijin* decree in 1371/12 and reaffirmed the ban again and again during almost the whole dynastic period.[356] Technically speaking, Chinese residents were prohibited from engaging in maritime activities in any form. Scholars assume that the Chinese stopped sailing abroad and only waited around passively for foreign missions to visit China occasionally. Hence, historians regard the gift exchange proceedings at the court as the core of the Ming trading system. Particularly, they designate the gift exchange with the terminology, 'tributary trade'.[357] Supposing that trade would definitely shrink if private trade was banned, scholars interpret Ming China's maritime exclusion policy as a sign of 'isolationism' and something of a historical recession.[358]

Few have noticed the trading function of Ming's official missions to overseas states. Historians agree that Zheng He's expedition into the Indian Ocean in the 1403-1433 period was an extraordinary achievement, but they also suppose that it was just an 'exception',

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[356] Almost simultaneously, Emperor Hongwu abolished the Maritime Trade Offices (*shibo si* 市舶司) in 1370 and 1374, which was the official agency that took charge of maritime trade since the Song period. The abolishments of *shibo si* is usually seen as a symbol of Hongwu's anti-trade attitude. In 1403, Emperor Yongle reinstated these offices and subordinated them to the Ministry of Rites, in order to receive the incoming overseas envoys solicited by Zheng He and his colleagues. But the power of these agencies on trade affairs was limited at the time because trade was primarily under the supervision and control of the eunuchs on the behalf of the emperors, which we will discuss later. In 1523, most of these agencies were abolished again by Emperor Jiajing, who was famous for his tough attitude toward private maritime trade. For further discussion about *shibo si*, see Cao Yonghe (1984), Chen Shangsheng (1986), and Li Qingxin (2007).
[357] Li Qingxin (2007). Wan Ming (2014); Chao Zhongchen (2012); Danjō Hiroshi (2013).
[358] Danjō Hiroshi (Danjō Hiroshi (j. 1997)-(c. 2013)-(c. 2014), pp. 185-213.); Li Kangying (2010), p. 7.

which hardly benefited China in an economic sense.[359] However, it is inaccurate to depict Zheng He's expedition as an isolated case.

In fact, the convention of dispatching official trading missions had been established by Emperor Hongwu as early as the 1370s. The first Ming emperor actually had a deep insight into the role of maritime trade in generating revenue for the government. As he stated in a decree issued in the 1370s: 'If [we] open the sea route, [and] collect the meagre tributes from the barbarians, … the government would achieve income from this [trade]… [this revenue] would equate to the ample tax revenue [collected] from ten prefectures (*zhou* 州)'.[360] With this insight, the emperor had no intention of suppressing maritime trade. Instead, he vigorously encouraged the exchange between China and the overseas world. His pro-trade policy and the maritime exclusion policy were carried out without one conflicting with the other.

Ming China's trade with the overseas world progressed through three stages in the Hongwu reign (1368-1398). During the first decade of the Hongwu reign, the Ming court did not dispatch its trading missions overseas. Instead, it primarily traded with the overseas missions that visited China. In this first stage, the missions from Srivijaya, the traditional hegemon in Southeast Asia that had established its trading supremacy from the seventh century, was China's major supplier of overseas products (see Table 9). Apart from those who were sent to inform other countries about the establishment of the dynasty in 1369 and 1370, the Ming court did not dispatch any other missions overseas during the first five years of the dynasty. It was at the beginning of this first stage when the emperor issued instruction to restrict the frequency of visits from foreign countries. This was probably because the Ming emperor had not yet figured out a proper way to manage maritime trade.

[359] Wang Gengwu (1998).
[360] *Huang Ming shifa lu*, Book.12-2:10b-11a, v.1, pp. 341-342.

From 1377, the Ming entered stage two. In this year, the court suddenly sent missions to Srivijaya on the Archipelago of Indonesia and Siam on the Indo-China peninsula. As many scholars have pointed out, the Ming was trying to establish its hegemony in the region. This plan was interrupted by the Javanese, who were unhappy about the expansion of Chinese influence and thus they murdered the entire Chinese delegation to Srivijaya (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, the Ming resumed its plan in 1383 after the emperor conducted a political purge within the court and strengthened his grasp on power. At this time, the court laid aside the archipelago and sent delegations to the states on the peninsula, including Champa, Siam, and Chenla. During the 1380s, mutual visits between Ming China and these countries became regular. As we will see later, these delegations were largely trading missions. In this stage, the emperor welcomed overseas states to visit China, and he did not refer to the quotas on foreign visits. Moreover, in order to protect the mission ships, the emperor even launched a massive military operation into Champa's territoritorial waters in 1387, when the Ming fleet sailed out to Indochina for the third time. It is interesting to note that this military action in Vietnamese waters was launched on the pretext of 'catching Japanese pirates'.[361]

However, things took a drastic turn for the worse in the third stage (1388-1398). Ming China's relationships with Annam and Champa suddenly worsened after 1388, because of the regime changes in these two Vietnamese states.[362] The authorities in Annam and Champa began to plunder the missions commuting between China and other peninsular states, like Siam and Chenla. Given that the Vietnamese waters lay on the only route, these diplomatic events seriously disrupted Ming's commercial ties with the peninsular states. In the last decade of the Hongwu reign, Ming's overseas trading was slack. The bureaucrats complained

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[361] *Ming Taizu shilu* 182:7b, v.6, p. 2752 [Hongwu.20:intercalary 6:gengshen], 182:7b-8a, v.6, pp. 2752-2753 [Hongwu.20:intercalary 6:renxu].

[362] On the Ming's diplomatic relationships with Annam and Champ in the Hongwu reign, see Chapter 3.

at court, and the emperor wrote to overseas monarchs to encourage them to trade with China. Some historians argue that the decline in maritime trade was a result of the implementation of a maritime exclusion policy.[363] This interpretation is inaccurate. Rather, the shrinkage of trade was caused by the changes in the international situation, while the emperor's letter of 1397/08 indicates the Ming's wish for prosperous overseas trade.[364] In this stage, the Ming court limited Annam and Champa to send a mission to China every three years. Instead of an indication of an 'isolationist' policy, this limitation was more a diplomatic sanction against the two hostile Vietnamese states.

In short, although its plan encountered various kinds of obstacles, the Ming court actually made efforts to conduct and promote maritime trade from the reign of the first emperor by implementing some degree of maritime exclusion, carrying out tributary exchanges, and dispatching official trading missions. Table 8 shows the mutual diplomatic contacts between Ming China and the 'overseas states (*haiwai zhuguo* 海外諸國)' in this reign.

[363] Chao Zhongchen (2012).
[364] *Ming Taizu shilu* 254, 6a-7a, v.8, pp. 3671-3673 [Hongwu.30:8:bingwu].

Table 8. Diplomatic contacts between Ming China and overseas states in the Hongwu reign (1368-1398)

	JAPAN		KOREA		RYŪKYŪ		ANNAM		CHAMPA		CHENLA		SIAM		SRIVIJAYA		JAVA		INDIAN OCEAN		TOTAL	
	To	From	T.	F.	T.	F.	T.	F.	T.	F.	T.	F.	T.	F.	T.	F.	T.	F.	T.	F.	T.	F
1368			1				1														2	0
1369	3		2	3			2	1	3	2	1						2		1	1	14	7
1370			5	3			7	2	4	1			1		1		1*	1	1		20+1	7
1371	1	1		2				2		1		1		2		1		*	1	1	2	11+1
1372			1	7	1	1		1		1								1			2	11
1373				3			2	1	1	2		1		1							3	8
1374		1		1	1	1		2						2		1					1	8
1375		1		3				1		1				2		2		1			0	11
1376		2		1		1		1										*			0	5+1
1377			1	3		1				2		1	1	1	1	1		1*			3	10+1
1378				1		1	1	1		1				2				*			1	6+1
1379		1		2			1	1	1	1				1				2			2	8
1380	1	2	1	1		2		1		1		1		1				1			2	10
1381	1	1		1				1						1							1	4
1382				1	1	1		1		1				1				1			1	6
1383				1	1	2		1	1	1	1	1	1	1				*			4	7+1
1384				2		1	1	3		1				2							1	9
1385			1	5		1															1	6
1386		1	1	3		1		1	1	1	1		1	2							4	9
1387				3*		2		2		2	1	1	1	1							2	11+1
1388				3		1	1	2	1	1		1		1							2	9
1389			*	3		1		1		1		2		2							+1	10
1390				4				1		1		1		1							0	8
1391			1	2		2				1				1							1	6
1392			1*	4		2															1+1	6
1393			1	5		2		1						2				2			1	12

	JAPAN		KOREA		RYŪKYŪ		ANNAM		CHAMPA		CHENLA		SIAM		SRIVIJAYA		JAVA		INDIAN OCEAN		TOTAL	
1394			1	2		1		1										1			1	5
1395				2		2	1	1					1	1							2	6
1396				3		3	1	1													1	7
1397				3		2	1			1				2							1	8
1398			1			3				1				1							1	5
TOTAL	6	10	18+2	77+1	4	34	19	31	12	25	4	10	6	31	2	5	3+1	11+5	3	2	77+3	236+6

Sources: author.

Notes.

1. * represents a possible contact. In some cases, the *shilu* records a visit, but the schedule and the name list of the mission suggest that this might be a repeated record of the visit mentioned earlier. In other cases, the court dispatched envoys to 'overseas states' without specifying the destination. Besides, the visits paid by a dependent state of a foreign state are also marked with an asterisk (*). These possible contacts are counted after '+' in the cells for the 'total' number.

2. Although they shared land borders with Ming China, Koryŏ and Chosŏn Korea and Annam are included in this table, because they were categorized as 'overseas states' at the time and some of their envoys indeed went to China by the sea routes.

3. The cells in orange indicate a hostile attitude towards the other, and, on the contrary, the cells in green indicate a friendly or reconcilable attitude that is clearly pointed out in the shilu.

The data presented in Table 8 is distinguished from that in previous studies, because they used different sources. Most scholars collect data from *Ming shi*, which only notes down the years when there were foreign visits to China. As a result, what they actually count are the number of years when a certain overseas state paid visits to Ming China. Table 8 collected data from *Ming Taizu shilu*, which records every single visit in any given year. Thus, we see a gap between the numbers extracted from the two materials. For instance, according to *Ming shi*, Ryūkyū, Champa, and Siam dispatched 20, 19, and 20 missions to the Ming in the Hongwu reign, while *Ming Taizu shilu* indicates that 34, 25, and 31 missions arrived in China from these three states respectively in this period.[365] Moreover, *Ming shi* does not provide a complete record of China's missions to the overseas world, while *Ming Taizu shilu* marks those visits. Table 8 reveals these numbers as well.

As Table 8 indicates, Ming China had intimate relationships with the overseas world from the beginning of the dynasty. More than 236 missions visited China in the Hongwu reign and more than 77 Chinese envoys were dispatched abroad at the same time. On average, every year, the Ming received seven or eight overseas missions and sent two or three diplomatic missions abroad.

Moreover, the data suggest that many of these missions were dispatched for commercial purposes. Table 9 lists the amount of goods that China imported from its five major maritime trading partners in Southeast Asia during the Hongwu reign: Ryūkyū, Srivijaya, Siam, Champa, and Chenla.

[365] On the statistics collected from *Ming shi*, see Li Qingxin (2007), pp. 56-58.

Table 9. China's imports from five overseas states in the Hongwu reign (1368-1398)

	Sulphur	**Pepper**	**Sappanwood**	**Sandalwood**	**Horses**	**Elephants**	**Source**
1373			70,000 catties				Champa
1376	5,000 catties				40		Ryūkyū
1377	1,000 catties				16		Ryūkyū
1370s		400,000 catties					Srivijaya
1382					20		Ryūkyū
				800 catties			Champa
1383					983		Ryūkyū
1386	11,000 catties				124		Ryūkyū
1387		10,000 catties	100,000 catties				Siam
				60,000 catties		59	Chenla
			?	?		54	Champa
					67		Ryūkyū
				?		51	Champa
1388		?	?			30	Siam
						28	Chenla
1389	6,000 catties	800 catties	300 catties		36		Ryūkyū
		171,880 catties					Siam
1394	?	?	?		90+		Ryūkyū
1395	4,000 catties				36		Ryūkyū
1396	7,000 catties		1,300 catties		138		Ryūkyū
Total	**34,000 catties (approx. 17 tons)**	**582,680 catties (approx. 291 tons)**	**171,600 catties (approx. 86 ton)**	**60,800 catties (approx. 30 tons)**	**1,535**	**222**	

Source: *Ming Taizu shilu*, and *Huang Ming shifa lü*.

Notes:

1.This table only notes records in which precise figures were given.

2. The data of the row of '137x' are collected from 'Ming zhongshu xihe dengchu zhongliang' in *Huang Ming shifa lü*, which does not specify the date when the exchange was made. See *Huang Ming shifu lü*, Book 12-2:10b-11a, v.1, pp. 341-342.

We also have figures for China's exports in Hongwu's reign (Table 10). In 1374/09, Emperor Hongwu dispatched Li Hao 李浩 to purchase horses from Ryūkyū with 70,500 pieces of earthen ware and 1,000 iron pots. One year later in 1376/04, Li Hao returned from Ryūkyū with 40 horses and 5,000 catties of sulphur (see Table 9). Also, in 1383/08, the emperor dispatched a mission to 'award' the kings of Champa, Siam, and Chenla with 19,000 pieces of porcelain respectively.[366] A year later in 1384/01 and 08, Siam paid return visits to the Ming.[367] Similar cases unfolded in 1386/09 as Emperor Hongwu sent Tang Jingzhi 唐敬之 to Southeast Asia with porcelains again.[368] Tang returned a year later in 1387/07 with Chenla's and Siam's missions.[369] We have no idea how many porcelains Tang took overseas, but the court received 'tribute' of about 30 tons of aromatics, five tons of pepper, and 50 tons of sappanwood from those Southeast Asian visiting missions.[370] These cases indicate that bilateral trade was being constantly conducted.

Table 10. China's exports to overseas states in the Hongwu reign (1368-1398)

Year	Porcelain items	Iron pots	Destinations
1374/09	70,500	1,000	Ryūkyū
1383/08	19,000		Siam
	19,000		Chenla
	19,000		Champa

Source: *Ming Taizu shilu*.

It worth noting that what are presented above are just the trading figures of 28 isolated cases out of 133 mutual visits between China and its five major trading partners in Southeast Asia. For the trading volume of many other cases, the *shilu* only notes down the list of

366 *Ming Taizu shilu* 156:2b-3a, v.6, pp. 2426-2427 [Hongwu.16:8:yiwei], 156:5b, v.6, p. 2432 [Hongwu.16:9:shiyue].
367 *Ming Taizu shilu* 159:1a, v.6, p. 2453 [Hongwu.17:1:jihai], 164:2a-2b, v.6, pp. 2535-2536 [Hongwu.17:8:jimao].
368 *Ming Taizu shilu* 179:4b, v.6, p. 2710 [Hongwu.19:9:xinwei], 179:5a, v.6, p. 2711 [Hongwu.19:9:guiwei].
369 *Ming Taizu shilu* 183:3b-4a, v.6, pp. 2760-2761 [Hongwu.20:7:yisi].
370 *Ming Taizu shilu* 183:3b-4a, v.6, pp. 2760-2761 [Hongwu.20:7:yisi].

commodities without specifying precise figures. Sometimes, it even only records the business as ‘tribute’ without giving any other details. While data are fragmented and incoherent, the figures reveal the fact that diplomatic missions were busying commuting between China and overseas states and they played the role of trading missions.

In sum, the implementation of maritime exclusion was only one aspect of the whole picture of early Ming’s trading system. Similar to the Yuan plan, the Ming court not only carried out the *haijin* policy, but also sent its own trading missions to the overseas world. The difference between the Ming and the Yuan policy was that the Ming court no longer asked ordinary residents or merchants to conduct the trade. Instead, it appointed diplomats and eunuchs to command the fleets and manage the exchanges. Apparently, the early Ming policy makers drew lessons from its predecessors, particularly the Yuan authority, for reference to make their own trade policy. The intention of prohibiting private navigation was not to establish a constricted trading system, according to which the Chinese would passively wait for irregular overseas visitors. Rather, by closely supervising the coastal border, the Ming authority prevented the rise of any vicious non-governmental maritime powers, which might suffocate the normal trade and encroach on the court’s revenue. Also, with the exclusion policy, the court was able to monopolize the trade so that it could acquire more revenue from the business, as we will discuss in the following pages.

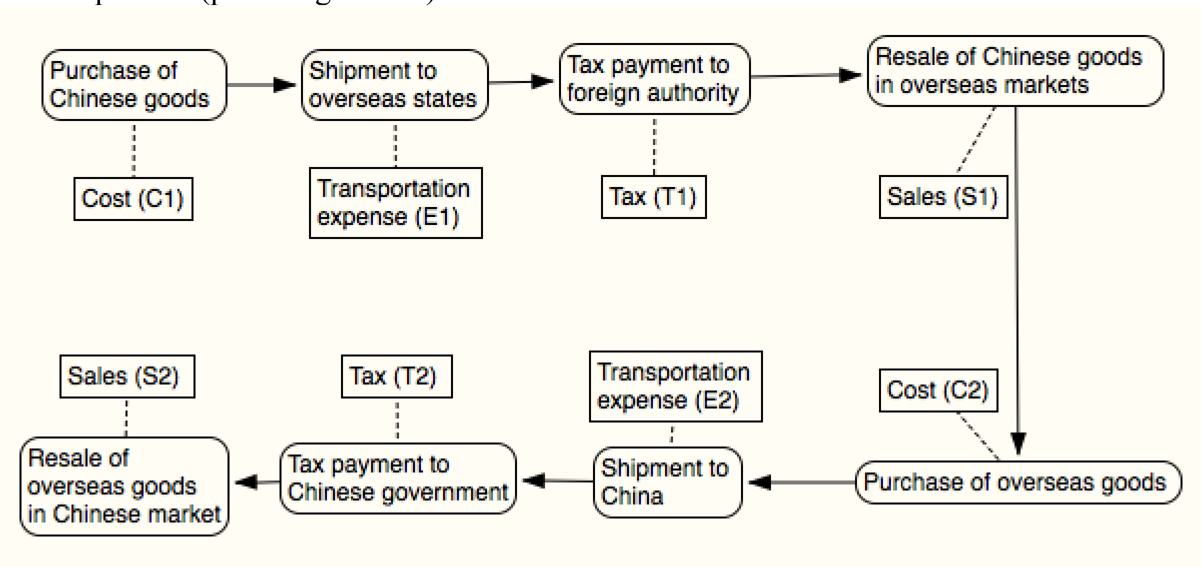
4.2 The advantages of the Ming system

Many scholars attempt to decipher the rationales behind the implementation of maritime exclusion, but most of them deny that the policy played a positive role in maritime trade. As discussed above, this was mainly because most historians do not notice the trade functions of the Ming diplomatic delegations. So far, none has paid attention to and illustrated the advantages of the early Ming's trading system in governmental revenue generation, which we will analyse below.

4.2.1 From tax collector to trader

Compared with the Song trade system, the Ming system generated more revenue for the government, because the court did not rely on tax for revenue but took all profits from the maritime trade by squeezing out the private merchants and directly conducting the business.

Chart 6. Trade process (pre-Ming traders)



Source: author

Chart 6 shows the trade process in the Song period when private merchants dominated maritime trade. In general, it took eight steps for a maritime merchant to make a round-trip transaction between China and overseas states. Expenditure was incurred in six of the eight phases (C_1, E_1, T_1, C_2, E_2, T_2) and the merchant made income from the other two stages (S_1 and S_2). In brief, the total net income (N_t) the merchant made from the trip would be:

Equation 1: $N_t = S_1 + S_2 - C_1 - C_2 - E_t - T_1 - T_2$[371]

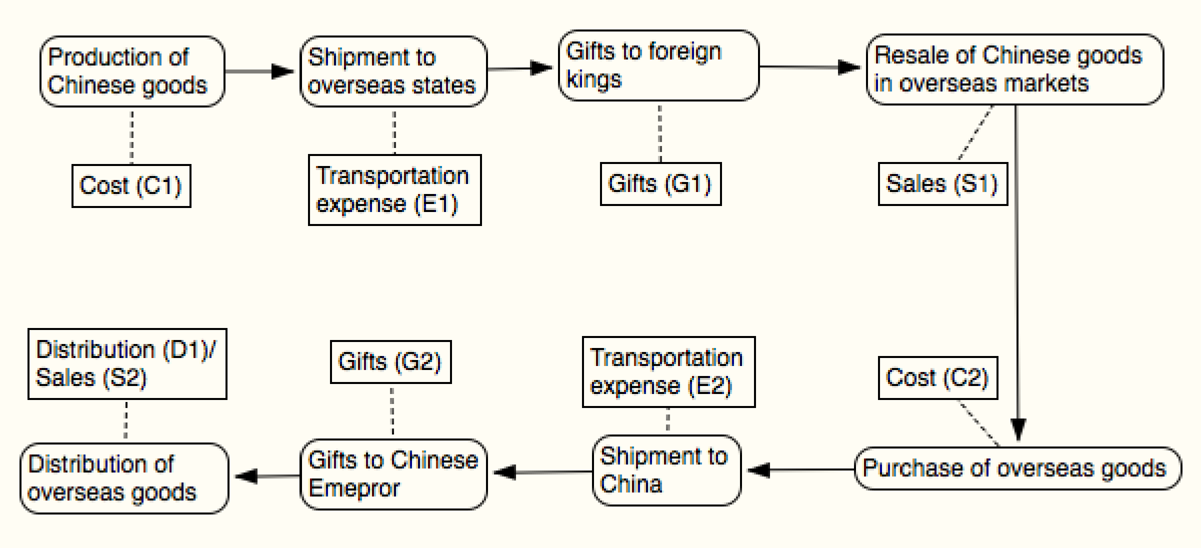
Apparently, what the Song court acquired from the business was the imported tax it collected from the merchants when they arrived in China from overseas (T_2). In other words, the revenue for the Song court (R_S) was:

Equation 2: $R_S = T_2 = S_1 + S_2 - C_1 - C_2 - E_t - T_1 - N_t$

Likewise, it also took eight steps for a Ming trading mission to make a round-trip journey between China and an overseas state (see Chart 7). But, the trade process for the Ming traders was slightly different from that for the private merchants in the Song period. Instead of paying tax to both foreign and Chinese political authorities, the Ming envoys presented gifts (G_1), or rewards (*shangci* 賞賜), to foreign monarchs when they arrived in the overseas state. Similarly, the envoys presented gifts (G_2), or tributes (*gong* 貢), from foreign monarchs to the Ming emperor when they returned to China.

[371] The net income our merchant made from the trip from China to overseas states (N_1) is: the sales in overseas market (S_1) minus the cost to purchase porcelains (C_1), the transportation expense (E_1), and the tax to foreign tax collector (T_1). Hence, the net income from this trip (N_1) is: $N_1 = S_1 - C_1 - E_1 - T_1$; Likewise, net income of the return journey from overseas states to China (N_2) is: $N_2 = S_2 - C_2 - E_2 - T_2$; By adding up the two equations, we have the total net income (N_t) from the round trip: $N_t = N_1 + N_2 = S_1 + S_2 - C_1 - C_2 - E_1 - E_2 - T_1 - T_2$; Given that the all freight transport was done by the same group of crews and the same vessel, we can merge E_1 with E_2 together and we get the total transportation expense (E_t). Thus, we can simplify the equation as: $N_t = N_1 + N_2 = S_1 + S_2 - C_1 - C_2 - E_t - T_1 - T_2$.

Chart 7. Trade cost, benefits, and procedure (early Ming traders)



Source: author

Hence, the revenue that the Ming court made from maritime trade (R_M) was:

Equation 3: $R_M = S_1 + S_2 – C_1 – C_2 – E_t – G_1 + G_2$

By subtracting Equation 2 from Equation 3, we can see the difference between the two courts' revenues from maritime trade ($R_M – R_S$):

Equation 4: $R_M – R_S = N_t + (G_2 – G_1)$;

According to Equation 4, the difference between the Ming and Song governmental revenue from maritime trade consists of two sections. First, the Ming court did not need to share business profits with the private sector (N_t). By excluding the private sector from the trade, the Ming government took all the profits of the trade. Second, the Ming trading missions did not need to pay taxes to the foreign government (T_1). Instead, the Ming traders presented gifts to foreign monarchs, but they also received gifts in return. That is to say, what affected the trade revenue was the profit going to the state and the value gap between the gifts from and to the emperor ($G_2 - G_1$), rather than tax.

It is conventional to argue that Ming China lost money in the transaction, given that the Ming court usually stuck to the principle of 'giving more and getting less (*houwang bolai* 厚往薄來)' and it paid out more than what it received in this gifts-exchange link.[372] Nevertheless, this conclusion is inaccurate. In fact, as the written records indicate, the volume of gifts exchange was actually very small, about 1 percent, compared to the volume of the trade.[373] In other words, even if the Ming court lost money on the gifts-exchange stage, it had little impact on the balance in the transaction.

In short, the Chinese government's role in maritime trade transformed from tax collector to business conductor, and thus, the court acquired more revenue, because it appropriated the net income that had belonged to the private merchants. In a manner of speaking, the governmental revenue increased, because an intermediate link was removed. Meanwhile, the Ming traders did not have to pay tax to a foreign authority. While they presented gifts instead, the returned gifts they received at least partly cancelled out the expense of the gifts they gave.

Moreover, the Ming administration got rid of the dilemma about tax rates, which bothered the Song court a lot. In the Song period, the Chinese administration had a strong incentive to raise the tax on the imported goods, because it always wanted more from maritime trade. But, every time it raised the tax rate, the trade shrank because it dampened

[372] Chao Zhongchen (2012).
[373] According to the trade between Ming China and Ryūkyū in 1376/12, the volume of the gifts that Emperor Hongwu gave to the Ryūkyū king was about 1 percent of what the court paid for trade of horses from Ryūkyū. Specifically, the emperor gave 20 pieces of silk cloth, 1,000 earthen-ware pots, and ten iron pots to the Ryūkyū king. The emperor's mission paid 200 pieces of silk cloth, 69,500 earthen-ware pots, and 990 iron pots for the trade. The relative percentages of the various kinds of gifts to the payments are 1 percent, 1.44 percent, and 1.01 percent. See *Ming Taizu shilu* 95:3a-3b, v.4, pp. 1645-1646 [Hongwu.7:12:yimao].

the maritime merchant's enthusiasm, resulting in a shrinkage of the tax base and governmental revenue. Hence, the court had to lower the tax rate. Consequently, the Song court repeatedly adjusted its tax rates and it never found the optimum balance point throughout the dynastic period.[374] By the mid-thirteenth century, the Song court gave in and appointed private merchants to administer the customs bureau, leading to the dramatic expansion of private maritime power and the tragic experience of the royal family we mentioned above.

In contrast, the tax rate ceased to be a factor affecting trade in the Ming trading system, since the Ming court did not rely on import tax for its trade revenue like its predecessors. Instead, it created income by engaging in the trade directly. In this way, the Ming trading system dodged the problem of a balance between tax rates and tax base. Even though the court might suffer a small loss at the stage of gift exchange, this loss was more controllable than that caused by tariff fluctuations.

4.2.2 Maximization of China's total profits by manipulating the supply and prices of Chinese products

By implementing the maritime exclusion policy, the Ming court precluded the Chinese private merchants from conducting overseas trade and established a monopoly over the business. From the perspective of the private merchants at the time and modern observers, this government-established monopoly led to unfair competition that damaged the financial interests of the private sector. However, from the perspective of the Ming court, the monopoly actually maximized the total trade profits that went to the entire country.

[374] For instance, the Song court raised the tax rate to 40 - 60 percent in the 1140s and set a record high governmental revenue from maritime trade in the dynasty. However, this high tariff heavily hit the business, leading to a depression in the market. Thus, the court had to readjust its tariffs in 1164. In 1126, the court reduced the tax rate to 6.6 percent. See Table 6.

In the pre-modern period, Chinese producers monopolized the production technology of several types of high-tech finished products, such as porcelains, silk, and tea. For long periods of time, China was the sole supplier of these technological products, for which the international market had great demand. Nevertheless, the Chinese were unable to maximize this advantage before the Ming period, because they imposed no restraint on the volume of exports.[375] To further their own interests, the private maritime merchants scrambled to ship out Chinese goods to overseas countries. Thanks to their efforts, there was a sufficient supply of Chinese products in foreign markets, leading to a drastic fall of the prices of those commodities. Hence, Chinese producers and merchants actually attained only a small profit margin in international trade even though they monopolized the technology of producing porcelain, silk cloth, tea, and certain types of ironware.

Moreover, since the Chinese sold their products at low prices, foreign products became relatively expensive for the Chinese merchants. The disparity partly explains why overseas goods, such as pepper and frankincense, were sold as luxury goods in China. This situation put the Chinese exporters in an unfavourable position, in which they had to sell their finished products at low prices and purchase overseas raw materials at high prices.

The written materials suggest that the Ming policy makers realized this problem and they tried to turn the situation around with the border control policy. The strategy was simple. By excluding the private sector, the court cut off the channel for exported goods that was out of the control of the government. Naturally, the overseas markets experienced a shortage of Chinese products, which led to price increases. Correspondingly, the overseas commodities became relatively cheaper and the Chinese traders had a stronger ability to purchase foreign goods.

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[375] The Song and Yuan administrations prohibited the export of contrabands like weapons, grains, and precious metals, but neither authority imposed quotas on the export of other products.

This trade strategy was exemplified by the tea-and-horse trade between Ming China and the Central Asian traders during the Hongwu reign. Immediately after his troops stabilized the north-western borderlands in the early 1370s, the first Ming emperor vigorously encouraged the local governments to exchange Chinese tea for horses from the Central Asia. China was not a producer of horses, but the state was in great demand for warhorses to defend its enemies from the Mongolian grassland. However, the price of imported horse was extremely high as the Chinese exported tea abroad without restraints. At first, the court did not prohibit private merchants from exporting tea, and thus, the cross-border export of tea became prosperous in the 1370s. While the private sector benefited from the exports, there was no corresponding growth in the horse supply. Since they already had the stable supply source of tea from the Chinese merchants, foreign horse deallers had no incentive to increase the sale of their horses. Instead, the price of the imported horses against tea stayed high as the price of tea kept falling because of China's unrestrained exportion of this product, which further prevented the government from buying enough horses from foreign horse dealers.

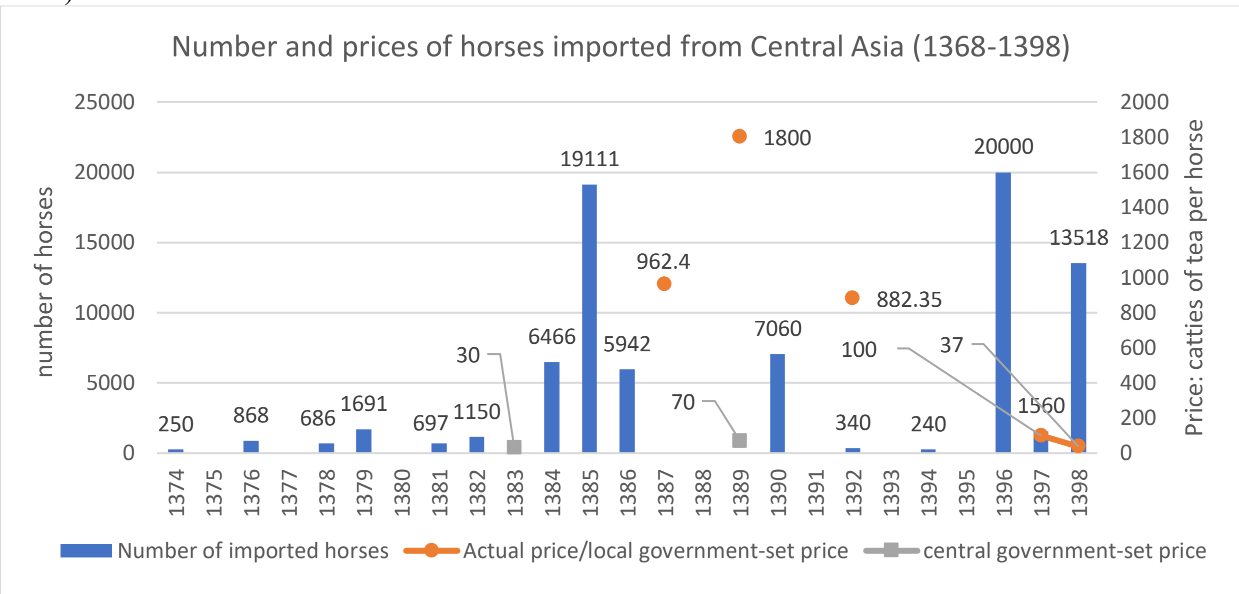
This situation put Ming China in a continual shortage of warhorses. Not until 1396, the third year from the last of his reign, did Emperor Hongwu realize the source of the problem.[376] The emperor saw it as a critical national security crisis, and he immediately took various measures to deal with the shortage of horses.[377] It was in this context that the court implemented strict suppression of the private export of tea and monopolized the cross-border trade. These measures were so successful that the court drove down the price of the imported

[376] In 1396/09, Emperor Hongwu ordered an audit of the number of soldiers and horses in the northern frontier provinces, attempting to learn the real situation of his troops. From this audit, the emperor realized the shortage of warhorses. *Ming Taizu shilu* 247:1b-2a, v.8, pp. 3854-3855 [Hongwu.29:9:yichou].

[377] *Ming Taizu shilu* 253:5a-6b, v.8, pp. 3655-3658 [Hongwu.30:6:gengyin], 251:1a-2b, v.8, pp. 3628-3632 [Hongwu.30:3:guihai].

horses by 95 percent and was able to purchase horses in bulk. In contrast, the price of tea was soaring. (see Chart 8).[378]

Chart 8. Number and prices of horses imported from Central Asia to Ming China (1368-1398)[379]



Source: author

Although the tea-and-horse trade occurred along the inland border, this case indicates that the Ming court was well aware of the advantages of being a monopoly, which would lead to a favourable trade balance for China. It also illustrates that the court had a clear knowledge of the economic functions of border exclusion, which enabled the court to establish its monopoly. With a monopoly, it could manipulate the supply and the prices of Chinese

378 The average price for an imported horse from Central Asia was 962 catties of tea in 1387 and 1,800 and 882 catties in 1389 and 1392, respectively. After the Ming court reformed the trading mechanism in 1396, the price for an imported horse went down to 100 catties in 1397 and 37 catties in 1398. Accordingly, the price of the imported horses was driven down by around 95 percent [(882.35-37)/882.35 = 95.81 percent; (1800-37)/1800 = 97.94 percent]

379 Prior to Emperor Hongwu's reform of the trading mechanism in 1396, the number of the imported horses was sizable in 1384, 1385, 1386, and 1390 respectively. This was because the court allocated a special fund to buy horses from the Central Asian traders in these years. In the rest of this period when the local governments took charge of purchase, the volume of imports was very low.

products in international markets. This case also shows that the Ming policy makers did not hesitate to further its economic interests at foreign traders' expense. More specifically, the Ming elites were not those who would sacrifice national economic interests for Confucian diplomatic protocols, according to which a benevolent monarch should allow foreigners to retain more profits at the expense of his own economic interests.

This case sheds light on Ming China's insight into foreign trade and its ingenious trade strategy. More importantly, the written records imply that Emperor Hongwu's strategy implemented in the inland frontier areas had direct connection with its trade policy carried out in the coastal border regions. On the *yiyou* 乙酉 day in 1397/04, Emperor Hongwu wrote to his sons, who were guarding the inland frontier regions, explaining his idea and strategy of border control and state monopoly on foreign trade. It was on the exact same day the emperor reaffirmed the maritime exclusion policy.[380] This was hardly a coincidence. It indicates the consistency and coherence of the emperor's policy of conducting both the inland and the coastal border affairs. Given that nothing much happened in the coastal region during those years around this change, we may fairly infer that the emperor's strategic thinking on the inland border business had direct influence on his policy of governing the maritime border and strengthened his stand on the implementation of *haijin* that had been in place since the 1370s. Accordingly, it was highly likely that the Ming court used the same strategy as with tea to sell porcelains at raised prices to the overseas merchants and drove down prices for overseas products.

Besides, the timings of the proclamations of policy indicate the fact that maritime exclusion had relevance to the court's maritime business and was not merely a political or security policy. In the early 1380s, Emperor Hongwu decided to initiate official trading missions to the overseas world because of the fall of Srivijaya (see Chapter 3), its largest

[380] *Ming Taizu shilu* 252:1b-2b, v.8, pp. 3638-3640 [Hongwu.30:4:yiyou].

overseas trading partner in the 1370s. In 1383/04 and 1383/08, the emperor ordered the dispatch of missions to Champa, Siam, and Chenla with tens of thousands of porcelain items.[381] Four months later in 1384/01, probably when the envoys had just sailed out, the emperor issued two special edicts about maritime affairs. The first edict exempted the foreign visiting missions from tariffs; the second edict was the fourth maritime exclusion order, forbidding Chinese residents from sailing the seas and conducting overseas trade.[382] The implication was that Emperor Hongwu probably had the intention of using maritime exclusion to promote the business profits for his official trading missions.

Likewise, in 1404/01, Emperor Yongle reaffirmed the maritime exclusion policy and ordered the modification of all the private sea-going vessels to a 'flat head boat (*pingtou chuan* 平頭船)', which would easily capsize on the deep sea.[383] Only three days after the issuance of this decree did the emperor reveal his plan to send Zheng He to the Western Ocean for the first time.[384] A similar case unfolded again in 1431. In 1431/04, Emperor Xuande reaffirmed the maritime exclusion policy.[385] In 1430/06, the emperor instructed Zheng He to arrange another voyage to the Western Ocean.[386] Four months later in 1431/12, the fleet sailed out.[387] All these coincidences indicate direct connections between the maritime exclusion policy and the court-sponsored voyages. The implication was that the Ming court prohibited private navigation deliberately to increase the profits of its trading missions.

[381] *Ming taizu shilu* 153:5a, v.6, p. 2399 [Hongwu.16:4:yiwei], 156:2b-3a, v.6, pp. 2426-2427 [Hongwu.16:8:yiwei].
[382] *Ming Taizu shilu* 159:4a-4b, v.6, pp. 2459-2460 [Hongwu.17:1:dingsi], 159:4b, v.6, p. 2460 [Hongwu.17:1:renxu].
[383] *Ming Taizong shilu* 27:4b, v.10, p.0498, [Yongle.2:1:xinyou].
[384] *Ming Taizong shilu* 27:4b-5a, v.10, pp. 0498-0499 [Yongle.2:1:guihai].
[385] *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 78:5b-6b, v.20, pp. 1811-1813 [Xuande 6:4:bingchen].
[386] *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 67:3b-4a, v.19, pp. 1576-1577 [Xuande.5:6:wuyin].
[387] Zheng Hesheng (1985).

In sum, one of the reasons for the Ming implementation of the border exclusion policy was to maximize China's total profits made from maritime trade by manipulating the supply and prices of Chinese products. In order to achieve a favourable trade balance for China, the Ming court applied this trade strategy on both the inland and the coastal borders.

4.2.3 A monopoly and distribution of overseas products

Another way for the court to maximize its profit from maritime trade was to distribute overseas commodities at a government-set conversion rate. Different from its predecessors, the Ming government did not achieve cash flow by reselling overseas goods to the Chinese market. Instead, the court paid stipends and rewards, which were conventionally paid in grain or cloth, with pepper and sappanwood. By doing so, the court saved on its grain and cloth reserves. In practise, the court made payments at a certain conversion rate between overseas products and grain. Given that the conversion rate was set by the court, it was actually able to save more grain by manipulating the rate. More specifically, the court could save more grain without increasing its payment of overseas products, if it made the imperial officials, troops, and hired craftsmen accept a low conversation rate. The lower the conversion rate was, the more the court could save. From a business aspect, this would be equivalent to reselling the overseas products at a higher price in the domestic market. In other words, the court could increase its gross profit from the trade, if it lowered the conversion rate, and, in fact, it did.

Table 11 Awards given in overseas products (pepper and sappanwood) in the Hongwu reign (1368-1398)[1]

Year/month	Targets for awards	Number of people	Goods	Number of awards for every individual	Total number of awards
1371/11	Surrendered Mongolian soldiers	5,700+	sappanwood		
1379/09	Soldiers in the capital	approx.380,000[2]	pepper	2 or 3 *catties*	380-570 tons
1380/05	Soldiers in the capital	approx.380,000	pepper	3 *catties*	570 tons
1380/11	Soldiers in the capital	approx.380,000	sappanwood		
1385/02	Soldiers in the capital	approx.380,000	pepper	1 *cattie*	190 tons
1391/01	Navel marines	13,800+	Sappanwood, and pepper		
1392/04	Navel marines	11,700+	pepper	1 *cattie*	6 tons
1392/07	Coastal defence force	12,000+	pepper	1 *cattie*	6 tons
1396/03	Bridge constructors	2,000+	Sappanwood, and pepper	1 *cattie* 5 *catties*	1 tons 5 tons
1396/03	Soldiers in the capital	approx.380,000	Sappanwood, and pepper	1 *cattie* 3 *catties*	190 tons 570 tons
1396/09	Soldiers of the Tiance 天策 Guard	14,700+	sappanwood	1 *cattie*	7 tons

Source: *Ming Taizu shilu*

Note

1. This table only notes down the records on which precise figures were given. Moreover, the table does not show the awards given to certain individuals, since the amounts are too tiny to be noted here.

2. We do not have the exact number of the soldiers in the capital. The number given here is assessed according to the following sources. There were 26 units stationed in the capital according to the regulations made in 1380 (*Ming Taizu shilu* 129:5a-6a, v.5, pp. 2051-2053 [Hongwu.13:1:guimao]). The number of soldiers in the Tiance Guard, one of these units in the capital, was around 14,700, according to a record from 1396 (*Ming Taizu shilu* 247:4a, v.8, p. 3589 [Hongwu.29:9:shiyue]). Accordingly, if the number of solders in the other 25 units was close to the Tiance Guard, the total number of the soldiers in the capital was roughly 380,000 (26*14,700=382,200).

Table 12. Official conversion rates between Chinese goods and overseas products (1407-1450)

Year	*Converting from*				*Converting to*	
	Silk cloth (bolts)	Cotton cloth (bolts)	Paper money (guan)	Rice (dan)	Pepper (catties)	Sappanwood (catties)
1407	1					1-1.8
1420	1				0.4 +	1.6
		1			0.3 +	1
1421		1				1
1424	1				1	
		1				1
			16		1	
			8			1
1434			100		1	
			50			1
1450				12	2.1 +	1.7

Source: *Da Ming hudian*, Book 39; *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 114:1b, v.21, p. 2566 [Xuande.9:11:dingchou]; *Ming Yingzong shilu* 187:17b-18a, v.31, pp. 3802-3803 [Jingtai.1:1:guimao].

The court began to make payments in overseas products from the early 1380s.[388] Table 11 shows how much pepper and sappanwood the court paid as awards to those who served in the military and other governmental projects during the Hongwu reign.[389] In 1407, the court implemented a fixed conversion rate between sappanwood and silk cloth, which were given as rewards to soldiers on a large scale. This was the first government-set conversion rate of overseas products recorded in *shilu*. In 1420, the court revised the rate and added pepper to the list. From 1424, the court also began to pay stipends with pepper and

[388] The Ming court began to pay soldiers and craftsmen with overseas products as 'awards' in the Hongwu reign (see Table 11). In 1407 when Zheng He returned from his voyage to the Indian Ocean for the first time, the court gave the first conversion rate from silk cloth (*juan* 絹) into sappanwood (*Da Ming huidian*, Book 40:1a-2a, 4a-4b, v.789, pp. 699-701.). From the 1420s, it became routine to pay the salary in peppers to the officials and military nobles as salary (*Da Ming huidian*, Book 39:1a, 9a-10a, 15b, 23a, v. 789, pp. 677, 681-682, 684, 688; and Book.40:1a-2a, 4a-4b, v.789, pp. 699-701; *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 114:1b, v.21, p. 2566 [Xuande.9:11:dingchou]). By 1450, it had become routine that 20% of the salary of the troops on the north-eastern border was paid with pepper and sappanwood (*Ming Yingzong shilu* 187:17b-18a, v.31, pp. 3802-3803 [Jingtai.1:1:guimao]). Not until 1481 did the court terminate this practice (*Ming Xianzong shilu* 214:7a-7b, v.47, pp. 3725-3726 [Chenghua.17:4:jiazi).

[389] For further discussion about the Ming court's payment in overseas products, see Tien Jun-kang (1981), referred to by Geoff Wade (2009), pp. 142-155.

sappanwood. By 1450, it had become a regular practice for the court to pay its soldiers with pepper and sappanwood. Table 12 indicates the changes of official conversion rates between Chinese goods and overseas products given by the court from 1407 to 1450.

Apparently, the officials, soldiers, and the hired craftsmen suffered losses due to this practice. As Ray Huang points out, this replacement of goods with pepper and sappanwood meant that the court broke a contract,[390] since the value of the substitutes was always lower than the value of the original good. From the perspective of the court, however, this was financially reasonable. By distributing overseas products at its favourable exchange rate, the court 'smartly' increased its profits rate from maritime trade.

4.2.4 The low prime cost

The new trading system also greatly reduced the court's prime cost of maritime trade. This was because the court actually marketed its own products, which could be produced at extremely little expense. The low production cost was mainly explained by the government's ability to acquire raw materials and mobilize labourers through taxation. In an accounting sense, the court spent little real money replenishing its warehouses or the envoys' cargo ships, since it could levy materials and labour directly from the people rather than pay for them. Paying little for materials and labour, the prime cost of maritime trade was almost negligible. This trading model gave the Ming traders a huge cost advantage over the Song maritime merchants, who had to purchase finished products from the market with cash or credit.

Take the manufacture of ceramics (*shaozao* 燒造) as an example. Ceramics was one of the top three export products of China to the overseas market at the time. The main ingredient of ceramics was clay, which was actually worthless and easily accessible in six

[390] Ray Huang (1974) pp. 62-64.

locations in China.[391] By establishing workshops in these locations, the government could extract clay from the ground at little expense. Besides, thin silk, firewood, and hemp mats were needed in the industry for pattern design, firing, and packing. The government collected these supplementary goods as tax in kind from farmers and woodcutters regularly and at large scale. In this way, the court sourced the raw materials at no cash cost. Only when it suffered a sudden shortage of firewood did the court make 'official purchases (*guanmai* 官買, or *hemai* 和買, or *zhaomai* 召買)' from the market.[392] Nevertheless, the cost of the special purchases was always small because of the convention that the official buyers normally purchased things from the market at a low price. More often, these buyers made purchases on credit and they never planned to repay the debt.[393]

'Labour' was probably the most significant factor of production in the ceramic industry. It required large numbers of labours to extract clay and carry loads on their shoulders to the workshops. It is worth noting that ordinary earth was also in high demand because the ceramists had to bake bricks first to build pottery kilns.[394] However, the court actually did not need to pay the labours, because it could conscript labour from the public through corvée (*yi* 役), a form of levy imposed on every adult male from their sixteenth to sixtieth year to provide labour for public projects. Through this channel, the government could mobilize crowds of people for ceramics production at little expense.[395] Moreover,

[391] They were Yizhen 儀真 in Nan zhili, Guazhou 瓜州 in Gansu, Zhending 真定 in present-day Hebei, Junzhou 均州 and Cizhou 磁州 in Henan, and Raozhou 饒州 in Jiangxi. See *Da Ming huidian*, Book 194:1a-22b, v.792, pp. 330-340.
[392] *Da Ming huidian*, Book 194:1a-22b, v.792, pp. 330-340.
[393] On the Ming court's abuse of 'official purchase', see *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 2:3a, v.16, p. 0035 [Hongxi.1:7:jiayin], 9:9b-10b, v.16, pp. 0220-0222 [Hongxi.1:8:yiwei], 12:6b-7a, v.16, pp. 0330-0331 [Hongxi.1:12:jiashen].
[394] In fact, brick firing was specially organized by the Ming court since the government had a huge demand for bricks. See *Da Ming huidian*, Book 190:1a-12b, v.792, pp. 293-298.
[395] Normally, the government provided grain rations on a monthly basis according to the workload. For Ming regulations on the mobilization of corvée and craftsmen, see *Da Ming huidian*, Book 188, 189, v.792, pp. 268-270, 271-292.

according to the laws, the court allowed criminals to atone for crimes by performing compulsory service. Punishments for minor offences, like being flogged with a wooden stick, could be converted into days or months of physical work. Some felons were sentenced to service for the government for their whole lifetime.[396] This was another source of free labour for the court.

As it turned out, the output of the industry in such business model was massive. In general, the official workshops supplied over 151,850 porcelains to the court annually.[397] The court would even arrange mass production in the capital city every ten years or when it suddenly had an urgent demand for a large number of porcelains.[398] Sometimes, the court made special orders for extra volumes of ceramics. For instance, when Zheng He's fleets returned from the Western Ocean for the seventh time in 1433, the court requested the workshops in Raozhou to produce 443,500 ceramics. It was highly likely that these porcelains were produced for the next voyage to meet the oversea demand.

In sum, by collecting raw materials as tax in kind and conscripting workers through corvée, the government produced large quantities of porcelains at a incredibly low cost, which greatly reduced the prime costs of maritime trade. It gave the court a huge advantage over the private pottery kilns and maritime merchants.

With similar procedures, the government arranged the productions of silk products and ironware, the other two top three exports from China. Specifically, the court established four types of special agencies in both the capital city and various places to supervise textile production (*zhizao* 織造) and ironware production (*zhuqi* 鑄器). Weaving and Dyeing

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396 *Da Ming huidian*, Book 188, 189, v.792, pp. 268-270, 271-292.

397 For example, Yizhen and Guazhou were required to supply 100,000 porcelain water vats to the court; the total annual quota for Zhending, Junzhou, and Cizhou was 51,850; Raozhou was responsible for the manufacture of specially supplied wares for the royal family. See *Da Ming huidian*, Book 194:1a-22b, v.792, pp. 330-340.

398 *Da Ming huidian*, Book 194:1a-22b, v.792, pp. 330-340.

Services (*zhizao ju* 織染局) and Perfume Services (*xiangzhi ju* 香置局) were responsible for silk products. Iron Melting Offices (*tieye suo* 鐵冶所) and Coinage Services (*baoyuan ju* 寶源局) oversaw the production of ironware. Through the taxation system, the government collected and conveyed silk, cotton, dye, raw iron, and other supplementary materials to these offices. Under the supervision of these agencies, weavers and blacksmiths, who were on active service like the ceramicists, constantly produced textile and ironware for the court.

In this way, a court's trading mission was able to replenish its stocks at little cost. This business model provided the Ming traders with a matchless advantage that the private maritime merchants could never achieve.[399]

4.2.5 The less-risky voyages.

Modern historians are impressed by Zheng He's fleets of advanced and huge sea-going vessels.[400] Some argue that Zheng He's voyages were costly military demonstrations to display China's might to overseas states,[401] but few historians have illustrated how these armed vessels protected the Chinese traders against perilous overseas trading situations and reduced the risk of business failure.

Maritime trade was a high-risk business in the pre-modern period. There were two types of risk every maritime merchant worried about: shipwreck and piracy. A twelfth-century Chinese geographical treatise describes an interesting scenario of maritime trade in the Song period. When a merchant recruited colleagues and crews to sail abroad, 'the crowd would dare to go [with him only] if the merchant says that the vessel [he possesses] is huge'.

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[399] For a discussion of the logistics industry chain for private maritime merchants in premodern China, see Kent Deng (1999), pp. 57-105.
[400] For a discussion of ship construction and the 'sailing-oriented transport infrastructure' in premodern China, see Kent Deng (1999), pp. 1-56.
[401] Chao Zhongchen (2005).

This record implies that a huge sea-going vessel had a stronger anti-risk capability than smaller vessels. The reasons were twofold. First, a huge vessel had a better seagoing performance than a small vessel, especially in high seas. As the account noted, a huge sea-going ship 'is not afraid of a gale and huge waves'. Second, the overseas security situation was horrible at the time and a huge vessel could better defend itself against pirates. As the treatise describes, piracy was common on Southeast Asian waters:

> [There are] many pirates in the overseas world. [They] plunder those who do not plan to visit their states. If the destination of [a ship] is Champa but [it] loses its way and enters [the waters of] Chenla, [the Chenla people] would 'confiscate' all its goods. [They would also] kidnap the northern people (the Chinese) and sell them [as slaves]. [The Chenla people justify their actions by] saying: you did not plan to visit this place [, thus, you deserve this].[402]

The passage indicates a common practice: local people would commit an act of piracy when they encountered a foreign vessel passing their territorial waters on its way to other countries. The quotation of the Chenla people's words suggests that the local authority might give his approval to plundering the passing vessels. Therefore, the Chinese maritime merchants and crews preferred to sail and work on a huge vessel because a bigger crowd could act as a deterrent to the pirates, and they could better protect themselves in an emergency.

The third reason that the merchants preferred a huge ship was because they could reduce business costs by sharing the tax expenditure with more people. In pre-modern

[402] '海外多盜賊, 且掠非詣其國者, 如詣占城, 或失路誤入真臘, 則盡沒其舶貨, 縛北人賣之, 云: 爾本不來此間'. *Pingzhou ketan*, Book 2:2b-3a.

Southeast Asia, most political authorities levied a standard amount of tax on every visiting merchant vessel. Specifically, they collected the same number of goods from every ship as 'gifts', regardless of the various sizes of the vessels. This practice was obviously 'unfavourable to [the merchants on] small ships'. [403] The Chinese maritime merchants were clearly aware of this tax convention, and hence, they preferred taking huge vessels.

In this context, the advantages of the Ming court's fleets of huge vessels become apparent. First, the huge vessels largely reduced the risk of shipwreck caused by storms. Second, the court could provide a military escort to the fleets because the huge vessels had a great carrying capacity. Third, the Ming traders could load their ships with more products, which not only increased the trading volume, but also reduced the average tax expenditure.

Besides, the Ming traders also benefited from their status as diplomats. As most Southeast Asian authorities accepted Ming China's 'tributary system' and its norm of conducting business, the Ming traders would receive a courteous reception in overseas countries, even if they lost their way or suffered shipwreck in foreign waters.[404]

The reason the Ming traders had the more advanced and larger vessels than their previous counterparts was down to the fact that they had comprehensive support from the government. It is worth noting that, even in the pre-modern period, the shipbuilding industry was a labour-intensive as well as technology-intensive industry. At the same time, it was also a capital-intensive industry, since high-quality hardwood was essential. Hence, only those who had a strong resource mobilization capability could invest in and possess large sea-going

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[403] On the tax convention in Southeast Asia by the twelfth century, see *Pingzhou ketan*, Book 2:3a. On the tax convention in the period from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, see *Rekidai Hōan*. According to *Rekidai Hōan,* the number of 'gifts' that the Ryūkyū envoys presented to the Siam and Malacca authorities hardly changed from the fifteenth century to the sixteenth century. It implies that the tax convention in Southeast Asia had little change by the sixteenth century.

[404] Under the tributary system, the diplomatic norms demanded that a country had a duty to provide shipwreck salvage to those serving as envoys of another country when it was needed.

vessels. This partly explains why the privileged households could squeeze out the small merchants and dominated the maritime commerce by the late Song period.

Seen from this aspect, government might be the best sponsor for maritime trade at the time. That was the way things went in the early Ming period. Under the instructions of the court, the best timbers were felled from the remotest forest and top-skilled craftsmen were recruited from all over the empire. That was how the fleets of the most advanced and biggest sea-going vessels in the world at that time were built. Also, it was the court who provided the fleets with military escort. The Ming's large naval force was dispatched to smash the pirates along the trade route repeatedly when it was needed. Again, it was the court who promoted the diplomatic norms in the region and combined trade and diplomacy, providing the traders with extra protection against various business risks. In short, because of the Ming court's direct intervention, the Chinese traders, the official missions, enjoyed a safer passage on East Asian waters. The Ming court's marvelous sea-going vessels were much more than giant toys to impress an overseas audience. Rather, these splendid ships reduced the uncertainties of maritime trade and the risks of business failure.

4.2.6 A rough assessment of gross profit rates and the role of *haijin*

According to the discussion above, we see the strengths of the Ming's trading system to increase governmental revenue. It was a special business model that enabled the court to monopolize the business and fulfilled the government's potential to extract more revenue from maritime trade than its predecessors.

Although we do not have the account books for the Ming traders, we can make simple calculations to assess the gross profit rates of the business with the data given in the written records. Table 13 shows the unit prices of peppers in three Indian Ocean states when Zheng He's fleets arrived in the period from 1403 to 1433. It tells us how much pepper the Ming traders could purchase from the overseas market with 1 tael of silver. Table 14 shows the purchasing power of 1 tael of silver against paper money and rice in Ming China from 1375 to 1451.

Table 13. Prices for peppers in the Indian Ocean region (1403-1433)

States	*Silver (tael)*	*Pepper (catties)*
Sumatra	1	100
*Cochi (*Kezhi 柯枝 *)*	1	80
*Kozhikode (*guli 古里*)*	1	200

Source: *Yingya shenglan*.

Note: In Cochi, 400 catties of peppers were worth 5 taels of silver. Thus, 1 tael of silver could buy 80 catties of pepper (400/5 = 80). In Kozhikode, 400 catties of peppers were worth 200 local golden coins, the Chinese transliteration of which was 'banan 吧南'. The purity of the golden coin was 60 percent and the weight of a coin was 0.01 tael. Thus, it cost 1.2 taels of gold to purchase 400 catties of peppers (200*0.01*0.6 = 1.2). According to *shilu*, the conversion rate from gold to silver was about 6 to 10 in China in the early 1440s.[405] Thus, 1.2 taels of gold was worth 2 taels of silver in China at the time. In other word, it cost 2 taels of silver to buy 400 catties of peppers in Cochi, and thus, 1 tael of silver could buy 200 catties of pepper (400/2 = 200).

Table 14. Conversion rate from silver to paper money and the prices for rice (1375-1451)

Year	*Silver (*tael*)*	*Paper money (*guan*)*	*Rice (*dan*)*
1368	1		3.2
1375	1	1	
1389	1		2
1397	1	5	
1426	1	400	
1436	1	1,000	
1438	1		4
1439	1		2.5
1446	1	500	
1449	1		4
1451	1		4

Source: *Ming shilu*, and *Da Ming huidian*, Book 31, v.789, pp. 552-559.

[405] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 65:1a-2a, v.25, pp. 1237-1238 [Zhengtong.5:3:yisi].

Given these data, we can briefly assess the gross profit rates from Zheng He's voyage. When the imperial fleet returned to China in 1433, it brought back tons of overseas products, including pepper, with which the court paid the stipends and covered the expenditures of rice, cloth, and cash.[406] Let us assume that the court was supposed to pay a court official with rice, cloth, and cash that were equivalent to 100,000 *guan* of paper money. According to the exchange rate between paper money and silver in 1436, it substantially cost the court about 100 taels of silver to accomplish this payment. But, the court could choose to pay the official with 1,000 catties of pepper.[407] Given the unit price of pepper in its production regions, it cost the Ming trading missions only 5 to 12.5 taels of silver to buy 1,000 catties of pepper. In other words, by covering the salary expenditure that should have been paid in paper money with pepper, the court saved 87.5 to 95 taels of silver. In a manner of speaking, the court 'sold' the imported pepper to the stipend receivers at the unit price of 100 taels of silver per 1,000 catties. This means that the gross profit rate of the 'resale' of pepper was about 700-1900 percent.[408]

Likewise, it would cost the court about 3,000 taels of silver to purchase 12,000 *den* of rice from the market to pay the troops along the northern border in 1450. But if the court paid in peppers (around 3,000 catties) instead,[409] it cost the court only 30 taels of silver. In this way, the court paid only 1 percent of what it was originally supposed to pay. In fact, that was

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[406] Conventionally, the court paid rice, cloth, and cash in certain ratios.

[407] According to the regulation made in 1434, the court began to paid stipends in pepper. The exchange rate between pepper and paper money was 1 catty of pepper to 100 *guan*. See *Da Ming huidian*, Book 39:1a, 9a-10a, 15b, 23a, v. 789, pp. 677, 681-682, 684, 688; and Book.40:1a-2a, 4a-4b, v.789, pp. 699-701.

[408] Gross profit rate = (income – cost)/cost * 100 percent. Thus, the gross profit rate of business in this example is: (100-12.5)/12.5*100 percent = 700 percent to (100-5)/5*100 percent = 1900 percent.

[409] According to the official conversion rate at the time, 12,000 *den* of rice would be converted into 2,100 catties of peppers and 1,700 catties of sappanwood. Given that the value of 1 catty of peppers was equal to 2 catties of sappanwood in most case (see Table 12, the rows '1424' and '1434'), 12,000 *den* of rice could be converted into about 3,000 catties of peppers (2,100+1,700/2=2,950).

exactly what the court did in 1450.[410] Calculating with these figures, the gross profit rate of the 'resale' of pepper was 9,900 percent.[411]

It is worth noting that what we calculated is only the revenue from the imported business (N_2). Because we do not know the prices for the Chinese exported products, like porcelains, in either Chinese or the overseas markets, we are not able to assess income from the Ming export business (N_1). In other words, the actual profit rate might be more amazing than what is calculated above. In comparison, the Song court's gross profit rate from maritime trade, if we take the case in 1076 as an example, was approximately 217percent.[412]

Table 15. Ming inventories of pepper and sappanwood in the national storehouses (1368-1500)

	Products	*Amount*
1370s	pepper	1,000,000 catties
1436/03	pepper	3,000,000 catties
1448/06	pepper	10,000 catties
1456/09	pepper	1,000,000 catties

Source: *Ming shilu*; *Huang Ming shifa lu*, Book.12-2:10b-11a, v.1, pp. 341-342.

Considering the large volume of the trade conducted by the Ming trading missions, the total economic benefits that the court gained from maritime trade was definitely huge. Apart from the case studies in the section on Ming policy, the records of the court's inventory

410 The prototype of this example is the case and regulations recorded in 1450. See *Ming Ming Yingzong shilu* 187:17b-18a, v.31, pp. 3802-3803 [Jingtai.1:1:guimao].
411 (3,000-30)/30*100 percent=9900 percent.
412 It is difficult to give a precise description of the Song court's maritime revenue with the rare and fragment figures in the written records, but we have the government's account book for maritime trade for three consecutive year from 1076 to 1078 (refer to *Zhongshu beidui,* pp. 226-227). Accidentally, the *Song shi* also notes some trade figures for the year 1076, as it will present below. Hence, the year 1076 is the best sample we have for our comparison. Besides, given that the year 1076 was in the middle of the Northern Song period (960-1127), when the empire was witnessing a long period of prosperity and peace. Therefore, this thesis assumes that we can measure the Song court's normal profits with the figures of the year 1076 and compares these numbers with the Ming's figures. The Song court's annual governmental revenue from maritime trade in this year was 540,173 mixed units and the trade expense was 238,056 mixed units. Thus, the gross profit rate was: (540,173-238,056)/238,056*100 percent = 216.91 percent. See *Song shi*, Book 186, v.7, pp. 4560.

of pepper, as seen in Table 15, also illustrate the sizable trading volume at the time. Accordingly, the volume of maritime trade at the time evenly matched that in the Song period.[413] The Ming trade figures did not soar to a higher level probably because the business with Southeast Asia had reached the maximum level that the economy could turn out. While the trading volume in the Ming period did not top the previous records, the court's profit margin was definitely higher than before. Furthermore, this large-scale exchange of commodities between China and the maritime world was actually unceasing for nearly a century.[414]

The maritime exclusion policy was a prerequisite for this achievement. The policy played a direct or indirect role in every stage that improved the court's business efficacy. With this policy, the court squeezed private maritime merchants out of the business and thus

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413 According to *Zhongshu beidui*, the Song court kept about 1,000,000 catties of frankincense in its storehouse in the 1070s. See *Zhongshu beidui*, pp.226-7. It is worth noting that the Northern Song court acquired more revenue from maritime trade by the 1100s, but that was because the court began to trade with the states in Northeast Asia after the Yuanfeng reign (1078-1084) (*Wenxian tongkao,* Book 20:42a-42b, v.610, p. 462). What *Zhongshu beidui* presents are the data of the cases in the 1070s when Song China's major maritime trade partners were the states in the Southeast Asian and Indian Ocean regions. This provides a fair basis for our comparison.

414 The trade probably lasted much longer than our estimation. According to Ryūkyū's governmental achieve, *Rekidai Hōan*, the trade continued to the mid-sixteenth century. This archive notes the contents of more than 37 tallies issued by the Ming administration to the Ryūkyū missions. The earliest tally is dated 1428/09 and the latest one is dated 1564/10. More importantly, every tally has its traceable serial number and these numbers are all sequential. Given the special permutations and combinations of the serial number on the tallies, the records suggest that at least 77 and 983 Ryūkyū vessels visited Ming China by 1428 and by 1564 respectively. Here below is the inference process: (1) The archive shows that the serial number on the 1428 tally is '77' and the serial number on the 1564 tally is '*yu* 宇 23'. (2) Given that the archive also notes down other tallies with the serial numbers with the initial characters of '*xuan* 玄' and '*huang* 黃', we know the initial characters are arranged according to a Chinese literary work, *qian zi wen* 千字文, the first line's text of which is '*tian di xuan huang yu zhou hong huang* 天地玄黃, 宇宙洪荒'; (3) Hence, we can track the initial character, '*yu*', of the serial number on the latest tally and we know that it is the fifth character in the text line; (4) The archive also indicates that the maximum number attached to the initial is 240; (5) Thus, we can conclude that the 1564 tally with the serial number of '*yu* 23' was the certificate issued to the 983rd Ryūkyū vessel that visited China (240*5+23 = 983). See *Rekidai Hōan*.

it was able to take all profits from the trade. Because of the ban on private trade, the court held all the buying orders from the overseas market, which caused a positive scale effect that enabled the court to arrange massive production made possible through its administrative power to control the industrial chain. The huge volume of trade also reduced the marginal cost of the investment in the manufacture of sea-going vessels. Besides, since the court monopolized the supply of Chinese products and the resale of overseas commodities, it gained the pricing power to sell or distribute at a better price or conversion rate.

All in all, the maritime exclusion policy made it possible for the Ming court to impose absolute control and establish a monopoly on maritime trade. Only with this state monopoly could the court implement its general trade strategy, with which it successfully suppressed dangerous private maritime powers and obtained sizable and sustainable income from maritime commerce.

4.3 Competition for financial resources and the decline of the trading system

Although maritime trade generated considerable revenue for the Ming authority, the trading system was abandoned in the mid-fifteenth century. The Ming court stopped dispatching trading missions on a large scale to the overseas world after 1436. At the same time, the number of overseas missions to China decreased as well. In other words, the trading system established by the first Ming emperor lasted for around only five decades. The following pages will argue that the decline of the system was a result of the cut-throat fiscal competition between emperors and bureaucrats, rather than an inevitable response to the deficit caused by the state-sponsored voyages, which, in fact, improved the court's financial situation.

4.3.1 Fiscal practice established by the first Ming emperor

To understand the fiscal competition between emperors and bureaucrats, we first need to understand the early Ming's fiscal practice. The Ming's fiscal network was composed of hundreds of storehouses distributed around the empire and the transportation lines that connected these nodes. These storehouses could be classified into three types, the 'inner-office treasuries (*neifuku* 內府庫)' in the two capital cities managed by the central government, the 'various outer-office treasuries (*zaiwai zhusi ku* 在外諸司庫)' administrated by the local governments, and the national storehouses (*cangyu* 倉庾) at traffic hubs and strategic positions, the reserve in which were stockpiled as military provisions, relief funds, and for emergency use.[415] Additional to what was preserved in the local governments' treasuries and the national storehouses, tax and materials collected from all over the empire were conveyed to and stored in the inner-office treasuries.

Correspondingly, the central government covered public expenditures with the money and materials from the inner-office treasuries. Nevertheless, apart from the central government departments, which were known as 'the outer-court (*waiting* 外廷)' agencies, the eunuchs' offices, which were known as 'the inner-court (*neiting* 內廷)' agencies, also took money and materials from the inner-office treasuries to support the daily expenditure of the royal family in the palace. In a manner of speaking, the emperor in the palace and the bureaucrats of the central government shared the wealth in the inner-office treasuries together.[416] In other words, there were two fiscal authorities within the court, the palace and the government.

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[415] On the introduction of the Ming's official treasuries, see *Da Ming huidian*, Book 30, v,789, pp. 540-551. On the introduction of the national storehouses, see *Da Ming huidian*, Book 21, 22, and 23, v.789, pp. 348-395.

[416] The number of the eunuchs' offices was fixed at twenty-four in the early fifteenth century. Generally, they were known as the 'twenty-four offices (*ershisi yamen* 二十四衙門)'. See

The division of fiscal power and responsibility between the two fiscal authorities was ambiguous. Institutionally speaking, the emperor had the final say on the budget process. As Ray Huang points out, the emperor was the sole legitimate decision maker on fiscal matters. High-ranking officials gave emperors advice, but they had no legal power in the decision-making process. The duty of the Minister of Revenue (*hubu shangshu* 戶部尚書) was different from a present-day finance minister, because the Ministry of Revenue never became a decision-making department in the Ming period and the minister was no more than an administrator for routine work, such as allocating money and keeping accounts.[417]

However, in daily practice, the emperor would consult with the bureaucrats and they would generally make decisions together. Besides, the inner-office treasuries were actually under the dual supervision of both the bureaucrats and the eunuchs, who managed the treasuries on behalf of the emperor. Specifically, the eunuchs held the keys to the gates of these treasuries, while the bureaucrats were responsible for keeping accounts.[418] This cooperation reflects the palace's and the government's dual authority in fiscal affairs.

Although there was not a clear line of allocation between the palace and the government, this dual leadership model functioned well during the Hongwu reign (1368-1398). This was partly because the first Ming emperor was willing to cooperate with the bureaucrats in the budget process, even though he treated his fiscal officials harshly.[419] Besides, this emperor also exercised strict economy in the palace and he tried his best to reduce his personal expenditure. Hence, there was no fundamental conflict of fiscal interests

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Zhuozhong zhi, Book 16, pp. 501-531. For further discussion about the fiscal authority of the eunuchs, see Ray Huang (1974), pp. 9-13.

[417] For a discussion about the division of labour in fiscal matters in the Ming period, see Ray Huang (1974), pp. 4-20.

[418] On the details about the functions and the management of these treasuries, see *Da Ming huidian*, Book 30, v,789, pp. 540-551, and *Zhuozhong zhi*, Book 16, pp. 501-531.

[419] On the relationship between the Ming emperors and the fiscal officials, see Ray Huang (1974), pp. 13-16.

between the emperor and the government in the Hongwu reign. In brief, the relationship between the two fiscal authorities was mostly collaborative rather than competitive, and thus, the dual leadership model did not become a problem when Emperor Hongwu was in power. However, things changed in the reign of the third emperor.

4.3.2 Emperor Yongle's fiscal practice and the splendid voyages

During Emperor Yongle's reign (1403-1424), the relationship between the Ming emperor and his bureaucrats became more competitive than collaborative, as the emperor became more aggressive and more arbitrary in the budget process than his predecessors. This was because of the new emperor's huge demand for revenue.

Because of his political and military ambitions, Emperor Yongle vigorously promoted several splendid projects that led to enormous increases in public expenditures throughout his twenty-two-year reign. Under his leadership, the Ming court constructed a new capital city near its northern borderline and dug the Grand Canal, the length of which was over two thousand miles, to connect the old and new capitals. The transfer of the imperial political centre had both political and military meanings. Politically, Emperor Yongle was able to reduce the political influence of the civil government in the old capital and build a new political centre for his own in the north. This was significant for the new emperor, because the legal basis of his enthronement was actually questionable, given that he ascended the throne by rising up in revolt and overturned the rule of his nephew, whose enthronement was recognized by the founding emperor of the dynasty. Unwilling to be restrained by the existing bureaucracy in the first capital city, Emperor Yongle insisted on constructing a new capital in Beijing, the feudal estate he was conferred when he was still a prince. In this new capital city, the emperor could better exert his influence and implement his decrees with less restraint from the bureaucrats and residents in the old capital city and its environs, many of whom still felt loyal to the previous emperor.

The construction of the new capital city also had great strategic significance in safeguarding the security of the empire. In the opinion of the Ming authority, the Mongolians on the grassland were the most dangerous security threat for the Chinese empire. As the military commander stationed in the northern frontier area for more than two decades, Emperor Yongle was even more sensitive to the threats posed by the Mongolians and had a greater concern for border security issues than his nephew, who was growing up in the coastal area. Hence, the Yongle emperor strongly believed that moving the political centre to the north was militarily necessary. By moving the imperial political centre to the northern border line, Emperor Yongle shortened the response time to enemy actions and shifted his empire’s strategic focus from the southern coastal region to the northern inland frontier. Considering that the empire’s economic centre was located on the southern coastal region, the necessity of the construction of the Great Canal became clear, since the new capital city relied on tax resources from the south.

Apart from the construction projects of the new capital and the Great Canal, Emperor Yongle also kicked off huge military exercises. Specifically, the emperor made five military expeditions against the Mongolians, annexed the territory of Annam in the south, and dispatched huge armed fleets to wipe out pirates in East Asian waters. These military operations not only strengthened the Ming’s hegemony in East Asia but also provided China with vast buffer zones on both its inland and coastal borders. Moreover, the emperor also strengthened his personal authority over the domestic audience and suppressed the question of the legitimacy of his reign with a series of military successes.[420]

[420] For the further discussion about Emperor Yongle’s splendid projects and his ambitions, see Hok-Lam Chan (1998); Makoto Ueda (2005); and Danjō Hiroshi (2012).

However, these costly construction projects and military operations meant enormous expenditures. It forced Emperor Yongle to find out a way to raise a large sum of extra funds to finance his pricey plans. Against this backdrop, the emperor took various measures to acquire more revenue and expanding the maritime trade was one of his plans.

The emperor benefited from the trade expansion in two ways. First, he increased the business revenue by investing more in the trade. Given the Ming's special trading system we discussed above, the more the emperor invested, the more he would acquire. From his perspective, maritime trade was an excellent business, from which he could make quick and easy money.

Second, Emperor Yongle enhanced his control of the imperial treasuries and get more money from the taxation system on the pretext of financing his overseas activities. Specifically, the emperor designated the high-ranking eunuchs as the supervisors of the inner-court treasuries, and meanwhile, he appointed grand eunuchs like Zheng He as the commanders of the fleets of 'pursuing treasure ships (*qubao chuan* 取寶船)' in the Western Ocean.[421] Then, he issued the eunuch-commanders with special edicts, which allowed them to withdraw money and goods directly from the inner-office treasuries.[422] Since these allocations were 'normal expenditure' and the treasuries were now under the charge of the high-ranking eunuchs, the transitions of money to the fleets always went smoothly and the bureaucrats could do nothing to stop it.

Likewise, when the fleets returned to China, the overseas products they brought back would be moved and stored in the treasuries that were under the supervision of the eunuchs. Nevertheless, the bureaucrats could not get the overseas goods from the treasuries without a

[421] On the personnel structure of the fleets to the Western Ocean in the Yongle reign, see Zheng HeSheng. (1985).

[422] The travelling account written by Zheng He's secretary (*zongzhi zhi mu* 總制之幕) on the fleets incorporates three of these special edicts. See *Xiyang fanguo zhi*.

nod from the emperor. This was because, constitutionally, the emperor had absolute power in diplomatic affairs,[423] and thus, the bureaucrats had no right to get access to the goods that were imported by the diplomatic missions under the command of the eunuchs. If the bureaucrats wanted to get overseas goods out from the treasuries, they had to ask for permission from the emperor or bear an order in the name of the emperor.[424] Making use of this convention, Emperor Yongle vigorously promoted the court-sponsored maritime trade and aggressively withdrew money from the taxation system.

In essence, by promoting the eunuchs-led voyage project, Emperor Yongle established an external closed circulatory system of finance that was appended to the imperial taxation system. In this system, money was pumped by the taxation system that was primarily managed by the government but did not normally fill the governmental accounts when it generated income. Instead, the eunuchs held back all trade revenue for the emperor. Through this mechanism, the emperor was able to get money from the taxation system without bothering the bureaucrats, many of whom disagreed with the emperor's aggressive budget spending plans. In this way, Emperor Yongle constantly introduced public funds into his personal accounts. The practice greatly enhanced the emperor's authority in fiscal matters, giving him more freedom to realize his ambitious projects.

[423] This was the convention established by the first Ming emperor. By executing his two prime ministers and thousands of officials in the early 1380s, Emperor Hongwu made it a political taboo in the court for the bureaucrats to intervene in the foreign policy decision-making process. See Section 2.4.1.

[424] In 1436/03, the bureaucrats requested Wang Jinghong 王景弘, the Eunuch Grand Commandant (*shoubei taijian* 守備太監) in Nanjing, to convey three million catties of pepper and sappanwood to Beijing and hand over these goods to the government. Instead of giving a direct order to the eunuch, the bureaucrats drew up an instruction in the name of the new emperor, who was only a nine-year-old boy at the time. Only in this way could the bureaucrats legally get overseas products from the eunuchs. This case exemplifies the convention that the inventory of overseas products was under the strict control of the eunuchs and the bureaucrats could only get access to these goods with the emperor's permission. *Ming Ming Yingzong shilu* 15:13a-13b, v.22, pp. 0299-0300 [Zhengtong.1:3:jiawu]

Based on this system, Emperor Yongle's benefits were positively correlated to the size of the vessels and the frequency of the voyages. The positive connection explains not only the dramatic expansion of the fleets and the intensive sailings during this reign. It also partly accounted for the strict implementation of a maritime exclusion policy, which strengthened the court's monopoly position in overseas trade.

In all, Emperor Yongle not only benefited from the increasing revenue generated from the booming maritime trade. He also extended his sway over the imperial treasuries and unceasingly extracted money from the taxation system for his own use, as his fleets continually commuted on the East Asian waters. Substantially, Emperor Yongle reshaped the relationship between the emperor and the bureaucrats in the budget making process: the emperor became the one who made a budget spending plan, while the bureaucrats struggled to meet the budget. This completely changed the fiscal practice established from the Hongwu reign, in which the emperor worked together with the bureaucrats in the budget process.

4.3.3 The competition for revenue between the emperors and the bureaucrats

Emperor Yongle boldly promoted court-sponsored maritime trade because it not only generated profits, but also squeezed revenue from the taxation system to finance his ambitious but costly projects. However, from the perspective of the imperial bureaucracy, the emperor actually enhanced his own fiscal authority and increased his personal income at the expense of their fiscal power and financial interests.

Although the court, or the empire, as a whole might benefit from maritime trade, the bureaucratic government constantly lost money in the business. On the one hand, the bureaucrats had to allocate public funds to maritime trade, because they could not stop the emperor from robbing the imperial treasuries to pay for the voyages. On the other hand, the government could hardly take receipt of the trading income to balance the government accounts since the eunuchs had a tight control on the gains from trade, from the inventory to the distribution. In short, maritime trade became a money-losing business for the bureaucracy, and although they had to keep investing in it, they would never receive appropriate income.

Essentially, the expansion of maritime trade benefited the emperor but imposed additional fiscal pressure on the bureaucratic government. Being pushed by the emperor, the bureaucrats had to allocate more funds from the imperial treasuries to the voyages, but they did not have new sources of revenue. Thus, they had no other choice but to divert public funds to the voyages. As a result, the voyages became a project that steadily encroached on the budget of daily administrative activities and necessary public facilities, such as transporting tax grains, providing disaster relief, and building and maintaining post roads and irrigation works, on which the empire and the economy was relying.

Under this circumstance, the bureaucrats had to mortgage the economy in ways that could be very destructive. For example, the government speeded up the money printing process to make purchases and pay off its debt, resulting in hyperinflation in this period. Meanwhile, the court imposed heavier levies on its people by collecting additional fees or extending the length of the national service period.[425] Also, the administration started buying things and labour from the market on credit or at a very low price or conversion rate. Moreover, the individual bureaucrats were suffering as well, given that their salaries were paid in kind at an unfavourable rate of conversion. As many scholars have pointed out, the

[425] In the Yongle reign (1402-1424), the value of paper money dropped. But, in the Xuande reign (1424-1434), the Ming court took some efforts to reverse this trend. Their plan worked in a sense. The paper money stopped being devalued and even appreciated a bit. There was 'fluctuation' in the value of paper money and not just a one-way slide. For further discussion about Ming's currency, refer to Peng Weixin (2007).

economic burden on the society was so heavy that the economy almost collapsed by the end of the Yongle reign.[426]

However, what really frustrated the bureaucrats might have been the new division of fiscal authority between the emperor and the civil government. By designating eunuchs to conduct maritime trade and supervise the imperial treasuries, Emperor Yongle actually found a way to exclude the bureaucrats from the budget process and confine them to the task of collecting tax to meet the emperor's spending plans. Substantially, the emperor separated the expense budget from the income budget and made himself the spender and the government the fundraiser.

This separation of expense and income budgets gave Emperor Yongle a free hand on his projects. But, from the perspective of the bureaucrats, the emperor created a very dangerous precedent. The dangers were twofold. First, the new fiscal practice greatly weakened the fiscal power of the bureaucracy. Second, this practice made it difficult for the court to restrict spending. Since the emperors were not under the direct stress of keeping a balanced budget, they naturally inclined to increase the expenditure on their favoured projects and items. This was apparently unsustainable as the increasing expenditure would exert more and more pressure on the bureaucrats and the economy, which might finally lead to a collapse of the entire fiscal system. But, it must be pointed out that we should not attribute this circumstance to the state-sponsored voyages, since the voyage actually created positive revenue. The root of the problem was the gap between the emperors' splendid but costly ambitions and the empire's limited financial capability.

As they were striving to make the empire better respectively in their own ways, the emperor and the bureaucrats finally became competitors for fiscal resources. Fiscal management became a zero-sum game between the two parties, and, their relationship shifted

[426] See Hok-Lam Chan (1988); Wang Gengwu (1998).

from collaborative to competitive. Although they were full of good intentions in building a better empire, the empire's fiscal capability could never satisfy the demands from both sides at the same time.

Under the leadership of the aggressive emperor, the bureaucrats were at a disadvantage in the competition. By dispatching fleets to the overseas world regularly, Emperor Yongle seemingly established a practice that would permanently weaken the fiscal power of the government. However, the bureaucrats did not resign themselves to defeat in this zero-sum game.

4.3.4 The bureaucrats' opposition and the decline of the trading system

In 1420/12, the Hall of Tribute to Heaven (*Fengtian dian* 奉天殿), the largest hall within the forbidden city, was completed in the new capital city. In 1421/04, the hall was destroyed together with two other new halls because of fire caused by lighting.[427] Supposing that it might be a warning given by heavens, Emperor Yongle issued a decree asking for criticisms and suggestions from his officials.[428] Many bureaucrats took this opportunity to remonstrate against the emperor about his policies. The court-sponsored voyages became the focal point in negating the emperor's scheme of governance, particularly military expansion and fiscal practice. They argued that the 'tributary activities…actually exhaust the middle kingdom'.[429]

Under the pressure from the bureaucrats, the emperor swallowed his anger and ordered a cessation of the voyages. He also ordered a cessation to building new sea-going

[427] *Ming Taizong shilu* 236:1a, v.14, p. 2263 [Yongle.19:4:gengzi].
[428] *Ming Taizong shilu* 236:1a-1b, v.14, pp. 2263-2264 [Yongle.19:4:renyin], 236:4a, v.14, p. 2269 [Yongle.19:4:jiyou]. Also see *Ming shi*, Book 7, v.1, p. 100.
[429] *Ming Taizong shilu* 236:1b-2b, v.14, pp.2264-2266 [Yongle.19:4:jiachen]. Also see *Ming shi*, Book 163, v.15, pp. 4421-4424.

vessels.[430] Four days after the issue of this edict, the fire in the three palace halls went out.[431] The coincidence inspired the bureaucrats, who firmly believed that they were upholding justice. From then on, complaints and criticisms in regards to the voyages to the Western Ocean became well-founded among the bureaucrats. Therefore, every time when an emperor resumed or attempted to resume launching a voyage in order to generate revenue for the 'inner-court', crowds of bureaucrats in the government admonished against the project or the idea.

This dispute between the emperors and the bureaucrats burst out from time to time in the following decades. Noticeably, the balance of power between the two parties had a direct impact on the outcome of the dispute. When an emperor had strong control on the court, he and the eunuchs would try to initiate a new project. When an emperor was reliant on the bureaucrats for his rule, the project would be cancelled.

After he put those who opposed his projects in prison in 1421,[432] Emperor Yongle reinitiated Zheng He's voyage in 1424/01.[433] However, the voyage was terminated six months later because of the death of the emperor. In 1424/07, Emperor Yongle passed away and his elder son ascended the throne as Emperor Hongxi, who was heavily reliant on the

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[430] The emperor was furious at the criticisms and he sent Li Shimian 李時勉, who took the lead to criticize the emperor, to prison. See *Ming shi*, Book 163, v.15, pp. 4421-4424. On the decree about the termination of voyages, see *Ming Taizong shilu* 236:2b-3b, v.14, pp. 2266-2268 [Yongle.19:4:yisi].
[431] *Ming shi*, Book 7.
[432] Xia Yuanji and Li Shimian were the two high-ranking officials among those who were put in prison after 1421, because of their criticisms of the emperor's projects and their uncooperative attitudes. See *Ming shi*, Book 149, v.14, pp. 4150-4155, Book 163, v.15, pp. 4421-4424.
[433] *Ming Taizong shilu* 267:3a, v.14, p.2427 [Yongle.22:1:jiachen].

bureaucrats for his enthronement.[434] Immediately after he ascended the throne, the new emperor made a promise to terminate the voyages in his inaugural decree.[435]

Nevertheless, the reign of Emperor Hongxi did not last for long. The emperor suddenly died in 1425/06 and his son ascended the throne as Emperor Xuande. The character and the leadership style of this new emperor were notably like his grandfather, Emperor Yongle. Under his leadership, the Ming court reinitiated the voyages in 1430,[436] immediately after the death of Xia Yuanji 夏元吉, the court minister who managed the empire's finance for three decades and strongly opposed the voyages.[437] In the end, the court's fleets sailed out again and this was the seventh voyage led by Zheng He.

The bureaucrats did not give up and they achieved final success after 1435 when Emperor Xuande died and his son succeeded to the throne as Emperor Zhengtong. The new emperor was only an eight-year-old boy when he ascended the throne, and thus, the bureaucrats held complete power in the following decade. The bureaucrats seized this opportunity and made massive and rapid efforts to abort the voyages permanently. First of all, they cancelled all further voyage plans and dismissed the imperial navy by dissolving relevant offices and demolishing the sea-going vessels. Specifically, the Commandant of Sea-going Vessels (*haichuan shoubei* 海船守備) was abolished as early as 1435/03 and the relevant troop was dismissed in 1435/10. Meanwhile, the sea-going vessels were demolished or modified to 'fast boats (*kuaichuan* 快船)' that could not sail on the deep sea. The

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[434] The competition for the throne between Emperor Hongxi and his elder brother was very intense during the Yongle reign. Emperor Hongxi finally defeated his brother, who was supported by the military, and ascended the throne, because he had full support from the bureaucrats. See Hok-Lam Chan (1988).

[435] *Ming Renzong shilu* 1:4b-11a, v.15, pp. 0008-0021 [Yongle.22:7:yimao]; Hok-Lam Chan, (1988), pp. 278-9.

[436] *Ming Xuanzong shilu* 67:3b-4a, v.19, pp. 1576-1577 [Xuande.5:6:wuyin]. Also see Louise Levathes, (1994), pp. 167-81.

[437] On the biography of Xia Yuanji, see *Ming shi*, Book 149, v.14, pp. 4150-4155.

modification was made under the pretext of better defence against piracy.[438] Besides, the court also stopped transporting tax grain to Beijing by the sea route. Instead, it turned to and relied more and more on the canal for tax delivery. Correspondingly, the marines were transferred to river transport work.[439] Moreover, the court held half of the transport ships in Beijing, in order to further weaken the power of the navy.[440] In short, the bureaucracy was swift to dismember the empire's naval force.

Second, the bureaucrats terminated the massive production of the export products and the purchase of relevant materials. By drafting the inaugural decree for the child emperor, the bureaucrats cancelled most manufacture and official purchases of products, including silk cloth, porcelain, and iron wares. At the same time, they called back all the eunuchs and officials who had been sent to supervise the manufacture or to make purchases.[441] The implication was that the court stopped producing goods for export.

Third, the bureaucrats made efforts to discourage overseas visits to Ming China. The bureaucrats urged foreign delegations to leave China from 1435/04.[442] Instead of arranging another voyage to send all those visitors back to their home countries as usual, the court sent the foreign delegations to Malacca and asked them to change ships at Malacca.[443] From then on, the Ming court never offered transport to the overseas visiting missions. In addition, the court also reduced the reception fee for overseas visitors. According to the new regulation,

[438] Even though *shilu* only records the case in Zhejiang, this indicates the bureaucrats' efforts to dismember the imperial navel. See *Ming Yingzong shilu* 3:2b-3a, v.22, pp. 0066-0067 [Xuande.10:3:jimao], 10:8a, v.22, p. 0199 [Xuande.10:10:jiazi].
[439] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 9:3b-4a, v.22, pp. 0172-0173 [Xuande.10:9:xinsi], 31:5a-6b v.23, pp. 0617-0620 [Zhengtong.2:6:yihai].
[440] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 15:8a-9a, v.22, pp.0289-0291 [Zhengtong.1:3:jiashen], 18:4a, v.23, p.0355 [Zhengtong.1:6:yisi].
[441] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 1:5a-9b, v.22, pp. 0009-0018 [Xuande.10:1:renwu].
[442] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 1:9b-10a, v.22, p. 0019 [Xuande.10:1:yiyou], 4:1a-3a, v.22, pp. 0081-0083 [Xuande.10:4:renyin], 7:2b-3a, v.22, pp. 0130-0131 [Xuande:10:7:yihai], 11:3b-4a, v.22, pp. 0206-0207 [Xuande.10:11:dingchou].
[443] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 4:1a-3a, v.22, pp. 0081-0083 [Xuande.10:4:renyin].

the court would no longer receive the entire delegation from overseas, which usually consisted of hundreds of people. Instead, only the envoy and several representatives were allowed to visit the capital city.[444] Meanwhile, the bureaucrats even attempted to limit the volume of the trade by confining the tributary exchange to high quality goods only.[445] Moreover, the court brought up the restriction on the frequency of tributary visits paid by overseas states again.[446] Corespondingly, the court reduced the group size of the Maritime Trade Supervisorate, the office that was responsible for receiving overseas visitors.[447] By these means, the court clarified its new stand on maritime trade that the Ming court would no longer be enthusiastic for maritime trade.

Apart from terminating the voyages, the bureaucrats also revised the fiscal practices established from Emperor Yongle's reign. They were impatient to impose restraint on the emperor's fiscal power. In the same month when they controlled the court in 1435/01, the bureaucrats carried out a comprehensive audit of the palace, the finance of which was conventionally conducted by the eunuchs. The bureaucrats requested every eunuch's office to enumerate the palace's revenues and expenditures in the past years and its current inventory.[448] In the meantime, they took over the imperial treasuries from the eunuchs and made a comprehensive inventory of all storehouses in the two capital cities.[449] Also, they deprived the eunuchs of their right to directly receive governmental revenue.[450] Moreover, the eunuchs were requested to hand over the inventory of overseas products to the court in

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[444] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 3:1b, v.2, p.0064 [Xuande.10:3:dingyou].
[445] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 31:1b-2b, v.23, pp. 0610-0612 [Zhengtong.2:6:jiazi].
[446] In 1437/06, the court imposed a constraint on Champa missions, requesting them to visit China every three years rather than annually. *Ming Yingzong shilu* 31:7b-8b, v.23, pp. 0622-0624 [Zhengtong.2:6:jiashen]. The court imposed a similar constraint on the Java as well in 1443/07. *Ming Yingzong shilu* 106:8a-8b, v.24, pp. 2161-2162 [Zhengtong.8:7:xinsi].
[447] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 21:7b, v.23, p. 0416 [Zhengtong.1:8:jiashen], 27:5a, v.23, p. 0539 [Zhengtong.2:2:renshen].
[448] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 1:16a, v.22, p. 0031 [Xuande.10:1:jihai].
[449] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 15:1a-2a, v.22, pp. 0275-0277 [Zhengtong.1:3:dingmao].
[450] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 3:6a-6b, v.22, pp. 0073-0074 [Xuande.10:3:jichou].

the name of the child emperor.[451] With these measures, the bureaucrats largely confined the fiscal power of the eunuchs. In essence, they confined the fiscal power of the emperor.

After discovering the palace's real financial situation, the bureaucrats decided to impose a clear limitation on the emperor's fiscal power. In short, they separated the emperor's account from the government's treasury. In 1436/08, the court approved a proposal forwarded by Zhou Quan 周銓, Zhao Xin 趙新, and other officials, according to which 15 percent of the empire's tax grain would be converted to silver and allocated as an exclusive fund to the emperor.[452] This special fund was later known as 'gold floral silver (*jinhua yin* 金花銀)'. This fund was transferred to and stored in one of the inner-office treasuries, *nei chengyun ku* 內承運庫. From then on, this inner-office treasury became the 'Palace Treasury' exclusively belonging to the emperor.[453] By this mean, the bureaucrats confined the emperor's expenditure to a fixed amount of money and separated it from the public funds. In 1442, the court founded a principal treasury, the National Silver Vault (*taicang ku* 太倉庫), to handle most kinds of revenues collected from all over the empire. This treasury was under the direct charge of a bureaucratic department, the Ministry of Revenue. Since then, a tacit but clear line between the imperial treasury and the emperor's storehouse was drawn. In a sense, by separating the emperors' treasury from the nation's coffers, the bureaucrats built a firewall to protect their financial authority against intervention from the emperor.

In this way, the bureaucrats dissolved Emperor Yongle's fiscal practices and established a new convention to deal with their financial relationship with the emperors. By

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[451] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 15:13a-13b, v.22, pp. 0299-0300 [Zhengtong.1:3:jiawu].
[452] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 21:6b-7b, v.23, pp. 414-416 [Zhengtong.1:8:gengchen].
[453] This was also a measure to reduce tax on the people. For further discussion of this fund, see Ray Huang, (1974), pp. 10, 52-53. On the function of the *nei chengyun ku* and the National Silver Vault, see *Da Ming huidian*, Book 30, v,789, pp. 540-551; *Zhuozhong zhi*, Book 16, pp. 501-531; and *Ming shi*, Book 78, v.7, pp. 1901-1902.

designated a treasury as a personal coffer of the emperor and allocating a certain sum of money to this coffer, the bureaucrats prevented the emperor from encroaching on government revenue without constitutional restraints. By defining the voyages as a waste of both labour and money, they stopped the later emperors from arbitrarily extending their financial authority again through the court-sponsored voyages. In short, at the time when the emperor was too young to fight for his interests, the bureaucrats seized fiscal power by abolishing many old practices and policies that favoured the emperors.

The written records imply that, Emperor Zhengtong intended to initiate the voyages again when he grew up and started exerting influence on the court affairs. In 1439/04, three years before he officially assumed the power, the emperor specially ordered to build a new sea-going vessel for the Bangladesh mission upon the request of one of the Bengal envoys, who was a Chinese, because 'the emperor thought that the [overseas] Chinese could solicit [visits from] foreign states'.[454] Three months later in 1439/07, the emperor gave the Ryūkyū envoys a new vessel as well, disregarding the opposition from the bureaucrats.[455] In 1442, Emperor Zhengtong assumed the reins of government upon coming of age. The frequency of visits from other overseas states, like Siam and Java, increased as well.[456] Even the envoys of an Indian Ocean state, Sri Lanka, visited Ming China again ten years after their last visit in 1436.[457] Meanwhile, the Ming court again dispatched missions to overseas states including

[454] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 54:7a—7b, v.24, pp. 1045-1046 [Zhengtong.4:4:jiachen].
[455] But, in this case, the emperor made a compromise. Instead of building a new vessel for the Ryūkyūese, the court gave the Ryūkyū mission one of the three existing vessels belonged to the Fujian government. *Ming Yingzong shilu* 57:10b-11a, v.24, p. 1102-1103 [Zhengtong.4:7:jiaxu]. Probably as a countermeasure against the emperor's pro-trade tendency, in the next month, the Fujian government complained about the overspending on receiving the Ryūkyū missions and requested to reduce the reception fee for foreign envoys. *Ming Yingzong shilu* 58:5a-6b, v.24, pp. 1113-1116 [Zhengtong.4:8:gengyin]
[456] See Table C in the Appendix.
[457] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 141:5a-6a, v.28, pp. 2791-2793 [Zhengtong.11:5:gengchen].

Champa,[458] and Sumatra.[459] These events suggest a change of maritime trade policy in this period. They also indicates Emperor Zhengtong's increasing influence in the court and his positive and encouraging attitude towards maritime trade. In 1446/04, the emperor even planned to punish a high-ranking official for delaying giving the Ryūkyū envoys a sea-going vessel.[460] This punishment was unimaginable just a few years ago when the bureaucrats dominated the court.[461]

However, this pro-trade policy ended in 1449 because of the military and political disaster, in which the emperor was captured by the Mongolians.[462] Immediately after the enthronement of the new emperor, the bureaucrats imposed constraints on the maritime trade again.[463] From then on, the empire had to shift its major concern to the inland border security issues, which gave the bureaucrats a better pretext not to invest money in foreign voyages. Although some later emperors and eunuchs attempted to initiate the voyages again, none of them succeeded, since the bureaucrats took strict precautions against the resurgence of this project.[464]

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458 The Ming court sent missions to Champa in 1443/05. Ming Yingzong shilu 104:3b-4a, v.27, pp. 2102-2103 [Zhengtong.8:5:renxu].

459 In 1446/05, the court dispatched a mission to Sumatra on the pretext of sending back the refugees who arrived in China in 1436. *Ming Yingzong shilu* 141:1a-1b, v.28, pp. 2783-2784 [Zhengtong.11:5:jisi].

460 *Ming Yingzong shilu* 140:4b-5b, v.28, pp. 2776-2778 [Zhengtong.11:4:dingsi].

461 Refer to the above footnote about the case in 1439/07, when the emperor intended to build a vessel for the Ryūkyūnese. Again in 1447/08, another vessel was built for the Javanese envoys. *Ming Yingzong shilu* 157:2a-2b, v.29, pp. 3053-3054 [Zhengtong.12:8:guihai].

462 This crisis was known as the Tumubao Crisis (Tumubao zhibian 土木堡之變). On this event, see Denis Twichett and Tilemann Grimm (1988), pp. 305-338.

463 *Ming Yingzong shilu* 185:7b-8a, v.30, pp. 3678-3679 [Zhengtong.14:11:yiyou].

464 For example, to dissuade the emperor from dispatching new fleets, some high-ranking bureaucrats ordered the destruction of the government archives of Zheng He's voyages, when Emperor Chenghua (r. 1465-1487) called for consultation. See *Shuyu zhouzi lu*, pp. 307-8. Besides the case of the governmental archives, the contest between the emperors and the bureaucrats also proceeded in various other events, including the case of fishing for pearls in 1459 and the case of catching yellow croaker in the late 1450s.

From then, the Ming court did not arrange any large-scale voyages to the overseas world. Trade between the court and overseas states was conducted only when a foreign mission visited China. The trade in this form was later known as the 'tributary trade'. Nevertheless, the trading volume was incomparable with what it was before 1435, because the court no longer implemented any preferential policies to encourage foreign visits. Consequently, the early Ming trading system declined dramatically.

In the meantime, the written records suggest that the bureaucrats, particularly the coastal administration, moved to lift the maritime exclusion policy by weakening the enforcement of the ban. As early as 1431/09, the administration of Zhejiang province proposed to slightly lift the sailing ban and allow the coastal residents to catch fish in coastal waters, however, Emperor Xuande, who was planning a new expedition to the Western Ocean, rejected this proposal decisively.[465] In 1437/07, two years after the enthronement of the child-emperor, the same proposal submitted from the Southern zhili was approved by the court.[466] Apparently, as the bureaucrats came to power and terminated the state-sponsored voyages, it was no longer necessary for the court to exclude the private sector from maritime business with the strict prohibition on private sailing. Instead, the local administrations had a strong motive to boost the local economy by opening the coastal border. In this way, the local governments actually created a grey area between legal (catching fish) and illegal (colluding with overseas people) to encourage private overseas trade.

However, the process of re-opening the coast did not proceed smoothly. While the local administrations consciously loosened their control over the coastal border, they did not

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465 *Ming Xuanzong shilu*83:3b-4a, vo.20, pp. 1916-1917 [Xuande.6:9:renshen].

466 In fact, as early as 1431, officials from Zhejaing province had proposed to lift the ban on catching fish, but Emperor Xuande rejected this proposal. See *Ming Xuanzong shilu*83:3b-4a, vo.20, pp. 1916-1917 [Xuande.6:9:renshen]. Not until 1437 did the court approve the proposal from Nan zhili to lift the ban on catching fish. See *Ming Yingzong shilu* 32:1a-1b, v.23, pp.0625-0626 [Zhengtong.2:7:gengyin].

formulate new rules to regulate private involvement in the sea-borne business. In this context, private maritime trade was booming from the late 1430s in the form of smuggling, accompanied with piracy. Naturally, several gangs of pirates developed, and their power and influence expanded dramatically without proper restraints in the coastal provinces and on the seas. From 1447, piracy developed into rebellions and chaos reached its peak in 1449 and 1450.[467] Among those rebel forces, the one that was under the leadership of Huang Xiaoyang 黄蕭養 played an extremely destructive role in coastal areas. In late 1449, Huang mobilized massive teams of pirates with more than three hundreds on sea-going ships to attack the seashore and for months laid siege to Guangzhou 廣州, the most significant city in the southeast region.[468] Although Huang was executed in mid-1450,[469] his confederates remained and made trouble in the following years.

Against this backdrop, the court reaffirmed sailing bans again in 1449/06.[470] As the editor of the *shilu* noted, it was the turbulence caused by Huang that pushed the court to strengthen government control of the coastal border.[471] From the perspective of the central government, the decision to reimplement the maritime exclusion policy was unquestionably reasonable, given that the empire was still in a military confrontation with the Mongolians on the northern inland border and it needed a stable backyard in the south. Out of a similar consideration, the court reaffirmed the policy respectively in 1452/06, 1459/07, and 1460/07.[472]

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[467] On the chaotic in coastal region, see *Ming Yingzong shilu* 170-179, 181-195; also see Denis Twitchett, and Tilemann Grimm, (1988), pp. 303-7, 328-9.
[468] On the experience of Huang Xiaoyang, see *Ming Yingzong shilu* 183-193.
[469] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 193:4b-5b, v.31, pp. 4032-4034 [Jingtai.1:6:jimao].
[470] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 179:12b-13a, v.30, pp. 3474-3475 [Zhengtong.14:6:renshen]..
[471] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 217:5a-5b, v.33, p.4635-4636 [Jingtai.3:6:xinsi].
[472] *Ming Yingzong shilu* 217:5a-5b, v.33, p.4635-4636 [Jingtai.3:6:xinsi], 305:1a-1b, v.37, pp. 6433-6434[Tianshun.3:7:xinsi], 317:4b-5a, v.37, pp. 6614-6615 [Tianshun.4:7:jichou].

This move, however, reversed the local administrations' efforts to reboot the coastal economy. From then on, the two sides of the dispute over the *haijin* policy shifted from the emperor and the bureaucrats in the court to the central government and the coastal administrations. With the tacit consent of the local authorities, private overseas trade grew rapidly in the second half of the fifteenth century, regardless of the court's strict orders.[473] In the following century, the coastal administrations made continuous efforts to legitimize the private trade. Thanks to their efforts, coastal shipping became legal in Fujian province after 1452/01 and in Zhejiang after 1472.[474] In the period from the 1490s to the 1510s, the local bureaucrats even successfully convinced the court to permit foreign merchants to visit and trade in the Guangdong province.[475]

These new regulations actually left loopholes in the maritime exclusion policy. Making uses of these loopholes, the private sector rapidly filled the business vacuum left by the official trading missions in the second half of the fifteenth century. Given that the court actually did not lift the ban on private sailing until the 1570s, the business conducted by the private sector was still defined as 'smuggling' at the time.

Lin Renchuan argues that the rise of private maritime trade in the Ming period was a response to the strict implementation of the maritime exclusion policy.[476] This is inaccurate. Instead, the trade boom was caused by the decline of the early Ming trading system in the

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473 A travel account written by a Korean shipwreck victim in 1488, Ch'oe Pu (崔溥), recorded the economic prosperity promoted by maritime trade in China's southern coastal regions. Refer to his *Kŭmnam P'yohaerok* 錦南漂海錄.

474 *Ming Yingzong shilu* 212:2a-2b, v.22, pp. 4559-4560 [Jingtai.3:1:renyin], *Ming Xianzong shilu* 108:5a-6b, v.44, pp. 2103-2106 [Chenghua.8:9:jiyou]. This regulation was reaffirmed by the court repeatedly thereafter. See *Da Ming huidian*. Book 132:20a-23b, v.791, pp. 346-347; *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 206:1a-1b, v.60, pp. 3823-3824 [Hongzhi.16:12:wuxu]; *Ming Wuzong shilu* 17:8a-8b, v.62, pp. 0519-0520 [Zhengde.1:9:renchen].Also se *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 209:5b-8a, v.60, pp. 3886-3891 [Hongzhi.17:3:dingchou].

475 *Ming Xiaozong shilu* 92:6a-6b, v.55, pp. 1693-1694 [Hongzhi.7:9:jihai]. *Ming Wuzong shilu* 149:8b-9b, v.68, pp. 2910-2912 [Zhengde.12:5:xinchou]. Also see *Ming*
Ming Shizong shilu 4:27a-28a, v.70, pp. 0207-0209 [Zhengde.16:7:jimao].

476 Lin Renchuan (1987); Lin Renchuan (1990).

1440s, which was a product of the cut-throat financial competition between the emperor and the bureaucrats, and by the appearance of competition over border governance between the central and local governments.

4.4 Summary: The economic significance of the *haijin* policy

Maritime trade had generated sizable revenue for China as early as the Song dynasty. Although the Ming authority prohibited private overseas trade with the maritime exclusion policy, China still achieved a respectful amount of cash flow from the state-monopolized trade.

It should be pointed out that the Ming maritime exclusion policy was not a comprehensive trade ban, which blocked China from the international markets. Rather, it was part of the reform that regulated overseas trade and fixed the pitfalls of the previous trading system. With this policy, the Ming government prevented the oligarchs from jostling against regular merchants and encroaching on government revenue. Moreover, the maritime exclusion policy helped the court to establish a monopoly on maritime commerce, which not only generated more revenue for the state but also improved the trade balance for China. In fact, the Yuan authority had initiated similar reforms in the early thirteenth century, but it failed to sustain the policy. In contrast, the Ming authority succeeded in implementing reforms and achieved sustainable revenue from the business.

However, the Ming trading system operated for only around half a century and became unsustainable after the reign of Emperor Zhengtong (1435-1449), although the final collapse of the system did not take place until 1567. Many historians attribute the sixteenth-century collapse of the early Ming trade system to the fifteenth-century rise of the private sector, which was the inevitable result of the fourteenth-century politico-ideological and socio-economic system that was characterised by various contradictions. The major contradication that destabilised the system was that, on the one hand, the court wanted to suppress trade and the private power of merchants, but on the other hand, it permitted trade and did not abolish the principles of profit calculation and trade for profit.[477] The state-dominated trade system violated economic principles: the market probably would have been more efficient than the government regarding commercial affairs. Therefore, from a long-term perspective, the collapse of the early Ming trade system and the rise of the private sector in trade may have been two inevitable outcomes.

While not disputing the reasons for the eventual collapse, this thesis presents a different perspective on the policy failure in the short term. The early Ming trade system malfunctioned not because the system was running at a loss. That would develop over time. Instead, the early policy failure was a result of the irreconcilable dispute over the distribution of trade income and tax revenue between the two fiscal authorities in the court. The emperors like Emperor Yongle and Emperor Xuande tried to impose a tight control on the imperial treasuries and establish absolute power over the budget process through the court-sponsored overseas voyages project, while the bureaucrats boycotted the voyages in an attempt to resist the emperors' encroachment on their fiscal power. Finally, in the late 1430s, the bureaucratic government seized the opportunity of the enthronement of a child emperor and limited the emperors' fiscal power. In order to prevent the later emperors from expanding their fiscal authority again by reinitiating the court-sponsored voyages, the bureaucrats labelled the voyages a waste of treasure and put various obstacles in the way of emperors trying to develop trade overseas. As the court called off the state-sponsored voyages, the Ming's trading system collapsed.

While the maritime exclusion policy was still in force after the 1430s, the local governments slightly relaxed the prohibition on sailing to improve the coastal people's

[477] Angela Schottenhammer (2005) and Li Kangying (2010).

livelihood. The central government tacitly consented to this practice. Thereafter, the private sector began to fill the vacuum left by the official trading missions in a semi-legal way. As the private overseas business was booming in the second half of the fifteenth century, the court had growing concerns about how to administer the border-crossing commercial activities and the accompanying security problems. From the 1490s, the Ming authority, particularly the local governments in the coastal provinces like Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang, started exploring a new way of trade administration. The sixteenth century witnessed reversals of the trade policy, which caused serious social chaos in the coastal region. The court thus tightened the maritime exclusion policy again after the 1520s when the problem of piracy had remerged as a major threat to coastal security in East Asia. Not until 1567 did the court formally legitimize private navigation and overseas trade.

Chapter 5

Chosŏn Korea's trade control policy

From the perspective of scholars like Lee Hun-Chang and Peter Temin, Chosŏn Korea's *haegŭm* policy was a non-economic policy.[478] It is commonly to suppose that Chosŏn's decision makers implemented *haegŭm* for security and diplomatic reasons even though they realized this policy damaged the commercial interests of the kingdom. This chapter will argue that economic concern played a significant role in the decision-making process. Specifically, the Chosŏn court suppressed maritime trade, because it attempted to regulate the trade within a reasonable scale, in order to protect its economy from excessive trade.

5.1 The excessive trade between Chosŏn Korea and the Japanese

Korea witnessed a dramatic decline of maritime trade in the mid-fourteenth century, because of the Japanese pirate attacks that appeared after 1350. Not until the 1390s did the costal security situation improve, which led to the recovery of maritime trade in the 1400s. In order to cement the diplomatic relationship with the Japanese, Chosŏn opened its market and encouraged free trade with the Japanese at the beginning. The Korean government even drew on a national reserve to fund the trade. However, as the trade thrived after the 1410s, it soon became a tremendous and often unaffordable burden on the Chosŏn court.

5.1.1 The initiation of maritime commerce

Korean merchants had been deeply engaged in the maritime trade in East Asian waters before the twelfth century. However, they faced an increasingly intense competition

[478] Lee, Hun-Chang and Peter Temin (2010).

from their Japanese counterparts from the thirteenth century. Since then, the Korean maritime merchants were gradually squeezed out of China's coastal waters, which was the most significant overseas trade destination for Korea.[479] Because of the rise of Japanese pirates, the Koreans retreated from the sea rapidly in the second half of the century. They even had to give up the coastal farmlands on the peninsula, avoiding assaults from the pirates. As *sillok* points out, the coast 'became desolate' and 'completely empty' after 1350.[480] According to the Chinese records of the conversation between the Ming emperor and the Koryŏ envoys in 1369, there were no people living within 30 to 50 *li* 里 (approximately 13.5 to 22.5 kilometres) of the coast in Korea.[481] In this context, maritime trade became impossible for regular Korean merchants. Only the Korean marines could conduct trade to some extent.[482]

Not until the 1380s did the trade environment improve. The reasons for the trade recovery were twofold. First, Yi Sŏnggye, who later became Chosŏn's King T'aejo, and his troops successfully defeated the Japanese pirates many times after the 1370s and greatly strengthened coastal border security. Thanks to the military victory led by Yi, the coastal region experienced an economic recovery in the 1380s and 1390s.[483] In 1401/07, the Chosŏn court began to measure the seashore farmlands and collect tax from the coastal residents.[484] This was an indication of coastal economic recovery, which was a precondition for maritime trade recovery. The second reason was that the newly established Korean dynasty actively

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[479] Billy So (2000).

[480] *T'aejo sillok* 11:2b-4a, v.1, pp. 100-101 [T'aejo.6:2:kap-o], 11:14a-14b, v.1, p.106 [T'aejo.6:5:chŏng-sa].

[481] *Ming Taizu shilu* 46:1a-3a, v.3, pp. 0907-0911 [Hongwu.2:10:renxu]; *li* 里 is a measuring unit of distance. 1 *li* = 449.17 m (see "Korean History Glossary"). Thus, 30 *li* =13475.1 m = 13.4751 km; 50 *li* = 22458.5 m = 22.4585 km. It would be 10 to 16.6 miles (15 to 25 kilometers) if we calculate this with Chinese measure (1 *li* = 1/3 miles).

[482] On the trade conducted by the marines, see Chapter 2.

[483] *T'aejo sillok* 8b-9a, v.1, p. 77 [T'aejo.4:4:im-o], 6:14b-15a, v.1, pp. 69-70 [T'aejo.3:9:kap-in], *Chŏngjong sillok* 1:7a-8a, v.1, pp. 146-147 [Chŏngjong.1:3:kap-sin], 4:13a-13b, v.1, p. 174 [Chŏngjong.2:5:sin-sa].

[484] *T'aejong sillok* 2:3a-6b, v.2, pp. 209-210 [T'aejong.1:7:kyŏng-sul].

cooperated with Ming China and the Ashikaga *bakufu* to re-establish the international order on the Northeast Asian waters. As the relationships among these three East Asian maritime powers became normalized in the early 1400s,[485] regular trade became feasible.

However, the trade situation in this era was different from that before the thirteenth century. Although commerce was reinitiated, the Koreans were still absent from the deep-sea shipping trade. Even though the Ashikaga *bakufu* and the Kyūshū authorities made promises to restrain the pirates, their influences on the islanders in west Japan was actually indirect and limited. Thus, neither the Korean government nor the Japanese *bakufu* was able to put an end to the piracy in the region. The islanders' armed ships still dominated the open sea around the peninsula, and they were always happy to plunder the Korean vessels if possible. Given the considerable risk of being assaulted, the Koreans confined their marine activities to the coastal waters.[486] Meanwhile, they passively waited for and traded with the visiting merchants from overseas countries.

Besides, Ming China's maritime exclusion policy also gave Korea an incentive to retreat from the sea. At Chinese request, the Chosŏn court no longer sent envoys by sea routes but turned to overland communication after the 1400s. As the trade between China and Korea was increasingly proceeding by the land route, Korea relied less on sea-borne trade.

In this context, the Chosŏn court gave little attention to maritime trade at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the marine trade was reinitiated. While the Japanese envoy cordially invited the Korean merchants to visit and trade in Japan in 1399/07, after the

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485 In order to strengthen their political authority respectively after civil wars, Emperor Yongle in China, King T'aejong in Korea, and Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in Japan tacitly promoted the normalization among the three countries through diplomatic channels. For further discussion about this normalization, see Chapter 3.
486 The Chosŏn administration showed a strong interest in the coastal transportation of tax grain from the southern provinces to the capital city. To boost this industry, the court started expanding its transport fleet from 1401. On the court discussion of sea transpiration of tax grain, see *T'aejong sillok* 2:6b-7a, v.2, pp. 210-211 [T'aejong.1:8:mu-o]; on the expansion of the transport fleet, see *T'aejong sillok* 3:25b-26a, v.3, pp. 233-234 [T'aejong.2:5:pyŏng-sul].

bakufu had forced the islanders to be submissive,[487] the Chosŏn court gave no response to this invitation. Although envoys from both sides continually commuted across the strait and presented gifts to each other in the following several years, they never got on to the subject of private trade. It seemed that the Chosŏn court was satisfied with gift exchange, which is known as 'tributary trade' by modern historians, even though the volume of this type of exchange was very small at the time. Besides, there is no record indicating that any Korean merchants regularly sailed overseas for trade at the time.[488] Correspondingly, the court did not make any policy to regulate the ordinary trade.

In contrast, the Japanese, particularly those who lived on Tsushima, had a very strong desire to trade with Korea, because many of them financially relied on this trade.[489] After the Korean-Japanese diplomatic relationship was normalized in the Chŏngjong period (1398-1399), many Japanese islanders made use of their naval advantage to conduct the cross-strait trade with Korea. They primarily exchanged Korea's grains and cloths with the archipelago products, including fish, salt, bronze ore, iron ore, and sulphur. They also traded tropical goods, like sappanwood and pepper, from the Ryūkyūan and Southeast Asian people and resold these to the Koreans. This was the beginning of the 'private trade (私貿易)' between

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[487] On the *bakufu*'s efforts to suppress the Tsushima pirates in 1398, see *Chŏngjong sillok* 1:12b-13b, v.1, pp. 148-149 [Chŏngjong.1:5:ŭl-yu]*;* On the Japanese invitation to trade in Japan, see *Chŏngjong sillok* 2:1a-1b, v.1, p. 151 [Chŏngjong.1:7:ki-sa]

[488] There is no direct evidence in *sillok* testifying that the Korean merchants carried out maritime trade in overseas states in the first half of the fifteenth century after the implementation of the sailing bans above. The only indirect evidence is a folk song that was collected by the government in 1431/10 from the coastal region. The main content of this song was a story about a wife welcoming her husband, who finished his trade on a sea-going ship and came back home. (*Sejong sillok* 54:4a-4b, v.3, p. 346 [Sejong.13:10:chŏng-yu]). Other than that, we see no record of maritime trade conducted by the Korean merchants. While the Korean delegations indeed conducted trade in Japan, the trading volume of these missions was limited because the court imposed strict administrative controls on this trade.

[489] For further discussion of Tsushima's economic reliance on Korea, refer to James B. Lewis (2003), pp.27-29. Also see Chapter 3.

Chosŏn and the Japanese.[490] Since the Chosŏn court was indifferent to the trade at the beginning, maritime trade unfolded in Korea without being officially administered. Hence, the Japanese merchant vessels were able to freely access Korea and boosted the trade without restraints. As a result, the Japanese actually monopolized Korea's commercial contacts with the overseas world and became Chosŏn's largest overseas trading partner.

In summary, although maritime commerce was reinitiated in Korea in the early fifteenth century, the trading situation was very different from the Koryŏ period. The kingdom concentrated on coastal shipping and the onshore trade, rather than maritime expansion. Ordinary trade expanded between coastal residents and Japanese visitors from the T'aejong reign (1401-1418), but few Korean merchants sailed the open sea and traded in overseas countries.

5.1.2 Trade expansion and market saturation

After the Chosŏn-Ashikaga normalization from the Chŏngjong reign (1398-1400), the Chosŏn court paid more attention to the gifts exchange between monarchs than the maritime trade conducted by ordinary people. This was because the volume of the maritime trade was too small to be noticed at the beginning. Also, it was an international norm established by Ming China that international trade should be exclusively conducted by the governments under a tributary system, rather than by private individuals. Therefore, the Chosŏn court had little concern for private trade nor did it work out specific regulations to administer the trade in the early 1400s. However, 'private trade' grew rapidly in a short period. Not until 1407 when the problems of 'free trade' became big enough to see did the court pay attention to the ordinary trade.

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[490] James Lewis categorizes Chosŏn's trade with the Japanese into four forms 'in descending order of institutional importance': tribute, official, private, and illegal trade (smuggling). James B. Lewis (2003), pp. 87, 109.

In 1407/07, the Army Deputy Commander (*Pyŏngma Chŏlchesa* 兵馬節制使) in Kyŏngsang-do suddenly presented a memorial to the court about violent conflicts between Japanese visitors and Korean residents in the trading ports and coastal towns. In his report, the commander argued that it was 'inappropriate' for the Japanese merchant ships to anchor scattered across different harbours, because they might spy on Chosŏn's naval vessels. Also, he indicated that the visitors unrestrainedly made contacts with Japanese immigrants in Korea, which might lead to collusions against the kingdom. In regard to these risks, the commander provided solutions, including strengthening the coastal defence, moving the Japanese immigrants to inland regions, and designating certain harbours in which visiting ships could lie at anchor.[491]

This report reminded the court that the ordinary trade was growing fast and making problems for the kingdom. Immediately, King T'aejong conferred with the State Council (*Ŭijŏngbu* 議政府) about matters of Japanese visiting merchants. The quotation below is a briefing on the court discussion:

> The State Council reported [to King T'aejong], saying: 'the Japanese merchant ships constantly sail out [from Japan] and visit Kyŏngsang-do. Sometimes, there are dozens [of vessels] arriving [in Kyŏngsang-do] at the same time. Those who failed to trade easily lingered [along the coast] or barged into civilian residences. [They] forced [the residents] to sell [grains] and disturbed [the locals]. From now on, [the local governments should] trade with the Japanese ships that are anchored in the designated harbours, [selling them] the grain stocked for many years in the coastal official granaries at a market price. After prompting the Japanese ships to return to

[491] *T'aejong sillok* 14:10a-11b, v.1, p. 407 [T'aejong.7:7:mu-in].

> [their] home islands, [the governments should] load the fish and salt [they bought] on to the official ships, [which will] return to and anchor in the upper (northern) [part of the] province by the Nakdong River. The residents from various places, who volunteer [to trade, are allowed to] sell grains or cloth to the government. [The grain and cloth would be] conveyed to the [official] granaries and storehouses'. [King T'aejong] accepted it (this proposal).[492]

It is interesting to note that, while the Army Deputy Commander in Kyŏngsang-do worried about the military threats posed by foreign ships, the policy makers in the court approached the issue from a different perspective. Instead of concerning themselves with the loopholes in the coastal border security system, the State Council focused on the economic impact from the Japanese visitors. The bureaucrats noticed that the number of the Japanese visits not only notably increased but also wildly fluctuated over time. The council also highlighted that many trouble makers were those who 'failed to trade'. The bureaucrats' concerns suggest that they actually analysed and interpreted the disputes from an economic aspect.

Substantially, it was a problem of imbalance between the Japanese demand for trade and Korea's small coastal economies' capability to meet this demand. On the one hand, the private trade rapidly increased and overseas goods constantly flooded into Korea; on the other hand, the scale of the coastal border markets was limited and too small to consume all products from the Japanese. As a result, the coastal markets had become saturated by 1407, seven years after the trade was reinitiated. Therefore, the Japanese could not sell all their

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[492] '議政府啓曰: 興利倭船, 連續出來, 至慶尙道, 一時或至數十隻; 以無貿易者, 動輒留連, 或散入民戶, 抑賣驚擾. 今後定處到泊倭船, 以沿海各官倉庫陳米豆, 從時價貿易, 使其倭船卽還本島之後, 將所貿魚鹽, 載於官船, 洛東江回泊於上道, 各官自願人民, 勿論米布和賣, 納諸倉庫. 從之'. *T'aejong sillok* 14:10a-11b, v.1, p. 407 [T'aejong.7:7:mu-in].

stock smoothly as they did before. Experiencing repeated trade failures, the Japanese merchants accumulated resentment and thus vented their anger on the Koreans.

A testimony given by a Tsushima islander a month later supports this interpretation. In 1407/08, the commander in Kyŏngsang-do reported information from his Japanese informants that 'the Japanese pirates on [Tsushima] Island' were planning to commit piracy against Korea again, because 'the trade with Chosŏn did not satisfy what [they] desired'.[493]

Apparently, the public order problem arose because of the insufficiency of trade. This judgement explains the court's response. Rather than restrain the Japanese access to Korea or ban the maritime trade, the administration made efforts to meet the Japanese demand for trade by involving itself in the trade directly. As the above quotation shows, the court instructed the local governments to use official grain reserve to purchase overseas goods so that they could send back the Japanese merchants as soon as possible. Then, the local governments were asked to convey and resell the imported products, which the coastal markets could hardly consume, to the inland regions. Meanwhile, the inland buyers were requested to pay grain and cloth directly to the official granaries.

With these means, the Chosŏn court established an emergency mechanism to cushion the small coastal economies against the impact of Japanese dumping. In the mechanism, the local governments acted as the buyer of last resort for Japanese goods that could not be sold. By introducing this mechanism, the court provided an effective and soft solution to the violent conflicts between Korean residents and the Japanese visitors. It was supposed that, as long as trade was done smoothly, the Japanese would leave Korea happily and immediately without creating trouble.

This was the origin of the 'official trade (公貿易)' in Chosŏn Korea, an alternative trade channel to gifts exchange between the monarchs. By conducting the 'official trade', the

[493] *T'aejong sillok* 14:10a-11b, v.1, p. 407 [T'aejong.7:7:mu-in].

court actually legitimized the private trade. In essence, the court attempted to suppress trade disputes with the Japanese by broadening its market access for overseas goods. This move significantly eased the burden on the coastal economies. To improve its market access and increase trade, the court implemented two specific supporting policies. For one thing, it provided free transport services by conveying goods with official ships. By conveying the overseas goods to the inland region, the court connected the Japanese sellers to the inland buyers; for another thing, it drew on regional grain reserves to finance the trade. In a sense, the court was providing 'liquidity' of grains, which was one of the hard currencies in international trade, to the market.

Moreover, it appears that the bureaucrats did not forget the deficiency of public grain reserves caused by the exchanges. Specifically, they planned to close the deficit by acquiring grains and refill the official granaries through the resale in inland markets. Besides, the court also benefited from this trade in two ways. First, the government might be able to make profits from the trade if it managed the trade properly, given that the price of overseas goods in the inland markets were generally higher than that in the trading ports. Second, the government could exchange old grains long stored with fresh crops to reduce standing loss.

In sum, while the border military commander was on the alert for security threats posed by the increase of overseas visits, the central government noticed the public-order troubles created by the Japanese and saw it as an economic problem. Hence, the court responded in an economic way, improving its market access and increasing trade to satisfy Japanese demand. It seemed that the new trading mechanism indeed improved the relations between the Korean residents and the Japanese visitors. There was no record of trade disputes in *sillok* in the following several years. Meanwhile, the number of pirate attacks decreased and stayed at the lowest level for a decade after 1408.[494]

But, in fact, the mechanism was far from perfect and the peace was not achieved at no cost. In 1409/11, the Office of the Censor-General (Saganwŏn 司諫院) reported that:

> In the last years, Chŏlla-do aided [the residents in] Cheju. Kyŏngsang-do subsidized the Japanese preferentially with [its] military provisions. [Because of these expenditures,] the granaries in these two provinces are almost used up. [That is something] worth worrying about.[495]

This report indicates a situation in which the provincial government's grain reserve had almost been exhausted only two years after the Korean administration began to engage into the private trade. It revealed a malfunction of the trading mechanism: the system failed to make up the grain deficit caused by the trade with the Japanese. This report raised a concern about provincial food insecurity, directly leading to a court discussion about land reform and other relevant economic policy changes a few days later.[496]

Moreover, the Japanese merchants also penetrated the inland regions as the markets in the coastal provinces became saturated. Given that the merchants were not allowed to leave the trading ports and travel to the inland areas, some Japanese merchants claimed that they were envoys from Japan who had arrived to present tribute to the Chosŏn court. With this

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[494] The decrease of piracy after 1408 might be explained by the change of geopolitical situation in East Asia. See Chapter 3.

[495] '近年以來, 全羅軍資, 賑濟濟州; 慶尙軍資, 優給倭奴, 二道倉庫, 幾乎虛竭, 甚可慮也'. *T'aejong sillok* 42:41a-42a, v.1, p. 517 [T'aejong.9:11:im-o].

[496] In order to increase the government's grain revenue, the court discussed a few days later about the possibility to regain land ownership from the aristocrats, exchange state-monopolized salt for grains, and to ask criminals to pay bail money in grains. See *T'aejong sillok* 42:44a-44b, v.1, p.518 [T'aejong.9:11:chŏong-hae].

excuse, many Japanese set out on the journey to the capital city and did trade with the locals along their routes. When they arrived in the capital city, these ‘envoys’ presented cheap items like a sword to the king and requested generous gifts. These practices caused a great increase in Chosŏn government spending and the court had to spend tons of grains on receiving these visitors. Meanwhile, the posthouses along their routes had to provide for reception and transportation expenses for these Japanese ‘diplomats’.[497]

By this means, the Japanese penetrated the inland region and dumped their goods on the local markets. Consequently, the inland markets became saturated soon enough, and the visitors started creating trouble as they did in the coastal residences. In 1414/09, the Ministry of Punishments (*Hyŏngjo* 刑曹) presented a draft of a proposed law to reduce crimes committed by the Japanese visitors. The Ministry explained the context of legislation to the court:

> In the past, the Japanese from various islands plundered our border regions. [They] may well deserve punishment [for] their wrongdoing. [However,] your highness…not only open up tributary relations [for the Japanese] but also permitted private trade, giving [them] whatever they demanded. Hence, [the Japanese]…come and present their treasures [to us] constantly. However, [the Japanese] are acquisitive and shameless. [They] make excessive requests as soon as they disembark from their vessels. The local counties [the Japanese] passed through suffered a lot from [their] presumptuous behaviour. [Some Japanese] even

[497] *Sejong sillok* 4:17b-18a, v.2, pp. 337-338 [Sejong.1:9:kye-hae].

> attacked the residents and robbed them of their money and treasure…[This situation] cannot be ignored.[498]

As the Japanese merchants continued to flood into Korea, the inland markets they 'passed by' shortly became saturated as well. Inevitably, trade disputes occurred between the visitors and the locals in a wider range of regions.[499] In 1407, disputes were largely between the coastal residents and the 'Japanese vessels', but, in 1414, even the residents in inland prefectures had troubles with the overseas visitors. In this context, the court had to resort to legal actions and suppressed the conflicts forcibly by extending its jurisdiction over foreign visitors.[500]

In 1424, even the market in the capital city became saturated, too. In 1424/01, the Ministry of Revenue (*hocho* 戶曹) reported that the Korean merchants in the capital were not able to consume all the 'private commodities' carried by the 'Japanese guests' because 'the people in the market' did not have enough 'treasure'.[501] In other words, even the goods collection and distribution center of the kingdom could, by the mid-1420s, no longer provide sufficient demand for the Japanese products.

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498 '曩者諸島之倭, 寇我邊境, 其罪當討. 殿下…旣通朝聘, 亦許貿易, 隨其所求以與之. 由是, 心悅誠服, 來獻其琛, 絡繹不絶. 然以嗜利無恥, 纔及下船, 便有徵求, 所過州縣, 益肆其毒, 以至刃傷人民, 攘奪錢財…不可不懲'. *T'aejong sillok* 28:19b, v.2, p. 34 [T'aejong.14:9:ŭl-hae].

499 Another factor that might account for the mounting dispute was Chosŏn's practice of tightening its control of trade in the mid-1410s. This was because of the mounting geopolitical tensions in East Asian waters in the 1410s, when an anti-Ming shogun came to power and terminated Japan's tributary relations with China. On further discussion about the geopolitical situation at the time, see Chapter 3.

500 It was inappropriate for the Koreans to further relax Japanese access to the kingdom at the time, considering the geopolitical tensions in East Asia at the time. Not only would it have posed security threats to the kingdom, but it would have also angered the Chinese, who were hostile towards the Japanese. On further discussion about the geopolitical situation at the time, see Chapter 3.

501 *Sejong sillok* 23:9a-9b, v.2, p. 575 [Sejong.6:1:sin-ch'uk].

The court had no alternative but to conduct 'official trade' in the capital city. It instructed the Ministry of Works (*kongcho* 工曹) and several other central government departments to take over the trade of the Japanese bulk goods, such as copper (銅), tin (鑞), sappanwood, and pepper.[502] Given that the court had already taken charge of the exchanges of Japanese copper and iron five months before in 1423/09,[503] the Korean government was now taking over most overseas trade. In other words, the court monopolized the trade, but it appears that the court intervened in the trade without the intention of monopolizing the trade. Instead, the court presented its policies as an attempt to protect local residents from the Japanese visitors' harassment by subsidizing the trade with its financial reserves.

Still, it was not enough as things progressed. In 1426, the Chosŏn court concluded a peace treaty with Tsushima and opened the Korean market to the islanders again.[504] In this context, the court lifted the ban on the private trade of sappanwood, copper, tin, and iron in 1427/08, because the trade of these bulky goods imposed a weighty burden on the government.[505] This policy change suggests that the court could no longer support the trade on its own and it had to open the trade to private merchants, sharing the burden of trade with the private sector.

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[502] *Sejong sillok* 23:9a-9b, v.2, p. 575 [Sejong.6:1:sin-ch'uk].

[503] The court monopolized the imported copper because of its monetary reform in pushing for a new currency system with cast, metal coins. Regarding the ban on the copper and iron trade, see *Sejong sillok* 21:19b, v.2, p. 557 [Sejong.5:9:kap-chin]. Also see *Sejong sillok* 37:17a-17b, v.3, p.89 [Sejong.9:8:kye-mi].

[504] The Chosŏn-Tsushima trade was severely affected by the 1419 military conflict between the two parties, but the Korean-Japanese trade continued, because the Japanese merchants from other regions like Kyūshū rushed to Korea and took over the market share that had been occupied by the Tushima islanders prior to 1419. This was exemplified by the changes in the number of Japanese visits over time from different regions during this period (see Section 3.5.2.1).

[505] *Sejong sillok* 37:17a-17b, v.3, p.89 [Sejong.9:8:kye-mi]. However, this ban was not permanently lifted. According to a record from 1434/03, the ban on private trade in iron, copper, and tin was still in force at the time. See *Sejong sillok* 63:31a-31b, v.3, p. 550, [Sejong.16:3:chŏng-yu].

Even though the Koreans did their utmost, the kingdom was still overwhelmed by the flood of Japanese products in a short time. Six months later, in 1428/02, the islanders appealed to the court again that they had lingered in the harbours for long 'because no people purchased [our goods]'. For the sake of the peace across the strait, the court had no alternative but to instruct the local administrators to bid for the Japanese goods with official grain reserves,[506] even though it had purchased large amounts of copper, tin, and iron just a month prior.[507]

In sum, by the mid-1420s, the Korean market had reached a saturation point where no more Japanese goods could be consumed. From the coastal regions to the inland areas, from the local administrations to the central government, and from the state to the private sector, the entire Chosŏn kingdom had become involved in maritime trade to meet the Japanese demand for trade. But every sector became overloaded with overseas commodities one by one. Notably, this scenario occurred within just three decades after the initiation of the ordinary trade between Chosŏn and the Japanese.

5.1.3 The court's overspending on the trade

To prevent the Japanese from harassing its residents and to maintain good relations with the Japanese, the Chosŏn court started the 'official trade' with the Japanese merchants from 1407. However, the official trade was running at a heavy loss even before the national market became saturated. The reason was twofold. First, the court's gross income from the trade was always negative. Because of the market saturation, the prices for Japanese goods naturally fell in the market. Against this backdrop, the Korean merchants did not want to import additional goods at high prices. Nonetheless, the Japanese refused to sell things at a

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[506] *Sejong sillok* 39:20a-21b, v.3, p. 116 [Sejong.10:2:ki-sa].
[507] The court purchased 20,000 *jin* (roughly 12,000 kilograms) of copper, tin, and iron from the Japanese in 1428/01. *Sejong sillok* 39:13a-13b, v.3, p. 112 [Sejong.10:1:mu-sin].

reduced price. Inevitably, disputes occurred between the Korean and the Japanese merchants. To resolve disputes, the court acted as the buyer of last resort and made sales turnover by reselling goods to the domestic market. When saturation occurred only in parts of the kingdom, the court could always recoup investment by selling its inventory of overseas products to the inland regions where the market prices were higher than the government purchasing prices. But when the entire kingdom became saturated, the court would not be able to get payback from the resale, because no one in the market would make a bid at prices higher than the government purchasing prices. In short, the court would lose money in every single deal if it kept buying high and selling low, resulting in the court's negative revenue from the trade.

Second, the indirect cost of the trade was high, because the court offered hospitality for the Japanese merchants. It was a diplomatic convention in East Asia at the time for governments to cover the expenses incurred by the presence of foreign envoys, including reception fees and land transportation services.[508] In addition, Chosŏn also established a routine to grant maritime travel subsidies (*kwahaeryang* 過海糧) to the Japanese envoys to cover their trips across the strait.[509] Originally, only formal diplomatic staff could enjoy this preferential treatment, and the private Japanese merchants had to pay their travelling fees by themselves. Nevertheless, to evade this distinction and draw reception and travel expenses

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[508] On the details about the specific treatments for each grade, refer to *Haedong chegukki*.
[509] The conversation between Sōda Saemontarō (早田左衛門大郎, ?-ca. 1428) and Chosŏn's envoys in 1425/12 indicates that Chosŏn gave maritime travel subsidies to Tsushima's visitors as early as the period when Sō Sadashige (宗貞茂, ?-1418) was in control of Tsushima (1398-1418). See '*Sejong sillok* 26:30a-32b, v.2, pp. 640-641 [Sejong.6:12:mu-o]. The letter from the Ministry to Sō Sadamori (宗貞盛, 1385?-1452) indicated that, conventionally, in the period when Sō Sadashige governed Tsushima, Chosŏn would provide grains to the envoys only, while the private merchants were to be self-financing in Korea. See *Sejong sillok* 87:9b-10a, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin]. For further discussion about maritime travel subsidies, also refer to Kenneth Robinson (1997), pp. 517-519.

from the Koreans, some Japanese merchants began to disguise themselves as diplomats in the 1410s. This behavior increased the financial burden on the government.

Besides, to increase security, the Chosŏn court began to impose a centralized administration on the visiting Japanese after its military conflicts with Tsushima in the late 1410s, by receiving all visitors in the Japan Houses and confine their activities to these buildings.[510] To realize this centralized administration, the Koreans had to be responsible for the provisions of the private merchants in the accommodation. This move, however, added a further fiscal burden to the court. Many jobless islanders and Japanese immigrants in Korea disguised themselves as visitors to get into the Japan Houses and receive free provisions.

In sum, for the purpose of maintaining a peaceful relationship with the Japanese, the court tolerated a negative gross income and subsidized the trade with regular allowances. This generous strategy helped Chosŏn to control a national security crisis on the one hand by

[510] It took years for the Chosŏn court to establish the convention to accommodate all the Japanese visitors in the Japan Houses. The first reference to a Japan House in *sillok* was in 1411/12, but the source does not specify where this building was (*T'aejong sillok* 22:52b, v.1, p. 616, [T'aejong.11:12:ki-sa]). In 1414/03, the two reception halls for foreign guests in the capital, Tong p'yŏnggwan 東平館 and Sŏp'yŏnggwan 西平館, were first referred to in *sillok* (*T'aejong sillok* 27:18a, v.2, p.9 [T'aejong.14:3:chŏng-yu]). According to a record in 1418/03, there had been a Japan House in Pusan 富山. In this year, the court built new accommodations in Yŏmp'o 鹽浦 (Ulsan) and Kabaeryang 加背梁 (Kŏje Island) to accommodate all Japanese merchants in these two port towns (*T'aejong sillok* 35:18b-19a, v.2, p. 207 [T'aejong.18:3:im-cha]). The first reference to the construction plan of the Japan House on the outskirts of the capital was a record from 1419/09. The court built new accommodation in the capital, because it planned to accommodate all Japanese envoys in these buildings, if it was able to make peace with the Tsushima islanders (*Sejong sillok* 4:17b-18a, v.2, pp. 337-338 [Sejong.1:9:kye-hae]). In 1419/10, King Sejong ordered the construction of a special 'House (*gwan* 館)' outside the capital for the Japanese (*Sejong sillok* 5:28b, v2, p. 343 [Sejong.1:10:mu-sul]). According to the agreement between Chosŏn and Tsushima in 1426, only the islanders who carried a *haengjang* would be received in Korea (see Chapter 3). Since then, the private merchants with a *haengjang* were received as official visitors. In 1430/04, the court regulated that all Japanese visitors must enter and stay in the Japan Houses (*Sejong sillok* 48:3b-5a, v.3, pp. 228-229 [Sejong.12:4:sin-sa]), thereby putting all Japanese visitors under centralized administration. Besides, it should be pointed out that, additional to the regular accommodations, there were also temporary accommodations or Japan Tents (*wae mak* 倭幕), which were usually pitched outside the Japan Houses. See *Sejong sillok* 80:3b-6a, v.4, pp. 122-124 [Sejong.20:1:im-chin]

suppressing the motivation for piracy; but on the other hand, it imposed an additional fiscal burden on the court.

The additional expenditure was affordable for the court when the trading volume was small, but the policy became more and more unsustainable in the 1420s when Korea's market became saturated and the Japanese continued to flood in. The lasting civil wars intensified in Japan from the mid-1420s, leading to a Japanese shortage of grain supplies in the following three decades. This situation drove the islanders to expedite their shipments to Chosŏn.[511] In contrast, because of the limited size of its economy, Chosŏn could hardly boost its domestic demand for overseas products any further.[512] Inevitably, the market saturation became increasingly serious in Korea and the market prices for Japanese goods fell steadily. As a result, the court's trade deficit widened as the difference between the market prices and the government purchasing prices expanded. Moreover, the indirect costs also increased, because more and more Japanese rushed to Chosŏn in an attempt to obtain Korean supplies. Against this backdrop, the court had to take action to restrict the trade, or the excessive trade would have drained the national reserves.

5.2 The efforts to turn loss into gain

Suffering an increasing budget deficit caused by excessive trade, the Chosŏn court made efforts to turn loss into gain. Specifically, the court took three measures. First, the court cut its losses in the trade deals by reforming its pricing policy. Second, it cut indirect

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[511] For a discussion about how the domestic situation in Japan contributed to the increase of Japanese visits to Korea, see Chapter 3.

[512] Transit trade (reselling Japanese goods to China) was not an appropriate option. To the contrary, the court had to prohibit its residents from conducting transit trade, since it tried to avoid arousing China's suspicion of its contacts with Japan. The court debate that took place in 1442/01 indicates that the concern about China's suspicion drove Chosŏn to reconsider its trade policy. This diplomatic concern explained the ban on the transit trade of Japanese products to China See *Sejong sillok* 85:3a-4a, v.4, pp. 390-391 [Sejong.24:1:ki-sa].

expenditures by imposing restrictions on Japanese access to Korea and regulating its subsidy policies. Third, it tried to make positive income from the trade by establishing a state monopoly on the resale of the Japanese goods in the inland markets.

5.2.1 The efforts to reduce trade losses by reforming the pricing policy

When trade was reinitiated at the beginning of King T'aejong's reign, the Chosŏn court did not specify its pricing policy. To cement its relationship with the Japanese, before 1414, the court hardly ever bargained with the foreign guests but paid for everything at the prices quoted by the Japanese envoys.[513] In the coastal regions, the local governments acted as the buyer of last resort and made unlimited purchases of Japanese goods.

However, it was impossible for the court to maintain its pricing policy forever because the court could not afford the loss in trade when the market became saturated and the government was purchasing at prices much higher than the market prices. As early as 1414/09, the court slightly modified its trade policy. Specifically, it no longer purchased whatever the Japanese presented without bargaining. Instead, the administration started examining the quality of the Japanese goods before making a purchase.[514] In this way, the court curtailed expenditures. Further, in 1423/06, the court began to grade 'the various goods contributed by the Japanese guests' into three classes and set prices according to product quality.[515] The implication was that the court was trying to transfer its pricing policy from a fixed price system to a free price mechanism. With this reform, the court could make purchases at reduced prices and cut down on the cost of trade.

The court carried out the reform at this time probably for two reasons. The trade pressure was certainly the primary one. The second reason was geopolitical. It should be

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[513] *T'aejong sillok* 28:19b, v.2, p. 34 [T'aejong.14:9:ŭl-hae].
[514] *T'aejong sillok* 2:25b-26b, v.2, pp.37-38 [T'aejong.14:9:sin-myo].
[515] *Sejong sillok* 20:27b, v.2, p. 546 [Sejong.5:6:ŭl-hae].

noted that Chosŏn was still in a diplomatic and military confrontation with Tsushima at the time. Under this circumstance, it was actually good timing for the court to promote a reform of its pricing policy. Besides, the reform also benefited the court's strategy of putting maximum pressure on Tsushima. By imposing this reform, the court actually reduced its subsidies on the trade with Japan. Substantially, the court imposed a trade sanction on the Tsushima islanders, attempting to force the islanders to give up their hostile attitude towards Chosŏn following the 1419 military conflict between the two parties.

The reform imposed heavy pressure on the Tsushima islanders because it greatly suppressed their profits. In 1424/06, a year after the implementation of the new pricing policy, the Tsushima islanders complained to Chosŏn's envoys in a humble manner that 'the superior state' did not treat them as nice as before.[516] The Koreans did not respond to the complaint immediately but maintained economic sanctions for another year to keep the pressure on Tsushima.

Not until a year later did the court soften the blow on the islanders, in order to facilitate the reconciliation between the two parties. In 1425/10, King Sejong instructed the Ministry of Rites to terminate the practice of grading Japanese goods. Apart from the most useless items, once again the court started accepting everything the Japanese 'presented'.[517] Seven months later in 1426/05, reconciliation was achieved. Tsushima's chiefs finally agreed to 'work together to suppress pirates and be submissive [to the authority of Chosŏn] forever'.[518] As a matter of fact, the Tsushima islanders finally gave up their confrontation against Chosŏn mainly because they could no longer suffer the economic depression caused by Korea's trade sanctions.[519]

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[516] *Sejong sillok* 26:30a-32b, v.2, pp. 640-641 [Sejong.6:12:mu-o].
[517] *Sejong sillok* 30:3b, v.2, p. 695 [Sejong.7:10:mu-in].
[518] *Sejong sillok* 32:23b-24b, v.3, pp. 28-29 [Sejong.8:5:kap-in].
[519] See Section 3.3.2.2.

Out of diplomatic considerations, Chosŏn reversed the pricing policy and allowed the Japanese to retain more profits. However, this policy reversal burdened the court with heavy fiscal pressure. The bureaucrats were thus anxious about the financial conditions of the kingdom, and they tried to promote the reform again. In 1429/04, the Ministry of Rites (*yejo* 禮曹) complained that the Japanese prices were beyond the market prices, and it appealed for a new regulation on trade.[520] Specifically, the Ministry suggested that the administration should refuse to make deals and ask the Japanese to leave with their goods, if the Japanese refused to trade at market prices.

King Sejong rejected this proposal and insisted on generosity, because he did not want to ruin the conciliation he achieved in 1426 with Tsushima.[521] Instead, eight months later in 1429/12 the court reaffirmed the policy to treat the Tsushima islanders generously in trade.[522] In 1432/11, the Minister of Rites argued against being excessively generous towards the Japanese who presented 'a bit of local products', while the king delayed the discussion.[523] Again in 1434/07, the Ministry proposed to reject poor quality goods from Japan, but the king rebutted this suggestion with the same argument.[524] In 1438/09, bureaucrats complained to

[520] It worth noting the context of this proposed legislation. In 1429/03, a Korean official translator was murdered on the street by a Korean smuggling gang, which intended to control a key position in the Japan House to cover their activities. When officials conducted an investigation into the murder, they tracked the smuggling gang by following the clues. Seizing this opportunity, the bureaucrats decried the rampant smuggling activities by the Japanese before the court and requested to rectify the trade order in the Japan Houses. On the murder case and the follow-up story, see *Sejong sillok* 43:27b, v.3, p. 172 [Sejong.11:3:ki-sa], 43:27b, v.3, p. 172 [Sejong.11:3 kyŏng-o], 44:1a, v.3, p. 173 [Sejong.11:4:pyŏng-cha, 44:2b, v.3, p. 174 [Sejong.11:4:sin-sa], 44:6b-7a, v.3, p. 176 [Sejong.11:4:pyŏng-sin], 44:14a, v.3, p. 180 [Sejong.11:5:im-cha], 44:15a, v.3, p. 180 [Sejong.11:5:hŏng-sa], 44:17a-17b, v.3, p. 181 [Sejong.11:5:ŭl-ch'uk], 45:10b-11a, v.3, pp. 192-193 [Sejong.11:7:kap-sul].
[521] *Sejong sillok*, 44:6b-7a, v.3, p. 176 [Sejong.11:4:pyŏng-sin].
[522] *Sejong sillok* 46:13b-16b, v.3, pp. 207-208 [Sejong.11.12:ŭl-hae].
[523] *Sejong sillok* 58:19b-20a, v.3, p. 428 [Sejong.14:11:kye-mi].
[524] *Sejong sillok* 65:6b-7a, v.3, pp. 579-580 [Sejong.16:7:pyŏong-sul].

the court again about the Japanese practice of exchanging cheap goods for high returns from the court, while the king still held back from making any decision.[525]

However, the lack of action did not mean that the Chosŏn court was going to pay for the peace by deliberately losing money to the Japanese forever. Although the proposed legislation was rejected, the court took moves to suppress prices quietly. In 1429/06, two months after King Sejong rejected the proposed legislation presented by the Ministry of Rites, the court implemented a set of new rules to regulate the trade. The court sent official trade attachés to the Japan Houses and the harbors to 'sit face to face with the guests' and supervise every single deal between the officials and the Japanese. While this practice was supposed to be an anti-smuggling policy, it actually indicated that the court began to drive hard bargains when it conducted the 'official trade'. In the meantime, the court also encouraged the Japanese to 'voluntarily' trade in the markets so that the private sector could share the burden of trade.[526]

By these means, the court successfully drove down the prices in the 'official trade'. According to a report in 1431/06, the court's 'rewards' for Japanese 'gifts' was worth only one third and even one fourth of the prices in Japan.[527] In 1434/03, the Japanese refused to trade with the Korean government because its bid was too low.[528]

In sum, the Chosŏn court began to adjust the preferential pricing policy for the Japanese from 1414, in order to reduce its losses in the trade. In the early 1420s, the court exploited the confrontation with Tsushima and furthered its reform by introducing a free price mechanism to 'official trade'. Nevertheless, for the sake of reconciliation with the islanders, King Sejong reversed the policy after 1425 and delayed the reform in the following

525 *Sejong sillok* 82:22a-22b, v.4, p. 162 [Sejong.20:9:kap-o].
526 *Sejong sillok* 44:24b-25b, v.3, p. 185 [Sejong.11:6:ki-ch'uk].
527 *Sejong sillok* 52:41b-42b, v.3, p. 327 [Sejong.13:6:chŏng-sa].
528 *Sejong sillok* 63:31a-31b, v.3, p. 550, [Sejong.16:3:chŏng-yu].

decade. But, in practice, the court did not allow the Japanese to abuse the preferential policy. Instead, it imposed strict supervision on every single deal after 1429, not only to stop smuggling activities but also to curb the growth of the volume and the prices in 'official trade'. With all these efforts, Chosŏn's policy makers tried to find a balance between economic interests and diplomatic goals. On the one hand, they narrowed the price differences between 'official trade' and resale in the domestic markets so that the court could reduce its losses in the trade; on the other hand, they cautiously modified the pricing policy at a slow pace, to avoid provoking the Japanese.

5.2.2 The efforts to cut down on the indirect cost of trade

Additional to reduce trade losses by reforming its pricing policy, the Chosŏn court also tried to cut down on the indirect costs of the trade. As mentioned above, the court subsidized the trade by covering the living fees for visitors and granting them with travel subsidies out of diplomatic considerations. Calculating from the aspect of trade, this expenditure was the indirect cost of trade. In the late 1410s, it cost the court more than 10,000 *sŏk* of grains to 'reward' the Japanese 'envoys' annually.[529] In the late 1430s, this number soared to 100,000 *sŏk*,[530] which was nearly one third of the national reserve at the time.[531] This financial pressure gave the court a strong incentive to cut down the spending. To

529 *Sejong sillok* 4:17b-18a, v.2, pp. 337-338 [Sejong.1:9:kye-hae]
530 *Sejong sillok* 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin]
531 In 1422, Chosŏn had grain reserves of 500,000 to 600,000 *sŏk*. The number dropped to a record low in 1447 of just around 300,000 *sŏk*, 190,000 *sŏk* in the storehouse of the Military Provisions Agency (*Kunjagam* 軍資監) and 110,000 *sŏk* in the Reserve Granary of the Office of the State Granary (*P'ungjŏch'ang* 豐儲倉) respectively (*Sejong sillok* 107:18a-18b, v.4, p. 610 [Sejong.27:3:sin-myo]). According to a record in 1435/07, the amount of grain held in *P'ungjŏch'ang* had already dropped to about 123,300 *sŏk* at the time (*Sejong sillok* 74:4a-4b, v.4, p. 22 [Sejong.18:7:ki-yu]). If the grain stocked in *Kunjagam* experienced a decrease at virtually the same pace with *P'ungjŏch'ang*, the amount of national grain reserves was reckoned at 300,000 *sŏk*. For a further discussion of the financial burden of receptions associated with the Japanese for the Chosŏn government, see James B. Lewis (2003), pp. 107-145. Lewis primarily analyzes the cases in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

do so, the court restrained foreign access to Korea, controlled expenditures to receive guests, limited the length of stay of the visitors, and confined most Japanese to the coastal trading ports.

5.2.2.1 Restrictions on the number of visitors

A direct way to reduce the indirect cost of trade was to limit the number of the Japanese visitors, because that would directly reduce the reception costs for the Koreans. To control the number of visitors, Chosŏn established a tally system to regulate foreign visits. As early as 1407, the Chosŏn court requested that Japanese authorities issue *haengjang* (short introductions) to the visitors from their domains.[532] In the early 1420s, Chosŏn began to confer *tosŏ* (copper seals) on certain Japanese chiefs and specify that the kingdom would only receive those who carried *munin* (sealed document) or *sŏgye* (diplomatic letter) sealed with *tosŏ*. The agreement achieved between Chosŏn and Tsushima in 1426 indicated the formal establishment of this system.[533] In this way, the court checked the inflow of unregistered visitors.

But a tally system alone was not enough, because it did not foresee and stop the Japanese elites from over-issuing *munin* or *sŏgye*. Responding to the flood of Japanese refugees in the 1430s, Chosŏn imposed more specific regulations to restrain the Japanese from rushing into the peninsula. In 1438/09, the court stopped receiving ships that arrived after the eighth month of the year.[534] From 1439, the court began to limit the number of visitors. According to the provisions listed on the letter to Sō Sadamori in 1439/04, the

Also refer to James Lewis's article in 1992, in which he tried to calculate the burden for the fifteenth century. See James Lewis (1992).

[532] *T'aejong sillok* 14:10a-11b, v.1, p. 407 [T'aejong.7:7:mu-in].

[533] For a further discussion of the tally system, see Section 3.5.2.1. Also refer to Kenneth Robinson (1997).

[534] The Koreans did not specify the reason for this regulation. See *Sejong sillok* 82:23a-24a, v.4, p. 163 [Sejong.20:9:ki-hae].

Japanese ships were categorized into three classes according to their size and the passenger numbers on each class were fixed. Specifically, there should be less than forty passengers on a large vessel, thirty on a middle-size ship, twenty on a small boat, and ten on a small light boat. If a ship or boat was overloaded, the extra crew would not be received or provided with any grain.[535] Meanwhile, Chosŏn negotiated with Tsushima again over the tally system from 1437. According to the new agreement finalized in 1439/10, Tsushima had a duty to implement a much stricter document check than before to curb the flood of visitors from Japan to Korea.[536] Finally in early 1443, a fixed quota on the number of visiting vessels was imposed. Specifically, 50 ships were allowed to visit Korea per year.[537] Accordingly, the number of overseas visitors to Chosŏn was restricted to a maximum of 2,000 people per year.[538] By limiting the total number of visitors, Chosŏn curbed the increase of its expenditure to receive the Japanese.

5.2.2.2 The standardized reception

Besides restricting the number of visitors, the court also specified a standardized reception for the guests from the late 1430s, according to their different status and diplomatic

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[535] *Sejong sillok* 85:20b-21a, v.4, pp. 208-209 [Sejong.21:4:kap-chin]:. In 1439/05, Chosŏn sent another letter to Tsushima to reaffirm this regulation. See *Sejong sillok* 85:31b-33a, v.4, pp. 214-215 [Sejong.21:5:sin-yu]. In 1439/10, the regulation was mentioned again at the court. See *Sejong sillok* 87:12b, v.4, p. 249 [Sejong.21:10:kap-chin]. Also refer to Sin Suk-ju's *Haedong chegukki*, in which the criteria for the sizes of vessels were noted.

[536] For a detailed discussion about the 1439 agreement, see Chapter.3.5.2.2.

[537] *Sejong sillok* 105:22a-23b, v.4, pp. 577-578 [Sejong.26:intercalary 7:ki-hae]. It should be pointed out that the ships sent by the *bakufu* and the Ōuchi clan were not bound by this agreement. Besides, in 1453/08, this quota was reconfirmed by Chosŏn (*Tanjong sillok* 12:2a-3a, v.6, p. 703 [Tanjong.2:8:ŭl-yu]). But in 1471, the quota was increased to 157 ships per year (*Sŏngjong sillok* 286:1a-2a, v.12, pp. 500-501 [Sŏngjong.25:4:ki-mi]). For a further discussion of the context of this event, see Section 3.5.2.2. Also refer to Sin Suk-ju's *Haedong chegukki*.

[538] 40 (the number of passengers on a large vessel) * 50 (the annual quota on the Japanese visiting vessels) = 2,000 visitors per year.

ranks.[539] By creating explicit standards, the administration restrained the visitors from making exorbitant demands.

According to a letter the Ministry of Rites wrote to Sō Sadamori in 1439/10, Chosŏn began to differentiate between envoys and private merchants from Tsushima and give them different amounts of provisions as early as the period when Sō Sadashige governed the islands (1398-1419).[540] As the court discussion in 1431/09 indicated, the court had already established a routine by then to differentiate between the *bakufu*'s envoys and the guests from Tsushima.[541] From 1438/04, the court further differentiated the high-ranking Tsushima envoys from regular envoys and cut the provisions for the latter by fifty percent.[542] In 1439/10, the court specified that it would stop giving provisions to the private merchants from the first month of 1440.[543] In 1449/06, the State Council and the Ministry of Rites drafted a plan to categorize the Japanese visitors into four grades, according to which the court would provide provisions by different standards.[544] This four-rank system became the finalized version, which was noted down in Sin Suk-ju's *Haedong chegukki*.

In the meantime, the court also linked maritime travel subsidies to the guests' identities and ranks. From the early 1400s, Chosŏn established a routine to grant Tsushima's envoys maritime travel subsidies. The court normally gave a ten-day provision for every envoy from Tsushima, even though it took less than a day to make a return trip across the

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[539] The practice of categorizing the visitors into different classes was designated as 'the Japanese envoy classification system' in Kenneth Robinson's work. Kenneth Robinson (1997), pp. 311-314.
[540] *Sejong sillok* 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin].
[541] *Sejong sillok* 53:24a, v.3, p. 340 [Sejong.13:9:chŏng-myo].
[542] *Sejong sillok* 81:2a-2b, v.4, p. 139 [Sejong.20:4:im-sul]
[543] *Sejong sillok* 87:9a-9b, v.4, p. 247 [Sejong.21:10:ŭl-mi], 87:9b-10a, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin].
[544] Specifically, the envoys dispatched by the shogun ('King of Japan') were the highest-ranking guests; the Ōuchi clan's envoys were second only to the *bakufu* envoys; Tsushima's envoys were in the third rank, and all other visitors would receive the lowest-ranking treatment. *Sejong sillok* 124:19a, v.5, p. 134 [Sejong.31:6:kye-hae]. On the details about the specific treatments for each grade, refer to *Haedong chegukki*.

strait. The amount of this kind of subsidy was limited in the first two decades of the century when Tsushima was under the rule of Sō Sadashige, since Sadashige sent only two or three envoys to Chosŏn every year.[545] But the situation changed after 1419. After Chosŏn's invasion of Tsushima in 1419 and until 1426, the Koreans were in a political confrontation with the Tsushima islanders, but the Chosŏn court began to grant maritime travel subsidies to private Japanese visitors, who provided information about the other side of the strait. In 1433/01, the court normalized this practice, because it wanted to keep itself informed of the situation in Japan where a civil war was proceeding.[546] Thereafter, the court gave subsidies to not only the private informants, who provided information about Japan to Korea, but also the private merchants. To obtain free provisions from the Koreans, many Japanese immigrants disguised themselves as visiting merchants and claimed subsidies from the border officers.[547] Gradually, it became common practice for every Japanese visitor to claim maritime travel subsidy from the Korean administration. As the war intensified in Kyūshū in the mid-1430s, more and more Japanese refugees flooded into Korea by every conceivable means. They usually invoked the convention of granting visitors travel subsidies and asked for supplies.

Unsurprisingly, it was unaffordable for the court to provide maritime travel subsidies without limitation. In 1436/intercalary 6, the court finally specified the regulation that the subsidies would only be granted to registered visitors.[548] In 1438/09, it further cut the subsidies for the envoys from Kyūshū by 30 to 60 per cent, in order to ease its fiscal burden.[549] In 1439/10, the court not only reduced the reception fees but also cut the subsidies

[545] *Sejong sillok* 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin].
[546] *Sejong sillok* 59:6a-7b, v.3, p. 438 [Sejong.15:1:kyŏng-o].
[547] *Sejong sillok* 73:39a-39b, v.4, p. 20 [Sejong.18:intercalary 6:sin-myo].
[548] *Sejong sillok* 73:39a-39b, v.4, p. 20 [Sejong.18:intercalary 6:sin-myo]. On the specific amounts of the maritime travel subsidies for the visitors from various places, see *Sejong sillok* 82:27b-28a, v.4, p. 165 [Sejong.20:9:kyŏng-sul].
[549] On the details of the cut in subsidies, see *Sejong sillok* 82:27b-28a, v.4, p. 165 [Sejong.20:9:kyŏng-sul] Also see *Sejong sillok* 83:6b-7a, v.4, pp. 168-169 [Sejong.20:10:ki-sa].

for the Tsushima envoys by 50 per cent, since it could hardly afford the expenditure.[550] By standardizing reception practice and regulating the release of maritime travel subsidies, the Chosŏn court effectively reduced its expenditure on Japanese affairs.

5.2.2.3 Limits on the length of stay

Many Japanese islanders tried their best to linger in Korea as long as possible. The benefits were twofold. First of all, they could constantly scrounge free meals off the Koreans as long as they stayed in the Japan Houses. Second, by squatting in Korea, the Japanese merchants pressed Chosŏn's trade officers to buy the Japanese goods at raised prices because their overstaying would cause extra expenditure for the Koreans. As the Korean bureaucrats complained in 1438, the Japanese were dawdling around for months and plagued Chosŏn's trade officers to overpay for their 'cheap stuffs'.[551] Besides, the Koreans also worried that the Japanese might made troubles or cause security problem if they lingered for long. In order to strike the deal and send back the Japanese as soon as possible, the court lifted the ban on private trade of tin and iron in 1434/03.[552] Given that the market prices were higher than the government purchasing prices at the time,[553] the court actually compromised on price. This kind of compromise encouraged the Japanese visitors to hang around in Korea.

To cut its spending and reduce the risk of conflicts with the islanders, the court regulated the length of the stay of the visitors. In 1435/09, the court instructed that the Japanese merchants must leave the kingdom immediately after they completed the trade.[554] In

[550] *Sejong sillok* 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin]. For further discussion about the maritime travel subsidies, also refer to Kenneth Robinson (1997), pp. 517-519.
[551] *Sejong sillok* 82:22a-22b, v.4, p. 162 [Sejong.20:9:kap-o];
[552] *Sejong sillok* 63:31a-31b, v.3, p. 550, [Sejong.16:3:chŏng-yu]. As mentioned earlier, private trade of iron ore and bronze ore was prohibited at the time.
[553] We will further discuss this price reversal in section 5.2.3.
[554] *Sejong sillok* 69:22a-24a, v.3, pp. 60-651 [Sejong.17:9:chŏng-ch'uk]

1436/07, the court simplified the trade process to avoid overstaying.[555] In 1438/09, an intense debate took place on the court, discussing further accelerating the trade process and setting a limit on the time span that the visitors could stay. But, the proposals were detained because the court had a concern that this rule might provoke the Japanese.[556] Finally, in 1439/04, a new regulation was imposed to restrictions on the length of stay.[557] In 1439/10, Hŏ Cho 許稠, the Left State Councilor (*Chwaŭijŏng* 左議政), even suggested to repatriate all the visitors forcibly, but King Sejong rejected this proposal.[558] In 1440/05, the court reaffirmed the regulation against overstaying.[559] As it limited the duration of foreign stay, the government's spending on receiving the visitors became more predictable and the court could better control the relevant costs.

5.2.2.4 Regulations for visiting the capital city

The Japanese were usually intent on visiting Chosŏn's capital and trading there. This was mainly because the market prices for imported goods in the capital city were always higher than those in the coastal trading ports. The reasons were twofold. First, there was extra cost in moving overseas products to the capital, requiring a journey that took from 30 to 40 days.[560] Second, the capital was a goods collection and distribution centre for the kingdom where merchants from all over the country congregated. These reasons yielded a magnificent market demand for imported goods. Meanwhile, the supply of grain and cloth was sufficient in the capital city, not only because of its economic position but also because tax grain and

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[555] The border commanders were requested to report to the court for preparing the trade without delay as soon as the Japanese arrived. *Sejong sillok* 74:8b-9a, v.4, pp. 24-25 [Sejong.18:7:pyŏng-chin].
[556] *Sejong sillok* 82:22a-22b, v.4, p. 162 [Sejong.20:9:kap-o].
[557] *Sejong sillok* 85:20b-21a, v.4, pp. 208-209 [Sejong.21:4:kap-chin].
[558] *Sejong sillok* 87:2a-2b, v.4, p. 244 [Sejong.21:10:kyŏng-chin].
[559] *Sejong sillok* 22:21a-23a, v.4, pp. 289-290 [Sejong.22:5:chŏng-myo]
[560] Kenneth Robinson (1997), p. 63.

tax cloth were constantly conveyed to this city from all over the kingdom. That circumstance implied an ample supply of goods the Japanese demanded. In brief, the Japanese could sell their goods at higher prices and buy Korean products at lower prices in the capital city than they could in the coastal markets.

The Japanese were clearly aware of this difference.[561] Thus, many of them made every effort to visit Chosŏn's capital from the 1410s. Merchants disguised themselves as envoys to visit the capital city for more profits,[562] while actual envoys made use of their travel privileges and added luggage without restraint to make extra income.

From the perspective of the Koreans, it could be both beneficial and problematic to let the Japanese travel straight to the core of the kingdom. On the one hand, as discussed above, Chosŏn could avoid conflicts with the Japanese by increasing market access for visiting merchants. On the other hand, the visits not only consumed a large amount of food and local supplies,[563] but they also put heavy burdens on the posthouses and residents along the routes, as the Japanese constantly moved large amounts of goods back and forth.[564] Besides, travelling increased the risk of disputes between the visitors and the locals. Moreover, the court was also concerned that the Japanese might collect geographic information on Korea's interior region.[565] If a military conflict were to occur between Korea and Japan, these

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[561] In 1448/04, the representative of a Japanese mission argued for a visit permit by complaining that the prices in the harbours were so low that it was 'unfavourable to the trade', and the low prices would 'close merchants' minds to paying a visit from [places] far [away]. *Sejong sillok* 120:11a-11b, v.5, p. 63 [Sejong.30:4:im-o].

[562] *Sejong sillok* 4:17b-18a, v.2, pp. 337-338 [Sejong.1:9:kye-hae]. *Sejong sillok* 104:28b-29a, v.4, p. 562-563 [Sejong.26:6:chŏong-hae]. The court legislated against this practice in 1423/11 and reaffirmed the law in 1426/04, see *Sejong sillok* 32:8a-8b, v.3, p. 21 [Sejong.8:4:im-o].

[563] Conventionally, it was Chosŏn's duty to cover the travelling expenses for the journey. On the details of the supplies for the guests along the routes to and from the capital, refer to *Haedong chegukki*.

[564] *Sejong sillok* 20:27b, v.2, p. 546 [Sejong.5:6:ŭl-hae].

[565] The record in 1410/05 illustrates this kind of concern. *T'aejong sillok* 19:49a-49b, v.1, p. 547 [T'aejong.10:5:kye-yu].

Japanese, who had become familiar with Korea's geography and transportation routes, might pose a serious security threat to the capital city. This fear was realised in 1592.

To achieve a balance between diplomacy, security, and financial concerns, the court restricted Japanese access to the capital and encouraged most Japanese to stay in the port towns. In 1419/09, before they decided to make peace with the Tsushima islanders, King Sejong and his assistants planned to confine most Japanese visitors to the trading ports and only allow envoys to visit the capital city.[566] In 1423/06, to release residents along the post road from the burden of transporting goods for the Japanese, the court instructed the local officials to finish most deals and gift exchanges in the trading ports and only convey a small amount of special goods and gifts to the capital city.[567] This was the first instruction of this kind. Further specifications were made respectively to restrict Japanese access to the capital city in 1425/02,[568] 1431/11,[569] 1438/02,[570] 1439/04/06/10,[571] 1444/intercalary7,[572] 1445/04,[573] 1447/intercalary 4,[574] and 1448/01/04/06.[575] The court set up quotas on the number of visitors to the capital.[576] It imposed fixed quotas on the volumes of the trade in the interior markets.[577] It segregated diplomats from normal visitors and stopped the latter from visiting

566 *Sejong sillok* 4:17b-18a, v.2, pp. 337-338 [Sejong.1:9:kye-hae].
567 Sulfur, sappanwood, and copper were the kinds of goods that were allowed to be conveyed northward. *Sejong sillok* 20:27b, v.2, p. 546 [Sejong.5:6:ŭl-hae].
568 *Sejong sillok* 27:26a-26b, v.2, p. 656 [Sejong.7:2:kap-cha].
569 *Sejong sillok* 54:26b-27a, v.3, pp. 357-358 [Sejong.13:11:ki-myo].
570 *Sejong sillok* 80:20b-21a, v.4, p. 131 [Sejong.20:2:ki-sa].
571 *Sejong sillok* 85:20b-21a, v.4, pp. 208-209 [Sejong.21:4:kap-chin], 85:37b-38a, v.4, p. 217 [Sejong.21:6:kye-mi], 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin]:.
572 *Sejong sillok* 105:22a-23b, v.4, pp. 577-578 [Sejong.26:intercalary 7:ki-hae].
573 *Sejong sillok* 108:7a-7b, v.4, p. 616 [Sejong.27:4:kap-in].
574 *Sejong sillok* 116:9b, v.5, p. 19 [Sejong.29:intercalary 4:kyŏng-chin].
575 *Sejong sillok* 119:2a-2b, v.5, p. 48 [Sejong.30:1:mu-sul], 120:11a-11b, v.5, p. 63 [Sejong.30:4:im-o], 120:26a-26b, v.5, p. 70 [Sejong.30:6:chŏng-sa].
576 *Sejong sillok* 105:22a-23b, v.4, pp. 577-578 [Sejong.26:intercalary 7:ki-hae]
577 *Sejong sillok* 108:7a-7b, v.4, p. 616 [Sejong.27:4:kap-in], 116:9b, v.5, p. 19 [Sejong.29:intercalary 4:kyŏng-chin], 119:2a-2b, v.5, p. 48 [Sejong.30:1:mu-sul].

the capital.[578] It requested the Japanese merchants to pay for the transportation expenses of their goods.[579] It also conveyed a large amount of grains and cloth in advance to the coast, in order to settle most deals in the harbours.[580] With these various kinds of measures, the court tried its best to confine most Japanese visitors to the trading posts. Besides reducing the costs and easing the burden on the transport sector, the limits on the Japanese access to the capital city had another advantage. By imposing limits on the number of visitors and manipulating the quota, the court was able to encourage the Japanese to be more cooperative when the two parties were negotiating over diplomatic and security issues.

5.2.3 The efforts to generate positive revenue

According to the discussion above, we see how Chosŏn took various measures to protect its economy and government reserves against excessive trade with Japan. But, Chosŏn's goal was more ambitious than that. As a matter of fact, the court also expected to acquire profits from the trade. Probably because of the Confucian value that a monarch should not attach great importance to commercial interests, the court was never explicit about its trade ambitions. Instead, it attempted to make its fortune in a quiet way.

Because of the price differences between the coastal markets and the inland markets, Korean merchants could have made a significant profit from the resale of imported goods in Korea. However, the Chosŏn court surrendered the resale trade to the Japanese from the very beginning, for the purpose of maintaining the peace across the strait. The court opened the

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[578] According to the regulation made in 1439/10, those who carried *sŏgye* 書契 were permitted to visit the capital, while those who came with *munin* 文引 were allowed to land and trade at harbours only. *Sejong sillok* 87:9b-10b, v.4, pp. 247-248 [Sejong.21:10:pyŏng-sin]. *Sŏgye* were diplomatic letters from the Tsushima lord; *munin* were the sealed documents of passage issued by the Tsushima lord.

[579] *Sejong sillok* 4:17b-18a, v.2, pp. 337-338 [Sejong.1:9:kye-hae].

[580] *Sejong sillok* 80:18a-18b, v.4, p. 130 [Sejong.20:2:ŭl-myo], 98:9a-10a, v.4, p. 444 [Sejong.24:11:pyŏng-cha], 127:39a-39b, v.5, p. 169 [Sejong.32:intercalary 1:kyŏng-sin].

Korean market to the Japanese by conducting ‘official trade’ and permitting the Japanese to visit the capital city. It even subsidized the trade by making purchases of Japanese goods at raised prices, covering the guests’ living fees, and granting the visitors a per diem stipend. As a result, the court’s gross revenue from trade became negative and the indirect costs of trade were high. That was why the trade with Japan became a fiscal burden for the Chosŏn court in the first four decades of the fifteenth century. To reduce the excessive expenditures, Chosŏn made a set of regulations in the 1420s and 1430s to regulate the trade. As mentioned above, it reformed the pricing policy to reduce the loss in the ‘official trade’ and imposed limits on Japanese access to the kingdom and to the capital city to cut down the indirect costs.

As these various types of regulations and the relevant border security policies were implemented and improved, a comprehensive border and trade control system emerged by the early 1440s. Within this general framework, the court conferred powers on itself to limit the size of trade, designate the transaction time and location, isolate the trade partners from the markets, and specify the types of trading commodities. With these powers, the court was able to monopolize the trade and manipulate the prices to make monopoly profits, if it wished, and in fact, it did.

As early as 1434/03, some Chosŏn trade officers intended to take advantage of the court’s monopoly position to purchase Japanese tin and iron at reduced prices. The Japanese rejected the bids but refused to leave, because they were not allowed to finish deals with the private sector. Their lengthened stay caused an increase of government expenditures on reception. As a result, the court agreed to slightly lift the ban and allowed the Japanese to sell their products directly to the market five days after they paid their respects (*sukpae* 肅拜) to the king.[581] The implications of this case were twofold. First, the bid prices offered by the trade officers were lower than the market prices, given that ‘private trade’ was seemingly a

[581] *Sejong sillok* 63:31a-31b, v.3, p. 550, [Sejong.16:3:chŏng-yu].

more favorable choice for the Japanese. Second, it was possible for the government to make profits by manipulating the prices in the 'official trade'. Furthermore, the trade officers were well aware of this possibility of manipulation and put their ideas into action, even though we do not know whether they were inspired by the king or the high-ranking officials in the court.

Substantially, the court made a compromise between its expectation of profits and the cost of reception. On the one hand, it expected to make profits from the 'official trade' by forcing down the prices; on the other hand, it did not want to detain the Japanese and cause unnecessary expense. Therefore, it introduced private sector competition to encourage the trade officers to offer a more reasonable price, but it also left a five-day gap for the officers to strike a bargain.

The trade officers failed to make the Japanese accept their bid prices in 1434, because the Japanese could access market information and thus they clearly knew that the offered prices were much lower than the market prices. However, as Chosŏn's visitor administration system was further improved by the early 1440s, the Korean officers could drive down prices much more easily than before. As a result, the Japanese often clamoured to have access to 'private trade'.[582]

In practice, the Korean trade officers deliberately hid market information from the Japanese visitors, making them believe that the court was striking deals at market prices. In fact, the court was conducting 'official trade' and the trade officers actually purchased the Japanese goods at government-set prices that were much lower than the market prices. In this way, the court could buy overseas products at reduced prices and make profits by reselling the goods to the market at market prices.

[582] *Sejong sillok* 118:11a-11b, v.5, p. 45 [Sejong.29:11:ŭl-myo], 119:13a-14a, v.5, p. 54 [Sejong.30:3:chŏng-yu].

We have no idea when exactly the Korean trade officers started conducting trade in this way, but the court's attempts at profiting from re-sale became clear to the Japanese in early 1445, and thus the court faced a severe challenge to its reputation. To manage this public relations crisis, King Sejong called a conference in 1445/04 to discuss the issue about 'trade prices with the Japanese'. On this occasion, the bureaucrats stated to the court:

> [we purchased] the same commodity at different prices [via two channels of transaction,] the "official trade" and the "private trade". [This practice] violates the general principle…Currently, [we] confused "official trade" with "private trade" and deliberately concealed [the truth] from them (the Japanese). However, they now know the truth. [Our practice was] not noble.[583]

The bureaucrats agreed that it was not honourable to cheat the Japanese in this way, and they proposed two options to survive a diplomatic scandal. Hwang Hŭi 黃喜, the Chief State Councilor (*Yŏngŭijŏng* 領議政), gave the first proposal, suggesting increasing price transparency in the trading procedure:

> From now on, [we] publicly inform the Japanese about [our new pricing policy: we will] negotiate the price [with them] to make [it] moderate for each party and consistent in both the 'official [trade]' and the 'private [trade]'.[584]

[583] '以一物而公私貿易, 價有高下, 有違大體…今以公貿易, 稱爲私貿易, 欲使彼不知, 然彼已知其故, 甚非正大之體' *Sejong sillok* 108:7a-7b, v.4, p. 616 [Sejong.27:4:kap-in].
[584] '自今開諭倭人, 酌定物價, 彼此適中, 公私如一'. *Sejong sillok* 108:7a-7b, v.4, p. 616 [Sejong.27:4:kap-in].

Ha Yŏn 河演, the Right State Councilor (*Uŭijŏng* 右議政), proposed the second plan, suggesting that the court should separate and clarify the boundary between "official trade" and "private trade":

> [For] trade items to be conveyed to the capital in the future, apart from the necessary medicines and indispensable necessities, [the court] should not instruct [the Japanese to trade through] "official trade"…In terms of the trade in the above medicines, [the court] must explicitly state [that these goods will be traded through] "official trade". If they (the Japanese) bargain over the prices, [we] then reply: "[trade] officers conduct the trade according to the old conventions. How dare they raise or reduce a penny [of the price]?" [If we] explicitly inform [them about our policy], then [we will] have no trouble over disputes about [who gets the] profit. [It will] not cause damage to [our] country's spirit of consoling [foreigners].[585]

In brief, Hwang proposed to conduct trade fairly at market prices with the Japanese, which meant that the court would give up its monopoly position in the resale trade. On the contrary, according to Ha's proposal, the court might confine 'official trade' to the trade of strategic materials like medicines. It implied that the court would stop cheating the Japanese through monopoly pricing and allow them to make profits from the trade of general commodities on one condition: they had to sell certain types of 'indispensable necessities' to the court at low prices via 'official trade'.

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585 '今後輸京之物, 除不得已藥材及切要之物外, 毋令公貿易…若上項藥材等貿易則必顯言公貿易, 彼若爭其價之高下, 乃曰: "官吏依舊式貿易, 何敢毫釐加減哉?" 分明開諭, 則必無因利忿爭之患, 國家撫綏之義, 亦無缺矣'. *Sejong sillok* 108:7a-7b, v.4, p. 616 [Sejong.27:4:kap-in]:.

King Sejong picked the Hwang plan.[586] Given its promise to abandon the pricing strategy, which was seen as disgraceful, the court seemingly gave up seeking positive revenue from trade. Actually, that was not the case. King Sejong's administration did not back down from its plan to make excessive profits from the trade. While the court promised not to cheat with prices, the trade officers deliberately depreciated all Japanese products so that they could purchase fine goods at lower prices. In this way, the court continued making profits from the trade without breaking its promise of price transparency. In 1447/07, the court ordered the trade officers not to depreciate the Japanese goods.[587] In 1448/02, the court reaffirmed this policy again, since the trade officers did not follow the previous instruction given in 1447.[588] The reason the court stopped depreciating the Japanese goods was probably because it came up with a new strategy: to exclude the Japanese from the resale trade in inland markets.

From the 1410s, the Japanese merchants were allowed to visit the capital city and conduct trade there, even though a quota was imposed sometimes. As late as 1445, the following regulation was applied: the Tsushima Islanders should sell 50 percent of their goods in the coastal trading ports and could sell the other 50 percent in the capital city.[589] In other words, the Tsushima islanders were given a market share of 50 per cent for overseas products in the inland areas.

However, the court broke this convention in the late 1440s. In 1447/11, the court prohibited the Japanese merchants to conduct 'private trade' in the capital city on the pretext

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586 *Sejong sillok* 108:7a-7b, v.4, p. 616 [Sejong.27:4:kap-in]:.
587 *Sejong sillok* 117:2b, v.5, p. 29 [Sejong.29:7:kye-myo].
588 *Sejong sillok* 119:7b, v.5, p. 51 [Sejong.30:2:chŏng-myo]. Nevertheless, it was doubtful whether this instruction was strictly followed in the future. According to the complaints made by the Ōuchi's envoy in 11448/03, the Korean officials still downgraded his products in the transaction. See *Sejong sillok* 119:13a-14a, v.5, p. 54 [Sejong.30:3:chŏng-yu].
589 The *bakufu* and the Ōuchi missions were allowed to sell all their goods in the capital city. *Sejong sillok* 108:7a-7b, v.4, p. 616 [Sejong.27:4:kap-in]. Regarding further discussion about the court's restrictions on Japanese access to the capital city, see Section 5.2.2.4.

of reducing the economic burden of transport on the post system. Apart from the official diplomatic representatives, all other Japanese were forbidden to visit the capital. In other words, the court confined most trade to the coastal trading ports. Meanwhile, the government stated that it held the right of first refusal to purchase the Japanese goods when foreign ships arrived. The Japanese merchants could only sell the residue stock to the private market after the government finished its purchases. Also, the court declared that even the envoys could only conduct 'official trade' in the capital city.[590] Two months later in 1448/01, the court specified that, according to the regulation made in 1443, at most 24 Japanese diplomatic representatives were allowed to enter the capital for every official mission. Besides, the court also imposed a limit on the amount of goods that the Japanese carried to the capital city. Prior to 1447, the Japanese moved more than 2,000 *t'ae* 駄 (horse loads) of goods northward every year.[591] According to the new regulation, the visitors could carry no more than 300 *t'ae* of goods with them into the capital city.[592]

In brief, the Japanese were excluded from the resale trade in the inland market. They could sell their products at market prices, but they could only make a sale in the coastal trading ports, and they must deal with the government's trade officers first. Although the pricing policy was transparent now and the court made purchases at market prices, it made no sense to the Japanese, because they could not profit from the sizable regional price differences between the coastal and the inland markets.

The government now monopolized the resale trade. According to a conversation between a Korean translator and an Ōuchi envoy in 1448/03, the court's bid price for

[590] *Sejong sillok* 118:11a-11b, v.5, p. 45 [Sejong.29:11:ŭl-myo].
[591] *Sejong sillok* 118:11a-11b, v.5, p. 45 [Sejong.29:11:ŭl-myo].
[592] The court also specified that the Japanese would be exempted from this regulation on certain conditions: the envoys were sent by the *shōgun*, they were new to Korea, and they strongly insisted on carrying more goods to the capital city. On the regulation details, see *Sejong sillok* 119:2a-2b, v.5, p. 48 [Sejong.30:1:mu-sul]

Japanese iron was 40 to 50 percent lower than the market price.[593] It meant that, by reselling the iron to the domestic market on its own, the court made approximately a 40 per cent profit from the trade. Also, by holding the right of first refusal, the court prevented the Korean merchants from competing with it in the market so that it could drive down the price even lower.

In a sense, Chosŏn reversed its trade practice of surrendering the resale trade to the Japanese from the 1400s. By forcing the Japanese out of the inland market, the court took over the trade and played the role of a monopoly. The key reasons for Chosŏn's success in this transition were twofold. First, it established a comprehensive trade and border control system, with which it could force the Japanese into obedience. Second, the balance of power between Chosŏn and Tsushima had shifted by the early 1440s. Because of their engagement in the on-going civil war in Japan, the islanders were facing a military deadlock with other Japanese powers but becoming increasingly dependent on the trade with Korea. In this context, the islanders could not resist Chosŏn's new policy by a threat of force, if they wanted to maintain their primary supply line. Although the profit margins decreased, the revenue stream was stable under the Chosŏn-government mechanism.[594] Therefore, they finally had no alternative but to accept the new profit distribution plan proposed by the Koreans.

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[593] If the Japanese envoy engaged in 'private trade', he received a bolt of silk for five or six *catties* of iron; but if he made the same transaction in the 'official trade', he had to provide ten *catties* of iron for a bolt of silk. In sum, the court set the official purchase price at about 40 or 50 percent lower than the market price. See *Sejong sillok* 119:13a-14a, v.5, p. 54 [Sejong.30:3:chŏng-yu].

[594] Tsushima also made great profits by selling tallies to the merchants from Kyūshū and other parts of Japan. According to a record in 1455/04, the islanders sold one *noin* at prices that ranged between 50 to 500 bolts of cloth. See *Tanjong sillok* 14:2a-5b, v.7, pp. 30-31 [Tanjong.3:4:im-o]. Apparently, this report has converted the price in Japan to Korean bolts of cloth, but the original price is unstated.

However, it is difficult to measure the economic outcome of Chosŏn's contacts with the Japanese. Although it achieved a trade surplus in the 1440s, we do not know whether the government had a positive account balance when it offset its trade revenue against the expenditures of receiving the Japanese. The written records do not provide relevant statistics.[595] But there was one thing for sure: it appeared to improve the court's financial situation as the gross trade income turned positive.

Unsurprisingly, the new regulation stirred up resentments among the Japanese. They repeatedly complained to the court about its low purchase prices in the 'official trade' in the coastal region.[596] In 1448/05, the *bakufu* envoy even threatened to stop his mission if the court stopped him from conducting trade in the capital city.[597] A year later in 1449/08, the envoy from Tsushima used the same trick, threatening to break off diplomatic relations with Chosŏn permanently if the Koreans did not satisfy their demands for goods; the court relented and approved their demands as well.[598]

Responding to this situation, King Sejong came out with a new trick in 1450/intercalary 1 when the Japanese mission arrived again. Under his instruction, all Korean merchants in the capital city were asked to trade with the Japanese at the 'official trade' prices in the market. In other words, even though the Japanese could trade in the capital city,

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595 On the estimation of the expenditures, refer to James Lewis, (1992). In his article, Lewis tried to calculate what this expenditure would have been, but the estimates are too expansive to be credible. He estimated what the maximum could have been, rather than what it really was.

596 On the relevant complaints, see *Sejong sillok* 119:13a-14a, v.5, p. 54 [Sejong.30:3:chŏng-yu]; 120:11a-11b, v.5, p. 63 [Sejong.30:4:im-o].

597 *Sejong sillok* 120:22a-22b, v.5, p. 68 [Sejong.30:5:mu-sul]. The court stopped the transportation of Japanese goods to the capital city initially, but it finally gave in to the Japanese a month later in 1448/06 (*Sejong sillok* 120:26a-26b, v.5, p. 70 [Sejong.30:6:chŏng-sa]). However, another month later, the border official discovered that two out of the three Japanese mission vessels were actually merchant ships. This discovery stirred up a quarrel between the border officials and the Japanese. The matter was left unsettled. See *Sejong sillok* 121:2a-3b, v.5, p. 78 [Sejong.30:7:ki-ch'uk].

598 *Sejong sillok* 125:13b-14a, v.5, p. 142 [Sejong.31:8:pyŏng-in].

they would only be able to strike deals at the same price as in the coastal trading ports. By doing so, the king intended to 'let them know that there is no price difference between the capital and (the coastal markets)' and thus they should abandon requests to visit the capital in the future.[599] In this way, the king attempted to safeguard the court's profits.

One month after he gave this instruction, King Sejong passed away in 1450/02.[600] While King Sejong's thirty-one year reign came to an end, the framework he established was inherited by the later administrations to govern economic and diplomatic Korea-Japan relations until the late nineteenth century.[601] Some modern scholars like Lee Hun-Chang and Peter Temin interpret Chosŏn's trade policy as a non-economic policy to trade for security at the cost of national treasure.[602] That is far from accurate. Indeed, the Koreans had to 'transform raiders to traders' at the cost of their fiscal reserve at the beginning, but that was not the ultimate goal of King Sejong's framework. What the king actually intended to establish was a mechanism that not only protected the kingdom from the aggressive Japanese and their dumping in Korea, but also generate positive revenue for the government. In fact, soon after they had the Japanese access to Korea under control, the Koreans swung into action to turn loss into gain by imposing a monopoly on the trade like the Chinese did.

[599] *Sejong sillok* 127:39a-39b, v.5, p. 169 [Sejong.32:intercalary 1:kyŏng-sin].
[600] *Sejong sillok* 127:36a-36b, v.5, p. 172 [Sejong.32:2:im-chin].
[601] The framework was little changed after Sejong's reign. Later administrations merely revised specific regulations due to changing diplomatic and trading realities. For example, the quota on ships from Tsushima was first confined to fifty ships per year in 1443. In 1453/08, this quota was reconfirmed by Chosŏn (*Tanjong sillok* 12:2a-3a, v.6, p. 703 [Tanjong.2:8:ŭl-yu]). But in 1471, the quota was increased to 157 ships per year (*Sŏngjong sillok* 286:1a-2a, v.12, pp. 500-501 [Sŏngjong.25:4:ki-mi].
[602] Lee, Hun-Chang, Peter Temin (2010).

5.3 The Japanese countermeasures and Chosŏn's improvement of its coastal border control system

While the Koreans took measures to regulate the excessive trade, the Japanese were aggrieved at being hedged in with stricter regulations. From their perspective, the Koreans were using state power to set up entry barriers with all kinds of border- and trade-control systems, stopping the Japanese from purchasing provisions they desperately needed. Nevertheless, the islanders did not want to restart a military confrontation that had ended not too long ago. Thus, they resorted to non-violent means to struggle with Korea's unfair trade practices. The Japanese found ways to slip into the kingdom and trade privately so that they could bypass supervision and promote their commercial interests. Responding to the Japanese behavior, the Koreans continually composed new regulations to plug the gaps in their system, stopping the islanders from illegally entering the country to smuggle. A cat and mouse game between the Chosŏn court and the Japanese visitors started. In this 'adversarial learning' process, Chosŏn improved its border and trade supervision system that governed its political and economic relations with the Japanese.

5.3.1 Illegal entries and document checks

Travel document checks were a significant measure for Chosŏn to restrain the excessive trade with the Japanese.[603] As early as 1407, the Japanese visitors were requested to show *haengjang* (short introductions) issued by their lords.[604] However, prior to 1422, the

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[603] There were two sorts of written documents, *sŏgye* 書契 and *munin* 文引 (which is also knowed as *noin* 路引), that Chosŏn recognized as valid travel documents. *Sŏgye* were diplomatic letters from the Tsushima lord; *Munin* were the sealed documents of passage issued by the Tsushima lord. See discussion above: 5.3.1. Illegal entries and document checks.

[604] *T'aejong sillok* 14:10a-11b, v.1, p. 407 [T'aejong.7:7:mu-in].

Koreans did not examine *haengjang* carefully and the Japanese could enter Korea with a minimum of formality.[605]

Things changed in the early 1420s when the tension between Chosŏn and Tsushima was high following the 1419 attack on Tsushima. In this period, Chosŏn strengthened its border control policy by establishing a tally system, according to which only those who held a valid travel document would be allowed access to Korea.[606] Meanwhile, the Korean border officers began to examine every vessel before they docked in Korea from 1422/02.[607]

This policy change caused unparalleled difficulties for the Japanese merchants. Against this situation, some Japanese began to sneak into Korea using various tricks. Imposters appeared from 1423/01, one year after Chosŏn carried out the strict document check. A group of merchants posed as envoys from Ryūkyū with false *sŏgye*, but the Koreans saw through the fraud and refused their entry.[608] From then on, imposters appeared one after another.[609] As a response, the court improved the 'identification system' to prevent access with counterfeit documents. Specifically, the court began to compile a Japan File (*Wae an* 倭案), a list that registered all the Japanese lords who had established official relationships with Chosŏn and had received one or more tallies.[610] With the help of this list, the border inspectors could distinguish the imposters from the legal visitors more easily.

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605 *Sejong sillok* 14:7b-8a, v.2, pp. 473-474 [Sejong.4:2:ŭl-mi].
606 Chosŏn began to confer the Tsushima lords with tallies, copper seals (*tosŏ* 圖書), regardless this behavior violated Ming's diplomatic norm that the vassals of the Ming should not have private contacts with each other. For a discussion about the details of the tally system, see Section 3.5.2.1. Also see Kenneth Robinson, (1997), pp. 82-181.
607 *Sejong sillok* 14:7b-8a, v.2, pp. 473-474 [Sejong.4:2:ŭl-mi].
608 *Sejong sillok* 19:1b-2a, v.2, p. 519 [Sejong.5:1:pyŏng-sul]
609 Kenneth Robinson (1997), pp. 354-427.
610 The first mention of a list was in 1425. *Sejong sillok* 28:11b-12a, v.2, p. 667 [Sejong.7:5:kyŏng-o], 28:14a-14b, v.2, p. 668 [Sejong.7:5:mu-in]. The length of the list changed as the court added new names or deleted names. For specific names on the list, refer to *Haedong chegukki*.

Since the Koreans started verifying *munin* or *sŏgye* carefully, the Japanese developed other tricks to exploit their *munin* or *sŏgye.* At first, the Japanese recycled old *munin* and *sŏgye* to get through Chosŏn's border inspection. But, in 1425/10, the court spotted this trick and instructed the border inspectors to collect *noin* immediately when the visitors entered the kingdom.[611]

While recycling *munin* and *sŏgye* became difficult, the Japanese used the documents as 'multiple-ship ticket'. A report submitted in 1436/ intercalary 06 noted down the precise operating procedure. First, Tsushima merchants, who carried *sŏgye*, notified Japanese immigrants in Chosŏn about their arrival date and time; second, the Japanese immigrants sailed out with their personal small ships and met the Tsushima merchants midway on the sea; third, all ships sailed into and docked in Chosŏn's port as one fleet with one *sŏgye*; fourth, the Japanese immigrants requested receptions in the Japan Houses as 'guests', living off Chosŏn's provisions for envoys, and even received travel subsidies, or 'the grains for crossing the sea (*kwahaeryang* 過海糧)', from Korea. Fifth and finally, the merchants and immigrants left together when the Tsushima merchants had completed their trade, and, every immigrant paid 5 *tu* 斗 (30 litres) of grain to the merchants as intermediary costs.[612]

In this way, the Japanese immigrants acquired free meals and provisions and the islanders obtained additional revenue by receiving intermediary fees from the immigrants. Generally speaking, around 40 to 50 immigrant ships could have re-entered Korea in this way with every *sŏgye* holder coming from Tsushima. That is to say, if every islander who carried a *sŏgye* engaged in this trade, at least more than 2,000 Japanese ships could have annually entered Korea illegally by 1436 and swindled the Koreans out of grains.[613] To plug this

[611] *Sejong sillok* 30:1b-3a, v.2, p. 695-696 [Sejong.7:10:kap-sul].
[612] *Sejong sillok* 73:39a-39b, v.4, p. 20 [Sejong.18:intercalary 6:sin-myo]
[613] Not until 1443 did Chosŏn impose an annual quota of 50 on the number of visiting vessels from Tsushima. In other words, there surely were more than 50 Tsushima vessels that visited Korea annually with *munin* or *sŏgye* before 1443. If Tsushima fleets piloted 40 immigrant

loophole, Chosŏn required the Tsushima lords to specify the size of the visiting vessels and the captains' names on every *sŏgye* and *munin* after 1436 so that the Koreans could identify the legal visitors by verifying the captains and the sizes of the ships.[614]

Since *sŏgye* became invalid as 'multiple-ships tickets' from 1436, the Japanese started using *sŏgye* as 'group tickets'. By loading more passengers on one vessel, the Japanese could still openly intrude into the ports, conduct trade, and receive free provisions. Not until 1439/04 did the Korean court realize this practice of over-crewing and banned this operation. They fixed a quota on the number of crew and others on the ships by different sizes: 40 passengers on a large vessel, 30 on a middle one, 20 on a small one, and 10 on an extra small one. The court offered no provisions to extra visitors above these limits.[615] This new regulation was reaffirmed six months later in 1439/10.[616] Again in 1445/06, the court reaffirmed the passenger quota for ships of each size.[617]

After the Koreans imposed limitations on *sŏgye* and *munin* as 'group tickets', the Japanese invented the trick of 'piling-up tickets'. In short, the Japanese 'piled up *sŏgye* (*chŏpchae sŏgye* 疊齎書契)' from many captains and submitted them as a package to the border inspector all together when the fleet entered the port in the day time. Then, the second fleet, the captains of which carried no *sŏgye* or *munin*, intruded into the port at night and claimed that their *sŏgye* had been submitted in the daytime. Since the port was usually short of hands at night, the night-watchmen were not able to check the second fleets with the submitted package of *sŏgye* one by one. This trick worked in many cases and a large group of

ships into Korea every time, then there would have been 2,000 illegal ships visiting Korea through this channel every year.

614 *Sejong sillok* 73:39a-39b, v.4, p. 20 [Sejong.18:intercalary 6:sin-myo]

615 *Sejong sillok* 85:20b-21a, v.4, pp. 208-209 [Sejong.21:4:kap-chin]。.

616 *Sejong sillok* 87:12b, v.4, p. 249 [Sejong.21:10:kap-chin].

617 *Sejong sillok* 108:17b-18a, v.4, p. 621 [Sejong.27:6:sin-hae].

imposters entered the border successfully. As a response, Chosŏn prohibited late night docking in 1444/05.[618]

Not only did the individuals play tricks with *sŏgye* or *munin*. When the economic situation worsened in the 1430s, the lords on Tsushima began to issue *munin* without restraints to their people and encouraged them to live off Chosŏn. Therefore, the Korean court entrusted Sō Sadamori to administer all the visiting vessels through Tsushima and fixed an annual quota of 50 on the number of vessels in early 1443. In 1444/intercalary 7, the court reaffirmed this rule and the quota again.[619]

This was not the end of the game. In fact, the Japanese never stopped forging documents to get through Chosŏn's coastal borders. Kenneth Robinson's work that describes the crimes of fraud in the sixteenth century is outstanding on this issue.[620] Moreover, the Japanese did not limit their wisdom and intelligence to playing tricks with *sŏgye* and *munin*.

In additional to playing with *sŏgye* and *munin*, the Japanese also drew close to and lingered near the shore on the pretext of catching fish. When the border guards happened to neglect their duty, the Japanese fishing boats slipped into port to trade or commit robbery. Responding to this situation, apart from the three designated ports, Chosŏn prohibited catching fish in Korean waters in 1426/11.[621] Disputes over the islanders' right to catch fish in Chosŏn's waters became intense again in the 1430s.

5.3.2 Smuggling and the separation between visitors and residents

Chosŏn imposed restraints on certain types of transactions and exchanges of certain commodities for various reasons. For instance, the Koreans stopped buying Chinese products

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[618] *Sejong sillok* 89:23a-24a, v.4, p. 290 [Sejong.22:5:kyŏng-o]
[619] *Sejong sillok* 105:22a-23b, v.4, pp. 577-578 [Sejong.26:intercalary 7:ki-hae].
[620] Kenneth Robinson (1997); Kenneth Robinson (2000). See also James Lewis (2003).
[621] *Sejong sillok* 34:11b-12a, v.3, p. 50 [Sejong.8:11:ŭl-myo].

from the Japanese in the 1410s, because of the diplomatic pressure from Ming China. They suppressed the trade with Tsushima in the early 1420s in order to impose economic sanctions on the hostile islanders. They limited the size of overseas trade from the 1420s to protect the Korean economy from the impacts of the excessive trade. They restrained the 'private trade' for the purpose of monopolizing the resale trade. In addition, the court also banned the outflow of gold and silver, because the Chinese demanded a large amount of these precious metals as annual tribute. The court forbade its people to buy overseas products with copper coins, in order to ensure the supply of coins in the domestic market. It also interdicted the export of gunpowder and iron and steel, so that it could maintain its advantage in military technology over the Japanese.[622]

Although the court had reasons to administer the trade in a strict manner, its interventions inevitably disturbed market equilibrium and led to price distortions, which meant profit opportunities for unscrupulous people. Unsurprisingly, rampant smuggling occurred. The Japanese untiringly trafficked in all kinds of controlled commodities and contraband.

Nevertheless, the Japanese were not the only ones to blame. No matter whether it was legal or not, trade always requires two parties. The records show that Koreans from walks of life got involved in the illegal trade from the very beginning. At first, the black market was mainly managed by the marines.[623] From the 1410s, aristocratic families began to engage in the trade.[624] From the early 1420s, private merchants were involved.[625] In 1423, the Ministry of Rites revealed that Chosŏn's envoys to Japan also trafficked in contraband without

[622] We will further discuss the interdictions against the sale of currencies and weapons in Chapter 6.
[623] See Chapter 2.
[624] *T'aejong sillok* 27:31a-32a, v.2, p. 16 [T'aejong.14:5:sin-sa], 27:24b-25a, v.2, pp. 17-18 [T'aejong.14:5:sin-myo].
[625] *Sejong sillok* 12:8b-9a, v.2, p. 434-435 [Sejong.3:6:kyŏng-cha]..

restraint.[626] A murder case in 1429 indicates that the smuggling activities even involved Korean official supervisors of the Japanese.[627] According to the investigation, a group of Koreans colluded with the Japanese visitors in penetrating the security system for the Japan Houses, in order to establish a stable smuggling channel. The smugglers bribed and worked with the entire team of Korean officials who guarded the Japanese, including the interpreters (*t'ongsa* 通事), the assistants (*saryŏng* 使令), the house servants (*pangsik* 房直), and the storehouse servants (*kosik* 庫直). The court even suspected that everyone who could speak some Japanese, such as the Korean envoys that had been to Japan (*chaehaengin* 再行人), might be a part of the gang.[628]

In 1439, a silversmith missed a secret exchange with his broker from the Japan House because he was not at home. The father acted for his son and completed the deal without a hitch.[629] This case suggests that even the common people were making extra income through illegal swaps, too. Japanese immigrants also participated in smuggling activities. It was common for the Japanese visitors to contact compatriots and trade secretly on the pretext of

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626 *Sejong sillok* 19:6a-6b, v.2, p. 521 [Sejong.5:1:im-in]. For more records about the illegal transactions carried out by the Korean envoys, see, *Sejong sillok* 23:11a-11b, v.2, p. 576 [Sejong.6:1:ŭl-sa], 43:4a-4b, v.3, p. 160 [Sejong.11:1:im-cha], 43:12b-13a, v. 3, pp. 206-207 [Sejong.11:1:sin-mi], 49:1b-4a, v.3, pp. 244-245 [Sejong.12:7:ŭl-sa], 63:1a, v.3, p. 535 [Sejong.16:1:kyŏng-chin], 86:3a-3b, v.4, p. 223 [Sejong.21:7:ki-yu].

627 On the murder case and the follow-up story, see *Sejong sillok* 43:27b, v.3, p. 172 [Sejong.11:3:ki-sa], 43:27b, v.3, p. 172 [Sejong.11:3 kyŏng-o], 44:1a, v.3, p. 173 [Sejong.11:4:pyŏng-cha, 44:2b, v.3, p. 174 [Sejong.11:4:sin-sa], 44:6b-7a, v.3, p. 176 [Sejong.11:4:pyŏng-sin], 44:14a, v.3, p. 180 [Sejong.11:5:im-cha], 44:15a, v.3, p. 180 [Sejong.11:5:hŏng-sa], 44:17a-17b, v.3, p. 181 [Sejong.11:5:ŭl-ch'uk], 45:10b-11a, v.3, pp. 192-193 [Sejong.11:7:kap-sul].

628 *Sejong sillok* 44:24b-25b, v.3, p. 185 [Sejong.11:6:ki-ch'uk].

629 *Sejong sillok* 87:27a-28b, v.4, pp. 256-257 [Sejong.21:12:sin-sa]. It is interesting to note that this case even triggered an intense debate at court about the penalty for the family, because it covered the conflict between law and family ethics.

meeting friends or relatives outside their accommodations.[630] Even Jurchen immigrants dealt with the Japanese privately.[631]

To suppress smugglers from all walks of life, the Chosŏn court tried hard to separate residents from visitors and closely supervise their communications. In the battle with the smugglers who took every opportunity that came their way, the court made anew and improved enforcement of the anti-smuggling regulations. It forbade the marines to carry out maritime trade,[632] confiscated the property of the aristocratic families who committed smuggling,[633] and aggravated punishments on the merchant-smugglers.[634] It confined the visitors to special accommodations and constantly strengthened security measures by prohibiting unauthorised entry and exit,[635] building high walls and railings to surround the accommodations[636] and banning private conversations with visitors.[637] In order to prevent the

[630] For records about illegal transactions between Japanese immigrants in Korea and Japanese visitors, see *Sejong sillok* 80:11a-12a, v.4, pp. 126-127 [Sejong.20:1:kap-chin], 22:21a-23a, v.4, pp. 289-290 [Sejong.22:5:chŏng-myo], *Sejong sillok* 108:6b, v.4, p. 615 [Sejong.27:4:kyŏng-sul], *Sejong sillok* 109:18a-18b, v.4, p. 631 [Sejong.27:8:pyŏng-o].
[631] *Sejong sillok* 65:21a-22a, v.3, p. 587 [Sejong.16:8:im-sul]. I recognize the ethnic identity of these immigrants because of their names. Their names (Kim Maktong 金莫同, Kim Natae 金難大, Tok Tong 禿同) are identical with the names of the Jurchen people in *sillok*..
[632] *T'aejong sillok* 29:47b-50a, v.2, pp. 72-73 [T'aejong.15:6:kyŏng-in], *Sejong sillok* 12:27a-27b, v.2, p. 444 [Sejong.3:7:chŏng -hae]. For further discussion about Chosŏn's restraints on its navy, see Chapter 2.3.2.
[633] *T'aejong sillok* 27:24b-25a, v.2, pp. 17-18 [T'aejong.14:5:sin-myo].
[634] According to the law revised in 1421/06, smugglers were no longer allowed to be bailed out of prison; a more harsh physical punishment was applied: the number of hits with a single cane increased from 50 to 100; the officials confiscated not only the prohibited goods and illegal gains but also the transport vehicles and ships. *Sejong sillok* 12:8b-9a, v.2, p. 434-435 [Sejong.3:6:kyŏng-cha]. In 1445/04 when another case was uncovered, the four Korean smugglers' wives and children were sent into exile. See *Sejong sillok* 108:6b, v.4, p. 615 [Sejong.27:4:kyŏng-sul].
[635] *Sejong sillok* 48:3b-5a, v.3, pp. 228-229 [Sejong.12:4:sin-sa]; '64:43b-44b, v.3, p. 574 [Sejong.16:6:ki-sa].
[636] *Sejong sillok* 64:43b-44b, v.3, p. 574 [Sejong.16:6:ki-sa], 80:3b-6a, v.4, pp. 122-124 [Sejong.20:1:im-chin];
[637] *Sejong sillok* 64:43b-44b, v.3, p. 574 [Sejong.16:6:ki-sa];

possibility of private contacts, the court even replaced the guards on the Japan Houses with those who did not know any basic Japanese words.[638]

Besides, the court enhanced its controls over the Japanese immigrants in Korea,[639] separating them from the overseas visitors. From 1409, the Chosŏn court was on the alert for the possibility of collusion between the immigrants and the visitors. It thus deliberately moved the Japanese residents from the coastal border to the inland regions and scattered the leaders of the immigrants to different provinces.[640] The military conflicts between Chosŏn and Tsushima in 1419 sharpened the court's vigilance against the immigrants' contacts with the islanders, driving the court to strengthen its control over the Japanese in Korea. The court resettled the immigrants to remote inland areas,[641] executed those who might pose a security

[638] *Sejong sillok* 44:24b-25b, v.3, p. 185 [Sejong.11:6:ki-ch'uk].
[639] Chosŏn began to carry out a neutralization policy to pacify the Japanese raiders as early as the 1390s. In 1395/01, Hyōjirō 表時羅 and three other Japanese came and surrendered to Chosŏn, and the court settled them in Kyŏngsang-do. This was the first record in *sillok* about Chosŏn's acceptance of the submission from Japanese lords (*T'aejo sillok* 7:1a, v.1, p. 73 [T'aejo.4:1:mu-sul]). More Japanese islanders immigrated to Korea after the negotiations between Chosŏn and the pirate chiefs started in late 1396 (*T'aejo sillok* 10:11a, v.1, p. 99 [T'aejo.5:12:kye-sa]Many of them were conferred with official titles by Chosŏn. An example was Taira Dōzen 平道全, who was conferred in 1407/07 with the honorary title, Supernumerary Vice Director of Palace Kitchen Supplies (*Unoe Sajaesogam* 員外司宰少監). See *T'aejong sillok* 14:6a-8a, v.1, pp. 405-406 [T'aejong.7:7:pyŏng-in]. For the biography of Taira Dōzen, see *Sejong sillok* 63:33b-34a, v.3, p. 546 [Sejong.16:3:mu-in]. On the further discussion about Chosŏn's naturalization policy, see Kenneth Robinson (1992). In addition to the surrendered islanders, there were also some Japanese slaves in Korea. Most of them were arrested pirates and prisoners of war. In 1408/10, the court banned the buying and selling of Japanese slaves after a case of slave-running came to light (*T'aejong sillok* 16:30b-31a, v.1, p. 459 [T'aejong.8:10:ŭl-mi]). In 1410/04, the ban was proclaimed again (*T'aejong sillok* 19:33b-37a, v.1, pp. 539-541 [T'aejong.10:4:kap-chin]). These records of regulations for the Japanese slave trade indicates the existence of these immigrants in the early 1400s.
[640] *T'aejong sillok* 19:52b, v.1, p. 522 [T'aejong.9:12:ŭl-ch'uk], 19:16b, v.1, p. 530 [T'aejong.10:2:kap-cha].
[641] *Sejong sillok* 4:11a-11b, v.2, p. 319 [Sejong.1:6:kap-sul], 4:12b, v.2, p. 320 [Sejong.1:6:chŏng-ch'uk], 4:15a-15b, v.2, p. 336 [Sejong.1:9:kye-ch'uk].

threat to the kingdom,[642] forbade the immigrants to communicate with each other,[643] and stopped them from leaving the kingdom or getting in touch with their overseas compatriots.[644] The court further improved these measures in the 1430s, in order to suppress collusion and smuggling.[645]

Also, the court imposed restraints on contacts at sea. In 1413/07, the court explicitly forbade residents to obtain *haengjang* by fraudulent means and sail overseas for trade.[646] Four months later in 1413/11, the court began to register all the government and private vessels in the kingdom.[647] From then on, unregistered sailing was prohibited. Because of the tension with Tsushima in the 1420s, the court repeatedly affirmed 'the law against violating this ban and sailing (*wig'ŭm hahae ryul* 違禁下海律)' in the *Great Ming Code*. In the meantime, it also implemented further supplementary regulations to strengthen its control over marine activities.[648]

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642 *Sejong sillok* 4:11a-11b, v.2, p. 319 [Sejong.1:6:kap-sul], :12b, v.2, p. 320 [Sejong.1:6:chŏng-ch'uk]. The court even discussed the possibility of executing all Japanese adult males in 1419/04, but it eventually decided to settle them in various provinces. *Sejong sillok* 4:15b-16a, v.2, pp. 321-322 [Sejong.1:6:pyŏong-sul].
643 *Sejong sillok* 5:10b, v.2, p. 334 [Sejong.1:8:ki-hae].
644 *Sejong sillok* 10:14a, v.2, p. 426 [Sejong.3:3:pyŏng-cha], 11:17a-17b, v.2, p. 427 [Sejong.3:4:chŏng-yu], 24:12b-13a, v.2, pp. 596-597 [Sejong.6:5:mu-cha].
645 From 1438, meetings with friends were prohibited and meetings between family members were put under close supervision. *Sejong sillok* 80:11a-12a, v.4, pp. 126-127 [Sejong.20:1:kap-chin]. From 1440, the trading ports were closed to the Japanese immigrants. Also, the immigrants were not allowed to sail without a travel permit. Se*jong sillok* 22:21a-23a, v.4, pp. 289-290 [Sejong.22:5:chŏng-myo].
646 The first Chosŏn king introduced the Ming's *Code* to Korea when he established the dynasty in 1392. According to the *Great Ming Code*, unauthorized sailing was prohibited. However, the court did not specially issue a relevant order in the following decade. Not until 1413/07 did the court highlight the ban on private sailing for the first time. See *T'aejong sillok* 26:8b-9a, v.1, pp. 679-680 [*T'aejong* 13:7:ŭl-sa].
647 *T'aejong sillok* 26:44a-45a, v.1, pp. 697-698 [T'aejong.13:11:mu-sul].
648 In 1422/02, the court instructed that all Korean vessels must travel in a group of six or seven under the escort of the marines, or the officials would confiscate the goods on the ships (Sejong sillok 15:10a, v.2, p. 475 [Sejong.4:2:mu-sin]). Supplementary instructions were made in 1422/08 (*Sejong sillok* 17:6b-7a, v.2, p.491 [Sejong.4:8:kye-mo]), 1425/06 (*Sejong sillok* 28:27b-31a, v.2, pp. 675-677 [Sejong.7:6:sin-yu],), 1426/04 (*Sejong sillok* 32:8a-8b, v.3, p. 21 [Sejong.8:4:sin-sa]), 1426/05 (*Sejong sillok* 32:26b-27a, v.2, p. 25 [Sejong.8:5:ki-hae]), and 1440/05 (*Sejong sillok* 89:23a-24a, v.4, p. 290 [Sejong.22:5:kyŏng-o]).

It is interesting to note that the court not only implemented sailing interdiction on the high seas. It also applied the same interdiction on those who travelled to Ming China via the land routes and those who lived in the inland regions that bordered with the Jurchen people, in order to suppress the border-crossing smuggling activities.[649] This practice indicates that the *wig'ŭm hahae* policy was much more than a regulation for waterborne activities. It was actually an anti-smuggling provision that was applied in all smuggling cases. Hence, most Korean ships conducted coastal transportation trade and caught fish in coastal waters, rather than sail abroad and carry out overseas trade, even though the court did not thoroughly prohibit private navigation.[650]

Moreover, the court regulated the behaviour of its diplomats, too. In 1423/05, the court began to search the luggage of its diplomats for contraband before they sailed to Japan.[651] In 1424/06, the court legislated against smuggling committed by its missions to Japan and instructed both the central and local governments to supervise the envoys.[652] In 1429/11, the court reaffirmed the law and specified the list of contraband specially for its envoys.[653] In 1439/07, it was even proposed to instruct officers to spy on the private trades made by the envoys and other members in the missions.[654]

In summary, Chosŏn's trade control policy distorted the market and made smuggling an increasingly profitable trade, which attracted not only Japanese visitors but also a wide range of Korean residents to engage in smuggling. To defend its policy against the unscrupulous, the court had to closely supervise those who had an opportunity to contact the

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[649] *Sejong sillok* 21:12b-13a, v.2, pp. 553-554 [Sejong.5:8:sin-mi], 59:51a-53a, v.3, pp. 460-461 [Sejong.15:3:ŭl-hae].
[650] Legally speaking, those who registered with the officials and carried a permit were allowed to sail.
[651] *Sejong sillok* 21:12b-13a, v.2, pp. 553-554 [Sejong.5:8:sin-mi].
[652] *Sejong sillok* 23:11a-11b, v.2, p. 576 [Sejong.6:1:ŭl-sa].
[653] *Sejong sillok* 43:4a-4b, v.3, p. 160 [Sejong.11:1:im-cha], 43:12b-13a, v. 3, pp. 206-207 [Sejong.11:1:sin-mi].
[654] *Sejong sillok* 86:3a-3b, v.4, p. 223 [Sejong.21:7:ki-yu].

Japanese. It also tried its best to block every possible channel through which the visitors could collude with the residents in trafficking contraband and controlled commodities. It thus untiringly made tedious regulations to seal the accommodations of the Japanese, monitor the coastal waters, and closely watch its diplomats. With these regulations, Chosŏn cautiously mended and improved its fences, which gradually became a tight border control system that administered foreign access to the kingdom.

5.4 Summary: the economic significance of the *haegŭm* policy

It is common to interpret Chosŏn's maritime exclusion policy as a non-economic or isolationist policy, but that is not accurate. From the perspective of the Korean decision makers at the time, the implementation of a maritime exclusion policy was a rational economic decision that was made in response to specific economic challenges under a certain geopolitical-and-economic context.

By the turn of the fifteenth century, the Japanese islanders had a naval advantage over the Koreans. They thus often resorted to threats of force and made excessive commercial demands on their Korean neighbours. To pacify the Japanese, Chosŏn adopted a policy of laissez-fair from the early 1400s. From 1407, the court even made efforts to meet the Japanese demands by improving market access for the imported goods and supporting the trade with government reserves. However, by the 1420s, because of the limited size of their market, the Koreans were not able to increase their bid amounts and keep the price high at the same time. In contrast, the Japanese expected to maintain, if not expand, their trade surplus with Korea and made troubles for the Koreans by dumping goods on the peninsular market. These practices not only disturbed the economic and public order in Chosŏn but also put great pressure on government reserves.

Under this context, the Chosŏn court had to revise its laissez-fair policy and restrain the trade to protect the domestic economy and national treasure from excessive trade. By implementing various regulations, including the ban on unauthorised sailing and the prohibition on private contacts with overseas visitors, Chosŏn imposed centralized management on the trade with the Japanese from the 1410s. In the following three decades, the Japanese visitors tried hard to bypass the Koreans' restrictions and maintain profitability, while the Koreans kept improving their trade control framework with more specific supplementary regulations. The new rules and regulations were usually complex and tedious, but the court's control over trade became more effective in this process. By the early 1440s, a comprehensive system was developed and the Chosŏn court almost had the trade under control. The system was so successful that, by manipulating the trade, the court even regained the initiative and turned loss into gain in the resale trade in its domestic market. This became the general framework that governed Korea's economic contacts with the Japanese, and, it operated smoothly for five centuries with few breaks.

Generally speaking, Chosŏn Korea's trade policy was similar to Ming China's trade system. Both administrations intended to further their economic interests in foreign trade by monopolizing and manipulating the trade. To achieve this goal required the governments to have the border-crossing commerce under absolute control. That was the major reason why this thesis argues that the *haijin* or *haegŭm* policies were economically significant.

But it is also interesting to note the different paths on which maritime trade developed in these two countries. A notable distinction was that the overseas strategies implemented by the two countries were different. In China, the Ming authority vigorously expanded its overseas commercial network by promoting state-sponsored voyages and overseas trade. In contrast, the Chosŏn administration scarcely ever strengthened its commercial presence in the overseas world, especially after its military operation in Tsushima in 1419. Instead, the

Koreans discouraged its envoys from conducting trade abroad and concentrated on managing the trade that took place in the Japan Houses on its territory. This difference might be explained by the different military balances between the two countries and their overseas rivals. Ming China's trading mechanism was backed by a naval power unparalleled in East Asian waters. The Ming emperors could send out splendid fleets to sweep the seas and act as a deterrent for their trading missions if they so wanted. In the case of Korea, Chosŏn was in a relatively weak military position when they dealt with the Japanese, who dominated the high seas surrounding the peninsula. Therefore, the Chosŏn kings had to devote more energy to fashion compromises with the aggressive Japanese and find a balance between national security and economic benefits. That was probably a significant reason why it took much longer for Chosŏn to establish and develop its framework of trade than Ming China.

Another difference worth noting is that Ming China's and Chosŏn Korea's trade control systems had different endings. In China, the trade system collapsed by the 1450s, while Chosŏn's trade system operated with great consistency over the entire the dynastic period. Even though the Korean-Japanese commercial relationship had been interrupted twice by the Samp'o Waeran 三浦倭亂 (Japanese revolt of the three ports) in 1510 and the Imjin Waeran 壬辰倭亂 (Japanese invasion of Korea) in the 1590s, the general framework was soon re-established after the incidents. The reasons might be twofold. First, Korea's trade policy was exempt from the conflict of interests between different political departments, but the intense fiscal competition between the emperors and the bureaucrats paralysed China's trading system. However, this is not to suggest that the Chosŏn kings achieved financial harmony with their bureaucrats. Rather, it was because, after subtracting the costs of receiving and subsidizing the Japanese, the Korean government achieved a small profit margin, if not negative, from maritime commerce. Even if the court's net income was positive, the absolute revenue that the trade could generate was much smaller than Ming

China's trade income, since their market sizes differed so greatly. Given the narrow profit margins, Korea's supreme fiscal authorities were not enthusiastic about contending for the trade, and thus, Chosŏn's trade policy was spared from such disturbance.

The second reason was that, unlike its Chinese counterpart, the Chosŏn court did not completely prohibit the private sector from conducting foreign trade. Even after the court established its monopoly position in the domestic market in the 1440s, private individuals were still allowed to directly trade with the visitors after 'official trade' and under close supervision. In other words, Chosŏn found a balance between official trade and private trade, which the Ming authority never achieved in maritime trade. This balance might partly account for the consistency of Chosŏn's trade policy.

In summary, Chosŏn's decisions to implement and strengthen the maritime exclusion policy was partly made out of economic considerations. Maritime exclusion was not a policy that strangled Korea's maritime expansion process. Instead, it was a policy conforming with a historical trend, starting in the thirteenth century, that saw the Koreans retreat from the seas. What resulted was an optimal solution that the decision makers at the time could find within that historic context. At least, the policy of laissez -fair turned out to be an inappropriate option. Maritime exclusion was also a part of Chosŏn's efforts to deal with the fiscal crisis caused by the excessive foreign trade that was draining the national treasury. Beyond achieving peace by 'transforming raiders to traders', it established a new bilateral economic order with Japan that favoured the Koreans, helping them to turn trading losses into gains. More importantly, although the *haegŭm*-based trade control system did not generate liberal revenue for the court, it survived the test of time.

Chapter 6

Restraints on the outflow of precious metals and the non-proliferation of firearm technology

We have discussed the Ming and Chosŏn courts' security and economic concerns behind the implementations of maritime exclusion in previous chapters. In chapter 3, we reviewed the geopolitical uncertainty in post-hegemony East Asia and discussed how the courts improved national security with maritime exclusion. In chapters 4 and 5, we analysed the problems of China and Korea's old trade systems and explained how the courts improved trade balances by establishing state-dominant trade systems with maritime exclusion. In this chapter, we will examine two other security and economic concerns that related to the implementations of maritime exclusion. Section 6.1 will discuss the issues of the cross-border flows of precious metals and reveal the courts' attempts to improve the financial health of both the Ming empire and the Chosŏn kingdom. By analysing the Korean case in section 6.2., will show how the Korean and Ming courts prevented the proliferation of advanced military technologies with maritime exclusion in order to maintain their military advantages over overseas rivals.

6.1 Restraints on the outflow of precious metals

Another economic consideration behind the implementation of the *haijin/haegŭm* policy was to stop the outflow of precious metals. The Chinese authority prohibited the export of gold and silver, because it thought that the outflow of the precious metals jeopardized its monetary system and contributed to the devaluation of its fiat money.[655] In

[655] Chen Wenshi first makes this point with a oneline mention in his work about the Ming's *haijin* policy, but neither he nor later scholars unfold this argument and give it further discussion. See Chen Wenshi (1966). Li Kangying argues on the opposite side of the issue, suggesting that the early Ming administration carried out *haijin* because it tried to stop the inflow of silver from the overseas world. See Li Kangying (2010). Li's interpretation is

Korea, the court forbade its people to make payments to the Japanese merchants in silver and gold, because it had to keep the gold and silver reserves in order to satisfy Ming's requests for tribute. The modern academy knows that China burdened the Koreans with demands for gold and silver, but no one has pointed out the connection between this pressure to collect precious metals and the implementation of *haegŭm*. The following pages will examine issues of causality between the possession of precious metals and implementation of the *haijin/haegŭm* policy in both countries.

6.1.1 The case of Ming China: Monetary policy, fiat money, and precious metal reserves

According to an article in the *Great Ming Code,* the court prohibited the exports of certain types of silk cloth, grains, copper coins, silver, and gold to the overseas world.[656] In fact, this was not a new interdict on the export of metal currencies in China. As early as 1158, three decades after its establishment in 1127, the Southern Song authority prohibited the export of copper coins to the overseas world.[657] In 1286, seven years after it replaced the Song, the Yuan administration issued the same interdict, and it further banned the export of silver and gold in 1293.[658]

The reason for carrying out these interdicts was threefold. First, the authorities at the time seemed to share an idea with the mercantilism in sixteenth century Europe that emphasized the importance of metal money and regarded them as substantial treasure. This

obviously influenced by a current theory that links the decline of imperial China with the circulation of silver on a global scale after the sixteenth century when the Europeans began to extract large amounts of silver from the new world. However, it is incorrect to explain the early Ming case with Li's theory. As we will see in the following pages, the situation that the Chinese faced in the fourteenth century, when *haijin* was implemented, was completely different from that in the sixteenth century. For a discussion of silver and the decline of China in the early modern period, see Andre Gunder Frank (1998) and Lin Man-hong (2006).

[656] *The Great Ming Code*, p. 117.

[657] *Jianyan yilai xinian yaolu* Book 180, v.4, p. 2984. also see Song shi, Book.180, v.7, pp. 4396-4397; *Song shi*, book.201, v.8, p. 5016.

[658] *Yuan shi*, Book 94, v.8, pp. 2401-2403.

comprehension of treasure is reasonable in a sense, since precious metals have a substantial value in themselves. The Chinese put a lot of effort into mining, but the output was usually not enough, and the monetary authority always found themselves in a shortage of precious metals.[659] Hence, it is not surprising that the state should ban the export, even for payments, of bullion. This thought is particularly reflected in the court discussions of the Southern Song period.[660]

Second, the monetary authorities needed a sufficient amount of metal currencies to endorse the bills they issued. The officials at the time roughly realized the principle that fiat money must be backed by something. For example, the Southern Song monetary authority clearly realized the 'trust' issue of paper currency. To support the face value of its fiat money, the court bought back paper money from the market with its own coins and silver reserves many times and sometimes at great scale. The Yuan bureaucrats used a metaphor to describe the importance of the convertibility of fiat money into hard currencies: [we should] 'weigh up the child [fiat money] and the mother [bullion] with each other (*zimu qiangquan* 子母相權)'. With this insight, it became a consensus inside the administration that they should print fiat money according to the governmental deposits of silver.[661] While neither could firmly adhere to monetary discipline, both the Southern Song and the Yuan administration backed their fiat money with hard currencies stored in the national treasury.[662] Given this

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[659] On the efforts of mining and the shortage of precious metals in the Southern Song period, see 'dongnan zhulu zhuqian zengsun xingfei benmo 東南諸路鑄錢增損興廢本末' and 'zhuqian zhujian 鑄錢諸監' in *Jianyan yilai chaoye* zaji, Book 16, v.3, pp. 233-236.
[660] *Song shi*, Book 186, v.7, p. 4566, Book. 185, v.7, pp. 4538.
[661] On the Song policies and regulations on fiat issues, see 'Dongnan huizi 東南會子' in *Jianyan yilai chaoye zaji*, Book 16, v.3, pp. 237-239. On the Yuan monetary policies, refer to the policy debate that took place in the court in 1286. See 'Yi chao fa 議鈔法' and 'Lun shibo yantie chaofa shiyi guanmu zhufa 論市舶鹽鐵鈔法市易官牧諸法' in *Yuan dai zouyi jilu (shang)*, pp. 232-233, 259. On a general introduction to China's monetary system, see Peng Xinwei (1958).
[662] 'Yi chao fa' in *Yuan dai zouyi jilu (shang)*, pp. 232-233

monetary system, the Chinese officials were under pressure to guarantee that there were sufficient metal currencies circulating in the economy or stored in the national treasury.[663] This partly explains why the Southern Song banned the export of copper coins and the Yuan prohibited the outflow of copper coins, silver, and gold.[664]

Third, the great demand for metals from the outer world and the price differences between domestic and foreign markets drove the Chinese and overseas merchants to export precious metals from China. This profit-driven export led to a shortage of precious metals in China, which further resulted in negative consequences to the country. This situation also forced the government to react.[665]

The Ming administration faced similar challenges, if not worse. When it came to power, the Ming court took over a China suffering a serious shortage of copper coins and silver because of the centuries-long outflow of precious metals in the previous dynastic periods. It was in this context that the new financial authority set about making its financial and monetary polices. Zhu Yuanzhang's authority started issuing its own copper coins in 1361, seven years before he ascended the throne as Emperor Hongwu.[666] When the dynasty was formally founded in 1368, the administration changed the coin's name to take the new

[663] To collect enough bronze to cast coinage, the Southern Song officials made a compulsory purchase of all bronze wares in the country (see *Jianyan yilai chaoye* zaji, Book 16, v.3, pp. 233-236). Likewise, to establish a sufficient governmental reserve of silver and gold, Kublai Khan even decreed a ban on the circulation of these precious metals in the economy in 1284. See 'Yi gei qizhe yishi ji huaimeng zhuyuan jianghu yuke dengshi' in Y*uan dai zouyi jilu (shang)*, p. 257.
[664] Angela Schottenhammer presents a convincing explanation for the Song administration's restrictions on metals export by analysing the economic function of metals in maritime trade and Song's financial policies in detail. See Angela Schottenhammer (2001), (2019). Moreover, she also briefly discusses the Yuan's policy on metals export in another paper: see Angela Schottenhammer (2001).
[665] Li Kangying discusses the outflow and the shortage of metals in Song and Yuan China, which exhausted the country's metals when the Ming authority came to power, see Li Kangying (2007). Also refer to Angela Schottenhammer (2001), (2019).
[666] This sort of coin was named *Dazhong tongbao* 大中通寶. see Masui Takaki (2002); Peng Xinwei (1958), pp. 637-638;

rein title as *Hongwu tongbao* 洪武通寶. However, it seems that the financial authority failed to supply enough copper coins because of the serious shortage of copper at the time. Against this backdrop, paper money was introduced. In 1374/09, the court founded the Supervisorate of Precious Currency (*Baochao Tijusi* 寶鈔提舉司).[667] Six months later in 1375/03, the court started issuing paper currency.[668] There were six denominations in bills. The highest denomination note was one *guan* 貫, which could be exchanged for one thousand copper coins (*wen* 文).[669] Smaller denominations were issued in conversion rates of 100, 200, 300, 400, and 500, which could be converted to a corresponding number of copper coins.[670] The administration decreed that coins and paper money were the only two legitimate currencies in circulation. The government would accept both payment methods in tax collection. While the court also regulated that the bill of one *guan* was officially equivalent to one *liang* 兩 of silver, the circulation of precious metals was prohibited. People were allowed to buy the fiat money with silver or gold from the administration, but they could not convert the bill back to the metals.

Apparently, the Ming monetary authority imitated the Yuan system, in which the administration kept all precious metals in reserve and the market was required to use the fiat money and copper coins only. Institutionally speaking, the fiat money was supposed to be backed by governmental reserves of gold and silver. Naturally, this monetary system promoted the Ming administration's desire to stop the outflow of precious metals, as its predecessors had.

[667] *Ming Taizu shilu* 93:1b-2a, v.4, pp. 1620-1621 [Hongwu.7:9:xinwei].
[668] *Ming Taizu shilu* 98:1a-1b, v.4, pp. 1669-1670 [Hongwu.8:3:xinyou].
[669] *Ming Taizu shilu* 98:1a-2a, v.4, pp. 1669-1671 [Hongwu.8:3:xinyou]
[670] The officials issued smaller denominations in 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 *wen* 'as a help to the people' in 1390.

While the Ming fiat money was initially backed by government reserves of gold and silver, as per the original plan in the 1370s, Emperor Hongwu's specific monetary practices in the 1380s imperilled the system and led to hyperinflation of the fiat money, which pushed the court to tighten up its grasp of gold and silver exports in the 1390s. A brief discussion of the emperor's intervention in monetary policy is necessary here, not only because it has not yet been thoroughly examined in existing scholarship,[671] but also because that will help us to understand the financial context for the strengthening of coastal border controls.

By 1380, the supply of paper money was manged by the bureaucratic government, given that the Supervisorate of Precious Currency was a direct subsidiary department of the Ministry of Revenue, which was under the leadership of the prime minister in the Secretariat (*zhongshu sheng* 中書省). The paper money was initially successful, as the *shilu* reports no negative report about the system in this period. It implies that the monetary bureaucrats were cautiously managing the money supply at the time.[672] However, the original system was affected by significant political purges in 1380, when the emperor centralized his power by permanently abolishing the Secretariat and executing thousands of bureaucrats, including Hu Weiyong 胡惟庸, his prime minister. As the Secretariat was dismissed, the Supervisorate of Precious Currency was dissolved as well.[673] In 1383/05, eunuchs were appointed to manage the affairs related to paper money, which implied the increase of the emperor's authority over

[671] Most existing scholarships attribute the Ming's failure at currency management to the flaws in the monetary system. The discussion below suggests that Emperor Hongwu's problematic intervention was the direct cause for the failure.
[672] Ye Ziqi's writing in 1378 also indicates that the elites at the time had a mature insight on monetary policy. See Richard Von Glahn, (1996), p. 71.
[673] According to a report in 1380/05, the Ministry of Revenue took the place of the Secretariate and took charge of the issue of paper money, implying that the Supervisorate of Precious Currency was under the charge of the Ministry of Revenue at the time (*Ming Taizu shilu* 131:4b-5b, v.5, pp. 2084-2086 [Hongwu.13:5:jihai]). Three months later, the emperor ordered to dissolve the Supervisorate of Precious Currency (Ming Taizu shilu 132:6a, v.5, p. 2103 [Hongwu.13:7:xinchou].

the monetary issues and the decline of the financial authority of the government.[674] In the meantime, the printing and issuing of the fiat money were slowed down and halted completely in 1384/03.[675]

Not until 1386/09 did the emperor re-establish the Supervisorate of Precious Currency and revived the paper money.[676] It worth pointing out that, different from the case in the 1370s, when the bureaucratic government took charge of the money supply, the emperor was now the monetary authority. Before he resumed printing and issuing fiat money in 1386/09, the emperor first made two negative comments in 1386/03 and 1386/08 on the economic policies held by Sanghong Yang 桑弘羊 in the Han dynasty, Yang Yan 杨炎 in the Tang dynasty, and the Taizong Emperor in the Song dynasty.[677] These comments seem random and irrelevant, but, in fact, these three monetary authorities shared a common practice: all of them promoted a division between the national treasury and the emperor's storehouse. Considering this historical detail, the message the emperor tacitly conveyed is clear: the national treasury and the emperor's storehouse should not be separated. Speaking in unequivocal terms, the emperor's monetary authority should not be confined to his personal exchequer. Given this context and the fact that the Secretariat had been permanently abolished, the implication of the reestablishment of the Supervisorate of Precious Currency was unusual. It was not a revival of the government's monetary authority. Essentially, the emperor established himself

[674] *Ming Taizu shilu* 154:1b-2a, v.6, pp. 2402-2403 [Hongwu.16:5:yimao]. It worth noting that the eunuchs engaged in monetary affairs from the beginning when the court started issuing paper money in 1375. The Treasury [for the Benevolent Issuance] of Paper Money (*baochao [guanghui] ku* 寶鈔[廣惠]庫) was reconstructed from an inner-court treasury and the new treasury was still under the charge of the eunuchs, who represented the emperor to supervise the issue of paper money (*Ming Taizu shilu* 98:3a-3b, v.4, pp. 1673-1674 [Hongwu.8:3:renshen]).
[675] *Ming Taizu shilu* 160:10a, v.6, p. 2485 [Hongwu.17:3:renzi].
[676] *Ming Taizu shilu* 179:4a, v.6, p. 2709 [Hongwu.19:9:jiwei].
[677] On his comments on Sanghong Yang and Yang Yan, see *Ming Taizu shilu*177:4a-4b, v.6, pp. 2681-2682 [Hongwu.19:3:wuwu]. On his criticism of Song Taizong, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 179:1a, v.6, p. 2703 [Hongwu.19:8:yiyou].

as the absolute monetary power, and then, he delegated the government to take charge of practical affairs.

As soon as the paper money was reissued under his instruction, Emperor Hongwu cut loose from the monetary discipline that was practised by the bureaucratic government. He decisively started an easy credit policy and expanded governmental expenditures on a large scale. As shown in Table 16, the amount of fiat money put into circulation in the four months after the reestablishment of the Supervisorate of Precious Currency was about seven times larger than that in the past eight months. The amounts in 1389 and 1390 were, respectively, around four times larger than that in 1386.

Table 16. Issue of paper money from 1386 to 1390 (unit: *ding* 錠 or a roll equal to 5 *guan*)

Year	Month	Military expenditure	Government procurement	Relief prevention	Total
1386	01-08	249,359	N	62,105	311,464
	09-12	393,690	1,857,500	N	2,251,190
	01-12				2,562,654
1387		1,800,786	N	1,330,160	3,130,946
1388		2,171,503	400,000	6,737,587	9,309,090
1389		11,079,915	?	?	11,079,915
1390	01-10	6,965,996	3,570,608	1,121,622	11,658,226

Source: *Ming Taizu shilu*.
Note: Only expenditures with specific amounts are noted. The amounts of awards to certain individuals are excluded because they are very small. “N” means that no expenditure was recorded for the item. “?” means that no amount was given in *Ming Taizu shilu* for the item.

This ‘quantitative easing monetary policy’ immediately resulted in a serious inflation of the fiat money. According to a report on 1390/10, paper money had already depreciated by 75% against coins in the markets in the Zhejiang region. Responding to the inflation, the court took four measures. First, it requested the private sector to hand over bronze to the government for minting in order to increase the supply of coins. Second, it forced the market to use the notes according to the face values by enacting a compulsory order.[678] Third, it

[678] *Ming Taizu shilu* 205:1b, p. 3062 [Hongwu.23:10:wuchen].

acted to replace the worn-out bills with new notes in an attempt to support the credit of the fiat money.[679]

Last but not least, the court reiterated the overseas trade interdict in the same month and highlighted the ban on private overseas trade, particularly the export of gold, silver, and copper coins.[680] This was the fifth proclamation of the *haijin* policy in the Hongwu reign. Moreover, different from the previous four *haijin* decrees, it was the first time that the emperor underlined a ban on the export of precious metal. This special edict indicates a causal link between monetary affairs and *haijin* policy. It was apparent that the court strengthened its grasp over the coastal-border-crossing trade in 1390, because it tried to keep the hard currencies within the economy and stop the fiat money from constantly falling in value.

Similar cases unfolded in 1394 and 1397. In 1392/ intercalary 12, Zhao Mian 趙勉, the Minister of Revenue who made efforts to confine the money supply from 1390 to 1392,[681] was executed, because he was involved in a political purge.[682] The new Minister, Yu Xin 郁新, reduced the supply of coins by abolishing all provincial mints in 1393/07.[683] Yu took such a step, because he attempted to dissolve the inflation problem by withdrawing coins from circulation and making all hard currency into national reserves to back the fiat money. Nevertheless, the paper money kept devaluing in the market. In 1394/08, the fiat money dropped in value by 94%. As a response, Yu completely prohibited the circulation of coins

[679] But the court stopped this operation immediately within a month, probably because the cost to recover old notes from circulation was too high. *Ming Taizu shilu* 205:1a, p. 3061 [Hongwu.23:10:jiwei].
[680] *Ming Taizu shilu* 205:4a, v.7, p. 3067 [Hongwu.23:10:yiyou].
[681] On the efforts to control the money supply, see *Ming Taizu shilu* 2020:1a-2b, v.7, pp. 3019-3022 [Hongwu.23:5:guisi], 208:6a-6b, v.7, pp. 3103-3104 [Hongwu.24:5:jichou], 208:7a, v.7, p. 3105 [Hongwu.24:5:guimao], 211:2b-3a, v.7, pp. 3136-3137 [Hongwu.24:8:xinwei], 216:4b-5b, v.7, pp. 3184-3186 [Hongwu.25:2:gengchen].
[682] *Ming Taizu shilu* 223:5b-6a, v.8, pp. 3268-3269 [Hongwu.25:intercalary 12:renchen].
[683] *Ming Taizu shilu* 229:1a, v.8, p. 3345 [Hongwu.26:7:bingwu].

and requested the private sector to hand over all coins to the administration.[684] It was in this context when the court issued the sixth *haijin* order in 1394/02.[685] Again in 1397/03, it was reported that the market exclusively measured the value of commodities with gold and silver. As a response, the court reaffirmed the ban on the use of precious metals.[686] In the next month (1397/04), it proclaimed the *haijin* policy again.[687]

The discussion above illustrates the connection between monetary practices and the *haijin* policy in the Hongwu period. In summary, there were some monetary elites in the Ming central government, who had a mature knowledge about the importance of adhering to monetary discipline. These bureaucrats established a reasonable monetary system, and they proved that they had the capability of properly managing the system. However, their policy witnessed reversals in the early 1380s and the early 1390s, because of the political movements and purges launched by the emperor. At the same time, the emperor established his absolute authority in the monetary policy-making process. The new managers who came to power after the purges adopted policies that went against monetary discipline. Consequently, serious hyperinflation started and lasted into the 1390s. Responding to the hyperinflation, the monetary authority did not tighten the money supply. Instead, it tried various other measures, one of which was an interdict on the private overseas trade and a ban on the export of hard currencies, as the emperor and his new assistants believed that the problem could be alleviated if they curbed the outflow of precious metals. The last three proclamations of the *haijin* policy in the Hongwu reign were made under this circumstance.

In fact, the Ming authority never solved the inflation problem of its fiat money. Although it kept modifying its monetary policies, forbidding and reintroducing coins to

[684] *Ming Taizu shilu* 234:1b-2a, v.8, pp. 3416-3417 [Hongwu.27:8:bingxu].
[685] *Ming Taizu shilu* .231:2a-2b, v.8, pp. 3373-3374 [Hongwu.27:1:jiayin].
[686] *Ming Taizu shilu* 251:2a, v.8, p. 3632 [Hongwu.30:3:jiazi.
[687] *Ming Taizu shilu* 252:1b-2b, v.8, pp. 3638-3640 [Hongwu.30:4:yiyou].

circulation again and again, the empire failed to get rid of the money problem.[688] After the Zhengtong reign (1435-1449), the administration gave up defending the paper currency and lifted the ban on the use of silver. While paper money (*baochao*) was still a legitimate currency in the second half of the dynasty, it played an insignificant role in the economy. In other words, the Ming's fiat money only 'lived' in the first eight or nine decades of the empirical period. It is interesting to note that this course basically coincided with the timespan when the *haijin* policy was strictly implemented. This chronological coupling implies that the attempts to support its monetary system gave the Ming authority an incentive to tightly control the coastal borders.

6.1.2 The case of Chosŏn Korea: The pressure of making international payments in gold and silver and the efforts to build trust in copper coins

The Chosŏn authority also had concerns about the outflow of hard currencies, and it took actions to curb exports. In 1414/05, King T'aejong was informed that some official households colluded with the Japanese in the Japan House and smuggled silver to the Japanese.[689] A few days later, the king instructed harsh punishments for the smugglers.[690] This was the earliest case testifying that the export of precious metals to Japan was illegal in Chosŏn. In 1417/05, the court reaffirmed the interdict.[691] When a list of contraband for the trade with Japan was made in 1429/06, gold and silver were on the list.[692] In 1433/01, the court formally legislated against the outflow of copper coins to Japan.[693] By issuing these

[688] Angela Schottenhammer offers a general outline of China's currency history, in which she discusses Ming currency problems: see Angela Schottenhammer (2019). For a detailed introduction to Ming's currency history, also refer to Peng Xinwei (2007).
[689] *T'aejong sillok* 27:31a-32a, v.2, p. 16 [T'aejong.14:5:sin-sa].
[690] *T'aejong sillok* 27:24b-25a, v.2, pp. 17-18 [T'aejong.14:5:sin-myo].
[691] *T'aejong sillok* 33:35a-35b, v.2, p. 160 [T'aejong.17:5:ki-ch'uk].
[692] *Sejong sillok* 44:24b-25b, v.3, p. 185 [Sejong.11:6:ki-ch'uk].
[693] *Sejong sillok* 59:5b-6a, v.3, pp. 437-438 [Sejong.15:1:ki-sa]. The court did not issue iron coins until 1440.

regulations, the court defined the export of metal currencies as smuggling and imposed punishments on the violators.[694]

Although Chosŏn's policy was similar with those implemented in Ming China, the contexts behind the decisions were slightly different. The Korean administration did not have to back their fiat money with gold and silver, because the Korean monetary system differed from the Chinese case.[695] When the new authority was established in the 1390s, cloth was the major currency on the peninsula. Hence, as Chosŏn's monetary authority pushed for a new monetary system in the 1400s with paper currency (*chŏhwa* 楮貨),[696] the administration anchored the paper currency to cloth, rather than gold or silver, and devoted itself to prove the convertibility of *chŏhwa* to cloth in order to build trust surrounding the fiat money.[697] Accordingly, the fiat money issue was not a factor that facilitated the Korean administration to accumulate and store gold and silver.

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[694] On the cases of metal currency smuggling, see *Sejong sillok* 45:10b-11a, v.3, pp. 192-193 [Sejong.11:7:kap-sul], 52:7a-7b, v.3, p. 310 [Sejong.13:4:kap-chin], 59:8a-9b, v.3, p. 439 [Sejong.15:1:im-sin], 65:21a-22a, v.3, p. 587 [Sejong.16:8:im-sul], 82:19a-19b, v.4, p. 161 [Sejong.20:9:kye-mi], 87:27a-28b, v.4, pp. 256-257 [Sejong.21:12:sin-sa], 108:6b, v.4, p. 615 [Sejong.27:4:kyŏng-sul], 109:18a-18b, v.4, p. 631 [Sejong.27:8:pyŏng-o]

[695] On the history of Korean currencies, see Wŏn Yu-han (2006).

[696] Chosŏn witnessed reversals in pushing for the new legitimate currency. In 1402/01, the court put *chŏhwa* into circulation for the first time (*T'aejong sillok* 2:3a-3b, v.1, p. 222, [T'aejong.2:1:ki-ch'uk], 2:3b, v.1, p. 222 [T'aejong.2:1:kyŏng-in], 2:3b-4a, v.1, pp. 222-223 [T'aejong.2:1:im-chin].), but it had to terminate the plan only nine months later in 1403/09 because of the severe inflation of the bills (*T'aejong sillok* 6:13a-13b, v.1, p. 277 [T'aejong.3:9:ŭl-yu]). Not until seven years later in 1410/05 did the court resume the discussion of issuing paper currency (*T'aejong sillok* 19:52b-54b, v.1, pp. 549-550 [T'aejong.10:5:sin-sa]).

[697] When the officials first issued *chŏhwa* in 1402/01, it regulated the exchange rate between *chŏhwa* and cloth (*T'aejong sillok* 2:3a-3b, v.1, p. 222, [T'aejong.2:1:ki-ch'uk], 2:3b, v.1, p. 222 [T'aejong.2:1:kyŏng-in], 2:3b-4a, v.1, pp. 222-223 [T'aejong.2:1:im-chin].). On some of the efforts to persuade the people into accepting the paper currency, see *T'aejong sillok* 11:3a-4a, v.1, pp. 347-348 [T'aejong.6:1:ki-mi], 21:1a-1b, v.1, p. 572 [T'aejong.11:1:kap-cha], 21:4a-5a, v.1, p. 574 [T'aejong.11:1:kye-yu], 21:5a-6a, v.1, pp. 574-575 [T'aejong.11:1:kap-sul], 21:6b-7a, v.1, p. 575 [T'aejong.11:1:sin-sa], 21:7a-8a, v.1, pp. 575-576 [T'aejong.11:1:im-o], 21:8a-8b, v.1, p. 576 [T'aejong.11:1:chŏng-hae].

As a matter of fact, the real reason for the Chosŏn court's efforts to collect and ban the export of gold and silver was the pressure of paying tribute to China. As discussed above, the Chinese monetary authority suffered pressure in using gold and silver to back its fiat money. This pressure was so intense that the Ming government took various measures to increase its reserves, including demanding its vassal states pay it gold and silver as tribute. Therefore, the Ming authority demanded that the Koreans provide gold and silver as tribute even before Chosŏn was established, as we saw in the discussion about the Ming-Koryŏ relationship in Chapter 3. In sum, the Chinese shared the pressure to obtain precious metals with its vassals, particularly the Koreans.

This situation remained unchanged after the establishment of Chosŏn. The Chinese continued to demand annual tribute of gold and silver. The Ming requested the Koreans pay 150 *taels* (*liang* 兩) of gold and more than 700 *taels* of silver to China annually.[698] This levy became a huge financial burden on the new Korean authority. For one thing, the Chosŏn court could not just say no to the Chinese, given its decision to pursue the 'serving the great (*sadae* 事大)' foreign policy. For another thing, the production of gold and silver in the peninsula was poor at the time, since the Koreans had not yet touched their mineral deposits on any great scale before the 1440s.[699]

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698 *T'aejong sillok* 34:26a-26b, v.2, p.190 [T'aejong.17:10:kap-chin]. Also see *T'aejong sillok* 13:11a-11b, v.1, p. 387 [T'aejong.7:3:sin-yu].

699 Korea's production capability of gold and silver was low by the mid-fifteenth century. In 1417/10, not believing that the kingdom was a gold-and-silver-poor country, the court offered generous rewards for reporting mineral deposits. It promised official positions, exemption from compulsory services to officials in the postal system, and money to slaves (*T'aejong sillok* 34:26a-26b, v.2, p.190 [T'aejong.17:10:kap-chin]). This policy indicates the low production capability at the time. The court provided the same offer again in 1421/03 (*Sejong sillok* 10:13a, v.2, p. 425 [Sejong.3:3:chŏng-ch'uk]). The situation did not change until the early 1440s. When the central government set a quota on annual payment of gold from Chŏlla-do and Kyŏngsang-do, the two provinces were requested to present 2 *liang* (approximately 2 ounces) of gold per year respectively (*Sejong sillok* 92:21a, v.4, p. 339 [Sejong.23:4:ki-sa]). The quota for Ch'ungch'ŏng-do and Kangwŏn-do was 5 *liang* (*Sejong sillok* 92:19b-20a, v.4, p. 338 [Sejong.23:3:mu-o]). In 1442/02 the court set an annual quota

Before the 1430s, the Koreans desperately complained again and again in their court of the difficulty in sustaining the annual tribute,[700] but there were few things they could do. On the one hand, the court kept begging the Ming court for mercy and seeking exemption from gold and silver tribute.[701] On the other hand, the court made efforts to increase national reserves. To obtain more gold and silver, the court squeezed the kingdom by pushing the local magistrates to search for mineral reserves,[702] prohibiting the circulation of precious

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of 200 *liang* of silver for Hwanghae-do (*Sejong sillok* 95:18a-19b, v.4, p. 398 [Sejong.24:2:im-in]). Not until 1447 was a large deposit of gold found. In 1447/02, it was reported that a large deposit of gold, from which more than 2 *liang* of gold could be mined per day, was found in Kangwŏn-do, and the court immediately ordered experimental mining (*Sejong sillok* 116:6a, v.5, p. 17 [Sejong.29:intercalary 4:kye-hae]).

700 On relevant complaints, see *T'aejo sillok* 6:1a-2b, v.1, pp. 63-64 [T'aejo.3:6:ki-sa], T'aejong sillok 33:34a-34b, v.2, p. 159 [T'aejong.17:5:chŏng-hae], *Sejong sillok* 2:3a-3b, v.2, p. 277 [Sejong.*chŭwiyŏn*:11:kyŏng-sul].

701 In 1409/intercalary 4, the Koreans requested an exemption from gold and silver tribute for the first time, but the Chinese angrily denounced this request by insulting Chosŏn's envoys (*T'aejong sillok* 17:35a, v.1, p. 487 [T'aejong.9:intercalary 4:kyŏng-o]). The Koreans made the same request repeatedly in 1412/11, 1418/11, 1420/01, 1428/06, and 1429/07/08/10, because of the serious difficulties in collecting precious metals (*T'aejong sillok* 24:26b, v.1, p. 655 [T'aejong.12:11:ki-yu], *Sejong sillok* 2:3a-3b, v.2, p. 277 [Sejong.*chŭwiyŏn*:11:kyŏng-sul], 7:12b-13b, v.2, p. 367 [Sejong.2:1:kap-cha], 39:25b, v.3, p. 135 [Sejong.10:6:kye-mo], 45:4b-6a, v. 3, pp. 189-190 [Sejong.11:7:im-sul], 45:10b-11a, v.3, pp. 192-193 [Sejong.11:7:kap-sul], 45:11a-11b, v.3, p. 193 [Sejong.11:8:mu-in], 45:14a-15a, v.3, pp. 194-195 [Sejong.11:8:im-chin], 46:4a, v.3, p. 202 [Sejong.11:10:kye-sa]).

702 As early as 1406/10, the Koreans began to search for gold and silver mineral deposits in the kingdom (*T'aejong sillok* 12:30b, v.1, p. 377 [T'aejong.6:10:mu-cha]). However, the output was far from the court's expectations and the cost of mining was so huge (more than 300 miners worked for several months and extracted only three *taels* of silver) that the court had to cease the mining in 1407/03 (*T'aejong sillok* 13:11a-11b, v.1, p. 387 [T'aejong.7:3:sin-yu]). While the court continued to receive precious metals from local officials as late as 1408/02 (*T'aejong sillok* 15:7a-7b, v.1, p. 430 [T'aejong.8:2:chŏng-mi]), the output was still limited. For example, according to a report submitted in 1407/10 about the production from the north-western provinces (*Sŏbaemyŏn* 西北面), 30 miners could produce around 100 *taels* of silver in one year (*T'aejong sillok* 14:35a, v.1, p. 419 [T'aejong.7:10:jihai]). In 1411/10, the court instructed prospecting for gold in new locations, because the governmental gold reserve was soon used up. The output was extremely small. Seventy men excavated for 20 days but they extracted only one *tael* of gold (*T'aejong sillok* 22:31a-32a, v.1, p. 606 [T'aejong.11:10:ŭl-sa]). Not until 1447/02 when a large deposit of gold was found in Korea could the Koreans extract a considerable amount of gold (*Sejong sillok* 116:6a, v.5, p. 17 [Sejong.29:intercalary 4:kye-hae]). But the court did not give up searching for gold reserves and continued sending people to explore new reserves as late as 1448 (*Sejong sillok* 125:11a-11b, v.5, p. 142 [Sejong.31:8:ki-mi]).

metals,[703] and making compulsory purchases from residents.[704] In 1428/06, King Sejong even instructed his diplomats to the Ming capital to investigate the Chinese market conditions and regulations, wondering whether it could purchase gold and silver from China publicly or secretly in order to pay tribute to the Chinese court.[705] A month later in 1428/07, the Korean court started trying to obtain gold and silver from Japan as well.[706]

Unsurprisingly, the administration prohibited the private sector from exporting gold and silver. In fact, firstly, the court curbed the outflow of precious metals to China through the land route. As early as 1394/06, King T'aejo prohibited the export of gold and silver to China because 'the annual tribute' to China was 'particularly difficult to be sustained'. The king decreed that smugglers would be executed.[707] In 1395/02, seventeen smugglers were executed in the capital market (*kisi* 棄市).[708] Further, in 1397/03, the court required Korean travellers and merchants to carry a *munbing* 文憑 (travel document) if they wanted to cross the border to China. Those who carried no *munbing* were forbidden to exit the border to trade.[709] The ban on precious metals export to China was reaffirmed by later officials in

[703] The ban was reaffirmed repeatedly in 1407/01/08/10, 1419/01. Since China exempted Chosŏn after 1430, the ban was probably lifted in the early 1430s. But, the court proclaimed the interdict again in 1434/02 (*Sejong sillok* 63:21b-23a, v.3, pp. 545-546 [Sejong.16:2:kap-sul], 63:23a-23b, v.3, p. 546 [Sejong.16:2:chŏng-ch'uk]). Also see 1439/08 (*Sejong sillok* 86:18a-18b, v.4, p. 131 [Sejong.21:8:ŭl-yu]).
[704] T'aejong sillok 14:36a-37a, v.1, p. 420 [T'aejong.7:10:kap-chin]. Also see *T'aejong sillok* 34:25a-25b, v.2, p. 189 [T'aejong.17:10:mu-sul]. It is worth noting that not all purchases were compulsory. The court made normal purchases in many cases (*T'aejong sillok* 35:60a-61a, v.2, p. 228 [T'aejong.18:5:chŏng-ch'uk], *Sejong sillok* 2:32b-33a, v.2, p. 291-292 [Sejong.*chŭwiyŏn*:12:im-chin]). From the 1430s, it became routine that the state publicly purchased gold and silver from the market at fixed prices. See *Sejong sillok* 59:17b-18a, v.3, pp.443-444 [Sejong.15:2:chŏng-yu], 62:12b-13a, v.3, pp. 524-525 [Sejong.15:11:kyŏng-chin], 63:21b-23a, v.3, pp. 545-546 [Sejong.16:2:kap-sul], 68:33b-34a, v.3, pp. 603-604 [Sejong.16:12:mu-sin], 78:18a-19a, v.4, pp. 94-95 [Sejong.19:8:ki-mi].
[705] The king also ordered to investigate China's technology of silver smelting. See *Sejong sillok* 39:26b-27a, v.3, pp. 135-136 [Sejong.10:6:chŏng-mi].
[706] *Sejong sillok* 39:1a-2b, v.3, pp. 136-137 [Sejong.10:7:sin-hae].
[707] *T'aejo sillok* 6:1a-2b, v.1, pp. 63-64 [T'aejo.3:6:ki-sa].
[708] *T'aejo sillok* 7:4a, v.1, p. 75 [T'aejo.4:2:ŭl-ch'uk].
[709] *T'aejo sillok* 6:8b, v.1, p. 103 [T'aejo.6:3:kyŏng-o].

1405/02, 1406/01, and 1429/01.[710] Not until 1414 did the court proclaim a ban on the export of gold and silver to Japan for the first time.[711] This time difference was reasonable, considering that the trade with Japan expanded only after 1408.[712]

Although China agreed to exempt Chosŏn from providing gold and silver tribute and allowed it to substitute horses, cloth, and hawks in 1429/11,[713] Korea's authority did not lift the ban on the export of precious metals. This was because the Koreans did not want the Chinese to think that Korea was rich in gold and silver.[714] Specifically, it would be a diplomatic disaster if they created such an impression among the Chinese, given that the Ming emperor permitted the Koreans to replace the bullion tribute with other goods, regardless of the opposition from the Chinese bureaucrats, only because Chosŏn claimed that Korea had no gold and silver deposits. If proven that the deposits existed, that would have been the crime of 'deceiving the emperor', one of the most severe crimes according to Chinese law. Besides, the Koreans were also afraid that the Chinese might resume demanding gold and silver from Chosŏn once they believed that Korea had sufficient gold and silver reserves.

Thus, the Chosŏn administration maintained the ban on gold and silver exports,[715] even though the Ming had exempted the Koreans from paying tribute in gold and silver. The Korean court even cautiously removed golden and silver utensils from diplomatic ceremonies

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[710] *T'aejong sillok* 9:4b, v.1, p. 319 [T'aejong. 5:2:pyŏng-sul], 11:3a-4a, v.1, pp. 347-348 [T'aejong.6:1:ki-mi], *Sejong sillok* 43:12b-13a, v. 3, pp. 206-207 [Sejong.11:1:sin-mi].
[711] *T'aejong sillok* 27:24b-25a, v.2, pp. 17-18 [T'aejong.14:5:sin-myo]
[712] Refer to Section.5.1.1.
[713] *Sejong sillok* 43:12b-13a, v. 3, pp. 206-207 [Sejong.11:1:sin-mi].
[714] Not until 1447/02 when a large deposit of gold was found in Korea could the Koreans extract a considerable amount of gold (*Sejong sillok* 116:6a, v.5, p. 17 [Sejong.29:intercalary 4:kye-hae]).
[715] The court reaffirmed the ban in 1431/08 (*Sejong sillok* 53:11b-12a, v.3, p. 334 [Sejong.13:8:mu-sul], 53:15a-15b, v.3, p. 336 [Sejong.13:8:yisi]), 1432/10/12 (*Sejong sillok* 58:6a-6b, v.3, p. 421 [Sejong.14:10:kap-chin], 58:28b-29b, v.3, pp. 432-433 [Sejong.14:12:kye-mo]), 1433/01 (*Sejong sillok* 59:8a-9b, v.3, p. 439 [Sejong.15:1:im-sin]), and 1442/01 (*Sejong sillok* 95:1b-2b, v.4, pp. 389-390 [Sejong.24:1:chŏng-myo]).

and deny its possession of any gold and silver in front of the Ming envoys.[716] For the same reason, the court instructed its people not to wear golden ornaments and forbade them to cast Buddhist statues in gold.[717]

In addition, we should also note the ban on the export of copper coins. The Koreans targeted this interdict at the trade with Japan in particular. While the archipelago was rich in copper reserves and even the Koreans relied on Japan for this raw material, the Japanese technology to smelt and cast bronze products lagged behind the Koreans in the first half of the fifteenth century. Therefore, Japan had a high demand for Korea's bronze products, including bronze Buddhist statuary and copper coins.

However, the court supposed that the export of bronze products to Japan went against the interests of Chosŏn. In 1425, the court started to put copper coins in circulation as a fiat supplement to the paper currency,[718] but the Korean monetary authority had a tough time managing the new currency. It seemed that the market did not welcome the new money. As soon as the new currency was put into circulation in 1425, the court witnessed a rapid fall in the value of coins against cloth. [719] King Sejong and his assistants believed that this was because the market was reluctant to accept the new money, the reason of which was

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716 See *Sejong sillok* 53:11b-12a, v.3, p. 334 [Sejong.13:8:mu-sul], *Sejong sillok* 94:50b, v.4, p. 389 [Sejong.23:12:sin-yu].

717 *Sejong sillok* 94:38a-40a, v.4, pp. 383-384 [Sejong.23:12:kap-o], 125:11a, v.5, p. 142 [Sejong.31:8:pyŏng-chin].

718 In 1394/07, the bureaucrats of the Board of Revenue proposed to issue coins from King T'aejo's court (*T'aejo sillok* 6:6a, v.1, p. 66 [T'aejo.3:7:ŭl-myo]). It seems that the plan was not carried out in T'aejo's reign, given that *T'aejo sillok* does not follow up the issue. Not until 1415/05 did King T'aejong's bureaucrats bring up this issue to the court again (*T'aejong sillok* 29:35a-35b, v.2, p. 66 [T'aejong.15:5:im-sul]). In 1423/09, King Sejong's court decided to issue copper coins (*Sejong sillok* 21:16b-17b, v.2, pp. 555-556 [Sejong.5:9:kap-o]). A report in 1424/01 indicated that there were thirty-one copper melting furnaces in the Ministry of Revenue to produce coins. These furnaces melted 135 *kŭn* of copper every day or 48,060 *kŭn* per year. (*Sejong sillok* 23:6a-6b, v.2, p. 574 [Sejong.6:1:ŭl -mi]). Finally, in 1425/01, the court began to put coins into circulation (*Sejong sillok* 27:10a-10b, v.2, p. 648 [Sejong.7:1:mu-cha]).

719 *Sejong sillok* 28:24a-25a, v.2, pp. 674-675 [Sejong.7:6:cap-in].

threefold. First, there was a deep-rooted custom to use cloth as currency. Second, the coins were over supplied at the time. Third, there was a faction of officials opposing the plan to issue the new currency, and thus, the market took a wait-and-see attitude. Ordinary people were unwilling to accept the coins, because they were afraid that the government might give up the new currency soon.[720] By contrast, the Japanese had a strong demand for Korea's copper coins. As a result, the Korean residents refused to use copper coins in the market but sold the currency to the Japanese.

With this perception, the court took actions to build the faith in copper coins. It slowed its issuing of coins and reaffirmed that it would stick to the new monetary policy.[721] Meanwhile, it imposed restraints on coin exports, which might have disturbed the fragile order in Korea's money market. In 1426/04, the court highlighted an article in the *Great Ming Code* forbidding the export of contrabands and specifically emphasized a ban on exporting coins.[722] In 1429/04, the court again banned the use of coins in the trade with the Japanese.[723] In 1433/01, the court reaffirmed the ban on the export of coins to Japan.[724] As late as 1433, the court still sought to push up the exchange rate of the coins in order to encourage people to accept this currency.[725]

Since the state supressed the coin exports, the people turned to the export of bronze wares. In 1438/02, the court was informed that Korean coppersmiths were melting copper coins and casting bronze wares for export to Japan. Against this backdrop, the court began to

[720] *Sejong sillok* 29:7a-7b, v.2, p. 682 [Sejong.7:7:ŭl-yu].
[721] *Sejong sillok* 29:7a-7b, v.2, p. 682 [Sejong.7:7:ŭl-yu].
[722] *Sejong sillok* 32:8a-8b, v.3, p. 21 [Sejong.8:4:im-o].
[723] *Sejong sillok* 44:5a, v.3, p. 175 [Sejong.11:4:mu-cha].
[724] *Sejong sillok* 59:5b-6a, v.3, pp. 437-438 [Sejong.15:1:ki-sa].
[725] *Sejong sillok* 59:8a-9b, v.3, p. 439 [Sejong.15:1:im-sin].

replace copper coins with iron coins, which were so cheap that it gave people no incentive to export them to the overseas world.[726]

In short, as early as 1394, under the extremely heavy pressure of making compulsory international payments to China with gold and silver, the Chosŏn court implemented a comprehensive prohibition on the private export of precious metals to China in order to fill government requirements for tribute. Although the Ming exempted the Koreans from the tribute by late 1429, and Korea actually discovered a rich gold deposit in the 1440s, Chosŏn did not lift the ban, since it did not want to give the Chinese any pretext to resume the demands for precious metals. When the Korean-Japanese trade expanded after 1400, the interdict was applied to that trade, too. Also, the court prohibited the export of coins to Japan after the mid-1420s for the purpose of protecting its new currency from being exported.

Finally, it worth noting that cloth was one of the most commonly used currencies in Korea's economy at the time. Although Korea was a large cloth producing country in the region, excessive exports of cloth to Japan would come later in the fifteenth century and have a large impact on the financial and fiscal stability of the peninsular economy. This might be one of the reasons why Chosŏn placed restraints on the cloth trade, even though it did not prohibit it completely. In all, these interdicts and regulations helped the administration govern its coastal border and became integral parts of the *haegŭm* policy.

6.2 The non-proliferation of advanced military technology and products

The maritime exclusion policy also contributed to the non-proliferation of advanced military technology and products in the East Asian world, which helped to maintain China's and Korea's military-technical advantages over their overseas enemies and potential revivals.

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[726] *Sejong sillok* 80:19a, v.4, p. 130 [Sejong.20:2:ŭl-ch'uk], 80:19b-20b, v.5, pp. 130-131 [Sejong.20:2:mu-chin].

In the following pages, we will first discuss Korea's efforts to obtain gunpowder technology from China, which will enlarge our understanding of the Chinese practices of keeping their technological secrets. Then, we will consider Chosŏn's measures to keep the formula for gunpowder secret from the Japanese, who were desperately seeking the recipe. These cases will show us how the Chinese and Korean authorities deliberately prevented the proliferation of gunpowder and firearms in the region.

By narrating the Koreans' means to access and keep the secrets of gunpowder, this chapter will illustrate how the intention of stopping the proliferation of advanced military technologies drove the implementation of maritime exclusion policy in the two East Asian 'gunpowder' or 'firearm-armed' countries. Our narrative will be made primarily based on Korean materials, because the Chinese written records surprisingly provide us little relevant information except several tedious legal clauses and export interdicts. Perhaps, this is evidence suggesting the Chinese cautiousness in guarding state secrets.

6.2.1 Ways to access the secret of gunpowder

The Ming authority specified in the *Great Ming Code* that the export of 'military provisions (*junxu* 軍需) and 'weapons (*junqi* 軍器)' to the overseas world was prohibited. Apart from this law clause, the primary materials tell us little about Ming China's restrictions of arms exports. Especially, this interdict did not specify whether and how Ming China administrated firearm export. However, the Korean records about the technology transfer between these two countries shed light on the Chinese firearm non-proliferation efforts.

After defeating the Mongolian troops in Korea and resuming its sovereignty over the entire peninsular in the 1360s,[727] the Koreans began to study the firearms that were left by the

[727] In 1356, Koryŏ Korea stopped using the Yuan court's calendar and launched military operations to obtain the territories in the north of the peninsular that had been seized by the

Mongolians. The Koreans knew how to use the weapons,[728] but they had no knowledge about the formula of gunpowder and thus they could not make up ammunitions by themselves.

To ensure the supply of firearms, the Koreans, applied for technical support from the Chinese through the diplomatic channel on the one hand. In 1373, the Koryŏ court requested the newly-established Ming administration to provide them with gunpowder for the purpose of fighting against the Japanese pirates.[729] The Ming's Emperor Hongwu happily approved Koryŏ's request because he thought the Koreans finally agreed to form an anti-Japanese ally with China. But the emperor did not provide Koryŏ with gunpower for free. Instead, he requested the Koreans to supply raw materials, 500,000 catties of sulphur and 100,000 catties of nitre, to China for the production of gunpowder.[730] It is interesting to notice that the proportion of sulphur to nitre that the emperor asked for was different from the that in the Chinese recipes of gunpowder at the time.[731] In addition, the emperor deliberately told the Koreans that the Chinese technicians would mix other 'chemical (*yao* 藥)' with the raw materials to make up gunpowder, but in fact what the Chinese added was just granulated charcoal. The Ming emperor's crafty response silently indicated the Chinese awareness of protecting the secret of gunpowder.

On the other hand, the Koreans tried to steal the recipe of gunpowder from the Chinese. Choe Musŏn 崔茂宣 (1325-1395), the Korean pioneer developer of firearms, began

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Mongolians since the 1250s. In 1363, Koryŏ's troop defeated the Mongolian soldiers in Jeju and Pyŏngyang.

728 The Koryŏ court instructed to conduct trials on firearms in 1372/10 (*Koryŏsa* 44:23b, v.1, p. 850 [Gongmin wang.21:10:kap-o]), 1373/10 (*Koryŏsa* 44:16b, v.1, p. 858 [Gongmin wang.22:10:chŏng-ch'uk]). The Mongolians brought firearms to Korea and taught the Koreans how to use the weapons in the thirteenth century, because they wanted the Koreans to fight against the Japanese for them.

729 *Koryŏsa* 44:19a-19b, v.1, p. 860 [Kongmin wang.22:11:shiwŏl].

730 *Koryŏsa* 44:27a-30b, v.1, pp. 864-865 [Kongmin wang.23:6:im-cha].

731 According to the Chinese handbook for the production and usage of firearms, which might be first published in 1403, there were two formulas of gunpowder. The proportions of sulphur to nitre were 9 to 1 and 7 to 3. See *Huolong shenqi zhenfa*.

to fish for the secret of gunpowder in China when the Mongolians were still governing the country. By bribing a Chinese visiting merchants in Korea, Choe finally mastered the techniques of producing gunpowder in around the mid-1370s. After his demonstration of the new weapon, the Koryŏ court established the Directorate for Firelock (*Hwathong dogam* 火桶都監) in 1377/09 to conduct domestic production of gunpowder and develop new firearms.[732] In 1380, the Koryŏ's troop applied the domestic produced firearms in a battle with the Japanese and won an impressive victory over the pirates. According to the comments in *sillok*, this was the beginning of the pacification of the Japanese pirates in Korea's coastal regions.[733]

To strengthen their technological advantage over the Japanese, the Koreans constantly invest in the research of firearms. After it was established, the Chosŏn administration continued to sponsor the domestic research of firearms. While Choe Musŏn died in 1395, his son carried on with the research for the new authority.[734] In the first three decades of the fifteenth century, Chosŏn concentrated on independent research and development of firearms. The Koreans were confident that they were as good as, if not better than, the Chinese in firearm technology.[735]

But, in the 1430s, the Koreans gradually found that China actually had an advantage over Korea in the field. For instance, the Chosŏn court realized in 1434/07 that the Chinese technology was much efficient than the Korean way to produce gunpowder.[736] Thus, the

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[732] *Koryŏsa* 133:31a, v.3, p. 880 [Sin-U.3:10].
[733] *T'aejo sillok* 8b-9a, v.1, p. 77 [T'aejo.4:4:im-o].
[734] *T'aejo sillok* 8b-9a, v.1, p. 77 [T'aejo.4:4:im-o], *T'aejong sillok* 1:20a-20b, v.1, p. 199 [T'aejong.1:intercalary 3:kyŏng-in.
[735] By the 1430s, the Koreans believed that their firearm technology was better than that of China. See *Sejong sillok* 54:7b-8a, v.3, p. 348 [Sejong.13:10:pyŏng-o]. In 1435/05, Chosŏn's Director of the Government Arsenal (Pan kungigam sa 判軍器監事) claimed that Chosŏn's technologies of gunpowder production and firearm usage had caught up with China. *Sejong sillok* 68:17a-19a, v.3, pp. 629-630 [Sejong.17:5:im-sin].
[736] *Sejong sillok* 65:3b-4a, v.3, p. 578 [Sejong.16:7:chŏng-ch'uk].

Chosŏn court decided to apply for technical support from the Chinese through the diplomatic channel. Two months later in 1434/09, King Sejong dispatched envoys to China and made a request for technology transfer.[737]

Meanwhile, King Sejong prepared himself for the possibility that the Chinese would turn down his request. The king instructed his diplomats to smuggle gunpowder sample from China. He personally managed the details of the action, exhorting his envoys not to buy gunpowder in the Ming's capital city, where close supervision was imposed, but to make a secret purchase in the region to the east of Tongzhou 通州, a town 15 kilometres away from Beijing on the east.[738]

In 1444/10, King Sejong attempted to request for technology transfer again because he was upset at the regress of Korea's firearms and expected to obtain the Chinese technology to fire numerous arrows in a single firelock. To increase his odds of accessing the Chinese technology, the king planned to make three requests to the Ming court one by one: to dispatch technicians to Korea, to share the formula of gunpowder with Korea, and allow the Koreans to study the Chinese technology. [739] Nevertheless, the king eventually cancelled his plan because he and his assistants worried that the Chinese might demand Chosŏn to launch a military campaign against Japan for the emperor.[740]

The Korea's experience of obtaining firearm technology indicated Ming China's efforts at firearm non-proliferation. Although the *Great Ming Code* did not specify it, the cases above illustrated that the Ming's arm export interdict was applicable to gunpowder and

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[737] *Sejong sillok* 65:28a-28b, v.3, p. 590 [Sejong.16:9:im-o], 65:28b, v.3, p. 590 [Sejong.16:9:kye-mi], 65:28b-30a, v.3, pp. 59-591 [Sejong.16:9:ŭl-yu]. As the king explained himself in 1444/10, although he asked for gunpowder on the letter to the Ming emperor, what he requested for was actually the formula and the technology of producing gunpowder. *Sejong sillok* 106:12a-13a, v.4, p. 589 [Sejong.26:10:chŏng-sa].

[738] *Sejong sillok* 65:28a-28b, v.3, p. 590 [Sejong.16:9:im-o]. Nothing more had been noted down about this event in either the Chinese or the Koran records.

[739] *Sejong sillok* 106:12a-13a, v.4, p. 589 [Sejong.26:10:chŏng-sa].

[740] *Sejong sillok* 106:12a-13a, v.4, p. 589 [Sejong.26:10:chŏng-sa].

firearms. Under a close supervision, the overseas envoys could not purchase gunpowder or firearms on the open market in China. Only the close vassal states like Korea could exchange the finished products with raw materials when it made special application. If they wanted to obtain the technology from China, the foreign governments could only resort to smuggling, which apparently contravened the Chinese *haijin* policy.

6.2.2 Ways to keep the secret of gunpowder

Similar to their Chinese counterpart, the Koreans also kept the secret of gunpowder from foreigners, particularly the Japanese, their biggest overseas trading partner and primary geopolitical adversary. This concern drove the Chosŏn court to strength its control on the coastal border and put up a barrier to restrict the communication between overseas visitors and local residents.

In a sense, the Koreans might be more sensitive to the theft of firearm technology than the Chinese. The reasons were twofold. First, the Koreans had heavily relied on firearms to defeat the Japanese pirates, who invaded the peninsula and even approached to the core of the kingdom in the mid-fourteenth century. As mentioned above, the Koreans achieved domestic production of gunpowder in the mid-1370s, and immediately in 1380 they started employing firearms to fight against the Japanese. The firearms gave Korea's troops a big military advantage over the pirates. With the new weapons, the Koreans were beginning to gain the upper hand over the Japanese in battles and gradually 'pacified' the coastal regions by the end of the 1390s. The Koreans hence had a clear understanding of the significance of firearms for their military advantage over the Japanese. Given this awareness, the last thing the Koreans wanted was an aggressive overseas neighbour armed with gunpowder.

Second, the Koreans realized that the Japanese actually tried to obtain the secret of gunpowder from Korea. Similar to how the Koreans obtained China's technology, the

Japanese tried all means to access Korea's technology. According to the written records, the Japanese had made an explicit request and asked the Chosŏn envoy for a sample of gunpowder. Unsurprisingly, the Korean envoy rejected the request.[741]

Besides, the Japanese also tried to kidnap Korea's technicians and force them to tell the secret of gunpowder. In 1445/05, King Sejong mentioned a case, in which the Japanese captured a Korean resident and tried to extort the formula of gunpowder from him by torture. This poor man finally escaped from Japan and his testimony was the conclusive proof that the Japanese were indeed undertaking secret operations to steal Korea's gunpowder technology.[742]

Moreover, the Koreans suspected that the Japanese might send 'industrial spies' to Chosŏn to obtain gunpowder technology. In 1445/02, Sō Sadamori requested Chosŏn to send back a Japanese bladesmith to Tsushima. Superficially, this was a normal diplomatic request, since Tsushima conventionally had the right to request its citizens be returned to the islands. In fact, the chiefs of Tsushima had made similar requests many times, because they wanted wealthy overseas Japanese to return and make contributions to the island's economy.[743] However, the problem was that this bladesmith was recruited by a Chosŏn envoy, and the bladesmith had become naturalized as a Korean subject seven years prior. In other words, this man was no longer a Japanese citizen and Tsushima could not request Chosŏn to send them a Korean subject. More importantly, this bladesmith had closely cooperated with the Korean

[741] *Sejong sillok* 108:13a-13b, v.4, p. 619 [Sejong.27:5:im-o]. According to *sillok*, the Japanese asked Yi Ye for gunpowder when he visited Tsushima. But the written records did not specify when this specific visit was made.
[742] *Sejong sillok* 108:13a-13b, v.4, p. 619 [Sejong.27:5:im-o]. We have no idea when this event happened. The king's words suggested that this event happened before one of Yi Ye's visits to Japan, when the Japanese carried out gun salutes to greet the Korean envoy. However, Yi Ye had visited Japan more than forty times in the period from 1396 to 1443, and, the written records did not specify in which journey Yi was greeted by gun salutes. Hence, we are not able to locate this event in the timeline.
[743] Refer to Chapter 3.

technicians in the Government Arsenal (*Kun'gigam* 軍器監), Chosŏn's department in charge of firearm research and development, and he had privately learned how to produce gunpowder. Given this bladesmith's experience in Korea, King Sejong and his assistants had a strong suspicion that the bladesmith might be an industrial spy dispatched by Tsushima to steal gunpowder technology. Therefore, the court decided to put Tsushima's request on hold and see how Sō Sadamori would respond.[744]

Against this backdrop, the Koreans attached great importance to the confidentiality of gunpowder technology and they took strict precautions against Japan's theft of firearm technology. As early as 1413/06, the court instructed the Government Arsenal to store gunpowder in the palace.[745] Further, in 1423/05, the court instructed that nitre was a classified material reserved for military use, and hence it should be exclusively used by the Government Arsenal to make gunpowder and by other offices to make glazed jade (*chaeok pŏnjo* 彩玉燔造). From then on, private individuals were not allowed to access this material. Those who privately used nitre would be found guilty in accordance with the laws governing the smuggling of salt.[746] This might be Chosŏn's first gunpowder non-proliferation order. By implementing this interdict, the court stopped the private sector from accessing the raw materials and producing gunpowder. Although the court did not explicitly claim that the policy was directed against the Japanese, this interdict actually prevented the possibility that foreigners might obtain gunpowder technology from the private sector, which was exactly

[744] *Sejong sillok* 107:10a-10b, v.4, p. 606 [Sejong.27:2:sin-hae].
[745] *T'aejong sillok* 25:29b-30a, v.1, p. 673 [T'aejong.13:6:mu-o]. This order was reaffirmed in 1419/07 (*Sejong sillok* 4:23b, v.2, p. 325 [Sejong.1:7:chŏng-sa]) and 1427/07 (*Sejong sillok* 37:2a, v.3, p. 81 [Sejong.9:7:kap-o]). Not until 1431/10 did the court consider moving the powder magazine to an open terrain because of the awareness of fire prevention (*Sejong sillok* 54:7b-8a, v.3, p. 348 [Sejong.13:10:pyŏng-o]). In 1435/02, the court finally moved the powder house to the State Daoist Temple (*Sogyŏchŏn* 昭格殿) in Songdo 松都 (present-day Kaesŏng) (*Sejong sillok* 67:10b, v.3, p. 611 [Sejong.17:2:mu-sin]). Also see *Sejong sillok* 77:30b-32a, v.4, pp. 96-97 [Sejong.19:6:ki-mi]).
[746] *Sejong sillok* 20:18a-18b, v.2, p. 542 [Sejong.5:5:sin-ch'uk].

how the Koreans obtained the technology from China. In 1433/11, 1443, and 1447/04, the court reaffirmed this interdict, because it witnessed a rapid expansion of the private use of nitre to make luxury glazed beads.[747] By this means, the court reduced the risk of gunpowder proliferation.

Again in 1426/12, the court ordered the local administrations in the coastal provinces to permanently stop producing nitre, since it was afraid that the 'scoundrels and *nobi*' might learn the technology, flee to the overseas islands, and teach the Japanese to make gunpowder.[748] Nevertheless, it was impractical to shut down all coastal nitre workshops at the time, given Chosŏn's increasing demand for gunpowder. Besides, the inland northern provinces could not satisfy the court's demand for nitre, because of their poor production capability. Thus, the court had to reduce the inland provinces' annual production target and restart production in the coastal provinces in 1431/06.[749] According to a record in 1432/12, the three southern coastal provinces had even become the national production centre of nitre.[750] As the Director of the Government Arsenal pointed out in1435/05, the court received nitre as regular, annual 'tribute' (taxes) from the three southern coastal provinces. Moreover, the local workshops often employed numerous villagers to produce nitre. As a result, 'more than half of the local population of [those] counties know the technology'.[751]

This situation caused some bureaucrats on the court to worry about Japan's theft of the technology. They thus proposed producing nitre in the northern inland provinces. While the bureaucrats did not ask to shut down the nitre workshops along the coast, because the court wished to increase the production capacity to meet the increased demand for

[747] *Sejong sillok* 62:18a, v.3, p. 527 [Sejong.15:11:sin-chu'uk], *Sejong sillok* 116:2a-2b, v.5, p. 15 [Sejong.29:4:ki-hae].
[748]. *Sejong sillok* 34:16b-17a, v.3, pp. 52-53 [Sejong.8:12:im-sin].
[749] *Sejong sillok* 52:27a-32a, v.3, pp.320-322 [Sejong.13:6:kap-o].
[750] *Sejong sillok* 55:12b-13a, v.3, pp. 371-372 [Sejong.14:2:im-in].
[751] *Sejong sillok* 68:17a-19a, v.3, pp. 629-630 [Sejong.17:5:im-sin].

gunpowder, their proposal actually implied an industrial transfer from the coastal border to the inland area.[752] Meanwhile, the court formulated confidential protocols for workshops and technicians. Specifically, it imposed a quota on the number of young technicians who were to be taught the technology. [753] In addition, the court forbade local workshops from using hired help, since the Japanese could easily contact, or even kidnap, ordinary residents.[754]

In addition, the court also strengthened its control over the technicians. On the one hand, it raised pay and benefits for the technicians and relevant officials, offering them better remuneration and more chances of promotion;[755] on the other hand, the court tightened its supervision over the technicians, confining their careers to the technical department[756] and constraining the retired technicians to stay in their hometowns.[757] By doing so, the court increased the technicians' loyalty to the kingdom and reduced the possibility of their collusion with the Japanese. Further, in 1445/08, the court ordered the eunuchs to take charge of the production of gunpowder and instructed technicians outside the palace to work exclusively on the production of guns and cannons.[758]

Moreover, gunpowder was not the only military technology that the Chosŏn authorities were trying to monopolize. For instance, the Koreans also considered the 'short arrow or mini-arrow (*pyŏnjŏn* 片箭)' as a national secret and they hid this technology from their foreign neighbours, since the *pyŏnjŏn* gave the Korean archers a huge advantage over

[752]. *Sejong sillok* 55:12b-13a, v.3, pp. 371-372 [Sejong.14:2:im-in].
[753] *Sejong sillok* 68:17a-19a, v.3, pp. 629-630 [Sejong.17:5:im-sin]; Considering the risk of the technology being lost, the court slightly increased the quota on key technicians in 1435/11. *Sejong sillok* 70:9a, v.3, p. 659 [Sejong.17.11:chŏng-yu]; 115:15a, v.5, p. 8 [Sejong.29:2:wuwu].
[754] *Sejong sillok* 68:17a-19a, v.3, pp. 629-630 [Sejong.17:5:im-sin].
[755] *Sejong sillok* 68:17a-19a, v.3, pp. 629-630 [Sejong.17:5:im-sin], *Sejong sillok* 84:27b, v.4, p. 179 [Sejong.20:12:bingzi]; also see *Sejong sillok* 107:18a-18b, v.4, p. 610 [Sejong.27:3:sin-myo], *Sejong sillok* 108:18a, v.4, p. 622 [Sejong.27:6:ŭl-myo].
[756] *Sejong sillok* 68:17a-19a, v.3, pp. 629-630 [Sejong.17:5:im-sin].
[757] *Sejong sillok* 111:10a-10b, v.4, p. 653 [Sejong.28:1:kap-cha].
[758] *Sejong sillok* 109:23b, v.4, p. 634 [Sejong.27:8:chŏng-myo]].

their enemies.[759] The Chosŏn court first worried that the Jurchen people would learn the secret of *pyŏnjŏn* and use it against the Koreans. Therefore, the court instructed the troops in the northern inland frontier areas not to practice shooting *pyŏnjŏn* in 1431/03 and 1435/08.[760] Then, from 1437, the Koreans became cautious about practicing *pyŏnjŏn* in the coastal regions as well. In 1437/03, the court heard a report that a Japanese visitor made the special equipment and practiced using *pyŏnjŏn* by himself. This Japanese claimed that he learned how to shoot *pyŏnjŏn* from the Korean marines in Pusan. This case aroused concern in the court on whether the Japanese could widely access the secret of *pyŏnjŏn*. It was for this reason that the Chosŏn court prohibited the people in the coastal ports from practicing *pyŏnjŏn*.[761]

Also, the export of steel was a business that the Chosŏn administration closely monitored. Korea had an advantage in steel manufacturing over their Jurchen and Japanese neighbours at the time. The capability to manufacture iron weapons like swords, arrowheads, and cannon gave the Koreans extraordinary military advantage over their foreign adversaries. To maintain this advantage, the court issued a decree in 1433/intercalary 8, prohibiting its residents from selling the Japanese the iron that could be used to forge weapons.[762]

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759 *Pyŏnjŏn* was a unique Korean type of arrow used with a special bamboo arrow guide slot as early as the fifteenth century. The shorter arrow is lighter than the normal arrow and fits into a guide slot held between the drawn bow string and the bow grip. The arrow, which is shorter than the distance between the drawn bow string and the bow grip, flies down the guide slot on release. This gives *pyŏnjŏn* multiple advantages. With a lighter weight, the *pyŏnjŏn* shoots with a higher velocity, which results in greater range and quicker hits. Also, the higher speed means the arrows penetrate armour better. Besides, the smaller size of the arrows made it harder for the enemy to see and dodge them. Moreover, without the special arrow guide, the enemy could not reuse *pyŏnjŏn* against the Koreans, while the Korean archers could quickly resupply themselves by recycling the arrows and even the broken arrows fired by the enemy. For further discussion about Korea's *pyŏnjŏn*, refer to Lee Heon-jung (2017).

760 *Sejong sillok* 51:26b-29a, v.3, pp. 299-301 [Sejong.13:3:pyŏng-cha 69:15a-15b, v.3, p. 647 [Sejong.17:8:kyŏng-sul].

761 *Sejong sillok* 76:21b, v.4, p. 57 [Sejong.19:3:pyŏng-sin].

762 *Sejong sillok* 61:32b, v.3, p. 503 [Sejong.15:intercalary 8:kap-in].

In all, the Chosŏn authority was highly sensitive to the proliferation of military technology and products from Korea to Japan. To preclude this possibility, the Chosŏn court closely monitored relevant activities taken in the coastal frontier areas, moved industries from the coastal areas to the inland regions, isolated the workshops from those who could easily be accessed by overseas visitors, and stopped its domestic technicians from contacting with foreigners or leaving the country. All these practices were the supplementary measures taken in connection with the border control policy to administer the communication between the Japanese and the local residents in Korea.

Likewise, the Ming administration shared a similar concern with their Korean counterparts. As we mentioned above, the *Ming Code* explicitly banned the export of 'military provisions (*junxu* 軍需) and 'weapons (*junqi* 軍器)' to overseas countries. In 1387/04, the Ming emperor even issued an order that particularly forbade overseas envoys to purchase steel from China.[763] Further, the Korean's experience of gaining access to the secret formula for gunpowder indicated that firearms were actually under strict control in Ming China. These cases testify that the concern about the proliferation of military technology and products actually drove the Ming administration to strengthen its control over the coastal border.

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We can now see maritime exclusion in a new light, discovering two other reasons why the Ming and Chosŏn courts carried out strict coastal border controls. The first has to do with precious metals. To prevent fiat money from slipping down further in value, the Ming monetary authority wanted to curb the outflow of gold and silver, which was thought to be one of the reasons for the devaluation of their fiat money. Likewise, the Chosŏn monetary

[763] *Ming Taizu shilu* 181:3a, v.6, p. 2735 [Hongwu.20:4:gengyin]. The mounting tension between Ming China and Japan might partly account for the implementation of this interdict. See Section 3.4.1.

officials attempted to stop the export of precious metals, because they wanted to build trust in copper coins, their new fiat money, and ensure that they could collect enough gold and silver to pay the annual tribute to the Chinese court in a timely fashion. Apparently, these considerations gave the courts the incentive to tighten control over coastal borders and border-crossing activities.

There was another factor helping to explain the implementations of maritime exclusion. That is, the courts' concern about the proliferation of advanced military technologies and products. Firearm technology, in particular, had great significance for national security and was seen as one of China and Korea's military advantages over their overseas rivals. To prevent the leak of sensitive technological information, strict border controls and supervision of foreign contacts became essential. These reasons, in part, accounted for the consistent enforcement of maritime exclusion in Ming China and Chosŏn Korea.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This thesis is a study of the maritime exclusion policies implemented in Ming China and Chosŏn Korea at the beginning of their dynasties. By investigating the historical contexts and the policy makers' considerations in the early years of state construction, it aims to decipher the rationales for the policy and answer the question: why did these two East Asian countries establish strict coastal border control policies? The conclusion here is unequivocal. Maritime exclusion was a practical, reasonable border control policy that furthered the political, security, and economic interests of the newly-established regimes in China and Korea, helping the Ming and Chosŏn courts build a sustainable empire and kingdom. Nevertheless, by the sixteenth century, the Ming controls collapsed, among other reasons, from pressures and contradictions that arose in the competition between state and private pursuit of trading profits. The Chosŏn controls lasted into the nineteenth century, because, among other reasons, the same contradictions were generally absent or not as acute. This thesis did not examine the end of the controls but focused on the origins of the policies to understand why and how they came to be.

In this thesis, the Ming and Chosŏn cases have been analysed together. My comparative approach has been motivated by the coincidence that the two East Asian countries carried out similar border policies almost simultaneously. Rather than compare the two countries as stand-alone entities, this thesis has compared similar contexts, motivations, and practices of the policies common to the two countries. This comparative method enables us to identify Ming and Chosŏn's policy-making patterns and approach our subject thematically, offering a more comprehensive observation than a single case study or even two case studies side by side possibly can offer.

In our search for the rationales of maritime exclusion, we have seen that the policy played similar roles in the state-building processes of both the Ming and Chosŏn dynasties. First, maritime exclusion helped the courts strengthen the authority of the two newly-established regimes, both of which had just achieved political independence from the Mongolian empire. Maritime exclusion contributed to enhancing the authority of new regimes, not only because an effective control of the border was an exhibition of the exclusive power of the government over its territory. Taking advantage of the privilege to conduct all foreign affairs and the power to decide who could cross the border and who could not, the courts cemented their ties with different audiences including ordinary people, armies, bureaucratic elites, and foreign powers.

Specifically, by forbidding its people to sail the sea, the Ming court encouraged coastal residents to register as farmers with the local governments or become soldiers with the army, which helped the court control the coastal frontier regions more effectively. By prohibiting the marines from engaging in trade to supply themselves, both courts made their troops financially reliant on the central governments and thus they successfully imposed civilian control over the armies. Meanwhile, by stopping officials from making private contacts with foreign authorities, the courts constructed a monarchic-centric international system, in which the monarch was the only legal actor in international relations, reducing the threat posed by the bureaucratic elites to a monarch-centred court. In addition, by controlling the trading channels, the new regimes encouraged overseas powers to recognize and respect their sovereignty in China and Korea.

The second role of the maritime policy was to protect the new empire and the new kingdom against security threats from the overseas world. This thesis shows that what actually made the courts stay alert and reinforce the border controls was much more than the problem of piracy, the impact of which has commonly been overestimated by modern academy. The real concern of the Ming and Chosŏn courts was geopolitical disorder in the overseas world. In brief, the Ming court was worried about potential assaults from without, because it had involved itself in decades of conflicts with almost all its maritime neighbours when the court tried to establish a new international order and norm in East Asia. In contrast, what frustrated the Chosŏn court was the endless harassments from not only the pirates, but also the refugees, routed troops, and imposter envoys from Japan, where civil wars were endemic and flared up from time to time. To protect the empire or the kingdom from the chaotic and hostile overseas world, the Ming and Chosŏn courts had to tighten their controls over coastal frontiers.

The third rationale for their maritime policies was to establish trading systems in which the state could play a dominant role. This thesis discusses the circumstances and problems that the Chinese and Korean governments encountered in the old trading systems, which had given the private sector sufficient room to pursue profits. Government frustration with a laissez faire trading system explains why the Ming and Chosŏn courts found it necessary to reform the existing system and strengthen the government's role in trade. From the perspective of the Ming court, the state monopoly on trade effectively increased government revenues. The monopoly also removed a hidden danger that private groups could grow too big to control and corrupt the economy, and even the empire. For the Chosŏn court, strict restrictions on trade protected the economy from excessive trade with the Japanese, which almost drained the government of its grain reserves. Besides, the Chosŏn court also intended to boost its income by manipulating the resale of overseas products. Given these considerations, the Ming and Chosŏn courts imposed strict supervision over the border-crossing activities in order to enhance their dominance in overseas trade.

In addition, maritime exclusion was also implemented to stop the unfettered outflow of precious metals. The Ming monetary authority suspected that the devaluation of fiat money was accelerated by the outflow of precious metals, and hence, it reaffirmed maritime bans several times, attempting to cut payments in gold and silver to foreign merchants. In contrast, the Chosŏn court's consideration was slightly different and was twofold. First, Chosŏn was heavily burdened with the duty to pay Ming China an annual tribute in gold and silver. The court worried that it could not meet the Ming's demand for tribute if the Korean merchants kept selling gold and silver abroad. Second, the court attempted to foster the habit of using copper coins as fiat money in Korea. However, it seemed that the market was reluctant to accept the new currency and the merchants preferred selling the coins to the Japanese like an ordinary commodity. To curb the outflow of these precious metals, the Chosŏn court had to strengthen border controls and closely supervised the export of gold, silver, and copper coins in the same way its Chinese counterpart did.

Moreover, maritime exclusion also stopped foreigners from accessing China's and Korea's advanced military technologies. The Chinese kept the secret of gunpowder from foreigners and controlled the export of military-use materials like iron, steel, warhorses, and ox horn. The Koreans found ways to access China's chemical formula for gunpowder, while making efforts to protect the recipe from the Japanese. A novel Korean development was also the 'short arrow', which again was held back from the Japanese. By doing so, the Ming and Chosŏn courts attempted to maintain their military advantages over overseas rivals.

In sum, maritime exclusion was a border control policy that played multiple roles in the construction of the Ming empire and the Chosŏn kingdom. It produced regime stability, provided national security, improved finances, maintained monetary stability, and stopped the proliferation of advanced military technologies. With this practical policy, the Ming and Chosŏn courts showed sustained performance during their state-building periods and laid the foundations for the centuries-long empire and kingdom.

However, none of this is to deny differences between the two cases. As our discussion unfolded, we have also seen that maritime exclusion developed along different paths in Ming China and Chosŏn Korea over time. A notable difference was that the Ming court highlighted the ban on Chinese border-exit activities while the Chosŏn court concentrated on foreign access to Korea or border-entry activities. The different trading patterns in Ming China and Chosŏn Korea accounted for this difference. In Chosŏn, overseas trade was mainly conducted on the kingdom's territory. Instead of sailing abroad, most Korean merchants waited for and traded with foreign visitors. This was because the risk of encountering pirates was very high as Japanese sailors had dominated the high seas around the peninsula from the mid-fourteenth century. Against this backdrop, the Chosŏn court paid more attention to the border-entry activities and the contacts between the locals and the visitors than they did to border-exit activities. In contrast, the Chinese enjoyed a better maritime security environment than the Koreans, given its strong navy and the longer geographic distance to Japan. Suffering less from piracy, the Chinese merchants showed stronger enthusiasm for maritime trade than their Korean counterparts. Thus, the Ming court had to reaffirm repeatedly the ban on sailing to stop its residents from rushing to the sea.

Besides, the Ming court excluded the private sector from the trade while the Chosŏn court allowed its residents to engage in overseas trade to some extent. By the 1450s, the Ming court had imposed a strict control on maritime trade. Even though the private sector was allowed to carry out coastal sailing and traded with foreign visitors after the government made its purchases, the court actually monopolized the resale of overseas goods in China and Chinese products in foreign markets. In contrast, the Chosŏn court did not exclude the private sector from the trade like its Ming counterpart. Instead, it established a tradition of selective intervention in overseas trade. This was primarily because the court lost money on the trade early in the fifteenth century. The Chosŏn court's original intention of engaging in trade was to avoid conflict with the Japanese, rather than make monopolist profits. To satisfy the Japanese visitors, the court had to subsidize the trade with government reserves. Further, the state got involved more directly in trade after the 1420s, because it wanted to make sure that it would have a stable supply of several strategic materials like copper, tin, iron, and sulphur, but it cost the court a lot to purchase, convey, and stockpile these supplies. Given its limited fiscal capacity, the Chosŏn court needed the private sector to share the cost of trade. Only after the 1440s did the court start taking advantage of its controls over foreign trade and began extracting more revenue by suppressing the private trade and manipulating the prices of commodities. However, this move aroused the opposition of the Japanese. To avoid conflict, the Chosŏn court had to allow the continuation of private trade.

In addition, the paths of the policies in the two countries diverged from the mid-fifteenth century. In Ming China, the trading system based on maritime exclusion declined from the mid-fifteenth century, because of the intense financial competition between emperors and bureaucrats. To prevent the emperors from having a monopoly on financial authority, the imperial officials seized the opportunity to strip down the trading system in the late 1440s when they had a child emperor on the throne whom they could manipulate. From then on, the Ming court had a much slacker grip on its coastal border than it did before, and it even tacitly allowed, if not encouraged, private trade. In contrast, Chosŏn Korea's trading system operated relatively smoothly until the nineteenth century without being interrupted by financial struggles in the court. This was probably because Chosŏn's overseas trade turnover was modest and hence the court experienced less intense conflict of interests in trade among interested parties. Although the Korean-Japanese system had been shut down twice due to the violent incidents raised by the Japanese in the sixteenth century (1510 and again from 1592 to 1603), the system was restored soon after the Koreans had pacified the chaos.

These differences cannot be overlooked. Apart from shedding light on the special experiences and practices of each country, the policy divergences show that maritime exclusion was actually more flexible in practice than previously thought. The Ming and Chosŏn courts were flexible with policy changes in order to adapt themselves to complicated and changing situations. Policy flexibility implies that the courts had no intention of sealing off their countries from the outside world. Although the Ming and Chosŏn courts imposed strict control over the maritime frontier with their exclusion policies, it does not mean that the empire and the kingdom attempted to exclude themselves from the maritime world completely and consistently.

Here we arrive at a discussion of the ‘isolationist’ narrative that this thesis challenges. The ‘isolationist’ narrative is flawed not only in its descriptive claims about what happened but also in its explanations. According to the ‘isolationist’ narrative, China and Korea suffered humiliation in the past century and a half because of their backwardness, which was mainly attributed to their isolation and stagnancy in the early modern period. The evidence of their isolation was the implementation of maritime exclusion, which has been further explained by the ‘national characters’ that led to the isolation: introverted preferences, Sino-centric or Korea-centric worldviews, despotic leadership styles, and Confucian anti-commerce orientations. The ‘isolationist’ narrative thus claims that the Ming and Chosŏn courts voluntarily closed the countries because of some desire to dodge external impact, constrain themselves to a self-centric regional network, and comply with an inward-looking ideology and development strategy. Presumably, the isolation of early modern China and Korea was determined by the two countries’ isolationist characters, which were the root of the two countries’ tragic experiences in the modern period. Here the underlying problem with the ‘isolationist’ narrative is revealed as methodological nationalism. It assumes negative results from their isolation and explains this isolation by reference to their 'isolationist' characters.

In recent decades, historians have already begun to challenge the isolationist narrative. They have pointed out that China and Korea not only established regular contacts with countries in the region through local diplomatic frameworks, but also had constant commercial and cultural links with the outside world. These revisionist efforts challenge the picture of an isolated China and Korea, suggesting that the opposite was the case. However, the 'isolationist' narrative remains powerful in explaining the maritime exclusion policy. Most historians still perceive maritime exclusion as an isolationist policy and base their interpretations on the 'isolationist' narrative, explaining policy choices in terms of national characters, values, or traditions, and this is what I mean by methodological nationalism. The problem of this explanatory framework is that it excessively concentrates on cultural factors but overlooks the policy makers' pragmatic calculations under hard, realistic conditions. This omission results in oversimplifications of the reasoning behind the policy choices.

The evidence marshalled in this thesis offers an entirely different approach. First, rather than seeing maritime exclusion as an isolationist policy, this thesis sees *haijin* and *haegŭm* as normal border control policies with various potential impacts on the empire and kingdom-building processes. This approach releases us from a narrow focus on spurious cultural or national characters that conjure up a fabricated 'isolation' narrative, and thus, we can reassess the practicalities of maritime exclusion and see real reasons for the policy choices. Second, rather than interpret maritime exclusion with explanatory frameworks created by modern observers, this thesis attempts to understand the policies from the perspective of the policy makers at the time. Rather than relying on such modern analytical frameworks and concepts as the 'impact-response model', the 'tributary system', 'feudalist dictatorship', or 'anti-trade Confucianism', this thesis has explored the policy rationales by observing the processes in which the policy makers interacted with their changing environment, encountered and managed different challenges and problems, promoted national and government interests, and pursued personal goals. In this way, this thesis answers the question of why Ming China and Chosŏn Korea implemented the maritime exclusion policies, by revealing what the policy makers at the time understood themselves to have been doing in imposing maritime bans.

This is not to discard previous studies entirely. Earlier studies have thoroughly showed us how the piracy problem and the 'tributary system' affected the Ming and Chosŏn courts' decisions, even though the influence of these two concerns may be overestimated as pointed out above. Nor does this thesis aim to hastily discount the possibility that 'national characters' mattered in the policy-making process either. National characters, worldviews, values, and traditions certainly had some influence on the Chinese and Korean policy makers as they crafted policies on the ground. But this thesis has tried to show that cultural factors were not determinant; that the contextual factors and the realistic considerations of the interests of the empire and the kingdom, the courts, and the emperor and the king must also be taken into account. As opposed to the 'isolationist' narrative, the approach culled from this thesis emphasizes an analysis of contextual factors and policy makers' practical considerations, evident in historical details, rather than limit itself to discussions of national isolationist 'essences'. When we become more aware of the roles of maritime exclusion in the construction process of the empire and the kingdom, we can rely less on analyses of nations' inward 'natures' often evident in the 'isolationist' narrative.

Ultimately, maritime exclusion was a border control policy, which was essential to the Ming empire and the Chosŏn kingdom. By carrying out the maritime exclusion policies, the Ming and Chosŏn courts promptly established their dynastic authorities and created social order in China and Korea, survived international chaos and promoted regional security in maritime East Asia, improved their states' financial situations, and maintained monetary stabilities and military advantages over their rivals. The strict border controls did not mean that China and Korea were closed to the world. In fact, these two East Asian states continued to maintain regular diplomatic, commercial, and cultural contacts with the overseas world. The implementation of maritime exclusion did not mean that the Ming and Chosŏn courts intended to seal off the empire and the kingdom. Instead, the courts adopted strict border controls in order to better regulate those contacts and further China's and Korea's national interests. The decisions to impose strict controls on the coastal borders should not be explained by China's and Korea's national characters, echoed in the 'isolationist' narrative. Rather, the decisions to impose strict controls actually emerged from considerations of specific historical contexts along with the political, diplomatic, security, and economic concerns of the policy makers at the time. With the strict controls over their coastal borders, the Ming and Chosŏn courts constructed and sustained stable and prosperous regimes that lasted for centuries.

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Appendix:

Table A. The Ming's maritime prohibition edicts and memorials (1368-1566)

Year	*Reign*	*Serial number*	*Audiences*			*Region*	*Reference*
			Resident	*officer*	*official*	*Province (county/guard)*	
1372	1.Hongwu (1368-1398)	①	○			Zhejiang, coastal regions	*Taizu shilu*. Book.70, Hongwu.4:12:bingwu
		②		○		Fujian	*Taizu shilu*. Book.70, Hongwu.4:12:yiwei
1381		③	○			Coastal regions	*Taizu shilu*. Book.139, Hongwu.14:10:jis
1384		④	○			Zhejiang, Fujian	*Taizu shilu*. Book.159, Hongwu.17:1:renxu
1390		⑤	○	○	○	Guangdong, Zhejiang, Fujian	*Taizu shilu*. Book.205, Hongwu23:10:yiou
1393		⑥					*Da Ming huidian.* Book 175:1a-2a, v.792, pp. 129-130.
1394		⑦	○			Coastal regions	*Taizu shilu*. Book.231, Hongwu.27:1:jiayin
1397		⑧	○			Coastal regions	*Taizu shilu*. Book.252, Hongwu.30:4:yiyou
1398		⑨					*Guangdong Tongzhi.* Book 6:8b, v.5, p. 126.
1401	2.Jianwen (1399-1402)	⑩	○	○	○	Coastal regions	*Guangdong tongzhi*. Book 6:9b, v.5, p. 126.
1402	3.Yongle (1403-1424)	⑪	○	○		Coastal regions	*Taizong shilu*. Book.10, Hongwu.35:7:renwu
1404		⑫	○			Fujian	*Taizong shilu*. Book.27, Yongle.2:1:xinyou
1407		⑬	○	○		Annam	*Taizong shilu*. Book.68, Yongle.5:6:guiwei
1416		⑭				Jiaozhi	*Taizong shilu*. Book.181, Yongle.14:10:dinghai
1431	5.Xuande (1426-1435)	⑮	○			Coastal regions	*Xuanzong shilu*. Book.78, Xuande.6:4:bingchen
		⑯	○			Zhejiang (Ningbo)	*Xuanzong shilu*. Book..83, Xuande.6:9:renshen
1433		⑰	○	○		Coastal regions	*Xuanzong shilu*. Book..103, Xuande.8:7:jiwei

		⑱				Fujian (Zhangzhou Guard)	*Xuanzong shilu*. Book.104, Xuande.8:8:dingwei
1435	6.Zhengtong (1436-1449)	⑲	○			Zhejiang	*Yingzong shilu*. Book.7, Xuande.10:7:jichou
1440		⑳		○		Zhejiang	*Yingzong shilu*. Book.65, Zhengtong.5:3:renxu
1442		㉑	○	○		Zhejiang	*Yingzong shilu*. Book.93, Zhengtong.7:7:xinmao
1449		㉒	○			Fujian	*Yingzong shilu*. Book.179, Zhengtong.14:6:renshen
1452	7.Jingtai (1450-1456)	㉓	○			Fujian	*Yingzong shilu*. Book.217, Jingtai.3:6:xinsi
1459	8.Tianshun (1457-1464)	㉔	○			Zhejiang, Southern zhili	*Yingzong shilu*. Book 305, Tianshun.3:7:xinsi
1460		㉕	○			Guangdong	*Yingzong shilu*. Book.317, Tianshun.4:7:jichou
1472	9.Chenghua (1465-1487)	㉖	○	○		Guangdong	*Xianzong shilu*. Book.106, Chenghua.8;7:guihai
		㉗	○	○		Zhejiang, Fujian	*Xiaozong shilu*. Book.108, Chenghua.8:9:jiyou
1492	10.Hongzhi (1488-1505)	㉘	○			Guangdong	*Xiaozong shilu*. Book.68, Hongzhi.5:10:bingchen
1493		㉙	○	○		Guangdong	*Xiaozong shilu*. Book.73, Hongzhi.6:3:dingyou
		㉚	○			Guangdong	*Xiaozong shilu*. Book.82, Hongzhi.6:11:yimao
1494		㉛			○	Guangdong	*Xiaozong shilu*. Book.92, Hongzhi.7:10:jihai
1500		㉜	○			Coastal regions	*Da Ming huidian*. Book.132.
1504		㉝	○			Coastal regions	*Xiaozong shilu*. Book.209, Hongzhi.17:3:dingchou
1505	11.Zhengde (1506-1521)	㉞	○		○	Guangdong	*Wuzong shilu*. Book.8. Hongzhi.18:12:renshen
1506		㉟	○			Southern zhili	*Wuzong shilu*. Book.17, Zhengde.1:9:renchen
1514		㊱	○			Guangdong	*Wuzong shilu*. Book.113, Zhengde.9:6:dingyou
1515		㊲	○			Guangdong	*Wuzong shilu*. Book.123, Zhengde.10:4:bingwu
		㊳	○			Guangdong	*Wuzong shilu*. Book.124, Zhengde.10:R4:renxu

1520		39	○			Guangdong	*Wuzong shilu.* Book.194, Zhengde.15:12:jichou
1521	12.Jiajing (1522-1566)	40				Coastal provinces	*Shizong shilu*. Book.4, Zhengde.16:7:jimao
		41	○		○	Guangdong	*Shizong shilu*. Book.6, Zhengde:16:9:yihai
1524		42	○			Fujian, Zhejiang, Guangdong	*Shizong shilu*. Book.38, Jiajing.3:4:renyin; also see *Da Ming huidian*. Book.108.
1525		43	○	○		Fujian (Zhangzhou and Quanzhou)	*Shizong shilu*. Book.54, Jiajing.4:9:jiachen; also see *Da Ming huidian*. Book.132.
1529		44	○			Fujian	*Shizong shilu*. Book.106, Jiajing.8:10:jisi
		45	○			Zhejiang	*Shizong shilu*. Book.108, Jiajing.8:12:wuyin
1532		46	○			Southern zhili	*Shizong shilu*. Book.140, Jiajing.11:7:renzi
1533		47	○	○		Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong	*Shizong shilu*. Book.154, Jiajing.12:9:xinhai
1535		48	○			Zhejiang, Fujian	*Shizong shilu*. Book.174, Jiajing.14:10:dingsi
1536		49	○			Fujian (Longxi, Songyu)	*Shizong shilu*. Book.189, Jiajing.15:7:renwu
1545		50	○			Zhejiang	*Shizong shilu*. Book.298, Jiajing.24:4:xinyou
1549		51	○			Zhejiang, Fujian	*Shizong shilu.* Book.347, Jiajing.28:4:xinhai
1550		52					*Da Ming huidian.* Book.175.
1553		53	○			Zhejiang, Fujian	*Shizong shilu*. Book.397, Jiajing.32:4:bingzi
		54	○			(Not specified)	*Shizong shilu*. Book.401, Jiajing.32:8:renyin
1554		55	○			Zhejiang, Fujian	*Shizong shilu*. Book.417, Jiajing.33:12:dinghai
		56	○			Zhejiang, Fujian	*Shizong shilu*. Book.419, Jiajing.34:2:gengchen
1555		57	○			Zhejiang (Ningbo, Shaoxing), Fujian (Zhangzhou, Quanzhou)	*Shizong shilu*. Book.419, Jiajing.34:2:gengchen
		58	○			Zhejiang, Fujian	*Shizong shilu*. Book.422, Jiajing.34:5:renyin
1556		59	○			Zhejiang, Fujian	*Shizong shilu*. Book.442, Jiajing.35:12:guimao

1560		60	○			Liaodong, Shandong, Northern zhili	*Shizong shilu*. Book.482, Jiajing.39:3:bingxu
		61	○			Fujian, Guangdong, Southern zhili	*Shizong shilu*. Book.482, Jiajing.39:3:bingxu
1563		62	○			Shandong, Liaodong	*Shizong shilu*. Book.528, Jiajing.42:12:jiyou

Source*: Ming shilu*

Table B. Prohibited behavior in the interdicts

	Serial number	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨	⑩	⑪	⑫	⑬	⑭	⑮	⑯	⑰	⑱	⑲	⑳
External contact	Information leak									○											
	Collusion with foreigners			○		○		○			○	○	○	○		○		○	○		
	Collusion with piracy							○									○	○			
Business	Export contraband					○				○					○						
	Fishing				○												○			○	
	Traffic in foreign goods							○			○										
	Foreign Trade (seashore)					○															
	Foreign Trade (coastal water)		○			○				○				○		○					
	Foreign Trade (high sea)		○			○		○	○	○				○		○					
Travel	Border exit/Navigation	○	○		○		○	○	○		○	○	○	○		○		○			○
	Building or possessing a vessel												○					○			
	Being armed																				

	Serial number	㉑	㉒	㉓	㉔	㉕	㉖	㉗	㉘	㉙	㉚	㉛	㉜	㉝	㉞	㉟	㊱	㊲	㊳	㊴	㊵	㊶
External contact	Information leak		○																			
	Collusion with foreigners		○	○		○	○		○	○							○	○	○	○		
	Collusion with piracy	○	○	○	○	○							○		○	○	○	○				
Business	Export contraband												○									
	Fishing																					
	Traffic in foreign goods		○									○	○					○				
	Foreign Trade (seashore)	○								○		○			○		○	○		○	○	
	Foreign Trade (coastal water)										○		○	○			○					
	Foreign Trade (high sea)			○							○		○	○								
Travel	Border exit/Navigation	○		○	○						○		○									○
	Building or possessing a vessel				○						○		○	○		○	○					
	Being armed			○				○									○					㊶

	Serial number	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62
External contact	Information leak	○											○									
	Collusion with foreigners	○							○	○		○	○	○		○			○			
	Collusion with piracy	○	○			○	○	○	○	○		○	○			○					○	
Business	Export contraband	○	○									○										
	Fishing																					
	Traffic in foreign goods	○	○		○				○			○										
	Foreign Trade (seashore)	○		○								○			○		○					
	Foreign Trade (coastal water)		○				○					○		○	○	○	○			○		
	Foreign Trade (high sea)		○				○		○			○			○		○					
Travel	Border exit/Navigation							○	○		○	○			○	○	○	○				○
	Building or possessing a vessel	○	○		○	○	○		○			○		○		○		○	○			
	Being armed	○					○					○										

Source: author

Table C. Contacts between Ming China and the overseas world in the Zhengtong reign (1435-1449)

	Japan	Ryukyu	Champa	Siam	Chenla	Java	Malacca	Sumatra	Mengel	Sri Lanka	Cochin	Kuli	Tianfang（Saudi Arabia)
1435	1	2	1		1		1,*	1				1	
1436	1	5		1	1	3		1		1	1		1
1437		1	1	1		2							
1438		2	1	3		1			1				
1439		3	1				1		1				
1440		1	1			1							
1441		1	1										
1442		1	2			1							
1443			1										
1444		3	1	1			1						
1445		2	1	1			1			1			
1446		1	2	2		3		1		1			
1447		1,*	1,*	1		1							
1448		1	1										
1449		2	1										

Source: *Ming Yingzong shilu*
Note: * represents a delegation was dispatched by the Ming court to an overseas state.