

Song China and the multi-state and commercial world of East Asia¹

John CHAFFEE

More than the other major dynasties in Chinese history, the Song has been subject to many characterizations, which have variously focused upon its military weakness, diplomatic humiliations, cultural brilliance, intellectual achievements, institutional innovations, economic dynamism, and vibrant urban culture, to mention a few. My purpose in this paper is to explore the place of the Song in the East Asian world of the tenth to thirteenth centuries. The unique importance of maritime trade during the Song is of course widely accepted by historians. My aim is to contextualize it, arguing that it was made possible by the remarkable productivity of the Song economy functioning in the context of a politically fragmented East Asia, which produced a regional configuration characterized by inter-state competition and flourishing maritime trade. I will further argue that this configuration was remarkably stable, undone only by the historical accident of the Mongol invasions.

In making this argument, I will be drawing on three interpretive frameworks that have been used by historians dealing with this period: first, that of the Tang-Song transformation, which has emerged as a widely accepted paradigm for understanding the social and economic changes of this period; second, the multi-state order that prevailed in East Asia from the late ninth to thirteenth centuries; and third, the system of maritime trade that encompassed the entirety of maritime Asia. My object in this paper is to sketch out each of these frameworks, noting the ways in which scholars have treated them, and discussing their interrelationships and how we might conceive of them as parts of a broader whole.

Three Historical Frameworks

In the introduction to his book on the Sichuan tea industry (and the related trade in horses) in the Song dynasty, Paul Smith has written:

1 A Chinese version of this paper was published in Beijing last year as “Songdai yu Dong Ya de duoguo xiti ji maoyi shijie”, *Beida xuebao (Zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 46.2 (2009), 99-108. It has since undergone minor revisions.

Ever since the early twentieth century and the work of Naitō Torijiro [Konan], historians have come to view the late Tang and Song (...) as a period of fundamental change and a pivotal era in the shaping of early modern China. With each generation Song historians find new ways in which this medieval transformation, preserved for us in relatively rich detail thanks to the spread of woodblock printing in the ninth century, profoundly recast the social, intellectual, and economic life of the Chinese empire.²

I have quoted Smith, not because the passage conveys some new or different ideas, but rather because it nicely expresses a widely shared attitude among historians of middle period China, an acceptance of the primacy of the Tang to Song transformations in the Chinese economy and society as well as in politics and thought, all stemming in one way or another from the unsettled conditions following the An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757) rebellion in the eighth century.³

This acceptance has not precluded spirited debates over aspects of the Tang-Song transformation, especially relating to issues of social and political change. However, my focus here is on the economic arguments for the Tang-Song transformation, which have been largely unchallenged. In particular, there is widespread acceptance – following the lead of Japanese scholars like Shiba Yoshinobu⁴ – of the proposition that the spread of private landholding following the institution of the Two Tax system (*Liangshuifa* 兩稅法) in the late Tang, the subsequent agricultural development of south China, the deregulation of markets, and the growth of cities led to a spectacular increase in commerce, a “commercial revolution” according to some. Recent scholarship has naturally qualified elements of this model – for example, by arguing for Northern Song-Southern Song changes in elite society or by stressing the great importance of region for socioeconomic development – but has not fundamentally challenged it.

We shall be returning to the Tang-Song transformation and its many ramifications, but first let me go on to discuss the other two frameworks.

2 Smith (1991), 3.

3 Naitō's theory was first introduced to Western scholars by Miyakawa (1955), and much more fully treated by Fogel (1984). Beginning with John Fairbank's decision to organize his treatment of middle imperial China according to Naitō in his influential textbook (co-authored with Edwin Reischauer), *East Asia: The Great Tradition* (1958), and with Mark Elvin's *The Patterns of the Chinese Past* (1973), which was noteworthy for its role in presenting a large corpus of Japanese scholarship in English, Western scholars came increasingly to make use of Naitō's model. For an excellent recent treatment of the historiography of the Tang-Song transition, see Luo (2005).

4 Shiba (1970).

Characterizing the tenth to thirteenth centuries in East Asia as a period of multiple states is hardly new to Chinese or Japanese scholars, but in Western literature one can trace a discernable historiography, beginning with the pioneering European studies of conquest dynasties: Wolfram Eberhard's *Conquerors and Rulers*, Karl Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng's *History of Chinese Society: The Liao*, and the wide-ranging articles of Herbert Franke.⁵ More recently, Morris Rossabi's edited volume, *China Among Equals*, F. W. Mote's magisterial *Imperial China*, Warren I. Cohen's *East Asia at the Center*, Charles Holcombe's *The Genesis of East Asia*, and Dieter Kuhn's just released *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China* have presented a compelling picture of an East Asian world that was not dominated by China (or Han Chinese dynasties).⁶ Prominent in this inter-state order were the Khitan Liao 契丹遼 (established in 907), the Tangut Xi Xia 西夏 (1032), and the Jurchen Jin 女真金 (1115), but we should also note the Dinh 定 dynasty of Vietnam (968), the Nanzhao 南詔 kingdom to China's southwest, and even the Koryŏ 高麗 dynasty in Korea, established in 936. Chinese historians for centuries blamed the military weakness of the Song and its policy of esteeming the civil and despising the military, but neither the Han nor Tang had faced such an array of well developed and powerful states. The pragmatic willingness by the Song to compromise on principles and symbolism in the functioning of the tributary system, however humiliating it may have seemed to some, can be viewed as a successful survival strategy in an unprecedented situation.

The Asian maritime trade of the eighth or ninth to fourteenth century has long been a subject of study by scholars who recognized its unique characteristics.⁷ But it was left to world historians to recognize its significance in world history. In her 1991 book, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350*, Janet Abu-Lughod argued that the thirteenth century Eurasian world encompassed a vast trade system. It was a segmented system, to be sure, with seven regional subsystems such as

5 Eberhard (1965); Wittfogel and Feng (1949).

6 Rossabi (1983); Mote (1999); Cohen (2000); Holcombe (2001); and Dieter Kuhn (2009). Cohen's third chapter, "East Asia Uncentered", provides a succinct and readable account of inter-state relations from the late Tang to the Yuan, which Kuhn's book, despite its title, gives extensive coverage to the late Tang and Five Dynasties, the Liao and the Jin. See, too, the essays in Franke and Twitchett (1994).

7 In English, see the pioneering articles by Wang Gungwu (1958); Wheatley (1959); Schottenhammer (forthcoming); and the articles on Song seapower by Lo Jung-pang (1952, 1969). Three noteworthy Chinese treatments are Lin Tianwei (1986), Chen Gaohua (1998), and Huang Chunyan (2003). See, too, the many articles on Song maritime history that have appeared in *Haijiaoshi yanjiu* 海交史研究.

maritime East Asia, Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia, and the like, but with a sufficient volume of long-distance trade to justify speaking of a world system. Moreover, she argued that the primary economic motor driving this system was China, both as a producer of porcelain and other popular exports, and as a mass consumer of incense, aromatics, and other goods from Southeastern and Southern Asia.⁸ At the same time, thriving centers in Champa, Srivijaya, Calicut, Baghdad and Cairo, to name just a few, did much to provide the system with its vitality.

Issues of Chronology

In the remainder of this article, I would like to explore the interconnections between these three frameworks, for I believe that they were significant. Let me begin with chronology, for the late Tang and Five Dynasties period, when many if not most of the changes that generated the Tang-Song transformation occurred, also witnessed a political fragmentation that later evolved into the multi-state order of Song times. Thanks to rising power of regional governors (*jiedushi* 節度使) following An Lushan and the virtual implosion of Tang power in the late ninth century, the empire fragmented into multiple kingdoms in the south and short-lived dynasties in the north, and allowed the tributary kingdoms to go their own way. We thus see the rise of the Khitan Liao under Abaoji 阿保機 (872–926) and the Vietnamese breaking away from the Southern Tang in 956 (a permanent break from the Chinese empire, it turned out). Even in more distant Korea, the civil war (“Later Three Kingdoms”, 889–935) preceding Koryŏ’s unification of the peninsula occurred at a point when the Chinese court was powerless to influence events. Although the Song unification over the twenty years following 960 effectively reestablished the empire, the dynasty’s inability to subdue its neighbors testifies to the success of the latter’s state-building efforts through the tenth century.

At first glance, the emergence of a maritime trade system does not fit the pattern of late Tang and Five Dynasties change discussed above, for from at least the early eighth century the Tang carried on a thriving maritime trade with the Middle East through the southern port city of Guangzhou. However, the sacking of Guangzhou in 879 by the rebel Huang Chao 黃巢, which according to Arab historians resulted in the deaths of 120,000 Muslims, Jews, Christians and Mazdeans, almost cer-

8 Abu-Lughod (1991). Chaudhuri (1985) is an important precursor to Abu-Lughod’s book. See, too, the articles in Schottenhammer (2001), and Derek Heng’s (2010) new study of Sino-Malay trade.

tainly brought a hiatus to the trade which lasted to the end of the Tang,⁹ especially since political conditions in the western Asia were unsettled in the late ninth century.¹⁰ The trade that then appeared under the pro-trade policies of the Southern Kingdoms and the early Song can be distinguished from that of the Tang by its far larger size, the greater variety of commodities, the participation of new groups in the trade, and even the nature of the ships, thanks to the spread of Chinese junks. For the first time in Chinese history, states like the Southern Han and Min turned to maritime commerce as a critical and welcome source of government revenue, a move that was subsequently echoed by the Song. I would argue, in other words, that insofar as China is concerned, the maritime trade system as described by Abu-Lughod was a phenomenon of the tenth through thirteenth centuries.

The origins of the multi-state order and the maritime trade system in the ninth and tenth centuries are striking and, I would suggest, not coincidental. One can view them to some extent as international manifestations of the Tang-Song transformation. "To some extent" is the operative phrase here, for in both cases important exogenous factors were at work, and both had systemic characteristics that cannot be folded into post-transformation China. Indeed, I will argue below that the mutual influences between the Song economy, the multi-state order, and the maritime trade system were profound and that they did much to shape the East Asian world.

The Multi-State Order and the Song Economy

In contrast to obvious connections between Song economic transformations and maritime commerce, which will be treated below, the relationship of the transformations to the multi-state order were relatively indirect but still important. It has been noted that Song foreign relations differed markedly in the south and north. Song relations with Champa, Vietnam and Nanzhao, where its superior power was essentially unchallenged, accorded with well-tested practices emphasizing Chinese superi-

9 Cited by Levy (1961), 109. The number itself cannot be taken literally, but it attests to the existence of a sizeable community as well as to a massacre of foreigners when Huang Chao captured Guangzhou. This was followed by a shift in the center of long-distance maritime trade to Southeast Asia, most likely the port of Kalāh on the Malayan archipelago which lasted well into the tenth century.

10 Hourani (1951), 78; DiMeglio (1970), 106. The Abbasid caliphate was weakened by late ninth century rebellions, though the demand for luxuries and slaves entailed by the move of the capital from Baghdad to Samarra in 936 and then back to Baghdad in 892 undoubtedly stimulated trade.

ority.¹¹ Tribute practices with these states and with those of maritime Asia mutual involved gift giving and played a significant role in maritime trade in the early Song. In the north, however, the 1005 Treaty of Shanyuan 澶淵 concluding years of war with the Liao required an annual Song tribute of 200,000 bolts of silk and 100,000 ounces of silver. In 1042 these were increased to 300,000 bolts of silk and 200,000 ounces of silver, and two years later the Song agreed to give tribute payments to the Xi Xia of 130,000 bolts of silk, 50,000 ounces of silver, and 20,000 catties of tea. A century later, in 1141, the price for peace with the Jin consisted of 250,000 bolts of silk and 250,000 ounces of silver, and the symbolic subordination of the Song emperor by his having to address his Jin counterpart as “elder brother”.¹²

Although humiliating, these diplomatic conditions do not seem to have placed a great economic burden to the Song. Discussing the Song tribute payments to the Liao, Shiba Yoshinobu has written:

Sung exports normally exceeded imports by a great margin. On the average, Sung’s foreign trade with the Liao showed an annual favorable trade balance of 800,000 strings of cash, of which the government’s share through official trade accounted for about 400,000 to 500,000 strings. This excess of exports over imports enabled the Sung to regain all of the silver sent to the Liao as tribute.¹³

Put another way, the Song traded its way out of its tribute payments. Indeed, one might argue that the payments increased the consumption of Song goods within the Liao – and presumably within the Xi Xia and Jin as well – and thus benefited Song producers.

The multi-state order, specifically the northern states of Liao, Xi Xia, and later Jin, can be seen to have influenced the Song economy and commerce in at least three other ways. The first is geopolitical. Following a survey of the political instability common throughout East Asia in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, Angela Schottenhammer has written:

It is against this background of political instability in Central, North, and East Asia, and, last, but not least, in China itself, that we see a gradual shift of trade routes from traditional overland routes to maritime routes. To a great extent the active promotion of maritime trade by local rulers and by the Sung government during the tenth century also has to be seen in this historical context.¹⁴

11 See Anderson (2007), Chapter 1.

12 Mote (1999), 71, 185, 307-308. For the treaty terms, see *Song shi* 29.551. See Schwarz-Schilling’s (2010) article in this issue concerning the new diplomatic conceptions that the Song found themselves forced to invoke in the Treaty of Shanyuan.

13 Shiba (1983), 98.

14 Schottenhammer (forthcoming).

In other words, without the ability to control the continental trade routes to central Asia and Europe, the Song had no choice but to actively pursue a maritime trade policy.

Second was the growth of the vast tea and horse trade, centered in Sichuan and Shaanxi, which has been ably described by Paul Smith. Because the Song did not control any of the premium horse-raising regions of central and northeastern Asia, they were forced to purchase virtually all of their warhorses. Involving the annual production of 4–5 million catties of tea (ca. 2,600–3,000 tons) for export sale and the purchase 10,000 or so horses, this trade largely shaped the economy of Sichuan and the western part of the empire generally.¹⁵ It should be noted that the favored partners in this trade were the Tibetan federations, since their fragmented condition – dating from the breakup of the Tibetan state in the 830s – made them far less of a threat than the Xi Xia or Liao, but the large quantities of horses and tea influenced central Asian trade far beyond the domains of the Tibetans.

Third, the chronic threat of the northern states led the Song to maintain a military establishment of unprecedented size. According to the data compiled by Robert Hartwell, defense expenditures accounted for 34% of all government disbursements in 1073 and 48% in 1172.¹⁶ This was not simply a matter of maintaining a large standing army and navy; much of the expenditure was devoted to the production of weaponry and materiel, and to the development new forms of military technology. It was an arms race, since the Khitan, Jurchen and later the Mongols all proved adept at acquiring and utilizing Song technological advances, but it was still a key component of the Song military strategy. Moreover, as epitomized by the iron and steel industry that sprung up around Kaifeng in the Northern Song, military expenditures proved to be a powerful stimulus for industry and commerce.¹⁷

15 Smith (1991), 249-264.

16 Hartwell (1988), 71, 74, Tables 8-11. In the case of 1174, “Capital civil and army pay” was given as 237,514 strings, so I assumed that half of that figure went to the army. These are minimum percentages, since in both years unidentified agencies accounted for substantial expenditures, and there is a strong likelihood that some if not most of these were defense related. See also Wang Zengyu (1983), 287-294, on the enormous expenses incurred by the military.

17 On the connection between Song industry and the military, see McNeill (1982), 24-44, who draws heavily for his information from Robert Hartwell’s articles from the 1960s on the coal and iron industry.

Economic Transformations and Maritime Trade

Given the already mentioned role of the Song economy in the maritime trade system, the relationship between the two was direct and organic. Although the thriving regimes of the Fatimids in Cairo, the Cholas in southeastern India, and the Srivijayans in Sumatra insured a systemic trade in Indian Ocean waters, the “world trade system” was clearly dominated by the Song. In addition to the central role played by Chinese products and by the China market for non-Chinese goods, by the eleventh century much if not most of that trade was being carried by Chinese-style junks, and Chinese sea-going merchants were for the first time ranging abroad, in the case of the latter beginning a tradition of maritime diaspora that has lasted to the present.¹⁸

The Song government developed an approach to overseas trade that came to depart sharply from earlier practices. In 971, a year after the conquest of the Southern Han, a maritime trade office (*shibo si* 市舶司) was established in Guangzhou to handle all ships from the Nanhai. Two years later a ban on Chinese merchants venturing overseas to engage in trade signaled the government’s intention to control the trade.¹⁹ Then in 987, the Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) sent eight eunuch attendants in four missions out into the Nanhai 南海 to invite traders to come to China. Two years later a second maritime trade office was opened in Hangzhou 杭州, followed by a third in Mingzhou 明州 in 992.²⁰ Tang precedents were important in these early years. Much of the commerce occurred under the aegis of the tribute system, which was extremely active through the first sixty years of the dynasty, and even the case of trade carried out through the maritime trade offices, the court monopolized the purchase of the valued aromatics (*xiangyao* 香藥).

As time went by, however, the court’s attempts at centralized control gave way to a more decentralized system involving a host of maritime trade offices or, after 1080, of maritime trade superintendencies (*shibo tiju si* 市舶提舉司); at one time or another these could be found in ten ports.²¹ Essentially the dynasty opened its arms to foreign traders, sparing no efforts in making foreign merchants welcome, encouraging Chinese merchants to venture abroad, and relied on taxes rather than tribute. Noteworthy in this regard was the establishment, in 1087, of a maritime trade

18 These phenomena are well described in Sen (2003).

19 *Song shi* 5.76. See So’s (2000) clear summary to early Song policies towards the maritime trade.

20 *Song shi* 186.4558–4559.

21 This has been treated in detail by Schottenhammer (forthcoming).

superintendency in the Fujian city of Quanzhou, for by the end of the Northern Song it had eclipsed Guangzhou as the primary emporium for the Nanhai trade. Trade from the Ryūkyū Islands, Japan and Korea, in the meantime, came to be focused on Mingzhou (modern Ningbo).

This new system of supervised foreign commerce proved to be remarkably lucrative. Government revenues from maritime trade increased around half a million strings annually through much of the eleventh century to over a million in the early twelfth century, and two approximately two million strings by 1159, against total government revenues of sixty million.²² Song Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1167), is reported to have said:

The profit from overseas trade is the greatest. If the trade is handled in the right way, the profit can easily reach millions of coins [*qian* 錢]. Isn't the revenue from trade better than that from taxing ordinary people? Thus, I should pay more attention to overseas trade to relieve the tax burden of the people.²³

The maritime trade itself involved a remarkable range of commodities. Although in the early Song luxury goods, many of them from western Asia, predominated, by the twelfth century a wide variety of goods, many of them bulk, were traded with Japan, Korea, the Ryūkyūs, and southeast Asia. Chief among the export commodities were ceramics. As evidenced by archaeological finds from all parts of maritime Asia, the demand for Song ceramics – which often did double-duty as ballast for outbound ships – was global in character and it gave rise to an export industry with large-scale kiln complexes centered on the southeastern port cities of Guangzhou and Quanzhou, but extending inland as far as Jiangxi.²⁴ Besides ceramics, Song exports included silks, foodstuffs (often in large ceramic containers), manufactured goods (including books), and – in the thirteenth century especially – large quantities of copper and tin. Indeed, such was the demand for copper coins that the repeatedly though ineffectually tried to ban their export. As for imports, Song urban consumers developed a great appetite for *xiangyao*, a term usually translated as aromatics but which included incense, scented woods, perfumes and medicines, but also for pearls, ivory, rhinoceros horn, cotton fabrics, ebon and sappan woods, among other commodities.²⁵

22 Schottenhammer (forthcoming), especially Table 2.

23 *Song huiyao: Zhiguan* 44. The translation follows Deng (1999), 119.

24 See Tampoë (1989) and Stargardt (2001) on the dispersion of Song ceramics across maritime Asia, and Ho Chuimei (2001) on the ceramics industry in Song Quanzhou.

25 See Wheatley (1959), 45-129, on the full spectrum of trade commodities, and Lin Tianwei (1986), for a detailed treatment of the trade in aromatics.

The economic and social impact of overseas maritime commerce on China was significant, especially along the southeast coast. In addition to the export-oriented ceramic production mentioned above, shipbuilding was a major industry during the Song, benefiting from such technological advances as both floating and graving docks (below ground level) in the shipyards, and the use of models and blueprints for to standardize the production of government ships.²⁶ Much of the shipbuilding was aimed at supplying the needs the Song navy and domestic commerce, but the demand for seagoing ships was also great, especially since, beginning in the eleventh century, Chinese-style junks came to supplant the Arab dhows that had long dominated transoceanic trade in the Indian Ocean and southeast Asia.²⁷ Although shipbuilding establishments were to be found throughout the empire, including Shandong, the southeastern coast specialized in ocean-going ships. Lü Yihao 呂頤浩 (1071–1139) noted that southern timber was especially resistant to salt water corrosion, and ranked the ships built in Fujian as best, followed by those from Guangdong and Guangxi, and then Mingzhou and Wenzhou – all of them from the southeast.²⁸

Among the most dramatic manifestations of the flourishing Song maritime trade was the rapid growth of the port cities of the southeastern coast. Examples include Guangzhou, Fuzhou 福州, Wenzhou 温州, Mingzhou, and especially Hangzhou (Lin'an 臨安), the largest city in the empire during the Southern Song, when it served as the capital. But because it was the capital, and at the edge of the fertile Yangzi Delta, it is difficult to discern how much of its prosperity was the result of maritime trade. This is not a problem for Quanzhou, in southern Fujian, which rose from relative obscurity in the tenth century to become the premier emporium for the Nanhai trade in China. Lacking a significant hinterland, Quanzhou's success was the result of successful functioning as a transshipment center, the development of an export-oriented ceramics industry in its vicinity, and a thriving merchant culture, in which Chinese traders mixed with Arabs, Srivijayans, Tamils, Cholas, Koreans, Ryūkyūans, and Japanese.²⁹

26 Deng (1999), 18–20. See also Lo (1970), 172, and Wang Zengyu (1975).

27 Sen (2003), 177–178.

28 *Zhongmu ji* 2.13b–14a, cited by Schottenhammer (forthcoming).

29 The literature on Song Quanzhou is large. See Li Donghua (1985); Li Yukun (1995); and Fu Zongwen (1991). For English treatments, see Clark (1991); So (2000), and the essays in Schottenhammer (2001).

Finally, commercial success engendered political success for the south-east of a sort that was never matched before or after in Chinese history; during the Song the coastal circuits of Liangzhe, Fujian and Guangdong accounted for 27% of all *jinsbi* degrees given in the examinations, and 52% in the Southern Song.³⁰ How that translated into direct involvement in maritime trade we cannot say, given the aversion of Chinese biographers to talking about the economic backgrounds of families. Officials themselves were prohibited from involvement, though we have records of officials impeached or found guilty of such involvement. We know far more, however, about the role played by the Song imperial clan in the maritime trade of the Southern Song. After the loss of the north, Quanzhou became home to the largest concentration of imperial clansmen in the empire. Living under the supervision of the Southern Clan Office (Nanwai zongzheng si 男外宗政司), the imperial clan produced 122 *jinsbi* degree holders (out of 582 for the prefecture), 9 or 10 of the 87 Southern Song superintendents of maritime trade, and several clansmen found guilty of enriching themselves in the trade. Most striking is evidence that the large oceangoing ship dating to 1277 that was discovered in Quanzhou in 1973, was carrying a multitude of goods labeled as “Southern Family” (*nanjia* 南家), a clear reference to the imperial clan, indicating a major clan involvement in the venture and possibly even ownership of the vessel.³¹

Maritime Trade in East and Southeast Asia

Thus far my attention has focused almost exclusively on Song China, but when we turn to other parts of maritime eastern Asia, we see that the flourishing maritime commerce of tenth through thirteenth centuries had a profound impact throughout the region.³² In the view of Momoki Shiro and Hasuda Takashi, “Northeast Asia was deeply incorporated into international trade networks for the first time” during the eleventh through fourteenth centuries.³³ Yamauchi Shinji calls this “the age of Japan-Song

30 From Table 21 in Chaffee (1995), 132-133. Specifically, those southeastern circuits accounted for 5,079 of the 18,812 Northern Song *jinsbi*, and 10,886 of the 20,793 *jinsbi*. The figures for the circuits come from the empire-wide survey of local histories that I did for the book, while the figures for the total degrees come from the *Wensxian tongkao* and *Song huiyao*, as discussed and presented in Appendix 2 (191-195). See Clark (2001), 54-65, for an extended analysis of the relationship between examination and economic development (much of it related to maritime trade) in Song Quanzhou.

31 Chaffee (1999), 234-239 and Chaffee (2000). Concerning the Song ship, see Fu Zongwen (1989).

32 This is broadly treated by Li Meihua (2005), Chapters 1 and 2.

33 Momoki (2007), 5

trade” in which “there were active exchanges of people, commodities and information through frequent maritime trade with the Asian continent”,³⁴ and Charlotte von Verschuer has similarly described it as the age of free trade for Japan’s relations with China and Korea.³⁵ Similarly, Geoff Wade has argued that the period of 900–1300 C.E. constituted an “age of commerce” for Southeast Asia,³⁶ while Kenneth Hall identifies the period 1000–1400 as a time of fundamental transitions in the trade and state developments of that region.³⁷

In Korea, for almost a century the Koryŏ rulers accepted a tributary relationship to China, sending missions first to the successive Five Dynasties and then to the Song until around 1020. The complicating factor was, of course, the Liao, and indeed it seems that common cause against the Liao fueled the Song-Koryŏ relationship through much of this period. However, the Liao success at achieving an advantageous peace with the Song at the Treaty of Shanyuan in 1005 was followed by Khitan invasions of Korea and a treaty in 1020 establishing Koryŏ as a tributary of the Liao. According to Michael Rogers, in the ensuing decades

(...) the idea that the peninsular kingdom was no longer a satellite but had developed an independent orbit and was a planet (a “little China”) in its own right seems to have emerged.³⁸

Despite the lack of tributary relations, Song-Korean trade flourished, during both the Northern and Southern Song. We have records of Korean merchants settling in China – especially Mingzhou (Ningbo) – while Korean records document visits by dozens of Chinese ships, especially during the eleventh century.³⁹ This period also marked the highpoint of an active trade between Korea and Japan, which also exchanged frequent embassies.⁴⁰ Moreover, visits by Arab envoys and merchants to Korea are well documented in Koryŏ sources, including a visit by an Arab (Dashi 大食) envoy and one hundred others from Arabia in 1024, a telling indication of Korea’s participation in the maritime trade world.⁴¹

34 Yamauchi (2007), 83, 93.

35 Von Verschuer (2006), ch. 4.

36 Wade (2007).

37 Hall (1985), Chapter 8.

38 Rogers (1983), 158.

39 Lee (1997), 55-59. See also Chen Shangsheng (2004), 124-126. For a record of Quanzhou merchants visiting Korea, see Li Yukun (1995), 48-50.

40 Kawazoe Shoji (1990), 406.

41 Lee (1997), 56.

The case of Japan is even more striking. Beginning in 836 the Heian court, which had previously maintained active tributary relations with the Tang, began a two century hiatus in diplomatic missions to China. Although some official contact existed with the Yangzi Valley kingdom of Wu Yue 吳越 in the tenth century, it was not until the 1070s that the first mission was sent to the Song, which is also when missions to Koryō began.⁴² Relations between Japan and the continent were therefore left to private merchants (mainly Chinese) operating under the supervision of the governmental headquarters (*daijūfu* 大宰府) at Hakata.⁴³ The volume of trade was appreciable; von Verschauer estimates that about one Chinese ship per year came to Japan throughout the Heian period.⁴⁴ By the late twelfth century volume of trade had increased dramatically, partly the result of political instability in Japan – the Taira-Minamoto struggles culminating in the establishment of the Kamakura bakufu – but also in response to the rising level of trade throughout maritime East Asia. Special note should be made of visits to China by Japanese Buddhist monks and commercial ventures by Buddhist temples in Japan.⁴⁵ The Japanese imported not only a wide range of luxury goods from China and the south seas, but also large quantities of Song coins, producing inflation – some called it a “money sickness” – that alarmed the Japanese authorities, who tried on numerous occasions without success to restrict their import.⁴⁶ This issue ironically connected the Japanese with the rest of the maritime trade world, for in the Southern Song a massive outflow of bronze coins (and un-minted copper) from China to as far away as the coast of Africa had emerged as a major irritant for the Song government, which had tried, without success, to ban their export.⁴⁷

Turning to southeastern Asia, the case for the impact of maritime commerce is even stronger. Kenneth Hall has argued that the upsurge in trade caused by the pro-trade policies of the Song had a profoundly unsettling effect on maritime Southeast Asia, as Sri Lankans, Burmese, and Malays came to challenge Srivijaya’s long-time dominance of Southeast Asia’s maritime trade, and he identifies five discrete trading commercial zones that had come into being by the beginning of the fourteenth centu-

42 McCullough (1999), 84; Hurst (1999), 633.

43 McCullough (1999).

44 Von Verschauer (2006), 47. Her estimate is based upon the nearly annual arrival of Chinese ships that pertained during the well documented period of 980–1020.

45 Chen Shangsheng (2004), 127-131, for the Northern Song, and Von Verschauer (2006), 90-97, on the role of Buddhism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

46 Yamamura (1990), 358-360; von Verschauer (2006), 84-90.

47 Schottenhammer (2001), esp. 126-136.

ry.⁴⁸ More specifically, Momoki Shiro's study of Dai Viet (Vietnam) from the tenth to fifteenth centuries has shown how that state flourished through the eleventh and twelfth centuries by virtue of both its trans-shipment commodities between various Southeast Asian countries and China, and by a growing domestic production of precious export commodities.⁴⁹ He also argues that the volume of Dai Viet's non-tributary trade exceeded that of the well-documented tributary trade between them and the Song, this despite some of the Song court's restrictions on Nanhai trade during the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁵⁰

Using a very different approach, Derek Heng's work on Sino-Southeast Asian trade in the Song and Yuan periods offers important insights into the impact of that trade. Not only does he amply document the earlier mentioned transition from a luxury trade to a higher volume trade in bulk commodities, but he also identifies a change in the marketing of commodities which he attributes to the role of Chinese merchants, namely

[...] the development of other commercial practices, such as product quality grading and regional and product specialization, which were developed in the context of an increasingly sophisticated maritime economy and in response to the changing manner in which trade was conducted by the Chinese.⁵¹

The point about product grading is important, for Heng shows how in both Southeast Asian exports to China like aromatics, and imports from China like silk and especially ceramics, sources point to increasing gradations of goods (high vs. low quality and levels in between), suggesting increasingly complex commercial networks and improvements in commercial intelligence, for gradations would only make commercial sense if there were assurances that the market for different grades existed.⁵²

Finally, we should note the recent article by Geoff Wade arguing that the period of 900 to 1300 C.E. marked Southeast Asia's first great age of commerce, a development spurred by the Song "economic revolution". Space prohibits an accounting of all twelve of Wade's conclusions, but his arguments for the impact of that trade include the appearance of new ports, the movement of administrative centers nearer to the coast, population growth and the development of both cash cropping and Southeast

48 Hall (1985), 192-197, 222-231.

49 Momoki (1999), 15.

50 Momoki (1999), 12.

51 Heng (2009), 124.

52 Heng (2009), 134-142. See, too, Heng (2004) on these changes in the ceramics trade, though in it his focus is on the early Yuan.

Asian ceramics and textiles industries, new modes of consumption, and new mercantile organizations.⁵³

Taken collectively, this scholarship makes a compelling case for the impact of maritime commerce on the societies of Southeast Asia, increasingly integrating into that commercial economy and contributing to their economic and political development.

Conclusion

The Mongol conquest of East Asia during the course of the thirteenth century provides an obvious endpoint for this paper while at the same time raising the question, what became of the constellation of multiple states, Song economic dynamism, and flourishing maritime trade that I have been describing in the wake of the Mongol conquest? In answer, I would offer three points.

Concerning the multi-state order, the East Asian states of the tenth through twelfth centuries – in contrast to those in the third through sixth centuries – were wealthier and more developed politically, and they had the constant stimulus of the Song, which dominated the region economically and culturally but not militarily. Moreover, with the exception of the convulsions of the 1120s, the system was quite stable. There was little in the world of 1200 to suggest that the multi-state order would come to an end. Song irredentists may have constantly advocated a re-conquest of the north, but their wars with the Jin brought them no closer to that end, and the Mongols had yet to appear in the population centers of East Asia. It is also worth noting that Ming and Qing dominance insured that the multi-state order did not reappear after the Mongols, nor did the arms race with its developments in military technology that had characterized the multi-state period.⁵⁴ Thus without the forced unification of China by the Mongols, one can imagine a very different developmental trajectory for China and East Asia.

Second, trade flourished even more following Mongol unification. The world trade system as described by Janet Abu-Lughod entered its golden age, thanks to the securing of the continental trade routes under the Pax Mongolica, and policies encouraging maritime trade. Even as they completed the conquest of the Southern Song, the Mongols reestablished the maritime trade offices, designated Quanzhou as the primary port for the Nanhai trade, and sent numerous diplomatic missions abroad inviting

53 Wade (2007), 71-75. Reference should also be made to the article by Christie (1998) on the impact of maritime trade on Java.

54 This issue is brilliantly addressed by Needham (1980).

tribute and trade as far afield as India.⁵⁵ Although this might appear to contradict my contention that the multi-state order was an important condition for the development of maritime trade, I would argue that the Mongol unification of China under the Yuan dynasty was very different from that of dynasties like the Tang or Ming; their territory was vastly larger than the largest Chinese dynasties and their interests were more resolutely pecuniary, unconstrained by Confucian principles. It therefore made perfect sense for them to encourage commerce in all of its forms, though the greater body of it was channeled through the merchant monopolies (ortagh) that were heavily patronized by the Mongol court.⁵⁶

So when did the medieval maritime age end? Answers vary. Abu-Lughod places it in late fourteenth century, with the fall of the Yuan and the spread of plague throughout Eurasia. Others point to the restrictive trade policies of Ming Taizu 明太祖 (r. 1368–1398), while others yet mark it with the end of the Zheng He 鄭和 voyages. Whatever the end date, it is clear that the Ming restrictions, while never complete, nevertheless resulted in a severe restriction in trade between China and the rest of maritime Asia.⁵⁷ More significantly, even though China subsequently experienced periods of active maritime commerce – for example, following the lifting of restrictions in 1567 and again in 1717,⁵⁸ never again in imperial Chinese history do we see government encouragement of trade or the levels of maritime commerce that existed during the Song and Yuan.

Rather than ascribing the severe restriction of maritime trade to the suspicious nature of Taizu, the anti-trade biases of the Ming civil officials, or to xenophobia, I would suggest that larger systemic factors can be invoked to explain the differences between Song and Ming. First, the need for the Song to function in a diplomatic world in which they were not dominant meant that the tributary system could not be used as it had been under the Han and Tang. Moreover, states like the Xi Xia deprived them of the ready access to land-based continental Eurasian trade. In these circumstances, the attractions of maritime trade were obvious. In this regard, the Ming were far more like the Tang.

Third, the Tang-Song transformation resulted in an economy that was more productive per capita, more organized around commerce, and more geared to urban consumption than was the case at any other time in Chinese

55 Sen (2006).

56 Yokkaichi (2006).

57 See Ptak (1998).

58 Philip Kuhn (2008), 9.

imperial history, including especially the Ming and Qing.⁵⁹ These attributes did not apply to all of the empire, but most specifically to the southeast: Jiangxi, the Yangzi delta, and the southeastern coast, where marine environments predominated. As a corollary to this, the Song government was unusually dependent upon commercial and consumption taxes for its revenue base. Given the very different economic structures of the Ming, commerce – particularly maritime commerce – had little importance.

In summary, I am suggesting that the economic transformation of China, the emergence of a multi-state system, and the spread of maritime trade had a common origin in the economic changes and political collapse of the Tang, and that they produced a unique configuration in East Asia marked by political decentralization together with economic vitality and commerce.

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59 This is persuasively argued by Liu (2005). Drawing on Miyasaki Ichisada’s notion of a fiscal state (*Zaisei kokka* 財政國家), Liu argues that only in the Song was there such a state, in which “statehood was largely ensured by administration through market means”. By contrast, he contends that the early Ming was despotic and from the sixteenth century on the Chinese state was physiocratic.

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