

On the Inspection of Foreign Products during the Ming Period

Csaba OLÁH

During the Ming period private interactions of foreign countries with China were more restricted than in the previous Song or Yuan periods. Although only official tribute embassies sent by foreign rulers were allowed to enter China and to trade under the supervision of the Chinese authorities, in fact foreign trade in the Ming period consisted of three forms: tributary trade (trade of foreign tribute products that were exchanged for Chinese products or sometimes purchased by the court and paid for in copper coins), official trade (trade with the state based on official price-setting) and “mutual trade” (*hushi* 互市, private trade with local brokers, merchants or other individuals under official supervision).¹ Other forms of trade – such as smuggling or private trade without official acknowledgment – were regarded as illegal. Foreign local products were used as tribute gifts from a foreign ruler to the Chinese emperor and, at the same time, they also became important items for both the official and “mutual trade” between Chinese and members of foreign embassies.²

From the early years of the Ming period the main form of trade was basically the official trade, during which Chinese authorities bought the foreign products at a much higher price than their original value. Official trade created a large profit for the foreign embassies and it did not have as much risk as “mutual trade”, which probably was the reason why official trade was the main form of foreign trade until the second half of the fifteenth century. The official purchase of a large amount of foreign products by the Chinese authorities for high prices, however, led to financial straits in China. For that reason the court decided to reduce the scale of official trade, but at the same time it also made efforts to maintain official trade as a façade, in order to show that China was still economically powerful enough to purchase foreign products as before.³

As a result of these developments and the changing scale of official trade, there was an increase in the number of foreigners who were unsatisfied with the prices offered by officials or the court and who did not sell their products during

1 Tanaka Takeo 1975, 162.

2 Sakuma Shigeo 1992, 8; Wan Ming 2011, 587.

3 More about the decline of official tribute trade cf. Li Jinming 1990, 54-58.

official trade. Furthermore, there were also foreigners who had no choice but to trade their products privately because the authorities refused to purchase them during the official trade. This situation opened the way to the further development of “mutual trade”. With the gradual decline of official trade before the mid-Ming era, “mutual trade” became gradually the main form of trade.⁴

This article focuses on the problems of official trade in relation to the inspection of foreign tribute embassies. During these inspections, done by the local authorities at the border, not only the diplomatic documents, but also the ships and the members of the mission as well as the tribute and trade products underwent a strict inspection. Chinese authorities inspected the quantity and the quality of both the tribute products and the products that were brought to China for official trade. Even if products inspected at the border had already been accepted as tribute items, further inspection might take place again in Beijing, especially when an unanimous decision could not be made at the local level.

Despite the importance of the inspection of foreign products at the border, the relationship between cargo inspection and official trade has not been highlighted in previous research; and the mechanisms of inspection system and the necessity of such a system within Ming foreign relations have not been examined. However, if we look for information on cargo inspection, we can find many details scattered throughout the sources that help us understand the reasons and mechanisms of cargo inspections during the Ming period.

The aim of this article, therefore, is to give new insights into the problems of the cargo inspection system in Ming China, to investigate the reasons for its existence and to reveal its mechanisms. In making these points I analyze the *Veritable Records*, a Chinese source called *Fujian shibo tijusi zhi* 福建市舶提舉司志 (Record of the Superintendency of Maritime Trade in Fujian), compiled by Gao Qi 高岐, Supervisor of Maritime Trade Office in Fujian after 1554,⁵

4 Zheng Youguo 2004, 230-237; Chao Zhongchen 2005, 126.

5 *Fujian shibo tijusi zhi* is a relative well-known source containing a wide-range of information on the Superintendency of Maritime Trade in Fujian, the administrative system of the office, some of its administrative practices and its history. Works dealing with this source mostly refer to a short part that mentions the administrative organization of the office in the Ming period (names of officials, number of brokers etc.). For example Zheng Youguo 2004, 270, Schottenhammer 2010, 106-107. Schottenhammer (2002, 120-148) also used it for the reconstruction of the names of the supervisor officials in Quanzhou during the Song period. The rich data contained in this source, however, is still waiting to be examined in the context a Ming maritime trade. Superintendency of Maritime Trade, which – for the sake of convenience – I will refer to as Maritime Trade Office throughout this article. Although, strictly speaking, one has to distinguish between the superintendency and the office, the differences are negligible for

and the corpus of Japanese travel diaries and documents called *Nyūminki* 入明記.⁶ In *Fujian shibo tijusi zhi*, for example, there is a detailed description of the process of cargo inspection in the case of tributary ships from Ryūkyū. It contains valuable information about the administrative system of foreign relations in Ming China, which makes this source useful for comparison with the Japanese *Nyūminki* sources, as already pointed out by Kobata Atsushi.⁷

The *Nyūminki* sources, written by leading members of Japanese official tributary embassies to China, describe different activities and experiences made by Japanese during their stay in China. Among other things, the cargo inspection (inspection of tribute products and trade products) at Ningbo is also mentioned in three of them. These are the *Shōun Nyūminki* 笑雲入明記 (Record of Shōun's Journey to Ming China) by the Buddhist monk Shōun Zuikin 笑雲瑞訥, concerning the mission of 1453; the *Shotoshū* 初渡集 (The First Journey [to Ming China]), concerning the mission of 1539; and the *Saitoshū* 再渡集 (The Second Journey [to Ming China]), concerning the mission of 1548 (each year refers to the date of disembarkation at Ningbo). Based on these items it is possible to reconstruct the course of cargo inspection; however they do not contain details on the content of inspection itself. Thus, in order to make clear what happened during a cargo inspection and why it was necessary for China as part of the official trade, it is necessary to analyze and compare the above mentioned Chinese and Japanese sources.

Based on these sources I will examine how the inspection of foreign products took place in Ming China, and will explain why product inspection was necessary for the Ming government, what the relationship was between foreign trade and product inspection, and what the role of brokers and guilds was in the inspection. I further argue that the mechanisms and problems associated with the inspection system inevitably helped in the creation of “mutual trade”. I suggest that without analyzing the system and the reasons for product inspection – even though they seem to have no direct relationship to the trade itself – we cannot fully understand the mechanism of Ming foreign trade.

our purpose. Generally speaking, the superintendencies exerted a stricter central government control, while Maritime Trade Office (*shibo si* 市船司) is a more general designation.

6 For further details on this corpus and an analysis of their content cf. Oláh 2009, 195-244, and relevant parts in a recently published introduction into the research of Sino-Japanese relations during the Ming period; cf. Murai Shōsuke *et al.* 2015.

7 Kobata Atsushi 1939, 241.

General remarks about inspection of foreigners in the Ming Period

We must first understand why border inspection was necessary. First of all, an inspection at the border was necessary to confirm that a mission was an authentic tribute mission with the required diplomatic documents (i. e., a “vassal letter” from the foreign king and the *kanbe* 勘合 certificates) and that it was within the parameters allowed by the Ming state (i. e., number of ships and crew, period of tribute, etc.).⁸ Tribute missions that were labeled as unofficial were refused.

Second, inspection was an essential part of the selection process of foreign products. After the arrival of the foreign missions foreigners handed over their tribute products to the local officials for inspection. The decision whether all the products should be accepted, or whether some should be refused, was made by the officials. Therefore an inspection was necessary. Furthermore, official trade – that was in fact based on decisions by local officials about which products should be purchased by the state – also took place at the same time. That meant that the local officials were the first trading partners of the foreigners. They had the opportunity to make the first choice of the products of the best quality. Products that were judged to have an inferior quality were left for private trade.⁹ If foreigners were unsatisfied with the price offered by the officials they were also allowed to sell it later during the private trade.

In this sense local officials had a great responsibility during the inspections. The decision about the quality of foreign products and their selection was entrusted to them, despite the fact that they were not specialists and had almost no knowledge about foreign products. Therefore, as Zheng Youguo 鄭有國 and Chao Zhongchen 晁中辰 have already pointed out in their research, Chinese officials often turned to guilds and brokers (called *yahang* 牙行, *yaren* 牙人 or *yakuai* 牙儉 etc.) for assistance.¹⁰ In doing so this process helped, perhaps unintentionally, to develop private foreign trade.¹¹

8 For further details on the border inspection of foreign embassies in Ming China in general see Oláh 2012, 107-128.

9 *Shuyu zhouzi lu* 9.323.

10 Zheng Youguo 2004, 250, 270-271; Chao Zhongchen 2005, 158, 169.

11 On the role of brokers and guilds in trade with Japan and Ryūkyū during the Ming period also see Oláh 2008 and Oláh 2014, Schottenhammer 2010.

In the foreign trade guild members and brokers worked as experts for the authorities. In some cases private guild members and brokers even took official positions, such as official brokers (*hangren* 行人) in the Superintendencies of Maritime Trade (*shibo tijusi* 市舶提舉司), and became members of the state bureaucracy. As specialists they estimated the value of the products and probably also quoted a price for each item. Therefore officials principally entrusted them with the decision about tribute items and the selection of trade products.

As already mentioned above, the Ming court maintained the system of official trade as a façade. At the border or in Beijing officials had to decide what kind of foreign trade products should be officially purchased. In order to restrain the expenditures of the court, officials did everything to purchase foreign products for as low a price as possible. For the same reason they often purchased only a part of the foreign products.¹² This was a great change compared to the first half of the fifteenth century when Chinese authorities bought almost all foreign products for a high price.

According to Ming law, as described in the *Da Ming huidian* 大明會典 (Collected Statutes of the Great Ming), Chinese authorities principally bought the foreign trade products during the official trade. Still, if there were products that did not meet the requirements or were not worthy for the Chinese authorities to buy, foreigners were allowed to trade them privately.¹³ Other sources also mention that officials first selected the foreign products of high quality and purchased them according to their market price. After that they let the common people trade for the rest of the lower quality products.¹⁴ Chinese officials, we may suppose, used this method to reduce the expenses of China, which is why they often refused to purchase of foreign products because their quality was not sufficient or because their quantity was higher than necessary for China.

How did officials decide which products were good enough quality to be bought? Previous research has already pointed out that the cargo of tribute ships was inspected after their arrival. Accordingly, the tribute items and the products for official trade (the so called *fuda huowu* 附搭貨物) were unloaded and then inspected in the presence of local officials from the Maritime Trade Office or Superintendency of Maritime Trade and officials from the Three Provincial Offices (*sansi* 三司), i. e., the Provincial Administration Commis-

12 Sakuma Shigeo 1992, 149-151.

13 *Da Ming huidian* 111.592.

14 *Shuyu zhouzi lu* 9.323.

sion (*buzhengsi* 布政司), the Regional Military Commission (*duzhi buishisi* 都指揮使司) and the Provincial Surveillance Commission (*anchasi* 按察司). Inspected products were provisionally stored in the storehouse of the Maritime Trade Office.¹⁵

Inspection of products from Ryūkyū

Preparation for cargo inspection

What kind of inspection did foreign goods undergo after the arrival of tribute embassies? If we examine sources on foreign trade in China, we can find descriptions about a kind of inspection that was called *pányan* 盤驗, *kaipan* 開盤, or *huipan* 會盤. First let us examine the formalities that happened before cargo inspection and the measures taken by Chinese authorities upon the first arrival of an embassy in China.

In the Chapter “Bingong” 賓貢 (Foreigners and their tribute) in *Fujian shibo tijusi zhi* there is a detailed account of the inspection of products of tribute ships from Ryūkyū. According to that document, after the Grand Coordinator of Fujian was informed about the arrival of a tribute ship from Ryūkyū he ordered the officials from the Provincial Administration Commission, Regional Military Commission and Provincial Surveillance Commission to go to those ships together with officials from the Maritime Trade Office in Fujian, interpreters and craftsmen and to inspect them. After their arrival they began the inspection of the number of ships and crew, and the inspection and transcription of the diplomatic documents called *fuwen* 符文 and *zhizhao* 執照. The former was a record of important data of the embassy such as the family name of leading members of the embassy, the total number of people on board, the total number of ships, the name of each ship and the name of products for tribute and trade. The latter was a pass issued for each ship with information on the crew and tribute products.¹⁶

The first accounted duty of craftsmen was the sealing of the hatch of the ships in which the tribute goods and products for official trade were stored. This occurred on the order of officials after the diplomatic documents from Ryūkyū were transcribed. Next, ships from Ryūkyū were escorted by the Chinese military for coastal defence to the designated port in Fujian, and the whole

15 Sakuma Shigeo 1992, 7.

16 *Rekidai hōan* 2:1, 702-703, Kobata Atsushi 1939, 198-203.

procedure, together with the transcribed documents, was reported to the Grand Coordinator and the chief officials of the Three Provincial Offices.

In the *Xuanzong shilu* 宣宗實錄 (Veritable Records for the Xuanzong Reign) there is also an account on the sealing of the hatch of foreign ships after their arrival,¹⁷ so we may consider this act as a regular custom and part of the inspection procedure. Foreigners brought many high-quality products to China that they wanted to sell in the form of official trade or to submit as tribute items. Still it was not rare that Ming officials, sometimes conspiring with Chinese merchants or brokers, contacted foreigners before the beginning of the official trade or the delivery of tribute products, which was against Ming regulations, and tried to get the most precious items in the form of illegal trade. Some Ming officials probably tried to prevent this method whereby Rūkyūan people got access to their cargo and pursued illicit trade with Chinese before the official inspection of products. We can find accounts of illicit trade before the official inspection or official trade in other contexts that support this supposition.

For example, Xing Bangxiang 幸邦相, the District Magistrate of the District Huaian 懷安縣 in Fujian, reported once to the throne that the guards of the Rouyuan 柔遠 Postal Station in Fujian, where the members of the embassy from Ryūkyū stayed, often carried on illegal trade with Rūkyūan people before cargo inspection and official trade.¹⁸ These transactions, however, entailed risk for the Rūkyūans and sometimes ended with trouble. Since the Rūkyūans handed over their products to the Chinese in advance in the hope of receiving a payment for them after several days, the Chinese guards sometimes disappeared after they received the Rūkyūan products that they wanted without paying for them. Rūkyūan envoys probably expected a much higher profit from illegal trade than from official trade, which is a possible reason why they decided to engage in trade with Chinese before cargo inspection. The Chinese, however, took advantage of that. In that sense, sealing the hatch was probably not only a necessary measure to curtail illegal trading activities but it was also an effective method to protect Rūkyūans against dishonest Chinese traders.

According to *Fujian shibo tijusi zhi* (Chapter “Foreigners and their tribute”), the inspection called *huipan* (collective inspection, similar in meaning to *panyan*) took place under the direction of the Maritime Trade Office in the Tribute Building (*jingong chang* 進貢廠). The products were carried from the

17 *Xuanzong shilu* 67.1571. Oláh 2012, 112.

18 *Shizong shilu* 9.359-360.

tribute ships to the “Tribute Building” where the so-called guild craftsmen (*hangjiang* 行匠) actually performed the inspection in the presence of other officials. These “guild craftsmen” worked for the Maritime Trade Office either as regular members or temporary advisors. In case of the inspection of foreign products, they were asked by the officials to participate in the inspection as specialists and were entirely entrusted with the inspection (*bianyan* 辨驗). They inspected the products one after another, reporting the result for every product. Inspected products were then transported to the storehouse of Maritime Trade Office. We may assume that the people identified as craftsmen (*jiangzuo* 匠作) or guild craftsmen (*hangjiang* 行匠) were private craftsmen who were probably members of guilds, but they may have been related to local brokers or they may have worked themselves as brokers – it is not clear.¹⁹ In any event, they must have been specialists with knowledge of trade products and trade – otherwise it would not have been necessary for them to participate in the inspections. Ultimately, because officials relied upon these craftsmen for the inspection and the selection of goods, they could manipulate what products were accepted for the tribute and official trade, while those products that they rejected entered the private trade.

Content of the inspection

What was the content of this inspection or *bianyan* 辨驗? This term is often seen in the same context as in *Xiude mizai shu* 修德弭災疏 (Memorial on the Building of Virtue and the Elimination of Disasters), Shang Lu’s 商輅 (1414–1486) report to the throne on the inspection of jade stones brought by people from Hami and other Western regions. In this report Shang ordered that a specialist should inspect (*bianyan*) the quality of jade stones in the future and sort them according to their grade. As he mentioned, after the inspection jade stones of the first grade were to be sent to Beijing as tribute and those of the second grade were to be officially purchased by the state. The rest of the jade of lower quality could be freely sold by the Hami embassy during private trade.

From this account it is obvious that the word *bianyan* is used to mean “inspect and decide about quality”. The guild craftsmen in Fujian also had to do the same. They had to inspect the quality of the products from Ryūkyū according to their best knowledge and decide whether those products should be accepted as tribute items or should be officially purchased as part of official trade

19 Cf. Schottenhammer 2010.

(that was paid by the state). When the quality was not good enough, they might recommend that lower quality products should be sold by the embassy from Ryūkyū itself in form of private trade.

In short, based on the account on the inspection of products in Fujian, we can say that the inspection called *huipan* was a selection and sorting of foreign products in which the role of guilds or brokers was essential. Because officials depended on the help of guild craftsmen in the cargo inspection process this in effect facilitated the development of private trade.

Further, in the case of Ryūkyū, a more detailed inspection of sulphur occurred. Sulphur was a product that the Chinese bought during official trade – it was not permitted to be traded it privately. Chinese officials had to inspect its quality and weight very carefully. That is why they checked the moisture of the sulphur. During the sea travel to China sulphur became wet (we know also from Japanese accounts that this was a problem), thus its quality deteriorated and its weight increased, and as a result the price might increase significantly.

As described in *Fujian shibo tijusi zhi*, after the first inspection (called *huipan*) local officials reported the result to Beijing and then carried out a second and more thorough inspection in the storehouse of the Maritime Trade Office with the participation of officials. Here a craftsman opened the sacks of sulphur and inspected them one by one. After the inspection they refilled the sulphur in other sacks that were used for the transportation of tribute products to Beijing. Thus, after a careful inspection, the officials decided which products could be accepted and sent to Beijing as tribute or which were suitable for official purchase.

We can see that Chinese officials with the help of guild craftsmen did everything to prevent the purchase of bad quality products. The role of craftsmen was very important right after unloading the cargo, their decision had great influence on the official decision concerning the acceptance or refusal of foreign products. Always, if there was a problem with products officials asked craftsmen for their help.

We can discover a similar account on product inspection that took place in Guangdong.²⁰ According to the report *Canzou Nanjing jingji si yu fanshi zhizao weijin zhusi zouzhuang* 參奏南京經紀私與番使織造違禁紵絲奏狀 (Report to the Throne Impeaching Brokers of Nanjing for Establishing Illegal Relationship with Foreign Envoys and Weaving for Them Prohibited Hemp Yarn) by

20 Wang Chuan 2010, 89-92.

Wang Shu 王恕 (1416–1508), Nanjing Minister of War (*Nanjing bingbu shangshu* 南京兵部尚書) and Grand Commandant of Nanjing (*Canzan Nanjing shoubei* 參贊南京守備), a tribute ship from Siam drifted to Leizhou 雷州 (Guangdong Province) on the 2nd day of the 8th month in 1476,²¹ where members of the tribute embassy disembarked. After the officials checked the diplomatic documents of the embassy, the local products (*fangwu* 方物) that were brought from Siam as tribute items, were moved to the official storehouse in Leizhou.

After four months, the Right Vice-Director of the Guangdong Defence Command (*Zhenshou Guangdong youshaojian* 鎮守廣東右少監), Wei Juan 韋眷, and other local officials visited the ship, which had suffered great damage when it drifted ashore, and inspected (in the text called *kaipan*) its cargo in the storehouse. In this case the person in charge of the inspection was not the Supervisor of the Maritime Trade Office but the Vice-Director of the Guangdong Defence Command. As a result of the inspection, that was probably carried out by brokers or guild craftsmen in a similar way to the ships from Ryūkyū, the officials decided not to accept the sappanwood and ivory – important tribute items from Southeast Asia – as tribute. According to their explanation most of the sappanwood became rotten and broke into pieces when the ship drifted ashore and water leaked into the ship’s hold. The ivory, on the other hand, was likely damaged when people in Siam cut it or broke it off. It was mentioned that cracks in the ivory – that appeared when ivory was broken off – could be seen, and in some cases scratches were discovered that were caused when people cut off the ivory. Obviously the quality of the work in Siam was not very high this time. In this context the word *kaipan* is used for inspection, which Wang Chuan interpreted in his book as a case of “inspection and selection of suitable products from the tribute items that were paid”.²²

Another example we find in *Yingzong shilu* 英宗實錄 (Veritable Records of the Yingzong Reign) on the inspection of jade stones as tribute items from Samarkand.²³ When the border officials of Ganzhou 甘州, as part of the border control for foreign embassies, inspected the products of the tribute embassy from Samarkand, they decided that they could not accept the jade stones as tribute because they were too small. In this case there was no complaint against

21 In the text dates, where indicated as day and month, are cited according to Chinese reckoning, i. e., according to the lunar calendar; years are given according to the Western calendar.

22 Wang Chuan 2010, 92.

23 *Yingzong shilu* 264.5625-5626.

the quality (as in the previous case with ivory and sappanwood), the only reason was the size of the stones. This shows that size could be a problem, too. Of course such a reason could be made by officials as an excuse because they did not want to accept the products. Foreigners could do nothing against that. Furthermore, in this case there was no mention about specialists or craftsmen who were present at the inspection; so we may suppose that this was a decision made by officials.

Afterwards, members of the mission from Samarkand brought these stones to Beijing, where they still tried to submit them as tribute presents. When they presented the stones, they – as mentioned in the *Veritable Records* – “lied” about them, saying they were “beautiful jade stones” (*meiyu* 美玉).²⁴

Still, the Ministry of Rites, which was the responsible organ for foreign relations during Ming times, reacted to this act of the embassy fairly and impartially. It asked the emperor to order the inspection of jade by jade-craftsmen again in the presence of officials of the Ministry of Rites. The Ministry also suggested, that acceptable products should be collected as tribute, but unacceptable products should be given back to the embassy. Further it mentioned that the embassy should be allowed to trade in Beijing with those jade stones that were not accepted.²⁵ These sources on tribute embassies from Ryūkyū, Hami, Siam and Samarkand clearly show how the Ming court treated the tribute of foreign embassies and what its stance on official trade was. As we have seen from the previous examples a fair but strict inspection of products was organized after the arrival of tribute ships, during which officials had to decide which products were necessary or which products had a sufficiently high quality to be accepted as tribute or purchased by the state. In some cases officials even tried to reduce the price of foreign products. The most efficient method for that was the inspection of relevant products. Still, even if the products were not accepted the court allowed their sale in the form of private trade, which was welcomed by the foreigners.

These accounts also imply that foreign products were sometimes prepared in really bad quality, which explains why such a product inspection was necessary. As we have noted, craftsmen did a meticulous job checking every detail, such as quality, size, amount, as well as the appearance of the items, such as pos-

24 This of course was the interpretation of the Chinese about lying or deceitful foreigners; maybe the people from Samarkand just tried to submit the stones again, saying that these were – despite their size – perfect and beautiful stones. We do not know exactly.

25 *Yingzong shilu* 264.5625-5626.

sible damage and scratches. In a sense they controlled the types of trade goods that entered China in the Ming period, at least in the legal trade.

Information culled from Japanese sources about cargo inspection

The procedure before cargo inspection

As we have seen above, because of the lack of foreign sources in this topic, most of the available sources are in Chinese. However, Japanese tribute embassies also preserved certain information about their activities in China in the form of diaries and other records. These sometimes mention very important details about cargo inspection that are not found in Chinese sources.

In three Japanese travel diaries from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (*Shōun Nyūminki*, *Shotoshū*, and *Saitoshū*) there are accounts about inspections of Japanese products that took place in Ningbo, which was the designated port for the tribute ships from Japan. Japanese sources inform us not only about the details of the inspection itself but also about important details that describe what happened after the arrival of a foreign embassy at the “border”, where the inspection took place within a few weeks.

For example, according to *Shōun Nyūminki*, when the Japanese embassy arrived at Ningbo on the 20th day of the 4th month in 1453, the officials of Ningbo reported its arrival to the court in Beijing on the 3rd day of the 5th month. At the end of the same month the local officials in Ningbo received an imperial letter ordering the officials to send the Japanese mission to Beijing as soon as possible. From the next day forward local officials began with the disembarkation and inspection of the cargo, both the tributary goods and the products for official trade. At the same time, officials of the Three Provincial Offices, located in Hangzhou, arrived at Ningbo in order to supervise the whole process of cargo inspection. They returned back to Hangzhou on the four10th day of the 7th month, after the inspection was finished.²⁶ The mission departed for Beijing on the 6th day of the 8th month.

According to another Japanese travel diary, the *Shotoshū*, a Japanese mission had to report about the volume of their cargo before their arrival at Ningbo. In

26 For details about the officials in *Shōun Nyūminki* see Kawagoe Yasuhiro 2012. In his article he points out that the officials of the Three Provincial Offices from Hangzhou were principally never the chief-officials but the vice-officials or officials one rank lower.

the 5th month of 1539 two Battalion Commanders from Dinghai visited the Japanese on their ships with a letter from the Regional Commander. This letter contained several questions about the diplomatic mission and a request addressed to the Japanese to make a detailed list about the amount of tribute products and the other local products for trade loaded on the ships.²⁷ The Japanese received a letter from the Maritime Trade Office with almost the same content a day later. This shows that the Chinese officials not only checked whether the Japanese held the necessary diplomatic documents, such as the “vassal letter” and the *kanbe*-certificate as well as the required information about the number of the ships and the people on board, but also requested a detailed list of the names and amount of products.²⁸

The unloading of the cargo and its inspection took place after the Chinese officials received the “vassal letter”, the most important diplomatic document sent in the name of the “King of Japan” (i. e., the *shōgun*) to the Chinese emperor. Without this document a foreign mission was not acknowledged by the authorities as being official. The box that contained the “vassal letter” was handed over to the officials in a formal ceremony accompanied by music. After this ceremony the leading members of the mission made courtesy visits to the high ranking local officials, such as the Prefect, District Magistrate and the Assistant Prefect. Then the inspection began with the participation of both Japanese and Chinese members. The Grand Defender (*zhenshou* 鎮守) and three officials from the Three Provincial Offices each also traveled from Hangzhou to Ningbo in order to participate in the inspection.²⁹

This time, however, the imperial edict that permitted the Japanese to travel to Beijing was issued and sent to Ningbo much later than in the aforementioned case. The reason for the delay of more than four months was probably because of a debate in the court about the Japanese who caused a bloody incident in Ningbo in 1523³⁰ and whom the Chinese could not entirely trust anymore.

27 *Shotoshū*, 14th day, 5th month, 1539.

28 For the characteristics of China’s maritime trade politics in early Qing times, cf. Schottenhammer 2010b.

29 *Shotoshū*, 23th day, 5th month 1539.

30 In 1523 two Japanese tributary embassies arrived at Ningbo. First an embassy sent by the Ōuchi family arrived followed a few days later by an embassy of the Hosokawa family. Among the members of the Hosokawa embassy there was a Chinese called Song Suqing who used his connections and bribed the inspecting officials for the purpose of getting the Hosokawa embassy inspected first and to receive better treatment than the Ōuchi embassy. Because of this

The officials in Ningbo, nonetheless, did not wait for the order from Beijing, but instead started preparations for the journey to the capital. They began with the unloading of the cargo and its inspection after they examined the official documents. Because the Japanese had not received the imperial order even after the inspection was finished, they sent a letter to the officials on the 6th day of the 8th month in 1539 in which they complained about the situation and requested an imperial order as soon as possible. Finally the Japanese were allowed to go to Beijing and they departed in the middle of the 10th month.

Based on the information from these two Japanese diaries, first, we may suppose that the cargo inspection principally took approximately one to one and a half months. Second, it seems that the inspection might have been started either after the local officials in Ningbo received the imperial edict on the departure for Beijing or even before the arrival of the imperial edict. The most important requirement was that the Japanese – and foreigners in general – could prove with the necessary diplomatic documents that they were an official diplomatic delegation. These documents seem to have been enough for starting the inspection, while the imperial order was important as a formal permission for the travel to Beijing and audience with the emperor.

Already during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong (1425–35), we can find an imperial order about the issue of the cargo inspection and imperial permission for the journey to Beijing. The extant passage in *Xuanzong shilu* reads as follows:

聞西南諸番進貢，海舟初到，有司封識，遣人入奏，俟有命，然後開封起運，使人留彼，動經數月。供給皆出于民，所費多矣。其令廣東，福建，浙江三司，今後番船至，有司遣人馳奏，不必待報。三司官即同市舶司秤盤，明注文籍，遣官同使人運送至京，庶省民間供饋。

I have heard when the Western and Southern barbarians come to pay their tribute, the officials put seal-slips on [the hatches of] their ships and mark them as soon as their ships arrive.³¹ Then they send somebody [to the court] to report [their arrival]. They wait until an order [by the court] is given and only after that they break the seal-slips, and begin with the unloading of the cargo. [By doing so] they let [the barbarians] wait there [i. e. at the border] for few months. All of their supplies [during

unfair treatment the Ōuchi group got angry and a bloody clash occurred between the two groups in which not only Japanese but also Chinese officials and soldiers were killed. For a detailed study on this incident and the investigation after see Oláh 2007.

31 For more details on these seal-slips and the process of border control in the case of tribute ships from Ryūkyū cf. Oláh 2012, 107-128.

that period] are provided by the local people, who expend a large amount [of food and property] for that purpose. Now I order to the Three Provincial Offices in Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang that hereafter if a foreign ship arrives, then the officials should send somebody to report that [to the court], but they do not have to wait for a notice [from the court]. Then, the officials of the Three Provincial Offices should immediately carry out the inspection together with [officials of] the Maritime Trade Office and make a clear and detailed record of it. [Then they should] send officials who accompany the envoys on their way to the capital and carry [their goods]. By doing so, [the practice] that the common people provide their own food and other property to supply [the foreigners] must be eliminated.³²

This source – which is part of an imperial edict that was sent to the Ministry of Rites about this problem – shows that the cargo inspection and the imperial permission were separate matters in the eyes of the Chinese court. With this edict, Emperor Xuanzong intended to change the common practice and to make it possible for cargo inspection to take place before the official permission reached the border officials to move from the border to the capital. Main reason for issuing this edict was that the emperor wanted to shorten the period of stay of foreigners and thus to reduce the costs of their stay. He also aimed at reducing the burden of the Chinese local people who were often ordered to serve the foreign missions with food or to carry their products, which caused severe problems in their everyday life.

Types of inspection and the participants

We can reconstruct from the Japanese sources that there were probably two types of cargo inspection. The first inspection took place after the cargo was unloaded. This inspection concentrated on the recording of items. Officials recorded the name and amount/weight of products one by one and made a list of them. This was called *tenken* 點檢 in the Japanese diaries. In *Shōun Nyūminki*, for example, it is recorded that Chinese officials weighed the sulphur. Because the Chinese paid according to the weight of sulphur, for them it must have been an essential measurement.³³

The second inspection focused on the quality – which was called *panyan* in Chinese sources or *banken* in Japanese (same characters). As we have noted, this term was often used in the Chinese sources in the context of inspection of foreign products, and has the same meaning as *huipan* used in the case of embassies

32 *Xuanzong shilu* 67.1571.

33 *Shōun Nyūminki*, 58.

from Ryūkyū. However, in the Japanese diaries the term *tenken* (or just *ken* 檢) was also used in the same context for quality control, for example in the *Shōun Nyūminki* the word “*banken*” was never used, probably because the Japanese were not familiar with this Chinese word at that time.

For example, it was recorded that at the same time when sulphur was weighed, sappanwood and copper were also inspected; I suppose “inspection” here meant the recording of the amount of these items, but it is also possible that a quality inspection was performed at the same time. On the one hand, it is impossible to determine the meaning in this case because the explanation is too short, still we may conclude that members of the Japanese missions to China sometimes mixed the different terms for “inspection”, such as *banken*, *tenken* or *ken*, making no distinction between the words and the actions expressed by the words. On the other hand, in *Shotoshū* a clear distinction was principally made between the use of the two words for inspection: first, the *tenken* took place after the unloading of the cargo and after that the *banken* took place. Both inspections targeted the same products.³⁴

Based on the information that products of the Ryūkyū embassy were inspected after they were unloaded, documented and carried to the “Tribute Building”, we may suppose that in the case of a Japanese embassy a quality inspection was carried out similarly as a second inspection after recording the names and amounts of the product items. From the Japanese diaries we also know that the quality inspection in the case of a Japanese embassy was almost the same as in the case of a Ryūkyū embassy, but we can get more information about the details.

As we have seen, the inspection of the cargo from Ryūkyū took place in the “Tribute Building” of the Maritime Trade Office in the presence of high ranking local officials, and then the inspected products were moved to the storehouse of the Office. The situation of the inspection was very similar in the case of the Japanese embassy. According to the Japanese diaries, after the cargo was unloaded and leading members of the embassy paid a courtesy visit to the high-ranking Chinese officials (they later often repeated these visits during the inspection), products for tribute and official trade were carried to the Eastern Storehouse (*dongku* 東庫), inside of the walls of Ningbo, near the Eastern Gate. The products were unloaded and carried from the ships to the Eastern Storehouse in the order of the ship-numbers. First the ship No. 1 with the trib-

34 Oláh 2013, 52-53.

ute products was inspected, and then the other ships with the products for official trade were inspected.

The inspection took place in the Eastern Storehouse in the early Ming, but later, after the 1530s, products were inspected outside of the walls of Ningbo in a provisional building provided for this purpose.³⁵ The reason for that was probably the Ningbo incident. After that the Chinese feared that Japanese could again cause trouble because of the inspection and therefore decided to conduct inspections outside of the city walls.

At the quality inspection high-ranking local officials such as the Chief Eunuch and the Supervisor of the Maritime Trade Office, the Prefect, the Grand Defender and the officials of the Three Provincial Offices from Hangzhou were present. By contrast, these officials did not participate in the first inspection, which also shows that the second inspection was more important than the first one, where a decision was made about accepting the Japanese products.

According to *Xiting jianbie shi xu* 西亭餞別詩序 (Preface for the Farewell Poems of the Western Pavilion) by Zhang Bangji 張邦奇 (1484–1544), a high-ranking official who successively held various leading posts in different agencies and ministries – including the Ministry of Rites and the Agency for Four Barbarians (*siyi guan* 四夷館),³⁶ the right to decide to accept or refuse tribute products was in the hands of the Chief Eunuch of the Maritime Trade Office (*shibo taijian* 市舶太監). Other officials, including the Supervisor (*tiju* 提舉)³⁷ of the Maritime Trade Office, had only the right of inspection.³⁸

When the position of Chief Eunuch was abolished after the Ningbo incident the Grand Defender (*zhenshou* 鎮守) was often invested with the same authority as the Chief Eunuch before, which was a new development in the local authority structure. Examples for Grand Defenders who concurrently held the position of the Chief Eunuch of the Maritime Trade Office, can al-

35 Oláh 2013, 47-50.

36 This agency was established in 1407 and it was in charge of the translation of foreign diplomatic letters.

37 Zheng 2004 is a useful study on the historical development of the structure of maritime trade administration, the Maritime Trade Office and its officials in different periods. For comparison to the Ming system Angela Schottenhammer provides an explanation in English of the official administration of maritime trade and the role of supervisors during the Song period; see Schottenhammer 2015, 460-479.

38 “It is the Chief Eunuch who is responsible for the entertaining [of foreign guests] and who has the right [to decide about] the amount of tribute goods; other officials only have the right to inspect [the goods].”

ready be found in the sources from the middle of the Ming period. For example when a tribute mission arrived from Zhenla 真腊 in 1476, Wei Juan 韋眷, Grand Defender of Guangdong served concurrently as Chief Eunuch of Maritime Trade Office during the cargo inspection. Holding that position he led the inspection that took place in the Maritime Trade Office of Guangdong.³⁹

The process of the cargo inspection

In the case of the Japanese tribute mission of 1539 we can also find clear evidence for this development in a letter sent by the Vice Commissioner for Coastal Defence. In that letter he informed the Japanese that the Grand Defender, together with the officials from the Three Provincial Offices, would participate in the cargo inspection.⁴⁰ The Grand Defender arrived on the 29th day of the 5th month and, according to the Japanese diary, he possessed the full title of “Eunuch Director of the Directorate of the Imperial Horses, [concurrently appointed as] Imperial Dispatched Grand Defender of Zhejiang and other regions, as well as Manager of Maritime Trade Affairs” (*Qincha zhenshou Zhejiang deng chu difang jian guan shibo shiwu yumajian taijian* 欽差鎮守浙江等處地方兼管市舶事務御馬監太監). As his title indicates, he was a palace eunuch specially appointed by the central government to Zhejiang as Grand Defender. Furthermore, he also held the post of Manager for Maritime Trade Affairs, which meant that he held the same authority as the Chief Eunuch of the Maritime Trade Office before.

The reason for this concurrent and temporary appointment, such as in the case of Ningbo, can be explained by the fact that in 1539, when the Japanese arrived, the Maritime Trade Office still existed. The position of the Chief Eunuch, however, had already been abolished as a result of the Ningbo incident in 1523.⁴¹ Local officials in Ningbo needed a chief-official who supervised the Japanese mission and led the inspection of their products. That was why the court provisionally invested the Grand Defender with the authority of the Chief Eunuch of Maritime Trade.

After his arrival the Grand Defender sent the Supervisor of the Maritime Trade Office and the interpreter together with a letter to the Guesthouse of the Japanese. In this letter he emphasized that he was extremely delighted since the

39 Wang Chuan 2010, 92.

40 *Shotoshū*, 23rd day, 5th month 1539.

41 Wan Ming 2011, 592.

Japanese “acknowledged the superiority of the Ming court and sent their tribute.” At the end of the letter he also mentioned the cargo inspection. He promised that the inspection would start in a short time and asked the Japanese to be patient and wait in their Guesthouse until that time.⁴²

With this letter the Grand Defender certainly wanted to reassure the Japanese that the inspection and the trade would take place as usual, and thus he aimed at avoiding possible conflicts or incidents. Because of incidents in the earlier years that involved Japanese, they were in the eyes of the Chinese troublesome and violent people, who sometimes assaulted or killed others and who at other times were victims of violence. Chinese officials, such as the Grand Defender this time, were quite aware that trade was the most important purpose of the Japanese tribute missions, and that mostly trade-related disagreement led to such troubles. The fact that most of the letters that the Japanese sent during the cargo inspection to the Chinese officials were addressed to the Grand Defender, shows without doubt that he exercised absolute leadership over the cargo inspections.

As described in *Shotoshū*, it was also the Grand Defender who decided in 1539 the day on which the inspection should take place. Japanese and the Chinese officials were always informed about his orders of inspection. They followed these orders and moved to the place of inspection.⁴³ The quality inspection, depending on the weather, took a few weeks, and the Japanese were transported to the place of inspection from the Guesthouse in the Maritime Trade Office, which was called Jiabintang 嘉賓堂 or Jiabinguan 嘉賓館 (Hall of Distinguished Guests). Then the inspection took place in the provisional building outside of the city walls that was probably built for this purpose.

The cargo inspection began after a courtesy visit, at which time the Japanese visited the official residence of each of the officials (i. e., Grand Defender, Vice Commissioner for Coastal Defence, Prefect, District Magistrate), who had participated in the inspection.⁴⁴ When we look at the Japanese diaries, we can find many similar records about courtesy visits before important diplomatic or trade-related activities and events; it seems to have been an essential part of the duties of the Japanese.

42 *Shotoshū*, 29th day, 5th month, 1539.

43 *Shotoshū*, 8th day, 6th month, 1539.

44 *Shotoshū*, 1st day, 6th month, 1539.

Then, according to the same document, after a long period of waiting because of heavy rains from the end of the 5th month to the beginning of the 6th month, the inspection (*banken*) started on the 8th day of the 6th month. First, the products of the chief-ambassador, the vice-ambassador and other Japanese official persons were inspected, followed by the products of non-official members, such as merchants or the captain. Principally, the owners of the products, or at least the leading officials such as chief- and vice-ambassador and the so called *tokan* 土官 (principally laymen) and *koza* 居座 officials (principally Buddhist monks), were always present during the inspection.

The arrival of the Grand Defender, the chief supervisor of the inspection, was a carefully prepared procession, performed according to strict ceremonial rules. Before his arrival a few people playing drums lined up on the left and right side of the road, together with others who played music. Then the Grand Defender arrived by palanquin to the place of inspection where the Japanese were already waiting for him.⁴⁵

In another Japanese diary called *Saitoshū* there is a short description about the cargo inspection as well. According to that source the unloading of the cargo started on the 15th day of the 3rd month in 1548, but the Japanese were still not allowed to disembark at Ningbo. They had to wait on their ships for an official order. This indicated that the Chinese maintained a strict attitude toward the Japanese and did everything to keep them under control, similar or even stricter than during the mission of 1539. On the seventeenth day, after all the tribute products were unloaded, the Supervisor of the Maritime Trade Office, the Prefect, the Vice Prefect (*tongzhi* 同知), the Assistant Prefect (*tongpan* 通判) and the Police Chief of Ningbo moved to the provisional building outside of the city walls where the inspection of the quality of the tribute products took place. Then they sent the interpreter to ship No. 1 (the main ship among the tribute ships) and ordered the leading members on the ship to disembark. Similar to the previous mission the Japanese leaders also paid a courtesy visit to each participating Chinese official at this time. After the inspection of the tribute products, the trade products were unloaded and the officials inspected them one after the other as well. On the 20th day the inspection of the whole cargo of ship No. 1 was finished and it was followed by the inspection of the cargo of the remaining three ships.⁴⁶

45 *Shtoshū*, 8th day, 6th month, 1539.

46 *Saitoshū*, 15th–20th day, 3rd month, 1548.

Different from the records of Ryūkyū embassies, in the case of the inspection of the Japanese cargo there is no mention of the participation of any craftsmen who helped the work of the Chinese officials. Still we may suppose that craftsmen and brokers participated in the inspections, as they were essential specialists who helped the decision of officials, as already mentioned in the previous sources. There were also official brokers (*hangren*) in the Maritime Trade Office of Zhejiang who might carry out the inspection.

On the reasons for refusal of products

As a result of the cargo inspection and the quality control inspection, Chinese officials sometimes decided to refuse the tribute products or the official purchase of trade products. We may suppose, however, that foreign products were probably not always as bad in quality as the Chinese stated. We have to consider the possibility that Chinese officials used claims of the bad quality of products as a pretext to refuse those products. Of course, there could be several reasons for refusal, but in any case the most important reason behind a refusal was financial.

In *Diangu jiuwen* 典故紀聞 (Records of Authentic Precedents and Anecdotes) by Yu Jideng 余繼登 (*jinsi* 1577) we can find an example that supports this idea. The document discusses whether the court should accept all local products that were provided by envoys from the Western regions or whether they should refuse some of them. Finally, the court decided to accept only horses and to refuse the other products. As a reason for the decision, the source stated that the court “allowed them [i. e., the Western envoys] to trade with the people in order to reduce the expenditure of the court.”⁴⁷ As we can see, in the case of a refusal foreigners still had the opportunity to trade with Chinese people in form of a “state-controlled” private trade. Unfortunately, the existing sources on this problem were written by Chinese from a Chinese viewpoint, therefore it is impossible to be sure how fairly and honestly the inspections were carried out in reality.

In the Japanese sources there is some information that helps us to get a clearer picture. According to *Shōun Nyūminki*, on one occasion the Japanese complained that the inspection was carried out in an “unfair manner”. They discussed this problem in a meeting amongst themselves after the inspection but did not make any complaint to the Chinese authorities. After this account

47 *Diangu jiuwen* 8.144.

there is a record that the Chinese officials returned those products that were not accepted and were not sent to the capital. The reason for the refusal is not mentioned.⁴⁸ As other evidence, the *Veritable Records* also mention the huge amount of products that the Japanese brought to China at this time in order to sell them during the official trade. As a result the Chinese officials in the capital considered the Japanese to be greedy people because they brought ten-times more products than in the previous year. Their plan was to sell them during the official trade and gain high profits. At the beginning the Chinese refused all of the products, but after a discussion the court and the Ministry of Rites decided to accept most of them, but at a reduced price.⁴⁹ This case shows how firmly the court tried to reduce its expenditure because of financial considerations. Financial straits had a great influence upon tributary trade and official trade in the later decades as well.

In a document recorded in *Jinshin Nyūminki* 壬申入明記 (Records of the Journey in the Jinshin [Year, i. e. 1512] to Ming China) the Japanese once complained that Chinese servants treated Japanese swords roughly during the preparations for their transport to Beijing. Swords were important tribute and trade items, but they were limited to official trade only. In this case, after a long discussion, officials decided to purchase the entire amount of swords, but as a result of the “careless treatment” by the Chinese servants some of the swords were damaged. The officials claimed that they did not want to accept the damaged swords even if the Japanese would repair them. The Japanese complained that the treatment by the servants was intentional and requested that the officials accept the repaired swords. The Japanese were convinced, as they said, that the Chinese wanted to reduce the state expenditure in this way.⁵⁰

Based on these accounts, we have to consider that in some cases there might have been a kind of conspiracy and dishonesty behind the inspection. On the one hand, Chinese officials tried to find pretexts for refusing certain items. In the *Boshi Nyūminki* 戊子入明記 (Records of the Journey in the Boshi [Year, i. e. 1468] to Ming China) there was a list of items that were brought to China as trade products of the Japanese *shōgun*. On this list there was only one item, a razor, that was refused. The reason for the refusal is given in only a short comment that mentions it was “not necessary”.⁵¹ This example shows that products

48 *Shōun Nyūminki*, 58 and 60.

49 Oláh 2009, 281-286.

50 *Jinshin nyūminki*, 371, Document No. 15.

51 *Boshi nyūminki*, 358.

might have been rejected not only because of their quality but also solely because they were not necessary.

On the other hand, Japanese sources provide examples showing that tribute products were sometimes in reality of low quality and that the Japanese were well aware of that. For example, there is an account in *Inryōken nichiroku* 蔭涼軒日録 from the second half of the fifteenth century describing that the number of gifts from the Chinese emperor to the Japanese *shōgun* had decreased, and their quality also declined. The Japanese discussed the problem and came to the conclusion that the Chinese reaction was not surprising. The quality of the Japanese tribute items was in fact poor and that must have been the reason why the Chinese emperor had also sent low quality gifts as “reaction”.⁵² Based on this source we may suppose that the Japanese sometimes tried to profit from products of lower quality and that such products might have been rejected during the inspection. Such questions, however, need to be further investigated.

Conclusion

As previous studies have also already stressed, specialists such as brokers, members of guilds or guild craftsmen were indispensable in the management of tribute and official trade. They not only helped the foreigners conduct private trade and find trading partners among Chinese merchants or private brokers, but they also acted as specialists in the service of the state.⁵³ The aim of this article, however, has been to present a new aspect of trade that helps to explain the further role of brokers and guilds in foreign trade. Namely, to demonstrate that the inspection of foreign products in the border areas or in the capital would not have been possible without the help of such specialists; the article has reconstructed the process of cargo inspection that took place as part of the Ming maritime trade administration. In conclusion we may say that because of the fiscal constraints of the state after the middle of the fifteenth century inspections gradually became increasingly rigorous. As a result of the activities of guilds and brokers during the inspections the state could reduce its expenses. In doing so the state promoted, probably unintentionally, the growth of “mutual trade” and illegal trade in which Chinese officials were often also involved.

52 *Inryōken nichiroku*, 6th day, 6th month, 1492.

53 Numerous scholars point out this fact in general, such as Sakuma Shigeo 1992, Zheng Youguo 2004; Chao Zhongchen 2005. For a comparison with the situation in the Sino-Ryūkyūan trade see Schottenhammer 2010, 134.

This shift from official to mutual trade was a significant change in the history of Chinese foreign trade relations from the end of the fifteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. The change was necessary for the state to reduce the deficit that resulted from the official trade and it was also a necessary and unavoidable decision for maintaining the traditional tribute system that the Ming court did not want to abolish.

Because the Ming court desired to continuously receive tribute embassies, it had no other choice than to broaden the opportunity of mutual trade and to allow foreigners to trade privately with the products that they imported for official trade, in the hope that China would purchase them. Foreigners who “acknowledged the superiority of Ming” and submitted tribute, were in fact only interested in profit from trade (no matter if it was official or private). That was perhaps also clear to the Ming court, and that is why the Ming court decided to broaden the range of mutual trade.

Furthermore, this change also was a chance for both Chinese and foreign traders to have more freedom than before to conduct mutual trade. The sale of remaining products during mutual trade led to the further development of foreign private trade with all its difficulties. Mutual trade became more complex and less transparent. In this situation state control over trade became more difficult. The moral decay of officials on the coast, who were often more interested in private profit than in performing their official duties, can be also observed in the same period. The development of corruption among officials was closely related to the development of freedom in private trade.

We can find sources from the beginning of the sixteenth century that mention corrupt local officials who tried to get closer to foreigners because they wanted to conduct illegal private trade with them before the official trade. This kind of corruption further escalated and led to the establishment of collusive ties between pirates (in the Chinese sources called *zei* 賊, *haikou* 海寇, or *wokou* 倭寇), who were in fact armed smugglers of Chinese and Japanese origins, and the local gentry, wealthy merchants and corrupt officials.

Smuggling and illegal trade were not the only problems caused by the growth of private trade. Private trade within the official framework itself also became problematic. Ironically, troubles occurred because of the guilds and brokers who participated officially in the inspections and decided whether to accept foreign products. During the mutual trade the same official guilds and brokers – similar to private merchants or brokers – also had an opportunity to trade with foreigners. But they sometimes used their position only to get closer to foreigners, and they sometimes credited them. These credit transactions, however, often ended

with the foreigners being defrauded. Guilds and brokers received money or products that the foreigners wanted to sell in advance, but then disappeared. Thus, these official inspectors, sometimes in conspiracy with officials, other brokers or guilds, benefited from private trade with foreigners. These transactions sometimes probably included products that they had officially rejected.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Boshi nyūminki 戊子入明記. Shintei zōho Shiseki shūran 新訂增補史籍集覽, vol. 33/1 (Kyōto: Rinsen shoten, 1967), 355-388.

“Canzou Nanjing jingji si yu fanshi zhizao weijin zhushi zouzhuang” 參奏南京經紀私與番使織造違禁紵絲奏狀, by Wang Shu 王恕, in *Wang Duanyi zouyi* 王端毅奏議 (Siku quanshu 四庫全書, Wenyuange edition), 4.12b-26a.

Da Ming huidian [*Wanli chao chongxiu ben ...*] [萬曆朝重修本]大明會典. Reprint: Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989.

Diangu jiuwen 典故紀聞, by Yu Jideng 余繼登. *Yuan Ming shiliao biji* 元明史料筆記. Beijing: Zhonghua, 2006.

Fujian shibo tijusi zhi 福建省舶提舉司志, by Gao Qi 高岐. Manuscript dated 1939.

Jinshin nyūminki 壬申入明記. Makita Tairyō 1957, vol. 1, 365-375.

Inryōken nichiroku 蔭涼軒日錄. Zoku shiryō taisei 続史料大成, vols. 21-25. Kyōto: Rinsen shoten, 1983.

Rekidai bōan 歷代寶案, vol. 2:1. Naha: Okinawa ken kyōiku iinkai, 1992.

Saitoshū 再渡集. Dai Nihon bukkyō zensho 大日本仏教全書 (Tōkyō: Bussho kankōkai, 1980-1983), vol. 116, 325-378.

Shizong shilu 世宗實錄. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo, 1967.

Shotoshū 初渡集. Dai Nihon bukkyō zensho, vol. 116, 99-324.

Shōun Nyūminki 笑雲入明記. Murai Shōsuke and Suda Makiko 2010.

Shuyu zhoushi lu 殊域周咨錄 (completed 1583), by Yan Congjian 嚴從簡. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000.

- Xuanzong shilu* 宣宗實錄. Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo, 1967.
- Yingzong shilu* 英宗實錄. Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo, 1967.
- “Xiting jianbie shi xu” 西亭餞別詩序, by Zhang Bangji 張邦奇, in *Ming jingshi wenbian* 明經世文編 (reprint: Beijing: Zhonghua, 1997), j. 147, 1464-1466.
- “Xiude mizai shu” 修德弭災疏, by Shang Lu 商輅, in *Shang Wenyi shu gao* 商文毅疏稿 (Siku quanshu, Wenyuange edition), 38a-44a.

Secondary sources

- Chaffee, John William, and Denis Twitchett (eds.). *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 5, pt. 2: *Sung China, 960–1279*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2015.
- Chao Zhongchen 晁中辰. *Mingdai haijin yu haiwai maoyi* 明代海禁與海外貿易. Beijing: Renmin, 2005.
- Kawagoe Yasuhiro 川越泰博. “Shōun nyūminki ni mieru Sekkō Sanshi oyobi chūshiki kyojin ni tsuite” 笑雲入明記にみえる浙江三司および中式挙人について, *Chūō Daigaku Bungakubu kiyō* 中央大学文学部紀要, *Shigaku* 史学, 57 (2012), 1-54.
- Kobata Atsushi 小葉田淳. *Chūsei nantō tsūkō bōeki shi no kenkyū* 中世南島通交貿易史の研究. Tōkyō: Nihon hyōronsha, 1939.
- Li Jinming 李金明. *Mingdai haiwai maoyi shi* 明代海外貿易史. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1990.
- Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 (ed.). *Sakugen nyūminki no kenkyū* 策彦入明記の研究. Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 1957.
- Murai Shōsuke 村井章介 and Suda Makiko 須田牧子 (eds.). *Shōun Nyūminki: Nihon sō no mita Mindai Chūgoku* 笑雲入明記—日本僧の見た明代中国. Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 2010.
- *et al.* (eds.). *Nichimin kankeishi kenkyū nyūmon* 日明關係史研究入門. Tōkyō: Bensei, 2015.
- Oláh, Csaba. “Debatten über den japanischen Tribut nach dem Zwischenfall in Ningbo (1523) und der chinesische Umgang mit der ersten darauf folgenden japanischen Gesandtschaft (1539–40)”, in Schottenhammer 2007, 169-218.
- . “Troubles during Trading Activities between Japanese and Chinese in the Ming period”, in Schottenhammer 2008, 317-330.

- . *Räuberische Chinesen und tückische Japaner: Die diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen China und Japan im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009.
- . “Border Defence, Border Inspection and Foreign Embassies in the Ming Period”, in Rajkai and Beller-Hahn 2012, 107-128.
- . “Ninpō ni okeru Nihon shisetsu no kamotsu kensa ni tsuite” 寧波における日本使節の貨物検査について, in Tōkyō daigaku Nihonshigaku kenkyūshitsu 2013, 43-59.
- . “Chinese Brokers and Sino-Japanese Trade during the Ming period: A Case Study from 1539”, in Schottenhammer 2014, 23-39.
- Rajkai, Zsombor, and Ildiko Beller-Hahn (eds.). *Frontiers and Boundaries: Encounters on China’s Margins*. Asiatische Forschungen 156. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012.
- Sakuma Shigeo 佐久間重男. *Nichimin kankeishi no kenkyū* 日明関係史の研究. Tōkyō: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1992.
- Schottenhammer, Angela. *Das songzeitliche Quanzhou im Spannungsfeld zwischen Zentralregierung und maritimem Handel*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002.
- (ed.). *The East Asian Maritime World 1400–1800: Its Fabrics of Power and Dynamics of Exchanges*. East Asian Maritime History, 4. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007.
- (ed.). *The East Asian Mediterranean: Maritime Crossroads of Culture, Commerce and Human Migration*. East Asian Maritime History, 6. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008.
- . “Brokers and “Guild” (*Huiguan* 會館) Organizations in China’s Maritime Trade with Her Eastern Neighbours during the Ming and Qing Dynasties”, *Crossroads* 1–2 (2010), 99-150.
- (ed.). *Trading Networks in Early Modern East Asia*. East Asian Maritime History, 6. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2010 [Schottenhammer 2010a].
- . “Characteristics of Qing China’s Maritime Trade Politics, Shunzhi through Early Qianlong Reigns”, in Schottenhammer 2010a, 101-154 [Schottenhammer 2010b].
- (ed.). *Tribute, Trade and Smuggling. Commercial, Scientific and Human Interaction in the Middle Period and Early Modern World*. East Asian Maritime History, 12. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014.
- . “China’s Emergence as a Maritime Power”, in Chaffee and Twitchett 2015, 437-525.

- Tanaka Takeo 田中健夫. *Chūsei taigai kankeishi* 中世对外關係史. Tōkyō: Tōkyō daigaku, 1975.
- Tōkyō daigaku 東京大学 (eds.). *Chūsei seiji shakai ronsō: Murai Shōsuke sensei taishoku kinen* 中世政治社会論叢—村井章介先生退職記念. *Tōkyō daigaku Nihonshigaku kenkyūshitsu kiyō* 東京大学日本史学研究室紀要 (Bulletin of the Japanese History Department of the University Tokyo), Besatsu 別冊. Tōkyō: Tōkyō daigaku, 2013.
- Wan Ming 万明. *Mingdai zhongwai guanxishi lungao* 明代中外關係史論稿. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 2011.
- Wang Chuan 王川. *Shibo taijian yu Nanhai maoyi: Guangzhou kouan shi yanjiu* 市舶太監與南海貿易—廣州口岸史研究. Beijing: Renmin, 2010.
- Zheng Youguo 鄭有國. *Zhongguo shibo zhidu yanjiu* 中國市舶制度研究. Fujian: Fujian jiaoyu, 2004.