

# Brokers and “Guild” (*huiguan* 會館) Organizations in China’s Maritime Trade with her Eastern Neighbours during the Ming and Qing Dynasties\*

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In the course of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, numerous so-called *huiguan* 會館 (mostly translated – not quite correctly – as “guilds” in English) emerged in the economically more developed regions of China, such as the Jiangnan area.<sup>1</sup> In particular during the Qing dynasty, going hand in hand with the development of commerce, *huiguan* became important institutions of and for merchants who wanted to improve their competitive position as outsiders in regions where they were not so familiar with the local environment.<sup>2</sup> The *huiguan* also served as locations for meeting like-minded people from the same home regions and cherishing local customs. Common geographic origins thus played a vital economic and social role when merchants founded such *huiguan* with their characteristics of native-place associations (“Landsmannschaften”) established in connection with long-distance trade. With economic development these institutions also became gradually more and more specified according to different commercial areas. The *huiguan* served as meeting places to inform each other about market and price developments, about changes in the demand for certain products, effective sale strategies, and of course about the undermining of one’s own trade and business area by competing merchant groups and, last but not least, the government. While most *huiguan* were thus directly linked with supra-regional and long-distance trade, simultaneously they seemingly for the most part remained domestic trade institutions.

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1 For example *Jiangsu sheng Ming Qing yilai beike ziliao xuanji*. See also Lü Zuoxie (1982), 66, and (1983), 172-211.

2 For a general analysis of Qing period guilds see Golas (1977), 555-580; also Rowe (1992), 47-60; Quan Hansheng (1978); Hamilton (1977), 50-71. Many more publications could be mentioned, but it goes beyond the scope of this article to provide a general survey on Ming and Qing guilds.

Despite the ever increasing commercial network of local merchants to overseas markets also, the *huiguan* inscriptions found in China only rarely attest to merchants' activities abroad, being generally rather restricted to domestic long-distance trade. If information is provided, it is as a rule very general. Conversely, as will become evident below, we often obtain much more information from foreign sources including inscriptions of *huiguan* founded overseas by overseas Chinese, who sometimes cooperated with foreign merchants and institutions, as far as Sino-Japanese or Sino-Ryūkyūan trade is concerned, in particular by Japanese or Ryūkyūan sources in general. These sources at least mention where the merchants originally came from and, normally, also provide some details on the trade they were engaged in. An analysis of *huiguan*-based merchant associations and their relation to maritime trade can therefore only be carried out by a thorough comparison of a variety of both Chinese and foreign textual and archaeological sources.

Many *huiguan* were obviously established with the specific aim of resisting the influence of brokers and agents for the sale of commodities on commission (*yabang* 牙行). The government issued a broker's licence (*yatie* 牙帖) and expected the brokers to control trade on behalf of the government. This would of course imply contradictions with non-governmental private merchants, such as those organized into *huiguan*. A number of *huiguan* also organized their own markets on their grounds and built stores to sell the commodities of particular local or even foreign merchants. With increasing development of trade and commerce in particular in the south-eastern coastal regions, more and more merchants organized themselves according to business areas and fields, and the criteria for admission or exclusion became stricter. In addition, other economic groups, such as artisans, craftsmen etc., founded *huiguan*, too. In this context, also different names emerged, besides *huiguan* especially the term *gongsuo* 公所, which in Suzhou – in contrast to the merchants' or trade *huiguan* – was primarily used by craftsmen and people who were in some respect integrated into the production process of commodities;<sup>3</sup> in Shanghai, on the other hand, *huiguan* apparently were native-place organizations, *gongsuo* instead common-trade organizations.<sup>4</sup>

As many publications have shown, the local and central government mostly sought to strictly control merchant organizations as the *huiguan*.<sup>5</sup>

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3 See Schottenhammer (1995).

4 Johnson (1993), 162.

5 See for example the articles included in Nanjing daxue lishixi Ming Qing shi yanjiushi (1981).

But merchants, as a rule, tried to arrange themselves with such control mechanisms. In the sphere of maritime trade with Japan and the Ryūkyūs, as will become obvious below, we cannot even clearly distinguish between a private merchant and an official government sphere. As a rule, state-society relations in late imperial China are conceptualized in terms of three different but interrelated spheres: the state sphere (*guan* 官), the private sphere (*si* 私), and a distinctive public sphere (*gong* 公).<sup>6</sup> In this respect, the two case studies presented below may show in which way in practical terms, that means in the practical organization of foreign trade in the Eastern Seas, both in Ming and in Qing times all three spheres intermingled or were present at the same time. These two case studies may, thus, provide further evidence for a revision of our traditional view of the late imperial government’s control of trade and commerce: The late imperial Chinese state was not simply acting as “dragon” or “tiger”<sup>7</sup> controlling every step of merchants and obstructing commercial development – not even in this aspect of foreign trade relations. Nor can a strict distinction between official brokers (*ya*) and private *huiguan* be maintained. At the same time, due to the “privatization of trade”, the government found it increasingly difficult to manage the commodities over which it had asserted monopolies in foreign as in domestic trade, such as for example copper. Consequently, both unintentionally and deliberately, a rather flexible organization system emerged in which the state and its control and monopoly were always present, but the private sphere, too.

In places like Fujian, since Ming times authorized brokers were appointed by the government to manage foreign trade. As Fu Yiling has already noted, they were shop-keepers (*pushang* 鋪商) from Haicheng, the maritime centre of the Ming period, and were selected from among the registered shop-keeper households (*pubu* 鋪戶).<sup>8</sup> By the Yongzheng reign (1723–1735), *pubu* households and *hang* households (*hangjia* 行家) existed side by side, *hang* merchants overshadowing *pubu* households without *hang* affiliation.<sup>9</sup> These organizations thus had a clear relation to foreign trade. After the 1720s, as Ng Chin-keong has shown, specialization among merchants engaged in maritime trade became more complex.

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6 For some case studies see for example Anthony and Leonard (2002).

7 These terms stem from Anthony and Leonard who in their volume have already shown that also in terms of domestic Qing administration we cannot simply generalize state-society relations as a strict hierarchical scheme but have to understand it in terms of various governing environments and a broad variety of bureaucratic, sub-bureaucratic and extra-bureaucratic elites.

8 Fu Yiling (1956), 132–133 and 200.

9 Ng Chin-keong (1983), 168–169.

Originally, the authorized firms dealing with foreign goods were called *yang-huo bang* [洋貨行]. They were both exporters of native products to Nanyang [the Southern Seas (Nanyang 南洋), A.S.] and importers of foreign goods for domestic trade, in other words they both domestic coastal and overseas trade.<sup>10</sup>

In 1727, new rules placed overseas trade under the management of the ocean *hang* (*yanghang* 洋行) and coastal trade under the management of merchant *hang* (*shanghang* 商行). These organizations emerged in international ports like Guangzhou or Xiamen.<sup>11</sup>

Generally speaking, organizations managing foreign trade consequently rather seem to have developed from a cooperation of more or less official brokers than from a cooperation of various private merchants engaged in the same branch of business. But, as not only the case of Xiamen may show, private merchants were also involved. We will see this both in China's organization of maritime trade with the Ryūkyūs and in the Sino-Japanese copper trade.

But how important were organizations such as *huiguan* and *yanghang* in the Dongyang 東洋 trade, that is in trade relations with China's eastern neighbours, in particular Japan and the Ryūkyū Islands? Can we discern a distinction between private *huiguan* and private or government-controlled *yanghang*, and what do we know about the role of "private" and "government controlled" maritime trade with the Eastern neighbours? Were maritime merchants active in the Dongyang trade organized in *huiguan*, or did they at least use their structures? Or were they organized as official *yanghang*? Was there a similar kind of competition between *huiguan* and *yahang* as we know it from domestic trade?

In order to shed more light on these questions, in particular on the specific organization structures of maritime trade with China's Eastern neighbours and the specific roles of "private" and "official", this paper intends to introduce two examples of organization structures that played an important role in Jiangnan-Fujian trade relations with the Ryūkyūs and Japan.

The first example, with its origins in the Ming period, discusses the organization of maritime trade at Fuzhou with the Ryūkyūs, first via the *Ronyuan yi* 柔遠驛 and by later Qing times through so-called *Qiu*-merchants (*Qiu-shang* 球商) and the *Qiu-shang huiguan* 球商會館 – Guild house of *Qiu*-merchants in Fuzhou, originally named *Qiongsbui Qiu-shang Tianhou gong* 瓊水球商天后宮 (Tianhou being another designation for Mazu 媽祖), because Mazu was the god to be sacrificed there. The second example analyzes

10 Ng Chin-keong (1983), 169.

11 *Ibid.*

merchants, “ocean guilds” and guild organizations of private and official merchants engaged in the Qing period copper trade with Japan, with emphasis on the Qianlong and early Jiaqing period.

## 1 The Organization of Maritime Trade with the Ryūkyūs

From 1372 (Hongwu 洪武 5) the Ryūkyū Kingdom was a so-called “tributary country” of China.<sup>12</sup> Official trade relations with China were maintained in the form of tribute trade missions (Ryūkyū-China) or as trade during investiture missions (China-Ryūkyū). Tribute missions from the Ryūkyūs were originally permitted once a year, but due to an incident in 1474 this was changed to once every two years.<sup>13</sup> In 1507, the cycle of once a year was resumed, but was reduced again to once every two years in 1522. China on the other hand sent maritime missions to foreign countries “to grant investiture to foreign kings” (*cefeng* 冊封).

Besides these regular tribute missions, there were also the missions sent to China to offer congratulations on the accession of new emperors, to express gratitude for Chinese investiture or special imperial gifts, to report the death of kings and to request investiture. These missions undoubtedly increased opportunities for trade even more.<sup>14</sup> The historical records on Ryūkyūan “*sekkōsen*” or “*jiegong*” 接貢船 ships begin with an entry of 1678 (Kangxi 17) in the *Kyūyō* 球陽.<sup>15</sup> A detailed record included in the *Lidai bao’an* (Jp. *Rekidai hoan*) 歷代寶案 appears only a few years later, in 1685.<sup>16</sup> The establishment of a *jiegong* ship is said to have emerged when considering how to prevent Ryūkyūan tributary envoys from staying too long in Fujian and how to transport the gifts received in Beijing as well as other commodities traded back to the Ryūkyūs as soon as possible, in order to reduce the costs in China on the one hand, and also for safety reasons on the Chinese coast on the other.<sup>17</sup>

These relations were officially categorized as “tribute trade”. But we have to be aware that “paying tribute” was simultaneously an opportunity for trade, both private and official. And what will interest us here in par-

12 In 1392 (Hongwu 25), the younger brother of Satto, Taiki 泰期, was the first one to send an official tribute mission to China. Cf. *Fuzhou zhanggu*, 127 (entry by Lin Guoqing 林國清).

13 In 1474, a Ryūkyūan delegation in China killed a man and his wife, set their house on fire and stole their goods. Cf. Arano Yasunori (2001), 127; Xie Bizhen (2004), 55.

14 Xie Bizhen (2004), 74.

15 *Kyūyō*, entry no. 483.

16 *Lidai bao’an*, I: 35.1151.

17 *Ibid.*

ticular are not the political and cultural characteristics and effects this “tributary status” brought along for both sides, but the question of how this trade was managed and organized. Officially, it was a kind of tribute trade, but this does not provide us with any further information about who managed it in practice. Before we analyze this management of trade in more detail, let us first provide some general background information.

Some Chinese sources record that in 1393 the Ming Emperor Hongwu sent thirty-six Chinese families to the Ryūkyūs as officials to assist in the maintenance of the bilateral diplomatic and exchange relations and the establishment of a stable bureaucratic government on the islands.<sup>18</sup> Arano Yasunori claims, however, that “(c)ontrary to the common assumption that the Ming Emperor sent them to the Ryūkyū Kingdom, (...) they spontaneously came from abroad, settled and formed their community”.<sup>19</sup> The *Ming shi* speaks of “thirty-six households of ship-builders which were bestowed from among the people of Min, in order to ease the intercourse of tribute envoys” (*ci Minzhong zhongong sanshiliu hu, yi bian gongshi wanglai* 賜閩中舟工三十六戶以便貢使往來).<sup>20</sup> The *Lidai bao'an* speaks of thirty-six surnames from Min who entered the country (*Minren sanshiliu xing ruguo* 閩人三十六姓入國).<sup>21</sup> Descendants of these thirty-six families later served as foreign interpreters (*yi tongshi* 夷通事) in bilateral relations.<sup>22</sup> It would go far beyond the scope of the present paper to analyze the function of these interpreters in more detail. But it must be emphasized that their role and function comprised much more than merely the task of interpreting and that they were also directly involved in the management of Sino-Ryūkyūan diplomatic and trade relations.<sup>23</sup> Generally speaking, we have to distinguish between local Chinese interpreters (*tu tongshi* 土通事) and foreign, that is Ryūkyūan, interpreters (*yi tongshi* 夷通事). Whereas the former served as

18 *Da Ming huidian* 105.6b; cf. also Xie Bizhen (1996), 33 (with reference to *Wubei zhi* 214, *haifang* 海防 6). For the role of these thirty-six families cf. also Müller (1993), 44-47.

19 Arano Yasunori (2001), 125. The Chinese sources speak of “bestow upon” (*ci* 賜); for a survey on particular activities of one of these families and its descendants between 1434 and 1824 cf. also the genealogy of the Cai 蔡 family, *Caishi zupu* 蔡氏族譜, reprinted for example in Xie Bizhen (2004), 165-170. Data originally gathered in *Kumemura kei kafi*.

20 *Ming shi* 323.8362.

21 Cf. Wu Aihua (1989), 371; also Xie Bizhen (1991).

22 A Genealogy of the descendants of Cai Chong 蔡崇 of the Cai (Sai) 蔡 family based on entries in the *Kumemura kei kafi*, 246-277, will be provided in the next issue of this journal.

23 An excellent analysis of the role and function of interpreters in Sino-Ryūkyūan relations is Kikō Nishizato (1997); for the role of interpreters in East Asian maritime trade in general see also Liao Dake (2007).

interpreters for investiture missions (*cefeng*), the latter were part of Ryūkyū’s tribute missions to China. Also *jiegong* ships were usually provided with one chief or senior interpreter-clerk (*du tongshi* 都通事), selected to handle tributary and other public affairs of the district. In addition, two emissaries (*shizhe* 使者) and one temporary interpreter-clerk or residence attaché (*cunliu tongshi* 存留通事),<sup>24</sup> on duty only at the Ryūkyūan hostel (*Liuqiu guan* 琉球館, see below) in Fujian dealing with tribute affairs, as well as their companions and shipmates, as a rule about eighty persons in total (equipped with some weapons), were part of the team. Regarding the trade aspect, the residence attaché (*cunliu tongshi*) played an important role.<sup>25</sup>

Ming tribute relations, as is well known, were officially supervised and managed by the Maritime Trade Offices (*shibo si* 市舶司). The Fujian Maritime Trade Office (*Fujian shibo tiju si*) was particularly established for the management of the tribute trade with the Ryūkyūs. It was the supra-ordinate authority responsible for commercial exchange relations with the Ryūkyūs. But the localities where official and private trade with the Ryūkyūs’ non-tribute items, that is bilateral trade, took place were the *Huitong guan* 會同館<sup>26</sup> in Beijing and the *Rouyuan yi* 柔遠驛 in Fuzhou.

*Rouyuan yi* 柔遠驛 literally means the “office for being gracious to those afar”.<sup>27</sup> The *Rouyuan yi* in Fuzhou was a kind of Reception Bureau especial-

24 About the classification of interpreters, see *Zhongshan chuanxin lu*.

25 The so-called *cunliu tongshi* was a Ryūkyūan officer who arrived at Fujian with a tribute or *jiegong* ship and stayed there until his follower arrived with the next tribute or *jiegong* ship. Normally, a *cunliu tongshi* came in December or January and left in the summer of the third year, which means a stay of one and a half years in China. During this period, he was responsible for all kinds of official business. Dana Masayuki (1999).

26 The *Huitong guan* 會同館 was the principal agency for receiving tributary envoys; established in 1276, discontinued in 1288, re-established in 1292; in 1295 put under the supervision of the Minister of Rites (*libu shangshu* 禮部尚書); headed by 2 Commissioners-in-Chief (*dashi* 大史), rank 4a. During the Ming and Qing, it was also the principal state hostelry for foreign envoys, headed by a Commissioner-in-chief, Rank 9a; in 1492 placed under the concurrent control of a Secretary (*zhushu* 主事), Rank 6a, of the Bureau of Receptions (*zhuke si* 主客司) in the Ministry of Rites; in 1657 put under an Administrator (*tongshi* 通事) with nominal status as Vice Director (*yuanyai lang* 員外郎), Rank 5b of a Bureau (*qinglisi* 清吏司) in a Ministry; in 1748 combined with the Translators Institute (*siji guan* 四譯館 or 四夷館) into a single Interpreter and Translators Institute (*huitong siji guan* 會同四譯館) under the Ministry of Rites. According to the *Collected Statutes of the Qing Dynasty*, at the beginning of the Qing dynasty, like in Ming times, all foreign tributary countries were permitted to trade at the *Huitong guan* for three or five days, with the exception of Koreans and Ryūkyūans who were not subjected to these restrictions.

27 The term *rouyuan* is originally derived from the *Shangshu*, “Yudian”, and explained as meaning “to give preferential treatment to people from far away, in order to demonstrate the intentions of the court to cherish them gently”.

ly designed for people from the Ryūkyūs. It handled the reception of Ryūkyū chieftains, collected their tribute goods, and issued gifts for presentation at the Ryūkyūan court. In addition to the *shibo si*, the Ming government had opened in 1405 (Yongle 3) “residences for foreigners” (*yi* 驛) that consequently formed part of the *shibo si* in Zhejiang, Fujian und Guangzhou and were meant to serve in particular for the lodging of envoys and foreign guests. The residence in Guangzhou (Guangdong) was called “*Huaiyuan yi*” 懷遠驛, the one in Quanzhou (Fujian) “*Laiyuan yi*” 來遠驛 and the one in Ningbo (Zhejiang) “*Anyuan yi*” 安遠驛.<sup>28</sup> The *Laiyuan yi* in Quanzhou was especially established as a residence for merchants and envoys from the Ryūkyūs and served at the same time as a store-house for their goods. Most of the Ryūkyūan tribute ships first called at the port of Fuzhou though, because, when continuing their journey to the capital at Beijing, they sailed down the Min River from Fuzhou northwestwards.<sup>29</sup> As it was consequently very inconvenient for them to be obliged to call at Quanzhou first to pass the official regulations, the *shibo si* of Quanzhou was eventually moved to Fuzhou and called “*Huaiyuan yi*”, and the office in Quanzhou was abolished.<sup>30</sup> Because the respective institution in Guangzhou was also called “*Huaiyuan yi*”, the one in Fuzhou was eventually renamed “*Rouyuan yi*” 柔遠驛 during the Wanli (1573–1619) reign period. The term “*Lingqiu guan*” 琉球館 (or Ryūkyūkan) that came to be used for this institution in Qing times is a popular designation, reflecting the fact that it was mostly people from the Ryūkyūs who resided there.

Who in practice managed and supervised trade with the Ryūkyūs? Following an entry in the *Chouhai tubian* 籌海圖編, the Ming court permitted the Ryūkyūs to carry local products (*fangwu* 方物) and officially established brokers to trade with the people: *qi lai ye, xu dai fangwu, guan she yabang, yu min maoyi, wei zhi busi* 其來也, 許帶方物, 官設牙行, 與民貿易, 謂之互市.<sup>31</sup> The *Fujian shibo tiju si zhi* 福建市舶提舉司志 by Gao Qi 高岐, who served as a Superintendent of Maritime Trade in Fuzhou in 1554 (Jiajing 33), notes that

28 *Ming shi* 81.1980.

29 Cf. *Ba Min tongzhi* 40.843.

30 It is generally accepted that the Quanzhou office was shifted to Fuzhou during the reign period Chenghua 成化 (1465–1487) of Emperor Xianzong 憲宗 (1465–1487) and with the reopening of the office in Fuzhou, the one in Quanzhou was abolished.

31 *Chouhai tubian* 12.852.



[...] as for brokers (*yahang* 牙行), originally twenty-four persons (*ming* 名) were engaged differently from year to year. (Subsequently) nineteen were dismissed, so that today only five persons have remained.<sup>32</sup>

As the *Fujian shibo si* was particularly in charge of managing tribute and trade relations with the Ryūkyūs, we can conclude that these brokers were especially engaged in the Ryūkyū trade.

When in 1423 (Yongle 21), a Ryūkyūan tribute ship reached Fuzhou, twice the merchants Chen Míng 陳銘, Huang Enliu 黃恩六 and Zhou Wenzhi 周文質 (designated as *sanming* 三名 in the document) were charged with purchasing goods for the Ryūkyūans. They received an advance payment of 4,500 *guan* in paper money (*baobao* 寶鈔). When the tribute ship was about to return home two years later (Hongxi 1), Chen Míng and the others were asked to return the advance payment, but they refused to do so. The Ryūkyūans felt this was an insult, so there was no alternative but to report this matter to the Ministry of Rites.<sup>33</sup> This not only provides us with an example of embezzlement of money by merchants charged with the responsibility to practically manage the exchange of money for goods for the Ryūkyūans, but we also learn that as early as the Yongle period obviously Fuzhou merchants were selected by the government to take care of Sino-Ryūkyūan trade. Even the possibility that these three merchants functioned as a kind of early brokers cannot be excluded. Unfortunately we have no further information about their concrete content and the extent of their responsibilities or about their relation to the official authorities or the translators. It is also possible that they were a kind of private brokers.

Another document in the *Lidai bao'an* 歷代寶案 refers to another occasion when a Ryūkyūan tribute delegation requested to trade for white silk (*baisi* 白絲) and mentions ten well-known local brokers (*bendi shiya* 本地識牙)<sup>34</sup> who were in charge of managing the trade, the prices and the provision of interpreters, namely Liang Ji 梁跡, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, Lu Feng 魯豐, He Yida 何益達, Zheng Bi 鄭碧, Wang Ye 王燁, Zhang Gong 張拱, Feng Sheng 馮升, Zheng Qi 鄭齊 and Liang Ying 梁英 (*shiren shenjia* 十人身家).<sup>35</sup> Thus, already in the Ming period the *Lidai bao'an* speaks about so-called “ten names” (*shijia* 十家) of merchants or brokers responsible for the trade. The Ryūkyūan envoy Jin Yingyuan 金應元 mentions

32 *Fujian shibo tiju si zhi* 1.14a-15a.

33 *Lidai bao'an*, I: 12.390-391.

34 The entry also states that in the case of an exchange not being managed by official brokers (*guanya*), no fair market price and no interpreters could be guaranteed.

35 *Lidai bao'an*, I: 36.1177-1178; also *Kafu shiryō: sōgō*, 453, see Kikō Nishizato (1997), 74.

Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Liang Ji 梁跡, in all ten people.<sup>36</sup> In Fuzhou these merchants were called “*shijiapai*” 十家排 (lit. “a row of ten families”).

We can thus conclude that already in Ming times some kind of brokers (*ya* 牙), be they private or official, were obviously generally in charge of managing and supervising trade with the Ryūkyūs – and apparently, in addition to interpreters, ten merchants in particular were vested with this responsibility. Since direct private trade with the Ryūkyūs was not permitted, trade relations had to rely on these merchants or “brokers” who, according to the *Chouhai tubian*, were obviously mostly official brokers (*guanya* 官牙). If they eventually also fulfilled their role as official brokers and managed the bilateral trade in the sense of the government is another question. The general picture suggests that the government first selected certain local merchants and then vested them with the responsibility of acting as brokers, in other words, it absorbed private brokers into the state bureaucracy and turned them into a kind of government agents. In this context, one should perhaps rather than considering this system a strict state monopolization by government officials, speak of a, if not cooperation with, so at least of a nomination of private traders to fulfil government purposes, rather than of strict state monopolization by government officials.

Based on the *Ming shilu* 明實錄 and the *Lidai bao'an*, Ryūkyūan tribute items can generally be divided into three categories:

a) Native local products: sulphur, horses, safflower dye, silk floss padding, linen, ramie, and banana-fibre cloth, fans, white paper, and whetstones.

b) Japanese products: swords of various kinds, spears, gloves, shoulder and leg covers, helmets and armour both for men and horses, saddles, bridles, shields, fans, fruit boxes, small horses, incense burners, gold and silver vessels, lacquer objects, gold, copper and so-called “*jūmei*” 酒梅, apparently a kind of plum pickled in wine;

c) Products imported from Southeast Asia: pepper, cloves, sapan wood, sandalwood, various kinds of incense, ivory, tin, aloe, rhinoceros horn, shark and otter skin.<sup>37</sup>

According to the *Min shu* 閩書, trade articles during the Ming and Qing included products made of gold, silver, copper and tin as well as agate, ivory, spices, traditional Chinese medicinal materials, knife sharpeners, sulphur, swords, different kinds of dried seafood and articles for daily use.<sup>38</sup> No doubt, these articles did not all come from the Ryūkyūs – most

36 *Kafu shiryō: sōgō*, 453; Kikō Nishizato (1997), 74, also with reference to the *Lidai bao'an*.

37 Cf. Chang Pin-tsun (1983), 173; Zhou Guangdou (1996), 652.

38 “*Daoyi zhi*” 島夷志, in *Min shu* 146.4351, 4352, and 4359.

of them were from Siam, Java, Malacca and Japan. This indicates that the Ryūkyūs played a role as an intermediary trader. In other words, this kind of trade can also indirectly be described as a trade between China and other countries with the Ryūkyūs as an intermediary.

The gifts the Ryūkyūans received from the Ming court consisted primarily of silk fabrics and specie to purchase commodities in China – mainly silks, ceramics, iron pots and bronze coins. China provided the island country with, above all, silks and textiles, coins and money, medical drugs, ceramics and knowledge. Among the commodities the Ryūkyūans sought in China were medical drugs, of which rhubarb (*dahuang* 大黃) was among the most important ones. Also Qing documents repeatedly mention the export of medical drugs together with fabrics, such as cotton or silk (*bubo yaocai* 布帛藥材), from China to the Ryūkyūs.<sup>39</sup>

In 1654, tribute from the Ryūkyūs included gold or silver ornamented and gilded short swords, gold and silver wine pots, gold painted screens, gold and silver painted fans, plantain cloth, local linen, saffron, pepper, sapan wood, horses, conch shells, sulphur and some other items.<sup>40</sup> In 1666 (Kangxi 5) Emperor Kangxi granted a proposal presented by the Ryūkyūan King Shō Shitsu 尚質 (r. 1648–1668) for remitting non-native Ryūkyūan tribute, such as agate stones, ivory, sapan wood, in all ten items.<sup>41</sup> From then on, the regular tribute goods of Ryūkyū were to be fixed as follows: 10 horses, 3,000 shells, and 20,000 *jīn* of raw sulphur. As Wang Qing has shown, “it is obvious that the multitude of tribute items of the Ming time was simplified during the Kangxi period”.<sup>42</sup> Besides these tribute items products like rice, wheat, fish paste and other marine products were privately taken to China by members of the tribute embassies and were permitted to be traded privately.

In addition, the Ryūkyūans always brought official silver (*ōgin* 王銀) with them to China. This silver was called *to-Tō gin* 渡唐銀 (lit. silver for sailing to China) in Japanese, and amounted to 151 *kanme* or 15,100 taels (*liang* 兩) of silver for a tribute ship, that means 302 *kanme* for two tributary ships. It consisted of three parts: the silver used for trade, for ship repairs and for gratuities (*qianyin* 遣銀) to the Chinese officials in Fujian and Beijing who

39 Cf. for example *Qingdai Zhong-Liu guanxi dang'an xuanbian*, 61, 68, 98, 106, 119, 129, 136, 142, 155, 158, 166, 174 (141, 780 *jīn*), 188, 193, 194, 197, 206, 213, 216, 230, 240 (for the Qianlong era).

40 *Qinding Da Qing buidian shili* 503.11764 (*libu* 禮部, *chaogong* 朝貢, *gongwu* 貢物 1).

41 *Lidai bao'an*, I: 21.704.

42 For more details about this aspect and a quantitative analysis cf. Wang Qing (2010a), 160; Wang Qing (2009).

had something to do with Ryūkyū affairs.<sup>43</sup> It was also to be used in emergency situations, for example when Ryūkyūans needed to bribe local officials to do them favours or to reach their goal with more speed. During the eighteenth century, for one tribute mission this *to-Tō gin* amounted to 50 *kan* for Fujian officials and 30 *kan* for Beijing officials, and for one *jiégong* trip only 50 *kan* for Fujian officials respectively.<sup>44</sup> As Kikō Nishizato has shown, the embezzlement of this official silver was a not infrequent phenomenon in late Ming times. He provides six incidences (for example 1630, 1634, and 1636) and shows how in this way a real clandestine trade had emerged.<sup>45</sup> In 1634 (Chongzhen 7), the tribute envoys Cai Jin 蔡錦, Mao Shaoxian 毛紹賢 and Liang Tingqi 梁廷器<sup>46</sup> had a sum of 1,000 *kanme*, that is 100,000 *liang*, of *to-Tō gin* on board; subsequently they provided thirty-one Chinese merchants with silver in order to purchase Hu silk for them. In all, a quantity of 4,998 *liang* of silver for the purchase of 4,594 *jin* of Hu silk was misappropriated from the original *to-Tō gin*. It is unclear if these thirty-one merchants were private or official brokers or simply private merchants. Only two years later, in 1636 (Chongzhen 9), about 40,000 *liang* out of 120,000 *liang*, that is one third, of the *to-Tō gin* were misappropriated, once again for the purchase of Hu silk.<sup>47</sup> This becomes evident from a comparison of entries in the *Chūzan seifu* 中山世譜 (1636)<sup>48</sup> and in decrees of King Shō Hō 尚豐 (1621–1640) compared with the quantity of silks that had been confiscated by the Chinese government, as the exportation of silk was prohibited at that time.<sup>49</sup>

As Doi Yuko 土肥祐子 has shown, the highest amount ever misappropriated were 7,000 *liang* by Lin Yunxing 林雲興, followed by Feng Jiding 馮季鼎 with 5,845.24 *liang*, Feng Xiaqi 馮夏奇 with 2,116.6 *liang*, Liang Ji 梁跡 with 1,857.8 *liang*, Zeng Ti yuan 曾体元 with 1,806.23 *liang*, Feng Guang 馮光 with 1,528.8 *liang*, Feng Jing 馮敬 with 1,500 *liang* and He Er 何二 with 1,290.99 *liang*.<sup>50</sup> Among the persons involved in the 1634 incident were, for

43 *Ryūkyū-kan monjo* 1.5-9; cf. Sakihara Mitsugu (1975), 37. For more details see again Wang Qing (2010a).

44 *Ryūkyū-kan monjo*, 1.5-9; cf. Sakihara Mitsugu (1975), 37.

45 Kikō Nishizato (1997), 67-69.

46 The mission under the supervision of Cai Jin 蔡錦 went to China twice, on 11/9/1634 (Chongzhen 7) and on 7/3/1642 (Chongzhen 15).

47 Kikō Nishizato (1997), 68.

48 According to Kikō Nishizato (1997), 68-69 and 90, fn. 53, *Chūzan seifu* refers to a total of 120,000 *kan* that were used to purchase silks and other products; from these products one third (三分之一) was confiscated; cf. *Chūzan seifu*, fu 附 1.

49 Kikō Nishizato (1997), 69.

50 Doi Yūko (1994), 186, table 6.

example, Lin Tai 林泰, Feng Jiding 馮季鼎, Feng Ding 馮鼎, Feng Jing 馮敬 and Liang Ji 梁跡.<sup>51</sup> The probability that these six merchants were official brokers is relatively high. But only the name of Liang Ji (see above) appears in both entries of the *Lidai bao’an*. We can thus conclude that brokers were not only involved in such illegal trading activities, but that they were closely cooperating with private merchants, who were consequently at least indirectly also involved in the Sino-Ryūkyūan trade.

Do we possess more information on the question of who was involved in these clandestine, illegal trading activities? As we know that – in addition to that we can never exclude the possibility that private merchants were engaged – it was brokers and interpreters who were responsible for the organization of the correct procedures, Kikō Nishizato concludes that most probably the Ryūkyūans plotted together with brokers, interpreters and private merchants (who provided the silk) to establish this kind of illegal trading network. Although we do not possess concrete evidence, that both brokers and interpreters played an essential role in these illegal trading activities cannot be denied.<sup>52</sup> This clearly shows that despite official government control of Sino-Ryūkyūan trade, the private interests of those who were charged with the management of this trade by the government remained important and even played a vital role – under the general official auspices of the *shibo si*.

Officially, tribute relations with the Ryūkyūs were maintained in the Qing dynasty, although the traditional institutions of *shibo si* were abolished and with Kangxi’s decision to reopen the maritime borders for trade in 1683 Customs Offices (*haiguan* 海關) were established instead. Who was subsequently in charge of the management of trade with the Ryūkyūs in the Qing period?

According to a memorial of the Ryūkyūan King Shō Tei 尚貞 (1669–1709) to Emperor Kangxi,<sup>53</sup> it was decreed in 1664 (Kangxi 3) that non-tribute trade items of the tributary missions were only permitted to be taken to the *Huitong guan* in Beijing, if the Ryūkyūans had paid for the costs. Otherwise the items had to be traded in Fujian under the supervision of the provincial government. The Ryūkyūs got this news three years later in 1667.<sup>54</sup> However, no sooner had this measure been carried out, in 1670 (Kangxi 9), than the Ryūkyūs received an official correspondence from the

51 *Ibid.*, 177, table 1.

52 Kikō Nishizato (1997), 71.

53 *Lidai bao’an*, I: 6.204.

54 *Ibid.*, I: 14.467–468.

Qing Ministry of Rites of 1669 stating that all non-tribute items were only to be traded in the *Huitong guan* in Beijing, and any way-port trade was forbidden.<sup>55</sup> The new regulation had immediate repercussion on the Ryūkyūs. Shō Tei promptly submitted a memorial to Kangxi, stating that the land route from Fujian to Beijing was more than 6,000 miles and it was too expensive for the Ryūkyūs to transport their non-tribute local items such as rice, wheat, fish paste and other heavy things there. He asked for a permission for inquiring on the feasibility of trade in Fujian, especially for trading Chinese silk wadding and porcelains.<sup>56</sup> The emperor granted this proposal and from then on the Ryūkyūs could trade their non-tribute items at the *Ronyuan yi* or *Linqiu guan* in Fuzhou.<sup>57</sup> These historical documents, thus, record the shift from a single authorized trading place at the *Huitong guan* in Beijing to another trading possibility in the border region, namely the *Linqiu guan* in Fuzhou, and also reveal the sponsorship of tribute transport from the border area to Beijing. It can be conjectured that before 1664 the freight costs for transporting the non-tribute goods were born by the Qing government, like those for the tribute items. Comparing the trade intentions of both the Chinese and the Ryūkyūan side, it will suffice to show that the king of the Ryūkyūs was more economically orientated. Of course it cannot fail to be observed that the rebuilding of the *Linqiu guan* in 1668 (Kangxi 7) provided Kangxi with an advantage as a consequence of which he approved the above-mentioned proposal.<sup>58</sup>

Officially, so-called government brokers, who had the status of imperial merchants, were responsible for the Ryūkyū trade. The designation of “brokers” (*yahang*), however, as Kikō Nishizato explains, disappears in relevant sources of the Qing period. Instead, commissioned merchants came to be known as *keshang* 客商 (lit. guest merchants).<sup>59</sup> The reason for this change in the designation is unclear though. But it is evident that even in the case that the two designations referred to two distinct groups of people, both brokers (*yahang*) and “guest merchants” (*keshang*) pursued at least similar business activities and thus fulfilled common functions. Most probably, Kikō Nishizato continues, the change in designation was intended to emphasize a development from brokers as middlemen in

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55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*, I: 6.203-204; 14.467-468.

57 Whether this proposal was granted is not documented in the *Lidai bao'an*. However, from different later documents referring to the trade in Fujian, we can conclude that Kangxi granted the request of Shō Tei.

58 For a detailed description see Wang Qing (2010a).

59 Kikō Nishizato (1997), 75.

Sino-Ryūkyūan tribute trade to what I would call a more independent status, as merchants directly trading with the Ryūkyūans.<sup>60</sup> The further development and the later foundation of a *huiguan* actually do all point in this direction and appear to substantiate this hypothesis.

Consequently both in form (a new designation) and practice the private aspect of the management of this foreign trade became once again stronger and more important. This may also be attested to by the fact that these merchants eventually came to be known as “Qiu-merchants” (*Qiu-shang* 球商). The *Qiu*-merchants continued to be a kind of official broker with a licence to monopolize Sino-Ryūkyūan trade relations; but despite government control they seem to have possessed a certain degree of independence. Their task consisted of selling Ryūkyūs’ products, which had been brought along with the tribute ships, and purchasing Chinese specialties for the Ryūkyūans, as well as being translators for their merchants.

In China there are two different views about the *Qiu-shang*. According to the *Minxian xiangtu zhi* 閩縣鄉土志, these ten families were actually ten families with seven different family names, namely four families named Li 李 and the other six named Zheng 鄭, Song 宋, Ding 丁, Bian 卞, Wu 吳, and Zhao 趙; they acted as commission agents for products from the Ryūkyūs. According to Fu Yiling’s interview with Tang Zongji 唐永基, whose older generation had purchased wood in Tianjin 天津 for these selling agents, these ten families had ten different family names: Bian, Li, Zheng, Song, Ding, Zhao, Lin 林, Yang 楊, Ma 馬, Liu 劉.<sup>61</sup> According to rumours, Ma 馬 referred to Ma Yi 馬椅, Ding 丁 to Ding Li 丁厝 and Lin 林 to Lin Zhuo 林桌.<sup>62</sup> Fu Yiling possibly identified Liu 劉 with a certain Liu Yuzhai 劉豫齋.<sup>63</sup> In his eyes, these *Qiu-shang* can actually be compared to the *Thirteen Hang* (*shisan hang* 十三行) in Guangzhou, the *Ocean Hang* (*yanghang* 洋行) in Xiamen, or the brokers at Zhapu 乍浦.<sup>64</sup> Kikō Nishizato, however, is of the opinion that the *Qiu-shang* should not necessarily be considered direct successors of the ten families who were responsible for this trade in late Ming times, although the number of ten was certainly not arbitrarily mentioned – after all, only the last name, Zheng 鄭, appears in both, that is both Ming and Qing, name

60 *Ibid.*

61 *Minxian xiangtu zhi*. Cf. Fu Yiling (1989), 236.

62 Kikō Nishizato (1997), 77.

63 Fu Yiling (1989), 235, fn. 1.

64 *Ibid.*, 235.

lists<sup>65</sup> (cf. the list of names from the *Lidai bao'an* above). Definitely they were not Ryūkyūan merchants.<sup>66</sup> Generally speaking, more or less all Chinese merchants who relied on the Ryūkyū trade may have been designated as *Qiu-shang*, but only ten among them fulfilled the function as official brokers. These brokers subsequently engaged small merchants (*xiaoshang* 小商) to travel to other places such as Suzhou or Liang-Zhe to provide them with the commodities and products required by the Ryūkyūans.<sup>67</sup> The ten *Qiu-shang* subsequently acted as a common group that monopolized and supervised Sino-Ryūkyūan trade and engaged other merchants to secure for them the necessary commodities to be exported.

Trade at the *Lingqiu guan* had to be carried out under the strict supervision of officials from the Fujian Local Coastal Defence Office (*Fufangting* 福防廳), who also had to check if any prohibited items were being traded.<sup>68</sup> Interpreters, too, were directly involved in the supervision of trade at the *Lingqiu guan*.<sup>69</sup> Practically speaking, every time a Ryūkyūan tribute ship arrived at Fujian, mostly at Hekou 河口 district in Fuzhou, all the *Qiu-shang* assembled there. It was a busy downtown area centred around the *Lingqiu guan*.<sup>70</sup> Normally, after the tribute envoys left Fujian for Beijing, the *Lingqiu guan* was opened for trade, which was called “*kaiguan maoyi*” 開館貿易 (to open the house for trade). The Ryūkyūan residence attaché (*cunliu tongshi* 存留通事) had first to present an application for trade to the Fujian government. Once it was approved, the ten *Qiu-shang* responsible for the Ryūkyū trade could go to the *Lingqiu guan* for trading purposes. The exchange values were investigated in mutual trade, no local bullies or treacherous persons were permitted access to trade contraband items etc., and the local interpreters were ordered to establish a list of the trading guest merchants and their products traded.<sup>71</sup> Although these regulations were very strict, Xie Bizhen is of the opinion that the actual trading activities went beyond these regulations, in particular due to the assistance and support of the *Qiu-shang*.<sup>72</sup>

65 This might even open speculation on whether the Qiu-merchants perhaps were no longer only Fujian merchants. But without further evidence it will be impossible to answer this question.

66 Kikō Nishizato (1997), 77.

67 *Ibid.*, 78; Fu Yiling (1989), 235, in particular fn. 1.

68 Fu Yiling (1989), 235, and *Lidai bao'an*, II: 9.1775.

69 Kikō Nishizato (1997), 75.

70 Fu Yiling (1989), 235.

71 *Lidai bao'an*, II: 188.7740.

72 Xie Bizhen (2004), 87.



In transactions with the Ryūkyūs, the south of Fujian played a significant role. In terms of the products which were purchased by the Ryūkyūans, most of them came from the south of Fujian: for instance, cotton yarn of Quanzhou 泉州 was of excellent quality;<sup>73</sup> velvet of Zhangzhou 漳州 was already very popular during Ming times.<sup>74</sup> In addition, grass cloth from Yongchun 永春, porcelains from Dehua 德化, ramie from Hui’an 惠安 were all famous trading articles; furthermore, the south of Fujian was a good place for medicinal products and plants due to its mountain areas. All of these abundant nature resources made Fujian an active and interesting trading partner in the trade with the Ryūkyūs, and no doubt this also provided the *Qiu-shang* with advantages for their successful trade.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the group of *Qiu-shang* eventually established a “*Qiu-shang huiguan*” 球商會館 – Guild hall of *Qiu*-merchants in Fuzhou, originally called *Qiongsui Qiu-shang Tianhou gong* 瓊水球商天後宮 – Tianhou being another designation for Mazu 媽祖 because Mazu was the god to be sacrificed there. The hall was built in 1823 (Daoguang 道光 3), extended in 1839 by the *Qiu*-merchants who jointly invested money to bear the responsibility for the China-Ryūkyū trade and to worship Mazu. An inscription dating to 1839 (Daoguang 19, 7th month, 6th day) informs us that the managers and trustees of the Tianhougong, Zhao Guangli 趙廣利, Zheng Heyu 鄭和玉, Li Kaimao 李開茂, Ding Yunzhong 丁允中, that is some of the *Qiu*-merchants, reported that all business and trading activities as well as sailing to and from overseas actually all depended on the shelter and protection of Mazu.<sup>75</sup> The founding and establishment of this *huiguan* can most probably be traced back to socio-religious purposes rather than reasons of competitiveness and to protect the sailors against pirates, storms, etc. This may perhaps not be surprising, as it was founded by merchants who anyhow monopolized the Sino-Ryūkyūan trade and who most probably had a relatively high social position and close relations with local authorities. At the same time, the founding of this *huiguan*, in my eyes, once again attests to the fact that the *Qiu-shang*, despite their official obligation of managing and monopolizing the Ryūkyū trade as official brokers, were a group of merchants who enjoyed relative independence. But how much power they really possessed or how they were selected remains unclear.

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73 *Minchan luyi* 1.10.

74 Pan Jixing (1989), 326-327.

75 Cf. Fu Yiling (1989), 237-238.

This *Qiu-shang huiguan* thus seems to have originally developed out of a government-approved group of brokers and not in competition with them. Consequently, we can observe a development from a group of private merchants who were officially selected to manage Sino-Ryūkyūan trade and who had been active since the Yongle period at the latest, to a group of ten official brokers in Ming times, and subsequently ten *Qiu*-merchants who eventually even established a *Qiu-shang huiguan*. Thus the management of maritime trade with the Ryūkyūs, by government decision officially arose from a government-approved group of private brokers and not from a group of private merchants who had decided to organize their foreign trade in a *huiguan*. But the private element was and remained important throughout both the Ming and Qing dynasties, and eventually the group of *Qiu-shang* also fulfilled social and religious functions.

The *huiguan* we are acquainted with from domestic trade were, however, as the following example may show, indirectly involved in this East Asian maritime trade. Rhubarb (*dahuang*), a product much demanded by the Ryūkyūans, was normally first transported and sold to Fuzhou from a few inland Chinese regions, apparently primarily from Jianchangfu 建昌府 in Jiangxi. Conclusive in this context is an entry, dating to 1791 (Qianlong 56, 8th day, 8th month), which talks about the inner-Chinese transportation of medical drugs. The document mentions two Jiangxi merchants by name, Wang Yongxing 王永興 and Jiang Shengsheng 江生生. They purchased *dahuang* and other medical drugs on behalf of the Ryūkyūs and/or the *Qiu-shang*.

They opened a business for medical drugs in Min, every kind of medicinal drug such as *dahuang* 大黃 and similar products were (first) transported for trade to Min from Zhangshuzhen 樟樹鎮 in Jiangxi and then sold. But Jiangxi, too, does not produce *dahuang*. I heard that Jingyangxian 涇陽縣 in Shaanxi is the place where all the *dahuang* is collected. From there it is transported to Hankou 漢口, Zhangshuzhen and other places to the *hang*-shops (*hangpu* 行舖).<sup>76</sup>

At the same time, we should not forget that the institution of the *Linqiu guan* throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties also fulfilled certain social functions, such as acting as a common guesthouse for Ryūkyūans or providing medical treatment. The Qing government, for example, obviously laid great emphasis on the medical treatment of people coming from the Ryūkyūs. Probably, it was even considered a shame when somebody died after having

<sup>76</sup> *Qingdai Zhong-Lin guanxi dang'an xuanbian*, 225 (Fuzhou jiangjun Kui Lun (?–1800) zou cha Liuqiu chuanzhi gouzhi neidi wujian zhe 福州將軍魁倫奏查琉球船隻購置內地物件摺).

reached the *Lingju guan*. This is at least suggested by the many documents in the *Qingdai Zhong-Liu guanxi dang’an xubian* or in the *Chūzan seifu* 中山世譜, which mention the death of envoys or other persons from the Ryūkyūs.<sup>77</sup> In this respect, the *Lingju guan* fulfilled some functions that are normally ascribed to *huiguan*, as the organization of local brokers was only responsible for the supervision and management of trade and did not open their own *huiguan* before 1832.<sup>78</sup>

## 2 *Huiguan* of Merchants Engaged in the Qing Period Copper Trade with Japan<sup>79</sup>

Qing China’s “copper-managing system” (*bantong zhidu* 辦銅制度) was a complicated structure that underwent various changes in the course of the dynasty and it would go far beyond the scope of the present article to provide the reader with a detailed history of this system.<sup>80</sup> Instead, I will concentrate on the question of who was responsible for the copper trade management and how it came about that a kind of *huiguan* emerged.

That copper became so important for the Chinese government has primarily economic reasons. The promotion of bronze coinage has to be seen in direct relationship to the expansion of local markets which required a solid means of circulation also for smaller trade and exchange. A rising population and growing local markets in general required an equivalent of value in a much smaller denomination than silver *liang* – which was simply not adequate for every-day markets and the small commodity circulation.<sup>81</sup> The increasing demand for copper already in 1699 led to the official promotion of maritime trade with Japan by the Kangxi Emperor in order to purchase Japanese copper. The import and trade of copper

77 *Qingdai Zhong-Liu guanxi dang’an xubian*, passim. The documents in this volume are bilingual, Manchu and Chinese. *Chūzan seifu*, passim.

78 The treatment of diseases, etc. remained a task of the *Lingju guan* though.

79 This second part of the present article will be published separately as probably chapter 9 of Billy So Kee Long, Tam Kachai and Harriet Zurndorfer (eds.), *Money, Institutions and Markets in the Lower Yangzi Delta during the Late Imperial Era: An Economic History Perspective*. London: Routledge, 2011 (forthcoming).

80 The general principles of organizing the procurement of copper have already been introduced by Helen Dunstan in Dunstan (1992), 42–81. She distinguishes between four particular periods of management, namely (1) from 1644 to 1700: bureaucratic management; (2) from 1700 to 1715: merchant management (3) from 1716 to 1736: bureaucratic management, and (4) from 1737/44 to 1860: dualistic management. See also Hall (1949), 444–461; Liu Xufeng (1999), 93–144.

81 For this argument see also Schottenhammer (2008), 360, and *id.* (2009), 237.

was, in 1699, consequently transferred to merchants authorized by the Imperial Household Department (*neiwufu* 內務府).<sup>82</sup>

The question of why it was merchants from the Imperial Household Department who acted as magnate contractors has, as Helen Dunstan has suggested, certainly to be seen in the aim of the *neiwufu* to gain stricter control over funds of public origin which had so far been taken care of by privileged Manchus in their position as customs superintendents (until 1700). As *neiwufu* merchants they had fewer liberties and a basic interest in being considered faithful servants.<sup>83</sup> As we shall see below, the tendency to gain strict control over the copper trade while at the same time trying to shift the responsibility to merchants caused many reformations of the system and eventually led to a kind of hybrid or dualistic management of official (or central) control and private (and local) autonomy.

After 1700 the procurement of copper was transferred to magnate contractors and implemented by nine merchants in all (two consortia, thus also called “merchant management”), Wang Gangmin 王綱明, Wang Zhenxu 王振緒, Fan Yufang 范玉芳, Zhai Qigao 翟其高, all four Imperial Household Department Merchants, Zhang Dingchen 張鼎臣, Zhang Dingnai 張鼎鼐, Zhang Changzhu 張常住, Cao Yin 曹寅 (1658–1712) and his adoptive son, Cao Fu 曹頻.<sup>84</sup>

But these merchants were continuously clocking up deficits. Actually, between Kangxi 51 (1712) and Yongzheng 1 (1723), the annual copper tax shortage amounted to 310,000 *jin*. Copper merchants complained that their old tax debts in copper were still unpaid, while they were already being confronted with new debts.<sup>85</sup> The low import quantities gradually

82 “In Kangxi 38 (1699), it was also agreed upon that (whereas hitherto) the six customs stations of Wuhu, Hushu, Hukou, Huai’an, Beixin, and Yangzhou were supposed to purchase copper for the Baoquan ju 寶泉局 and the Baoyuan ju 寶源局, this management was now transferred to merchants of the *neiwufu*”. Cf. *Huangchao wenxian tongkao*, 14.26a; 35a mentions, for example, that besides the c. 330,000 *jin* of copper received at Lianghuai, Hedong, Guangdong and Fujian Salt Tax stations, all the 400,000 *jin* of copper imported through the *haiguan* of Fujian in Kangxi 52 (1713) were generally transferred to merchants of the *neiwufu*.

83 Dunstan (1992), 50; see also Hall (1949), 454.

84 *Cao jiapu* 曹家譜, 71–72 (Kangxi 48, 6th month, 4th day), *neiwufu* document, quoted according to Liu Xufeng (1999), 96.

85 *Shizong Xianhuangdi zhunpi yuzhi* 46.36a. Between 1716 and 1723, the *neiwufu* worked out particular contracts to enable contractor merchants to pay back their defaults, for example the so-called “horse procurement deal” which was made in 1717 to enable Wang Gangming to repay his debt. Accordingly, Wang Gangming and his associates had to supply horses to the military units and postal relay stations of some southern provinces including Fujian and Jiangxi. Horses had previously been purchased locally, but had now to be bought at Wang Gangming’s old base at Zhangjiakou 張家口 in North China at a

led to the encouragement of domestic copper mining, especially in Yunnan, but also to another reformation in the copper management system.

So at the beginning of the Qianlong reign (1736/37), the copper management underwent another decisive reform and a kind of dualistic system developed. After 1737, all responsibility was handed over to a limited number of private merchants, the so-called "quota merchants" (*eshang* 額商), and (from 1744) additionally to a single magnate contractor. The quota merchants were a group of circa twelve merchants<sup>86</sup> from the lower Yangzi basin. They were selected by the customs superintendent and were granted Japanese trade permissions (*Wozhao* 倭照)<sup>87</sup> by the Treasury in order to import the assigned amount of copper. As a precondition to involvement in the copper trade, they had to come from wealthy families, as they used their own capital to engage in the copper trade, and were also required to have all their tax obligations cleared.<sup>88</sup> These quota merchants were concentrated in the two provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, because many of the flourishing commercial centres were located there and because since 1743 Ningbo had been designated as the main port of entry for the trade with Japan.<sup>89</sup> In the course of time, fewer and fewer quota merchants were engaged in the copper trade. By 1780, only seven of the original twelve were left: Shen Yunzhan 沈雲瞻, Wang Lüjie 王履階, Gao Shanhui 高山輝, Wu Youguang 吳有光, Yu Huishi 俞會時, Yang Yuehuai 楊岳懷, Wu Ming'ao 吳鳴鵞(?)<sup>90</sup>. In the *Hyōka kiji* 漂客紀事 (1804) they are also referred to as "wealthy merchants" (*caidong* 財東).<sup>91</sup> However, the quota merchants officially continued to be referred to as the "twelve quota merchant families" (*eshang shi'er jia*), as in the case of the thirteen Hang merchants (*shisan hang* 十三行 or

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saving of three taels of silver per horse. These savings would be deducted at source from the regulation price and remitted by the provincial authorities to the treasury of the Imperial Household Department. With the help of this method, Wang's debt was to be cleared within twelve years. For further details see Dunstan (1992), 59.

86 Because of the lack of historical evidence, we do not dispose of the exact number of these quota merchants.

87 Cf. for example *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 17.27a. Accordingly, for each such certificate 8,000 to 9,000 silver *liang* had to be paid.

88 *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 17.26b.

89 Fu Yiling (1956), 179-181; *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 14.42a. The government, it should be noted, in 1721 (Kangxi 60), even restricted the management of incoming copper ships to the customs stations (*haiguan*) in Jiangsu and Zhejiang.

90 The last character of his name is not clearly readable in the copy.

91 A limited number of Zhejiang and Jiangsu merchants were licensed to conduct this trade; most of them were also based at Ningbo. Cf. Yamawaki Teijirō (1960), 23-37; see also Liu Xufeng (1993), 202, according to the *Hyōka kiji* 1.7a. Cf. page 150, Ill. 7.

Cohong 公行) in Canton, whose number was also not always thirteen. From the information we possess, we can conclude that during different time periods at least the following merchants belonged to the twelve quota merchants: Yang Yuhe 楊裕和, Li Yulai 李豫來, Fei Shenghu 費盛湖, Cheng Rongchun 程榮春, Xu Weihuai 徐惟懷(?), You Zhongmou 游仲謀(?), Cheng Chicheng 程赤誠, Liu Yuntai 劉云台, Shen Yunzhan 沈雲瞻, Wang Lǚjie 王履階, Gao Shanhui 高山輝, Wu Youguang 吳有光, Yu Huishi 俞會時, Yang Yuehuai 楊岳懷, Wu Ming'ao 吳鳴鵞(?) (Qianlong period), Yang Chunshui 楊春水 and Yang Epu 楊鶴圃 (Jiaqing period), and Yang Sixiang 楊嗣享 (Daoguang period).<sup>92</sup>

The magnate contractors, conversely, acted as official government merchants and were directly affiliated with the Imperial Household Department (*neiwufu*). The Fan 范 lineage is one example for that, Fan merchants dominating the copper trade until c. 1783.<sup>93</sup> Beginning with the Qianlong reign, the government thus cooperated with and supported certain merchants by providing them with licenses and granting them loans and particular privileges.<sup>94</sup> Some of the most famous of the official

92 Liu Xufeng (1993), 207.

93 See for example the tomb report of Fan Yubin 范毓麟, "Taipu siqing Fan Fujun Yubin mubiao" 太僕寺卿范府君毓麟墓表, in *Qingdai beizhuan quanji* 43.224, part of which is also quoted by Fu Yiling (1956), 190-191.

94 In the early Qianlong period basically two positions prevailed among officials – to use both foreign, Japanese and domestic copper (1) or to stop the Japan trade and use solely domestic copper (2). In 1736, the Provincial Governor of Jiangsu, Guzong 顧琮 (1685–1755) [grandson of Gubadai 顧八代 (d. 1709), a Manchu of the Bordered Yellow Banner with the clan name Irgen Gioro. Guzong was famous for his strict observance of Confucian rules of conduct. Cf. Hummel (1991), 1: 271], raised five proposals and memorialized the emperor: firstly, Yunnan, Sichuan and foreign copper should be managed together. If foreign copper especially was used to supply the mints in Yunnan and Sichuan, local domestic production would remain insufficient. He asked for a reduction in the quantity of foreign copper to promote domestic production. Secondly, the responsibility of managing the copper trade should be taken over by special provincial customs officials. If each province were to send her own officials to Jiangsu and Zhejiang, the costs would be too high and, in addition, those officials were not familiar with the situation of the maritime merchants there. Therefore, special provincial customs officials should manage the copper trade and incite merchants. Thirdly, the weighing and assessment measures for copper should be changed to a universal standard, in order to assist the merchants. One should not allow the argument that the quality of the copper is insufficient to be used as an excuse to arbitrarily impose additional levies on merchants. Fourthly, the merchants should be selected with more care in order to prevent the constant deficits and bankruptcies. One should select twenty sincere maritime merchants, who should be obliged to make joint signatures to act as mutual guarantors for each other. They should be officially registered but, as before, be forwarded the money for the copper to be purchased in advance, in order to be able to manage the Japanese cop-

merchants or magnate contractors during the Qianlong period, except for Fan Yubin 范毓麟, were the southern Shanxi merchant, Liu Guangsheng 劉光晟, Fan Yubin’s younger brother, Fan Yuqi 范毓綺<sup>95</sup>, and their sons, Fan Qingzhu 范清注<sup>96</sup> and Fan Qinghong 范清洪<sup>97</sup>; among the private merchants Yang Yuhe 楊裕和 and Li Yulai 李豫來 have to be mentioned.<sup>98</sup> In 1744, Liu Guangsheng was commissioned by the Shanxi governor, without advance funds by the government, to purchase 500,000 *jin* of Japanese copper for the local Shanxi mints.

List of official merchants being responsible for the copper management (Table 1)

Kin	Personal name	Time period of responsibility
Fan 范	Fan Yubin 范毓麟	Qianlong 9–10 (1744–1745)
	Fan Qingzhu 范清注	Qianlong 10–27 (1745–1762)
	Fan Qinghong 范清洪	Qianlong 28–29 (1763–1764)
	Fan Qingji 范清濟	Qianlong 30–47 (1765–1782)
Wang 王	Wang Shirong 王世榮	Qianlong 48–52 (1783–1787)
Qian 錢	Qian Mingcui 錢鳴萃	Qianlong 53–60 (1788–1795)
	Qian Jishan 錢繼善	Qianlong 60–Jiaqing 1 (1795–1796)
Wang 王	Wang Lüjie 王履階	Jiaqing 2–? (1797–?)
	Wang Rigui 王日桂	Jiaqing ?–12 (?–1807)
Cheng 程	Cheng Hongran 程洪然	Jiaqing 12–16 (1807–1811)
Wang 汪	Wang Yongzeng 汪永增	Jiaqing 17–21 (1812–1816)
Wang 王	Wang Yu’an 王宇安	Jiaqing 22–Daoguang 19 (1817–1839)
Wang 汪	Wang Bingfu 汪炳符	Daoguang 19–21 (1839–1841)
Wang 王	Wang Yuanzhen 王元珍	Daoguang 21–Xianfeng 10 (1841–1860)

Source: Liu Xufeng (1993), 206.

At the beginning of the Qianlong reign it was ordered that Japanese copper was again to be managed at the *baiguan* offices of Jiangsu in Shanghai

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per imports throughout the whole year. Fifthly, if the copper price was commonly low, this would prevent deceitful people from melting down copper coins. One should abolish the early Yongzheng period “copper prohibition” (*tongjin*) and, instead, allow its circulation and permit the merchants to sell the copper beyond their fixed quota on the market privately, in order to increase the motivation of the merchants and maintain the copper price at an even level. *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 16.1b–2b.

95 *Qingdai guanyuan lili dang'an quanbian*, 1: 456 b(elow).

96 *Ibid.*, 16: 671 b, 672 a(bove), 677 a, 677 b.

97 *Ibid.*, 2: 42 b, 16: 577 a, 581 a, 17: 230 a, 236 a, 680 b, 685 a.

98 Fu Yiling (1956), 182. For Yang Yuhe cf. also *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 17.27b–28a.

and Zhejiang in Ningbo.<sup>99</sup> The major entrepôt for the further transportation of Japanese copper was Suzhou, while it was Hankou for Yunnan copper. But the port of entry was Zhapu 乍浦. The *Zhapu xuzhi* 乍浦續志 compiled and edited by Xu He 許河 notes with reference to the earlier compiled *Zhejiang tongzhi* 浙江通志:

In Kangxi 35 (1696), [the Emperor] used 200,000 [taels] of silver from the treasury and gave it to merchants to manage the purchase of red copper (*bongtong* 紅銅)<sup>100</sup> and Japanese lead to assist in casting. After his reign, year by year Japanese copper was frequently used to assist in the casting of Chinese (*Zhongtu*) coins. Silver from the treasury was issued to enable official merchants (*guanshang*) to establish an office (or authority, *ju* 局) to prepare the ships for their overseas journey from the port of Zhapu. One has to distinguish between official and private offices, each is equipped with three ships. Every year after spring before July (lit. *xiaoshu* 小暑) six ships are equipped and loaded with sugar products from Min and Guang and other Chinese commodities that the Japanese need. They reach the country in the east [i.e. Japan] in the middle of the 9th month. From there they load their ships with copper, seaweed, sea-slugs, agar-agar and other marine products and return to Zha[pul]. The copper is then delivered to the official office. The merchants are not permitted to sell the goods without authorization. All goods including seaweed and other marine

99 *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 16.2b. Before the Qianlong period, the copper was not sufficient to also supply the local mints on a permanent basis. The latter were thus closed down again or reopened according to the actual supply. Most of the copper went to the metropolitan mints. After the copper management reforms at the beginning of the Qianlong reign and the increasing output from the Yunnan mines, some mints used Yunnan copper particularly, while others Japanese copper, but many mints used both. The transportation of Yunnan and Japanese copper was mainly organized via the Yangzi River and other big waterways. The question of Yunnan copper and its further transportation to Jiangsu and Zhejiang has been investigated in more detail by participants of the research project “Monetary, markets, and finance in China and East Asia, 1600–1900”, supervised by Hans Ulrich Vogel of the Sinology Department, Tübingen University. See for example Vogel (2008); Hirzel (2008).

100 The use of the term “*bongtong*” is somewhat misleading. According to Needham (1974), 178, *bongtong* refers to nickel arsenide (Kupfernicksel), NiAs, which means that its composition did not contain copper, but only looked like copper. Speaking of Japanese copper, if not using the term “*yangtong*”, we should therefore rather uniformly use the Japanese expression *shakudo* 赤銅 (red copper, *shaku* being another word for “red”, but referring to a light reddish or violet and not a deep red colour), which consisted of about 95% copper, 1% silver and 1 to 5 % gold. Before a suitable treatment of its surface, the Japanese *shakudo* had a dark copper colour, but “when completely pickled it acquires a rich black surface with a violet sheen”. Cf. Needham (1974), 264. In addition, as Wang Qing (2009), 230, has shown, Japanese *bongtong* was, for example, imported into China by the Ryūkyūans as a tribute item and the copper was then used for architectural projects or the casting of containers for the Qing imperial palace.



products called “*baotou huo*” 包頭貨 (wrapped products)<sup>101</sup> have to be registered. As for the goods carried by official merchants affiliated with the authority (*guan jushang*), they are consequently sold and their prices fixed by official merchants (*jushang*). Except for this there are no legal regulations to prohibit [the sale] of other miscellaneous goods that are privately carried and sold by the captains (*huozhang*) or the sailors. And as for the remainder of the *baotou* commodities, it is also permitted to deliberately carry them. But there are restrictions [concerning the quantity of products permitted to be sold] for each person’s name on the list. When the goods have been permitted to land and have been transported across the embankment, then once again sugar products (*tanghuo* 糖貨) and other commodities are loaded. After the small snow (late November to early December) and before the big snow (mid December) the [ships] set sail again and reach Japan between the 4th or 5th month the following year. Then again copper and various other goods are loaded and the ships return to Zha[pu]. So each year they sail twice, and the amount of officially managed copper reaches 1,200,000 *jin*. Each time every ship takes a load of 100,000 *jin*. When they enter the harbour, all goods and the Eastern Seas copper (*dongyang tong* 東洋銅) are handed over to merchants employed in public business for management. No taxes have to be paid.<sup>102</sup>

This is a description of the late seventeenth century. Firstly, we can clearly see the dualistic system of engaging both official and private merchants, as a system that, as we shall see below, became even more elaborate towards the end of the eighteenth century. Secondly, we learn about the relative strict controls at the port of entry. After the ships carrying copper on board entered the harbour, first the exact import quantity was checked and an official selected who would be responsible for the supervision of the transport of the copper to the mints in Suzhou, which was the domestic distribution entrepôt. Since 1762, the exact dates of port entry, the start of transportation and the leaving of the regional borders all had to be clearly notified. Other provinces subsequently had copper from Suzhou delivered. From the date of entry to the delivery in Suzhou, it took between five and forty-six days, as a rule approximately sixteen days.

Zhapu had already been the major port for the copper trade with Japan since the dynastic change, and of course it gained in importance after the Kangxi emperor officially promoted the copper trade with Japan in the mid-1680s onwards with rising quantities being imported. As we have seen

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101 In the eighteenth century, due to the decreasing quantities of silver and copper permitted to be exported from Japan, Chinese merchants had to export increasing quantities of marine products, which were apparently wrapped in a kind of rice straw called “*tanaru-mono*” 俵物 in Japanese, in order to make their trade activities profitable.

102 *Zhapu xuzhi* 1.5a-b (484).

above, in 1743, the Qing government officially made Zhapu, located opposite Ningbo, the main port for the import of copper from Japan. A limited number of Zhejiang and Jiangsu merchants were licensed to conduct this trade, most of whom were based at Ningbo.<sup>103</sup> Zhapu was also the place where, since 1724, the Manchu navy was located, a fact which was closely linked to all the private illegal trading activities conducted there: in order to obtain the required Japanese trade permissions (*shimpai* 信牌, in Chinese sources also referred to as *Wozhao* 倭照), numerous forbidden products were smuggled out of China via Zhapu. Thus Zhapu was also an important port in terms of China's maritime security and defence.<sup>104</sup>

Some indirect evidence for Chinese merchants engaged in the copper trade comes from entries in the *Zhong-Liu guanxi dang'an xuanbian*, as some of them were shipwrecked or drifted towards the Ryūkyūs:

1. In 1740 (Qianlong 5), the Jiangnan merchant, Xu Weihuai 徐惟懷, who was related to the Jiangnan merchant, Mao Zhengmao 茂正茂, who had opened a shop, received a certificate for trade in the Eastern Ocean. He rented Li Yongshun's 李永順 sand-junk which was registered at Shanghai. This ship had 19 helmsmen and 34 merchants on board and, on the 4th day of the 6th month in 1740, he left Shanghai for Japan. In the 11th month of 1741 (Qianlong 6), their business was completed. They took copper, sea-slugs (*haishen* 海參) and other commodities on board and returned. But their ship met with a storm and drifted towards the Ryūkyūs, whereupon the merchants were sent back to Fujian by the Ryūkyūan government. The copper, which Xu Weihuai possessed, was to be sold privately, it was not official copper (*guantong* 官銅). In Fujian, he permitted the local authorities (*guanfu*) to purchase half of it, that is 38,000 *jin* (c. 22,648 kg or 22.648 t). According to the market price, he received 17.5 silver *liang* for every 100 *jin* of copper, which was in all 6,650 silver *liang*. In 1742 (Qianlong 7), the government took money from the land tax (*diding* 地丁), waited for coins to be cast to assist with the military expenses (*bingxiang* 兵餉), and bought [copper] with a discount.<sup>105</sup>
2. In the 2nd month of 1745 (Qianlong 10), the merchant You Zhongmou 游仲謀 from Wuxian 吳縣, Jiangnan, and eighty-two other per-

103 Yamawaki Teijirō (1960), 23-37.

104 Liu Xufeng (1993), 196 and 200. Originally, in 1724, a Naval Forces Brigade Major (*shuishì yíng yǒuji* 水師營遊擊) with 500 soldiers was established at Zhapu, a figure which was later increased to 1,600. In 1731 (Yongzheng 9), the position of major (*yǒuji* 遊擊) was changed to an assistant regional commander (*cānjiāng* 參將).

105 *Qingdai Zhong-Liu guanxi dang'an xuanbian*, 8, 91, 83. Cf. Wang Qing (2010b), 157.

sons met with a storm on their way back from Japan and they crashed onto a rock. The ship was damaged, and they dragged 130,000 *jin* (77.48 t) of copper bars out of the water. In the 4th month, the Ryūkyūan king sent them back to Fujian under escort. The Fujian officials weighed, examined and purchased the copper to have it cast into coins. Although it belonged to private merchants, the copper was at the same time part of the government’s purchase.<sup>106</sup>

3. The Jiangnan merchant Wang Xiaoyuan 汪小園, took command of the ship belonging to his first male cousin, the official state copper merchant, Wang Yongzeng 汪永增, from Xiuning 休寧 district, Jiangnan, and sailed across the Eastern Ocean to purchase Japanese copper (*yang-tong*) to be used in the casting of coins. Every year, in the summer and winter, he left twice with his boat, passed the Regional Office (*fan si*) of Zhejiang and received a certificate which permitted him to carry items, such as cannons for defence boats, medical drugs, and tin. He also went through the Jiangsu Regional Office (*fan si*), which issued him with a certificate permitting him to carry medical drugs and various other commodities. According to the regulations, he paid taxes of 120 silver *liang*. On the 3rd day of the 12th month 1815 (Jiaqing 20), he hired the ocean-going ship of Jin Quanshun 金全順 together with 89 helmsmen and left from Shanghai.<sup>107</sup>

Unfortunately, no information is provided as to whether or not these merchants were organized in or used the structures of *huiguan*, but these sources clearly provide evidence for the involvement and engagement of private merchants in the Sino-Japanese copper trade. As the third quotation suggests, there were also relatives of official and quota merchants who took over the business of procuring copper. This corresponds to the observation by Fu Yiling who, referring to the Japanese work *Shinzoku kibun* 清俗紀聞 (1799) edited by Nakagawa Tadateru 中川忠英 (1753–1830), states that the copper merchants did not sail overseas themselves to sell their copper but hired merchant ships to carry out their business.<sup>108</sup> Wang Xiaoyuan 汪小園, a cousin of Wang Yongzeng 汪永增, would be an example of that. The ship’s owner, Shen Jingzhan 沈敬瞻, was also of the same family clan as Shen Yunzhan 沈雲瞻, the quota merchant mentioned above.<sup>109</sup>

106 *Qingdai Zhong-Liu guanxi dang'an xuanbian*, 13.

107 *Qingdai Zhong-Liu guanxi dang'an xuanbian*, 487–488.

108 Fu Yiling (1956), 185. *Shinzoku kibun*. Nakagawa Tadateru was a local high official of the Tokugawa government who wrote this report on China to serve as a manual for Japanese travellers to China.

109 *Hyōka kiji* 1.7a.

In 1795 (Qianlong 60), the copper merchant Qian Jishan 錢繼善 (see table 1) hired the ship belonging to Fan Sanxi 范三錫 from Pinghu County in Jiaying, Zhejiang. In order to obtain Japanese copper, he purchased silk fabrics and raw silk for exchange. But at that time, the Qing government had already set up restrictions for the exportation of raw silk.<sup>110</sup> Qian Jishan could, thus, only buy the permitted quantity of raw silk and fabrics and then had these items taken to Fan Sanxi's ship. Subsequently, everything was registered in a certificate issued by the Provincial Administration Commission (*xianzhao* 憲照) and was then shipped to Japan by a professional overseas merchant, named Fei Shunxing 費順興. Fei Shunxing left China via the port of Zhapu and managed all business affairs for Qian Jishan.<sup>111</sup> In both cases, as we can see, basically three major persons were involved: the official copper merchant, a ship-owner – in the first case Jin Quanshun 金全順, in the second case Fan Sanxi – and the overseas merchant in charge of the practical implementation of the trade with Japan.

It is interesting to note that according to Japanese accounts the most important vendors engaged in the Japan trade were a merchant called Qian Mingcui 錢鳴萃 coming from Changlu 長蘆<sup>112</sup> and the twelve quota merchants. But in Qianlong 69 (1795, in Japan *keijō* 寛政 7), as Qian Jishan had stopped his business, Wang Lüjie 王履階 took his place. If the information from the *Hyōka kiji* 漂客紀事 is correct, this would imply that Wang Lüjie was first a quota merchant<sup>113</sup> and later advanced to the position of official merchant. The captains (*chuanhu* 船戶) engaged by the Qian and Wang families were Shen Jingli 沈敬禮 and Wang Kaitai 王開泰. Among the quota merchants the names Fei Shenghu 費盛湖, Cheng Rongchun 程榮春, and later, Cheng Chicheng 程赤誠 and Liu Yuntai 劉云台 are mentioned. After the Jiaqing period, because the import of copper had decreased, only a few families remained. According to a report by Lin Zexu 林則徐 (1785–1850), the official merchants managing the copper trade in (Jiang)su province were Wang Lüjie, his younger brother, Rigui 王日桂, and the latter's son, Yu'an 王宇安.<sup>114</sup> This once again attests to the fact that official mer-

110 In 1760 (Qianlong 25), the emperor prohibited the export of raw silk overseas. Cf. *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 17.53b. This prohibition has to be seen in context of rising silk prices; see also fn. 116. In 1760, it was also fixed that the quota merchants, Yang Yuhe, and the official merchant, Fan Qingji *et al.* could send sixteen ships abroad annually and purchase copper of a quantity of 2,000,000 *jin* (*ibid.*), an amount which as table 3b may show, was even surpassed.

111 Fu Yiling (1956), 196, fn. 21.

112 For his biography, see *Qingdai guanyuan lilü dang'an quanbian*, 17: 560a.

113 *Hyōka kiji* 1.7a.

114 Fu Yiling (1956), 183.

chants did not sail to Japan themselves but only managed the import and export of the Japan trade. For the overseas trips they hired private captains, as noted above. Consequently, even in the case of official merchants private people were directly involved in the management of Sino-Japanese trade.

As for the commodities exchanged for Japanese copper, these were primarily silks and satins (*chouduan* 綢緞), raw silk in bulk (*sjin* 絲斤), sugar, and medical drugs<sup>115</sup>:

In 1760 (Qianlong 25), it was discussed and determined that copper ships would be permitted to take a certain amount of silks and satins on board; originally, they all had exported raw silk in bulk, but after a ... regulation initiated by the Censor, Li Zhaopeng 李兆鵬, this was prohibited.<sup>116</sup>

Only briefly after this prohibition, the Provincial Governor of Jiangsu, Chen Hongmou 陳宏謀 (1661–1771)<sup>117</sup>, asked to abolish this prohibition, as it was exactly silks and silk products which were in demand in Japan and which were exchanged for the copper that was so desperately needed by the Chinese government. Thereupon it was determined that for the purchase of the allotted 2,000,000 *jin* of copper to be imported from Japan, a trade capital in silver of more than 384,000 *liang* was required, and in addition to the various expenses and the purchases in medical products, sugar and some other commodities, every ship should be allotted thirty-three rolls of silks and satins (*chouduan*), divided among sixteen ships,<sup>118</sup> every roll according to custom weighing 120 *jin*, which was not allowed to be ex-

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115 *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 295.46b. For details on the cargo of ships leaving Zhapu for Japan, see Feng Zuozhe (2004).

116 *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 33.53b, 295.46a. In 1759, Li Zhaopeng reported to the throne that recently the silk prices had soared in the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, because treacherous merchants striving for profits had sold these items overseas privately. He asked for a prohibition and strict investigation of ships sailing abroad by the local authorities. But, as many silk producing households had (at least partly) already orientated their production towards the sale of their silk abroad, they subsequently lost their market overseas. In addition, the sale of silks in Japan was extremely profitable and was thus actually an ideal commodity to be exchanged for Japanese copper. Consequently, the Qing government soon loosened the restrictions again. In 1763, overseas ships sailing to Japan were permitted to carry 1,200 *jin* of local silk and coarse silk threads of bivoltine and trivoltine silkworms (*ersancan cusi* 二三蠶粗絲) each.

117 For his biography, see Hummel (1991), 1: 86–87.

118 In 1760, it was fixed that the quota merchants, Yang Yuhe, and the official merchant, Fan Qingji *et al.* could send sixteen ships abroad annually and purchase 2,000,000 *jin* (*ibid.*) of copper, an amount which was even surpassed. Cf. *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 17.53b.

ceeded. This would amount to 528 rolls all together for sixteen ships.<sup>119</sup> The responsibility was given to the officials of the authorities in Zhapu, Zhejiang, and Shanghai, Jiangsu, who should weigh and investigate the cargo according to the regulations and levy taxes. The dates of exportation as well as the amount of silver taxes received for the sugar, medical products and the silks and satins all had to be registered in certificates and then forwarded to the higher authorities. The Manchu official Injišan 尹繼善 (1696–1771), the Director of the Ministry of the Board of Punishments, also argued for an abolition of the silk exportation prohibition. Consequently, it was lifted in 1764.<sup>120</sup> The official merchant, Fan Qinghong, and the quota merchant, Yang Yuhe, *et aliter* were allowed to ask for an allotment of 1,200 *jin* of coarse silk threads of bivoltine and trivoltine silkworms (*ersancan cusi* 二三蠶粗絲) to be traded on sixteen ships (*meinian chuyang echuan shiliu* 每年出洋額船十六); according to the formerly permitted amount of silks and satins, for every 120,000 *jin*, one roll was given as discount.<sup>121</sup> Commodities, such as sulphur, Tong 桐 oil, camphor wood planks, iron nails, and agricultural tools were forbidden to be taken across the border.<sup>122</sup>

In addition, the *Hyōka kiji* is one of the rare written sources I have been able to find which also mention ceramics, five to six hundred completely preserved pieces, as part of the cargo.<sup>123</sup> Normally, ceramics do not appear in either commodity lists or other written sources. This information is therefore extremely valuable and would substantiate the archaeological evidence.

These commodities were subsequently shipped to Japan to be exchanged for copper. The exchange was in fact a kind of barter trade – Chinese goods for Japanese copper and some other Japanese products. Among the latter, marine specialities (for example sea-slugs, dried fish, or fish fins), brass and gold-plated vessels, or ceramics from Imari 伊万里 (Arita wares from Hizen) have to be mentioned.<sup>124</sup>

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119 *Ibid.*, 33.53b.

120 *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 33.61b–62a.

121 *Huangchao wenxian tongkao* 33.63a–b, also 17.28a.

122 Cf. <http://jiaxing.70bb.com/viewthread.php?action=printable&tid=222019> (13.03.2007), which includes information on Fan Sanxi.

123 *Hyōka kiji* 1.8a. Up to the present day, we have not yet found a satisfying answer to the question of why ceramics are never mentioned in the written sources, although we know from archaeological evidence that they constituted part of the items being traded across the East Asian waters.

124 Fu Yiling (1956), 188.

### 3 Ocean Guilds and *Huiguan* at Zhapu as well as Customs Procedures

The Zhejiang governor-general, Li Wei 李衛 (1687?–1738), in 1727 proposed to appoint so-called “principal merchants” (*shangzong* 商總) who should work together to regulate the Japan trade, coordinate responsibilities and to act as guarantors for merchants departing for Japan.<sup>125</sup> He discussed this matter with Fan Shiyi 范時繹 (d. 1741), who served as governor-general of Liang-Jiang between 1726 and 1730, and with Injišan. According to Li Wei, they gathered overseas merchants and broadly inquired about advantages and disadvantages in the organization of trade. Then, they set up a list of wealthy and well-experienced merchants for public nomination. Eventually, they selected Li Junze 李君澤 and others, in all eight merchants from Fujian and Zhejiang to take over responsibility as principal merchants.<sup>126</sup> They can probably be regarded as a kind of supervising broker.

In this context, the first respective record on brokers in Zhapu actually stems from 1728 (Yongzheng 6), from a throne report of the just mentioned Li Wei:

For all loaded commodities, packages and other items of the ocean-going junks, a certificate should be filled in examining and verifying everything; all the sailors, helmsmen, merchants, slaves, every single passenger, everything has to be written down (*zhuluo* 著落); the brokers examine the native place, age and appearance [of all personnel], guarantee bonds issued, and the date of return home. When they are in the backwater or entering the harbour, the number of persons (on board) is verified and if there are persons missing, then this is going to be investigated.<sup>127</sup>

This quotation mentions general duties of the brokers, such as examining details of cargo and people on board. As in Ming times, they were authorized and expected to manage foreign trade. But we get no information on particular brokers. In 1733 (Yongzheng 11), Injišan notes that

(...) the copper managing merchant Chen Huigong 陳惠公, who had just been investigated, had rented one so-called “bird ship” (*niaochuan* 鳥船) from

125 Ng Chin-keong (1983), 178–179.

126 *Guochao ranguan ji* 4.77 (1728–1756). Among these eight merchants were four from Fujian (Min) and four from Zhejiang. Guo Yilong 郭益隆, Li Yuanzu 李元祚, Xin Tingyin 辛(信) 廷英 and Tingyin’s younger brother, Tingfen 廷芬, were *hang* merchants of Fujian origin.

127 *Gongzhong dang Yongzhengchao zouzhe*, 11: 55.

a boatman called Wang Yuxing 王玉興, had paid his taxes to the Zhaoxiang 趙詳 Guild and on the 21st day of the 7th month 1733 left the harbour.<sup>128</sup>

The Zhaoxiang Guild was accordingly, probably among other things, responsible for collecting taxes. Another entry by the Provincial Governor of Jiangsu, Min Eyuan 閔鶚元 (1720–1797), mentions a Yanghuo 洋貨 (Overseas Products) “Guild” by a merchant called Xie Yonghe 謝永和.<sup>129</sup> This guild, according to Liu Xufeng, was actually in commission managing the imports and exports of the official merchant Fan Qingji. Xie Yonghe was originally Japanese. In 1789, he had drifted to Guangzhou in a storm and subsequently been sent to Zhapu:

I resided at the building of Xie Yonghe; Xie is the master of a guild being engaged in the Eastern Oceans. I lived there for two, three days, went to the Yamen of the Court of Coastal Defence (*haifang ting yamen*), inquired about the circumstances of castaways and the details about their being escorted home. They urged the wealthy merchants (*caidong*) engaged in the Japanese copper trade, Qian Enrong 錢恩榮 and Shen Yunzhan 沈雲瞻, generously to add (funds) and soothe and pity, in order to regulate and repair the guild of Mr. Xie and determine the houses (where the shipwrecked should) reside.<sup>130</sup>

The Ocean Guild of Xie Yonghe 謝永和, we learn, primarily managed the trade with Japan and maintained close relations with official and private copper managing merchants.

Another example is the Japanese merchant Xie Yongtai 謝永泰 and his association. According to a Japanese record, he was the wholesale dealer (*tonya* 問屋) for the Fan lineage and the twelve family quota merchants, managing the entire sale of commodities for them.<sup>131</sup> A Japanese shipwrecked person in 1780 (Qianlong 45) resided at a place in Zhapu called Chuansu 船宿. This Chuansu actually was a kind of guild organization (*chuanhang* 船行) and managed the export of Chinese commodities to Japan. Obviously, the latter was a relatively large merchant association, employing some 120 people.<sup>132</sup> In 1797 (Jiaqing 2), shipwrecked Japanese people resided at the house of Xie Shunxing 謝順興 of this Japanese merchant association (*chuansu*).<sup>133</sup> This Xie Shunxing is referred to as a broker in the *Shinzoku kibun* 清俗紀聞 (1799):

128 *Ming Qing dang'an*, 84: 45–14–3; Liu Xufeng (1993), 210.

129 *Gongzhong dang Qianlongchao zongzhe*, 55: 448 (*Jiangsu xunfu* Min Eyuan *zou*).

130 Koiyama Shitsu 新山質 (Kasai Inze 葛西因是), *Hyoryū shimatsu* 漂流始末 (Copy of a manuscript of the Kyūshū daigaku Library), quoted according to Liu Xufeng (1993), 210.

131 *Sashūjin Tokoku hyōryūki*, 45, referred to by Liu Xufeng (1993), 210 and 234, fn. 81.

132 Liu Xufeng (1993), 210, with reference to Ishii Kenji (1972), 126.

133 Liu Xufeng (1993), 210, with reference to *Tsūkō ichiran*, 6: 133.



Today, according to the report presented by the broker (*yaren*) Xie Shunxing 謝順興, the ship owner Fan Sanxi 范三錫 from Pinghuxian 平湖縣 and twenty-eight helmsmen, all together, had loaded sugar, medical drugs and other items of the merchant Fei Qingxing 費晴興 and proceeded to the Eastern Ocean to trade; after they had passed the verification and examination process at the military post they were released.<sup>134</sup>

This evidence suggests that the expressions *yahang*, *chuanhang*, or *yanghang* actually all refer to the same kind of organization, namely a group of merchants who were responsible for the management of the Sino-Japanese trade, from arranging the purchase of goods up to securing the payment of customs. At the same time, we see that these merchant groups also had an actual building, like the *chuansu*, at their disposal that, similar or in the same manner as the *huiguan* 會館, fulfilled social functions, like providing accommodation for shipwrecked people. As Zhapu was the major port for trade with Japan, it is not surprising that Japanese merchant associations were dominant there. But there were also other brokers who traded primarily, for example, with Southeast Asia: Xie Dingsan 謝定三 and Xie Kunyuan 謝崑源, father and son, of the Dongchen 東陳 clan, would be an example of that. They traded not only with Japan but also with destinations such as Xianluo (modern Thailand).<sup>135</sup>

Under the supervision of official merchants we thus encounter both broker and *huiguan* organizations of private merchants, even some managed by Japanese merchants. As we have seen above (quotation from the *Zhapu xuzhi*), we can generally observe that despite the strictly governmental regulated supervision of copper imports from Japan, private merchants too established their own copper “authorities”, the so-called *tongju* or *gongju* 公局. These were responsible for the bureaucratic management of the importation process and obviously functioned partly like *huiguan*. According to a Japanese entry, a quota merchant ship that sailed to Japan in 1805 (Jiaqing 10), carried the name “Enduring prosperity of the Jiahui copper authority” (*Jiahui gongju yongxing chuan* 嘉會公局永興船), which would suggest that the quota merchants, at least at that time, called their copper authorities “Jiahui” 嘉會.<sup>136</sup> Further evidence is provided by Zheng Guangzu’s 鄭光祖 *Zhouche suozhi* 舟車所至 which mentions that in 1823 there was a “Jiahui ju” 嘉惠(會)局 at Huqiu shantang 虎邱山塘 (located between Changzhou 長洲

134 *Shinzoku kibun* 10.448.

135 *Zhapu Dongchen zupu gao* 乍浦東陳族譜稿, quoted in Wu Zhenhua (1989), 223, and referred to by Liu Xufeng (1993), 234, fn. 85.

136 Ōta Nanpo 大田南畝 (Naojirō 直次郎) (1749–1823), “Keihō yūtetsu 瓊浦又綴”, in *Shoku sanjin zenshū*, 3: 639.

and Wuxian 吳縣 in Suzhou fu), which managed Japanese copper. Six boats came and went and used to anchor at Zhapu.<sup>137</sup>

Liu Xufeng discovered that much information concerning these local *tongju* (or *huiguan*) organizations can be obtained from records of shipwrecked people, because the latter used to manage their affairs and hosted the shipwrecked persons. Twelve families of the Wang clan all established their meeting places at Zhapu and called them “Authority” (*juli* 局裏). The two authorities (*ju*) of the Wang family, according to the *Tōkō kibun* 東航紀聞, were called *liangli* 兩裏 and constituted a place where the “coming and going of commodities was managed” (*laiqu huowu zai ci banli huiguan ye* 來去貨物在此辦理會館也).<sup>138</sup> Both official and private merchants could approach these organizations to hire from ship owners. In addition, in order to discuss the arrangement of their cargo and the like, private and official merchants also established a common meeting place (*juli* 局裏), also called “*Liangju huiguan*” 兩局會館.<sup>139</sup> From 1790 (Qianlong 55) we possess a document with instructions and an official stamp of this *Liangju huiguan* that managed both the affairs of shipwrecked people as well as the circulation (coming and going) of commodities.<sup>140</sup> So we know that both private and official merchants established their “copper authorities” in Zhapu, referred to as “*juli*” or jointly as “*liangju*”, and in addition a *Liangju huiguan* for the management of common problems like commodity exchange and the organization of sending back shipwrecked Japanese to their home country.

It thus becomes evident that also against the background of strict government control, private merchants were directly involved in the management of the Sino-Japanese copper trade. They even established *huiguan* and broker organizations that also fulfilled social functions such as taking care of shipwrecked people.

The *Local Gazetteer of Zhapu* eventually also includes a detailed description of how the examination and taxation at the port was practically implemented:

137 *Zhouche suozhi fu yi ban lu* 舟車所至增一斑錄, by Zheng Guangzu 鄭光祖, j. 1, quoted by Liu Xufeng (1993), 207.

138 *Tōkō kibun*, 5: 2.334-337.

139 Liu Xufeng (1993), 208. Also Ōba Osamu 大庭修, *Edo jidai Nittchū bima* 江戸時代日中秘話. 第一章 长崎貿易和中国貿易: Here quoted from <http://74.125.47.132/search?q=cache:RBRJ0gNOWBQJ:www.3320.net/blib/c/read/16/7935/1027.htm:> “在乍浦，有为数众多的对日商品批发行，漂流到中国的日本人称其为“日本商问屋”；唐货主的会馆—两局会馆也设在乍浦，使乍浦成为对日贸易的中心地区。”

140 Liu Xufeng (1993), 208-209.

For all merchant ships which enter the harbour, the brokers (*yahang*) prepare an application form to pass goods through the customs (*baodan* 報單), take the local passport permission (*xianzhao* 縣照) and go to the Sub-prefectural Office of the Coastal Defence (*haifang tongzhi shu* 海防同知署) and hand in [the documents] for customs inspection. On the passport permission name, age and appearance, and native places of the ship owner, the helmsmen, and every sailor are clearly listed; the next day they are guided to proceed to the Jiaxie Right Brigade, and all the information is finally entered into the account books; then everything is stated to both the water and the land port stations (*shuilu er kouzhi* 水陸二口址); afterwards the goods are transported across the embankment, and with the department warrant (or permit) (*bupai* 部牌) and the red certificate (*hongdan* 紅單), one goes to the customs office (*haiguan*) to declare the goods for examination. The red certificate contains the information on which the merchant has declared what kind of commodities at which ports and how much has been paid for duty. There is a wooden seal (*qianji* 鈐記) of every customs port on it.... And, when domestic goods are to be exported, [the merchants] have to pay duties at the customs stations (*shuikou* 稅口), and when the department warrant and the red certificates have all been received, the brokers prepare the application form to pass goods through the customs; they go first to the Office of the Local Command (*shoubei shu* 守備署), then to the Office of the Sub-prefectural Magistrate (*tongzhi shu* 同知署), take the local passport permission and hand everything in to the customs for inspection, have it sealed with an official stamp (*yongyin* 用印) and receive the export permit (*lingchu* 領出); furthermore they go to both the water and the land port stations, have their documents registered (*guabao* 掛號) to get everything released (for exportation).<sup>141</sup>

This description may not only serve as evidence for the strict and thorough customs investigations in eighteenth century China, but also as an indication that in Qing documents like this ocean guilds (*yanghang*) were considered as broker firms (*yahang*). All the documents mentioned here (*xianzhao* 縣照, *bupai* 部牌, *hongdan* 紅單, *guabao* 掛號)<sup>142</sup> are also referred to in Japanese records.

141 “Guanliang” 關梁, in *Zhapu beizhi* 6.3b-4b.

142 The official Chinese merchant, Qian Jishan, in 1796, carried the following verifying documents with him: (1) a passport permission of the district Pinghu xian (縣照), (2) registered documents (掛號) of the Jiaxie Right Brigade and (3) the Local Maritime Defence Administration of Zhapu, (4) the application form of the Maritime Defence Branch Office of Jiaxing to pass goods through the customs (*liandan* 聯單), (5) the trade permission (商照) and (6) the trading ship permission (商船照) issued by the Zhejiang *haiguan*, and (7) the official certificate (憲照) issued by the Provincial Administration Commission (*buzheng si*). Consequently, he carried all required documents (see also ill. 5 and 6).

## 4 Conclusion

In the case of Sino-Ryūkyūan trade – the Ryūkyūs being one of China's most loyal so-called tribute countries – a group of private merchants was officially approved to act as a kind of official brokers in bilateral trade: the Ming government considered state control and monopoly as important and consequently vested private merchants with the authority to manage this trade and absorbed them into their system. As we have seen above, they not necessarily always acted on behalf of government purposes but still pursued their own, private interests. At the same time, however, interpreters, both Chinese and foreign, continued to play an important role in the practical management of Sino-Ryūkyūan trade.

Due to a lack of source information, we do not know exactly if private and official brokers originally were active in parallel with each other, or perhaps even working in competition. But towards the end of the Ming dynasty a group of ten merchants (*shijia*) had emerged who obviously fulfilled the function of official brokers while they were at the same time closely cooperating with interpreters and private traders – also, quite contrary to their destined task, in organizing clandestine trade with prohibited items and in embezzling official money.

By Qing times, the so-called Qiu-merchants came to be in charge of Sino-Ryūkyūan trade. The identity of these *Qiu-shang* is still open to discussion and basically two slightly differing opinions prevail. The term “Qiu-merchants” may originally have been a designation for all merchants engaged in this trade. But we know that eventually ten among them acted as official brokers on behalf of the government. At the same time, however, they maintained relative independence, established their own coastal and domestic networks and engaged smaller merchants (*xiaoshang*) to provide them with the required commodities for Sino-Ryūkyūan trade. Instead of being considered a government brokerage firm, the *Qiu-shang* should, thus, rather be regarded as a group of private merchants with a government license to manage this trade. At the beginning of the nineteenth century (that means at a very late stage), the *Qiu-shang* eventually founded a *huiguan* that fulfilled socio-religious purposes – in my eyes a clear indication of their relative independence. This “broker *huiguan*” consequently emerged not in competition with official brokers but out of the needs and desires of merchants who were themselves acting as brokers. It also served similar socio-religious purposes as we know them from domestically orientated *huiguan*. The establishment of this *huiguan* may also reflect a general trend of local elite activism which developed further into late Qing and found its expression in a wide range of extra-bureaucratic areas. Simultaneously, it should be emphasized that the location where much of the trade and exchange

between Chinese and Ryūkyūans took place, the *Linquan guan*, continued to fulfil a series of social functions throughout both dynasties – from serving as a guesthouse to providing medical treatment and assistance for burials.

We can therefore conclude that although Sino-Ryūkyūan trade was officially controlled by the government both in Ming and Qing times, although it functioned as part of China’s alleged tribute system, private merchants and characteristics of private trade were not only the starting point of its management in the early Ming period but remained present and important throughout the centuries into the late Qing dynasty.

Qing period Sino-Japanese trade in contrast was of particular importance to the Chinese government because of a commodity much demanded by the state – copper. As we have seen, the government principally always sought to maintain a strict control and supervision of this trade. But, because the management system never really functioned satisfactorily according to its goals, the Qing government eventually started to experiment and shifted between strict government control and more private autonomy, resulting in a system combining both private autonomy and government control (dualistic management). Within this system both official and private merchants eventually developed their own particular organization structures. Both official and private merchants were eventually organized in so-called “authorities” (*ju*) and not only worked in parallel with but also in competition with each other. This organization structure, thus, seems to have combined both state (*guan*) and private (*si*) interests. And as we have seen, even under the supervision and the umbrella of official merchants and strict government control, private merchants were also more or less directly involved in the management of this trade and even established organizations such as *huiguan* or similar institutions. Against the background of the government’s need for copper, this particular kind of dualistic or hybrid organization was apparently considered the adequate means to further promote the import of copper. Both private and official merchants, however, were as a last step controlled by the government’s Customs Houses (*haiguan*) and thus remained under relatively strict government control.

*Huiguan* in the traditional sense, as we know them from China’s domestic trade, consequently did not play an important role in the direct management of Ming and Qing China’s organization and management of trade with the Ryūkyūs and Japan. But they were of course always indirectly involved in this trade as providers of products further shipped to the Eastern Seas. In our first example, private merchants, equipped with the government’s authority and competences, used their officially approved

monopoly not only to fulfil government guidelines but to also organize this trade for their own profit – including illegal activities. Socio-religious functions that are so characteristic of *huiguan* were fulfilled by the *Liuqin guan* and later by the *Qin-shang huiguan*. But we cannot speak of a *huiguan*-based merchant association in the traditional sense that developed rather from private merchant interests. Rather do we see a combination of state (*guan*), private (*si*) and public (*gong*) interests, with a clear tendency of a strengthening of the private sphere. In the second example, both private and official *huiguan*-like organizations developed as a consequence of the government's decision to permit both official and private merchants to manage the copper trade, certainly also as a result of the private merchants' competition with the official ones. These organizations quite resembled the *huiguan* we know in their functions dealing with domestic trade, providing meeting places to improve the management and organization of trade, discussing problems of competitiveness, managing practical issues and fulfilling social functions, in this case taking care of shipwrecked people.

A clear-cut distinction or competition between private *huiguan* and official *hang* or *yahang* (brokers), as we know it from many areas of domestic trade, can therefore not be maintained for this sector of foreign trade. Rather, we find characteristics of both private and official brokers, merchants and *huiguan*. Important to note is – perhaps conclusively – that despite the more or less strict government control and supervision of both the Sino-Ryūkyūan and the Sino-Japanese maritime trade, private elements existed and remained present and were quite influential during both the Ming and Qing period in the organization of trade with the Ryūkyūs and Japan.

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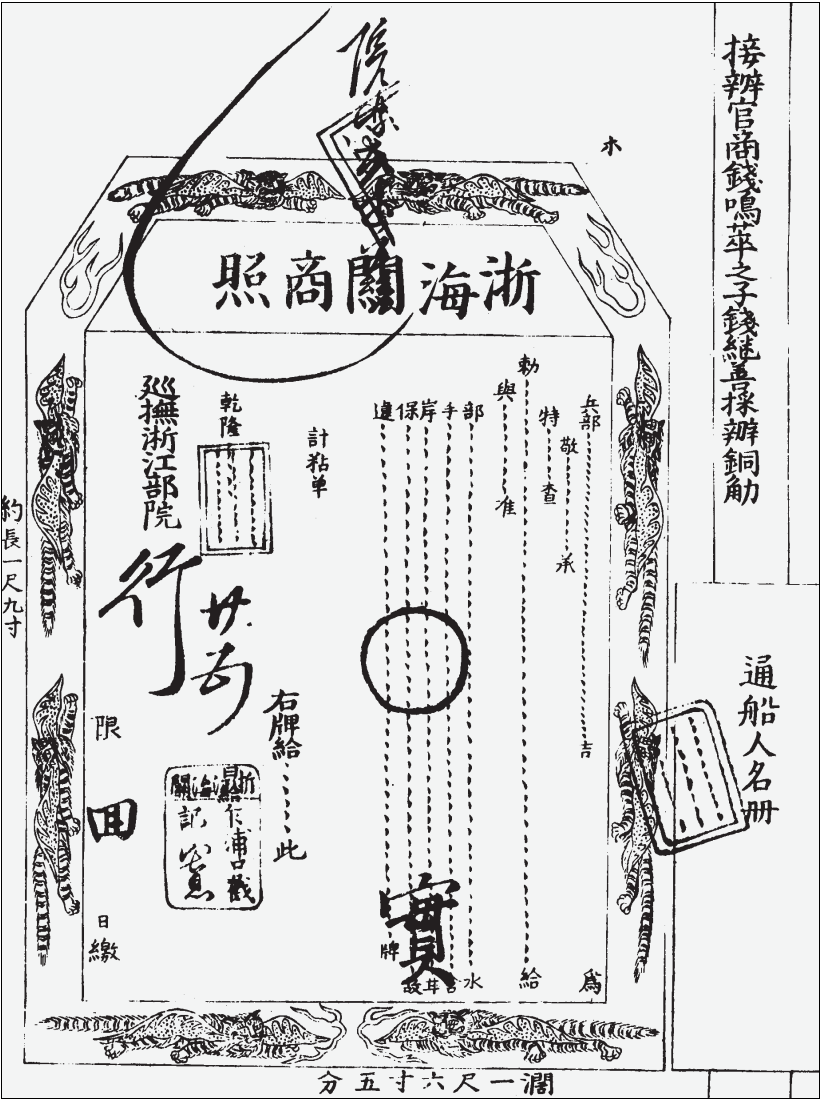
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Illustrations (from *Shinzoku kibun* 清俗紀聞 (1799), j. 10)



Ill. 1: Cover of a trading ship certificate of registration of the [Zhejiang] Customs Office (*Zhe haiguan shangchuan zhao* 浙海關商船照) dating from 1795 (Qianlong 60), issued for Qian Chunshan 錢純善, son of the official merchant (*guanshang* 官商) Qian Mingcui 錢鳴萃 (*Shinzoku kibun*, 10.12a, 449).

接辦官商錢鳴華之子錢繼善採辦銅勛  
 兵部侍郎兼都察院右副都御史巡撫浙江等處地方管理糧餉兼  
 理全省營務世襲散秩大臣騎都尉覺羅吉為敬陳專一等事  
 照得本部院恭奉特簡兼理海關伏查勅諭開載九海口出入船  
 載如有來帶禁物照例拿究商民情願從浙省出海貿易登記人數  
 姓名取具保結給與印票以便出入欽此又准部文內開船戶  
 攬載開放時令海關監督將船隻丈尺親驗明白取具挖水連環互  
 結客商必帶有資本貨物水手必查有家口來歷方許在船驗明之  
 後即將船隻丈尺客商姓名人數並載貨往某處情由及開行日期  
 填明船單令口岸文武官照單嚴查等因遵奉在案今據該商冊報  
 人數並載糖藥等貨往東洋貿易等情並據商船收執凡經過各海  
 具甘保各結前來合行照數給牌為此牌給該商收執凡經過各海  
 口崙汛處所驗牌查照人數即便放行毋得留難羈阻需索分文如  
 敢故違官參吏處回浙到關船戶立刻先投崙汛營縣候點人數明  
 確方許登岸以憑申報本部院存案仍將原牌繳銷毋得違錯須牌  
 計粘單  
 乾隆陸拾年十月  
 右牌給商人費順興准此  
 巡撫浙江部院  
 限日繳

Ill. 2: The text proper of the Trading ship certificate of registration of the Zhejiang Customs Office, issued for Qian Chunshan, the son of the official merchant Qian Mingcui; cf. Ill. 1 (*Shinzoku kibun*, 10.12b, 450).



Ill. 3: Cover of a trading ship certificate of registration of the Zheljiang Customs Office (*Zhe haiguan shangchuan zhao* 浙海關商船照) dating from 1795 (Qianlong 60), issued for a merchant called Fan Sanxi 范三錫 (*Shinzoku kibun*, 10.13a, 451).



浙海關商船照

兵部侍郎兼都察院右副都御史巡撫浙江等處地方管理糧餉兼理全省營務世襲散秩大臣騎都尉覺羅吉為欽奉上諭事案准部文嗣後一切出海船隻初造時即令報明海關監督及攬載開放時令海關監督將原報船隻丈尺親驗明白等因遵行在案今據嘉興府平湖縣平字拾柒號船戶范三錫探頭壹丈捌尺○廿○分合即給照為此照給該船戶執持出入貿易捕防口員役驗明放行如敢藉端需索分別參處該船務將此牌按期繳銷如過期不繳該船戶解關究治均毋違錯致干查究須至照者

舵工水手人數照縣牌

右照給船戶范三錫准此

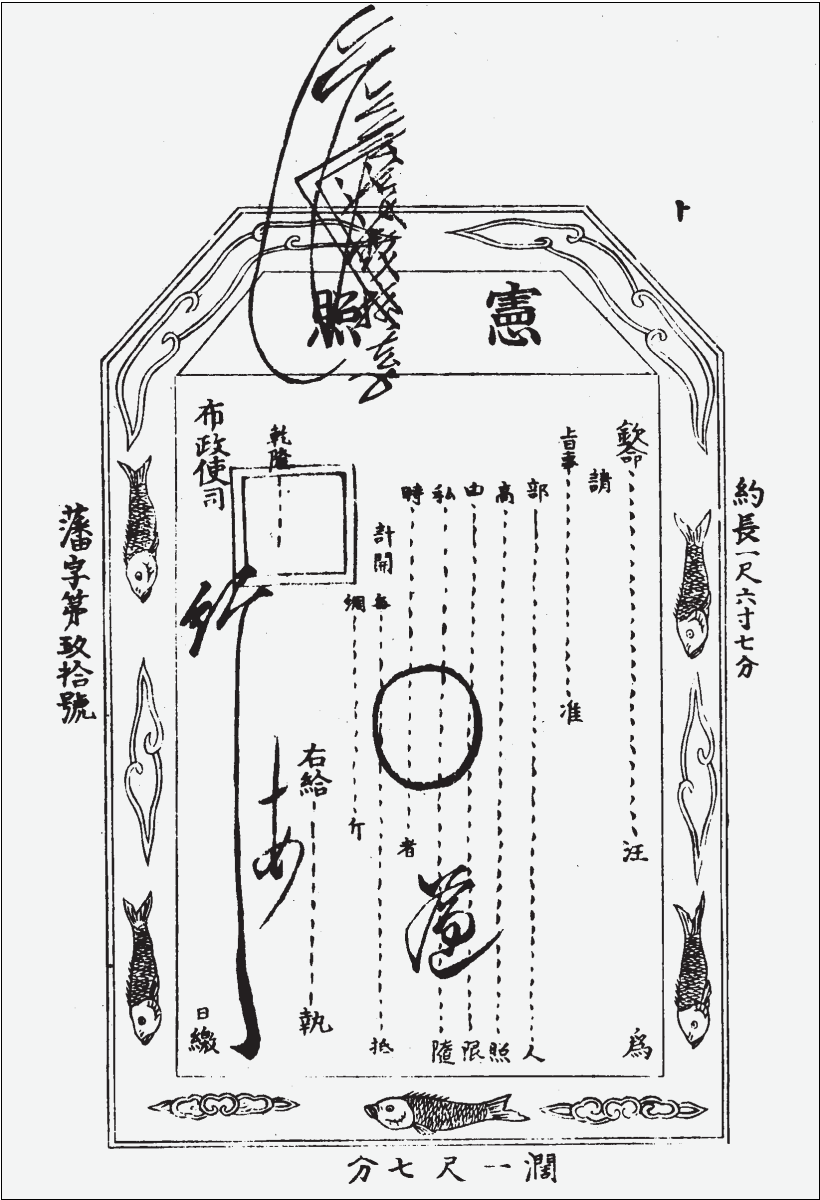
乾隆陸拾年拾月

日給

巡撫浙江部院  
乍字 第拾捌

號計完全年稅訖限次年米月初捌日繳

Ill. 4: The text proper of the Trading ship certificate of registration of the Zhejiang Customs Office, issued for a merchant called Fan Sanxi; cf. Ill. 3 (*Shinzoku kibun*, 10.13b, 452).



Ill. 5: Cover of a Provincial Administration Commission certificate (*xianzhao* 憲照) dating from 1795 (Qianlong 60), that registered the goods of the official merchant Qian Jishan 錢繼善 that were shipped to Japan by Fei Shunxing 費順興 (*Shinzoku kibun*, 10.14a, 453).

憲照

欽命浙江等處承宣布政使司布政使隨帶軍功加三級紀錄十五  
次汪為請部咨嗣後銅船出洋按船給與承辦官商印照以杜  
行奉准等因今據嘉防同知詳官商錢繼善家人高陸具呈陞主運例  
影射等因今據嘉防同知詳官商錢繼善家人高陸具呈陞主運例  
出洋採辦銅斤今雇有平湖縣船戶范三錫倩行商費順興執例大  
發各執照由乍出口等情請給印照前來合行須發為此仰該行商  
即使收執領賞往洋採辦該商不得逾限私越禁洋以及夾帶違禁  
貨物有干嚴例倘銅舡遇風收泊閩浙各海口地方驗明印照督令  
行商人等隨時撥回乍口各關汛毋得稽阻留難有悞報鑄回日仍  
將原照繳銷毋違須至照者  
計開

每船准帶綢緞三十三捲每捲重一百二十斤如有  
願帶絲斤者許配三三番粗絲每百二十斤抵綢  
緞一捲其多帶者以此抵算每船絲斤不得過一千  
二百斤

右給官商錢繼善商夥費順興收執

乾隆陸拾年拾月

布政使司

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Ill. 6: Provincial Administration Commission certificate that registered the goods of the official merchant Qian Jishan that were shipped to Japan by Fei Shunxing; cf. Ill. 5 (*Shinzoku kibun*, 10.14b, 454).

其別也。歸樟之載為何。曰。願箱條銅三千。昆布之相三千。海參并蛇魚其色五百。各船皆然。載曰。否。或條銅千餘。昆布二千。海參蛇魚共三百許。各稱載來貨物數。今長崎五市船共十三艘。其六稱范氏實官船也。其七財東七人。各一船。開創惣商共十二家。故今猶名跡十二家。其實七家也。七家為誰。曰。沈雲瞻。王履階。高山耀。吳有光。俞會時。楊岳懷。吳鳴鸞也。沈則敬瞻同宗。王高二子。嘗往崎陽者。且高是往年遇難於八丈嶋者也。夏日雖長不暇應酬。語甚繁絮。不必悉載。

Ill. 7: List of "wealthy merchants" (*caidong* 財東) from *Hyōka kiji*, 1.7a referred to above (page 119).