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China's Conquest of Taiwan in the Seventeenth Century

Victory at Full Moon

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Chapter 1
Introduction

In 1683, Imperial China launched a successful blue-sea naval campaign against Taiwan. It happened to be one of the most complex and hazardous sea battles before modern times. The mainland Chinese expeditionary forces commanded by Admiral Shi Lang first decisively defeated the Zheng fleets at Penghu, or known as the Pescadores in the West, and then compelled the Ming loyalists on Taiwan to accept unconditional surrender. Admiral Shi's skills, bravery, and experiences were surely indispensable for the victory, which not only secured imperial China's political legitimacy by eliminating the last bastion of the Ming loyalists but also firmly acquired a strategic island off the mainland coast.

Indeed, the event has yielded highly significant historical consequences. It ended the century long coastal unrest, and even more importantly it determined the future of Taiwan, or Formosa for the Portuguese and the Dutch. Precisely because of this victory, the island was formally incorporated into the Chinese empire with the flow of the increasing number of immigrants into the island from the mainland. Afterward, sinicization accelerated Taiwan's social, political, and cultural integrations with the mainland. If the conquest had not taken place, Taiwan could have become either an independent kingdom or an European colony, either Netherland or Great Britain.

Following the conquest, the Chinese empire had been able to maintain peace and order in the Taiwan Strait for more than a century. Not until the beginning of the nineteenth century did the relatively peaceful situation take a downturn. Shortly after the Vietnam-based pirates disrupting the coastal peace in 1796, the Fujianese pirate Cai Qian 蔡牵 commanded a fleet of seventy warships, including some European ships and guns, Cai first stole rice in Taiwan in 1804 and then invaded the island. Unable to occupy Taiwan effectively though he was, he nonetheless used the island base to harass many coastal towns from Zhejiang to Guangdong. Cai's violent activities recalled the historic piracy of the mid-sixteenth century and exposed the dilatoriness and slackness of the Chinese government in maintaining peace and security. As well, the government was unable to stop the rampant opium smuggling during the 1830s, and China's defeat in the Opium War in 1842 ushered

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in the rapid decline of the Chinese empire. Britain and other Western powers slowly but effectively came to dominate the China coast. The imperial government of Qing China finally decided in the 1880s to build a modern navy, known as the Beiyang fleet, but Japan routed the fleet in the war of 1894–1895.

Afterward, China lost, among many other things, the island of Taiwan, which had since become a Japanese colony until the conclusion of World War Two. Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945 allowed the reversion of Taiwan to China. The subsequent Chinese civil war, however, resulted in the separation of the island from the mainland again. The defeated Nationalists led by Jiang Jieshi 蒋介石, known as Chiang Kai-shek in the West, sought refuge in Taiwan and have since retained a national government under the protection of the United States. But mainland China in the name of the People's Republic of China claims the sole political legitimacy of China, and Taiwan is part of China. The contemporary situation across the strait seems to have replayed the seventeenth century history all over again. The *déjà vu* Taiwan question has aroused in me an interest in the connection to the history of 17th century Taiwan. Why did the mainland Chinese become interested in the island? How did Taiwan fall into the Chinese orbit? What was the importance of the island to the mainland? Above all, what were the series of historical events in the 17th century leading to China's conquest of Taiwan?

It is clear that China's conquest of Taiwan in the seventeenth century had little, if any, to do with expansionism or colonialism. During a long span of time, mainland Chinese, government officials as well as private persons, despite the geographic proximity, had shown little interest in the island. Only after a series of cumulative crises and security concerns since the beginning of the fifteenth century did Taiwan attract the attention of Chinese government on the mainland. The sea-borne commerce, however profitable, often threatened the coastal security. The volatile trading activities, difficult to control as they were, made the government prefer security to profit. This explains why imperial China from the Ming to the Qing invoked seafaring interdicts from time to time. But the suppression of profitable trade was often counter-productive. It actually intensified coastal insecurity by encouraging smuggling and piracy along the long coast. The worse came up in the "great pirate war" of the 1550s.

The Ming government, despite paying a high price for the extirpation of the pirates, failed to restore the real peace on the coast. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the rise of Zheng Zhilong 郑芝龙 and the arrival of the Europeans, principally the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Dutch further complicated the security on the southeast China coast in general and the Fujian coast in particular. Zheng came out as a pirate-trader and made Taiwan his base for trade as well as for piratical assaults on the coast. The Dutch occupied southern Taiwan, from which trying to establish a link to the China market. Taiwan thus attracted the attention of the mainland authorities.

Zheng Zhilong eventually surrendered to the Ming and became a *de facto* warlord in Fujian. But the transition of China's political power from the Ming to the Qing split the loyalty of the Zheng family. The father Zheng Zhilong switched his allegiance to the Qing, while the son Zheng Chenggong 郑成功, known as Koxinga in

the West, retained his Ming loyalism. For resisting the Qing, the son turned the coast into war zones and wrested Taiwan from the Dutch and made it his jumping board to launch attacks on the mainland in hopes of reviving the moribund Ming dynasty. The son thus politicized the coast and Taiwan. Zheng Chenggong and his successors had stubbornly challenged the mainland government not only by waging coastal wars but also rejecting the latter's political legitimacy. Taking the advantage of the rebellion of the "Three Feudatories" (*sanfan* 三藩) in the mainland, the Zheng forces on Taiwan, now under the command of Zheng Jing 郑经, crossed the strait and attacked the Fujian coast throughout the 1670s. Once the Qing dynasty survived the great rebellion, it could no longer tolerate a defiant Taiwan off its coast.

Realistically speaking, it appeared formidable at the time to cross blue sea and attack an enemy who possessed a superior naval force. To be sure, the Qing court tried repeatedly to talk the Zhengs into submission, but went nowhere. In the end, a military solution seemed to be the only option, and yet it still took a long time to make it happen. The indispensable figure who made the mission succeed was Admiral Shi Lang 施琅. His unwavering determination prevented a difficult project from falling apart, his skill and bravery guaranteed victory, and his vision assured the final integration of Taiwan into China. Strangely, many modern Chinese of different aspirations vilified Shi for his betrayal of Zheng Chenggong and the Ming loyalist cause. In historiography, Shi was overwhelmingly overshadowed by Zheng. So far as China is concerned, what Zheng had accomplished was mere a prelude to Shi's big show. To be sure, it was Zheng who took Taiwan from the Dutch, without Zheng Taiwan would have most likely remained the Dutch colony. But the defiant Zhengs on Taiwan could have become such autonomous kingdom as Korea or Ryūkyū, as Zheng Jing so wished. Thanks to Admiral Shi's effort, Taiwan became not only Chinese but also a part of China.

Admiral Shi's success, of course, owed much to the confidence and support of the Kangxi 康熙 emperor whose trust deterred many unwearied interference and His Majesty awarded his admiral the full authority in the completion of the mission. Without the emperor's trust, the admiral seemed unlikely to execute the extremely complex and hazardous naval operation and to make it successful. China seized Taiwan on the day of full moon at the time of *Pax Sinica*. Emperor Kangxi joyfully celebrated the victory with his officials and attendants in his magnificent garden palace in Beijing. It is quite justifiable to have a full account of this remarkable historical event.

This study presents the successive events leading to China's conquest of Taiwan in the seventeenth century. At the outset of my research, I thank late Professor Xia Deyi 夏德仪 (1901–1998) of National Taiwan University for generously giving me a massive set of Taiwan documents, known as *Taiwan wenxian congkan* 台湾文献丛刊, to which he was the editor-in-chief. With these basic materials at hand, I was in a favorable position to start my project. I want also to acknowledge my gratitude to the research grants from the College of Arts and Sciences and History Department, both of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, which helped me make fruitful trips to Library of Congress in Washington D.C. many times. I owe an intellectual debt to my good friend, Michael Hurst, Fellow in

Modern History and Politics a St. John's College, Oxford University. He patiently read an early version of my manuscript, which was published as "Security and Warfare on the China Coast: the Taiwan Question in the 17th century" in *Monumenta Serica* in 1983.

I decided to expand my earlier work into a book with a new focus long time ago. When I was a visiting professor in Taiwan from August 1997 to August 1998, I took the opportunity to use as many libraries on the island as I possibly could. I wish to thank specially my former classmate, Professor Liu Xianshu 刘显叔 of the Institute of Chinese Studies 汉学中心 in Taipei. As the acquisition director of the institute, he was particularly helpful for my research. I published an article entitled "Shi Lang yu Taiwan 施琅与台湾" (*Shi Lang and Taiwan*) in his institute's journal in 1985. Then, in 1993, in celebration of Professor Zhou Yiliang 周一良's eightieth birthday, I published an article on Zheng Zhilong and Zheng Chenggong in a symposium volume.

I am also very grateful to my old friend Li Ao 李敖, better known as a political dissident and sharp socio-political critic in Taiwan. But he is also an erudite scholar and admirable collector of books and documents. No individual on the island has possessed so much Taiwanese source materials as he does. He generously made his 100,000-volume library available to me during my residence in Taipei.

At the turn of the century, from 27 December 1999 to 4 January 2000, I was able to make a field trip to Xiamen, Tongan, and Quanzhou 泉州 on the Fujian coast. During the trip, Professor Shi Weiqing 施伟青 of Xiamen University graciously rendered me great help. He is the author of the first full-fledged biography of Shi Lang. He not only shared with me his vast knowledge of Shi and gave me some rare books but also served as my personal guide to tour the region, and we trod the path of Shi Lang some three centuries ago. In 3 days, we toured Shi Lang's hometown and his 300 years old residence, where some of his descendants still live, and visited his tomb, museum, monuments, and gardens in Quanzhou. Without Weiqing's guide, I had no way to see so many historical sites relevant to my research.

I had left this manuscript incomplete for many years as busily doing research on some very different projects. I must thank Dr. Wu Hao 吴浩 of Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press for his interest in my work and enthusiastically helped me to get the manuscript in print without further delay. In this book, I chose to use the pinyin system in transliterating Chinese terms and names. Some old spellings, such as familiar personal and geographical names, will be put in brackets on the first occurrence.

Chapter 2
Unrest on the China Coast

Hangzhou 杭州 bay clearly divides the China coast into two distinct sections. With the exception of the Shandong 山东 peninsula, the north of the bay is mostly sandy, while the south of it is rocky. The rocky and irregular southern coastline, which extends from the Zhoushan 舟山 islands to Hong Kong (Xianggang 香港) for approximately 600 miles, has numerous small deltas, narrow flood plains, islands and bays, and good harbors, and a few interior basins. Its irregularities are best seen in the section from Xiamen 厦门 (Amoy) to Fuzhou 福州 (Foochow) in Fujian 福建 province, some 140 miles distant as the crew flies. The actual length of the shore is more than ten times this distance. Small peninsulas, no fewer than 3338 of them, dot this deeply serrated coast. These characteristics made the southeastern China coast the region of navigation and trade. The same coastal region, where islands and harbors abound, could also become a haven for criminals, like pirates, should law and order fail to maintain.

2.1 Background to Maritime Activities

Maritime activities on this coast can be traced back to the time immemorial. As many ancient Chinese records show, people living in the Yangzi delta region had "used boats as transportation" (*yichuan weiju* 以船为车) before the beginning of imperial China in 221 B.C. No latter than the early Han period (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), skills in building and sailing ships had found their way to Fujian. According to the grand historian Sima Qian 司马迁, between 112 and 111 B.C., Emperor Wu 武 of the Han 汉 dispatched a fleet from the port of Ningbo to suppress the rebellious Nanyue 南越 to the south.[1] This shows the availability of ocean-going vessels at the time. The first recorded large-scale coastal exploration, however, did not take place until A.D. 230 when the King of Wu sent Wei Wen 卫温 and Zhuge

[1]Sima Qian, *Shiji*, *juan* 114, pp. 2980–83.

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Zhi 诸葛直 to sail with a fleet of 10,000 men from the mouth of the Yangzi River to Guangdong 广东. Their ships were taken to the open sea and captured thousands of men from Yizhou 夷州,[2] only tropical diseases and the hazards of voyages deterred further exploration.

At the beginning of the fifth century, the rebel Sun En 孙恩 was able to assemble enough men and ships to threaten the security of east Zhejiang from the sea. He had occupied numerous counties on land, and when being defeated he retreated to the sea and came back on another occasion. At least once he targeted at Nanjing 南京, and sent "shocks and fear" to the rulers of the East Jin 晋 regime. His brother-in-law Lu Xun 卢循 took over after his death, and extended his assaults on Guangdong with a force of "tens of thousand men and a thousand ships."[3] Most of these pirate raids, though eventually exterminated, caused great security concerns for the inland authorities. Thereafter, the successive Chinese governments took coastal defense more seriously than ever.

The Sui隋 dynasty, which eventually rejuvenated the disintegrated Chinese empire, sent eight routes of armed forces to conquer south China in 588, one of which was a naval force under the command of Yang Su 杨素. Admiral Yang built a "five storied tall" flag ship capable of accommodating 800 soldiers, brought his fleet from Shandong to the central Yangzi, and sent his enemies in panic escape. Subsequently, the admiral fully pacified the Yangzi delta as well as both Zhejiang and Fujian coasts.[4] The rulers of the unified Sui China not just constructed the celebrated Grand Canal (Yunhe 运河) but also set the stage for more extensive seafaring activities. The Sui fleets had invaded Taiwan, and from there reached as far as Indo-China and Malaya.

The short-lived Sui dynasty paved the way for the more cosmopolitan Tang 唐 China in the seventh century and witnessed a great expansion of sea-borne commerce. Sea routes among China, Korea, and Japan were well established. To the south, no later than the mid-eighth century, Guangzhou emerged to be a busy port, and its trade extended all the way to the Persian Gulf. The high-ranking Tang official Jia Dan 贾耽 (730–805) turned out to be a great geographer. He drew a huge atlas entitled "the Sea-faring routes from Guangzhou to foreign lands" (*Guangzhou tonghai yidao* 广州通海夷道), on which he indicated specific routes and calculated taking approximately ninety days to reach Persian Gulf via various present-day southeast Asian countries.[5] Jia's work testifies to the commercial linkage between the Chinese empire and the Arab world in the eighth century. As a result, Tang China had already created a Maritime Bureau (*Shibosi* 市舶司) in

[2]See Cheu Shou, *Sanguo zhi*, vol. 3, p. 1136.

[3]See *Jinshu*, vol. 8, pp. 2635, 2631–38.

[4]See *Suishu*, vol. 5, pp. 1283–84.

[5]See *Jiu Tangshu,* vol. 12, pp. 3785–86.

charge of trading activities and numerous merchant vessels from foreign lands. A large number of Chinese ships sailed to distant lands as well. With the improvement in ship-building technology, the "Tang ships" were famous for their large size, sturdy body, and better wave-resisting capability. No less than the ninth century that the Chinese ships dominated the seas, and the Arabs and the Persians all came and lived not just in such trading port as Guangzhou but also in the imperial city of Chang'an 长安.[6]

The international trade made it possible for another era of maritime expansion in the twelfth century, when the political, cultural, and demographical centers had gradually shifted from the Yellow River plains to the lower Yangzi delta. This was Southern Song 宋 China (1127–1278), during which no less than nine ports from the entrance of Yangzi to Guangzhou were open for overseas trade. In particular, Quanzhou in south Fujian enjoyed the most phenomenal growth. Never before had so many seaports operated on the coast. To be sure, this was a result of socio-economic development in the region and of the use of compass that greatly facilitated navigation. But the government's promotion was equally significant. It set up maritime bureaus to encourage commerce by offering banquets to entertain foreign traders when they first arrived and gave them the privilege of reporting any wrong doings of local officials directly to higher authority. With the expansion of trade, the number of the bureau rose steadily. In addition to the older bureaus in Guangzhou (971), Hangzhou (989), and Mingzhou 明州 (the present day Ningbo, 999) respectively, new ones were open in Quanzhou (1087), Mizhou 密州 (1088), Xiuzhou 秀州 (1113), Wenzhou 温州 (1132), Jiangyin 江阴 (1146), and Haiyan 海盐 (1246). The government was plainly motivated by huge profits from international trade.[7] Huge revenues from maritime bureaus no doubt contributed to the fact that the south China economy now surpassed that of the north in this time.

The Mongol conquest of China in 1271 did not prevent maritime activities from growing. While seaborne commerce remained active on the southeast coast, the Mongols started massive "sea transport" (*haiyun* 海运) from Yangzi delta to the north China plain, effectively transporting southern grains to Dadu 大都 (the present day Beijing 北京). The Mongol invasion of Japan temporarily disrupted the booming trade since the early Song China. Nor did the Mongols slow down the trade with Southeast Asian countries. The seaports, such as Guangzhou and Quanzhou, became world-renown centers for shipbuilding. In the thirteenth century, China was proud to claim the largest and most advanced ocean-going vessels, the best navigation skills, and busiest international trading ports. Quanzhou, in particular, won the reputation of being the "leading harbor in the world" at the time.

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[6]Cf. Yu Hua, *Zhongguo hangyun shihua*, pp. 37–45 and Zhang Xun, *Woguo de gudai haishang jiaotong*, pp. 19–28.

[7]See Fang Hao, *Zhongxi jiaotongshi*, vol. 2, pp. 28–52.

2.2 Trade and Security

Sea-borne commerce, though bringing huge profits to bear, heightened security problems on the coast. Inevitably, the priority of security took over trade. Obviously for the purpose of a closer supervision, the Chinese governments generally monopolized overseas trade, allowing only a small amount of merchandise to barter between the foreigners and the private natives. In spite of enjoying the lion's share of the enormously profitable trade, the government always kept a nurverse eye on the coastal trading activities.[8] The superior Song-Yuan naval forces unwaveringly took law and order on the coast as its foremost duty.

Ming 明 China (1368–1644) appeared to be a major turning point in China's maritime history. The notorious "seafaring prohibition policy" technically prevented trading activities from growing. Like its predecessors, the Ming court knew the profits of the trade but it was grossly worried about coastal insecurity as a result. It dealt with coastal unrest often in a rigid and desperate manner. Noteably, at the outset of the Ming dynasty, due to the demobilized rebels joining in piracy, as the 1370 records show, nowhere on the coast from Liaodong 辽东 to Guangdong was free from pirate raids. Faced the crisis, the Ming authorities simply resorted severely to cut off overseas trade as the means to minimize coastal insecurity. Only licensed ships within a tributary framework were permitted to enter into any Chinese port. As a result, the number of visiting foreign ships was sharply reduced.[9]

Japan added weight to the Ming's concern about insecurity. From the beginning of the Ming dynasty, the Japanese adventurers had become a major source of the worsening coastal violence. The Hongwu 洪武 emperor (1368–1399), the founder, had twice sent special envoys to Japan's Ashikaga Bakufu asking for cooperation, but no assistance had ever been obtained. The treason case of his own Prime Minister Hu Weiyong 胡维庸 intensified Hongwu's fear. Reportedly, the prime minister had sent his close lieutenants to Japan seeking assistance for his planned coup. It took more than a decade to find Hu guilty, and the punishment was so severe that no less than 30,000 Hu's associates were put to death with him. The cruelty made manifest how insecure the Ming ruler was.[10] The following era of Emperor Yongle appeared much more tranquil, and the emperor showed his strong interest in maritime activities. For one thing, he needed tributary envoys to strengthen state prestige, and for another he was anxious to find the missing Emperor Hui 惠, who was said to have sought refuge overseas, from whom he had seized the throne violently. Consequently, maritime bureaus were reopened, and envoys were sent abroad to solicit trade. During the Yongle 永乐 period, the most famous episode was the voyages of Zheng He 郑和, whose "treasure ships"

[8]Fang Hao, *Zhongxi jiaotongshi*, vol. 2, pp. 30–37.

[9]See Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, pp. 9–11. Cf. Tanaka Takeō, *Wakō tō kangō boeki*.

[10]See Zhang Tingyu comp., *Mingshi*, vol. 28, pp. 7906–7908, 8341–42, 8344; cf. Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, p. 128.

(*baochuan* 宝船), dwarfed any other flotilla at the time, sailed probably as far as to the eastern African coast, and predated the Europeans' geographical discovery about a century. But the voyages suddenly came to an end without much lasting consequences.[11] While encouraging foreign traders to come, Ming China had no intention of allowing its own people to go abroad freely. In fact, no native, for example, could legally own an ocean-going vessel. Violation of this rule was subject to capital punishment.[12] Even though the government no longer wanted to monopolize the profit from trade, security remained the overriding concern. The fear was that the natives, once being abroad, might conspire with the foreigners to harm the home country.[13] As the government became weaker as time went on, it tended to take even more guarded measures. Eventually, Ming China adopted a policy of full-fledged sea-faring interdict.[14]

Two incidents between 1516 and 1517 illustrated how nervous the Ming government became. The one involved the Japanese. Japan's trade with China was under the highly restrictive licensed, tributary framework. The Ōnin war in Japan resulted in many hostile factions, thus ship owners of rival factions fiercely competed with one another for the China trade. In May 1516, an Ochi ship entered the port of Ningbo ahead of a Hosokawa ship, and yet maritime officials, apparently having received bribes, let the late comer discharge its cargo first. The furious Ochi traders attacked the Hosokawa ship, killed the Chinese naval commander, and raided the Ningbo-Shaoxing 绍兴 area before departure. Distressed by the violence, the Ming authorities almost immediately stopped the trade.[15] The other involved the Portuguese. In 1517, two tall Portuguese vessels penetrated illicitly into the Canton River and the "thunder of their guns shook the walled city [of Guangzhou]".[16] The maverick behavior of the foreign intruders deeply troubled the Ming authorities. What was more, in the year that followed, the Portuguese captain Simon de Andrade unilaterally constructed a fortress on an offshore island, which provoked the Ming to issue an order of expulsion. Furthermore, the Portuguese annexation of Malacca, a tributary state of the Ming, convinced the Chinese that the foreigners had to be kept at bay. Then the Portuguese retaliated by attacking the Guangdong coast in 1523. The Ming forces, having won victory over the outnumbered Portuguese, reinforced the long-standing "seafaring prohibition" policy.[17]

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[11]See Xu Yuhu, "Zheng He xiaxiyang yuanyin zhi xintan," pp. 110–114; Kuei-shen Chang, "The Maritime Scene in China at the Dawn of Great European Discoveries," vol. 94 no. 3, pp. 347–59; Levathes, *When China Ruled the Sea*, pp. 172–73.

[12]See Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, p. 94.

[13]Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, p. 25. See also Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben*, pp. 123–125.

[14]See Zhang Weihua, *Mingdai haiwai maoyi jianlun*, pp. 34–40; Jung-pang Lo, "The Decline of the Early Ming Navy," pp. 149–168.

[15]See Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiajing jian de haijin zhengce*, pp. 115–24.

[16]Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 28, pp. 8430–32.

[17]Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 28, p. 8432; Cf. T'ien-tse Chang, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514–1644,* pp. 53–68.

Repeated violent incidents persuaded the Ming to close down all of its maritime bureaus altogether. No visiting foreign ship was allowed to enter into any Chinese port. Nor were the Chinese permitted to go overseas; in the decree of 1525 two mast Chinese vessels should all be destroyed.[18] As a result, the entire coast was virtually closed down. In the past, when the partial prohibition was in force, violations seemed insignificant. But now when their living was being fully deprived, the poor population on the coast was compelled to take risks in smuggling or in participating piracy. Even the interest of the rich community on the coast felt threatened not to mention the distressed foreign traders. They formed a sort of united front to defy the government interdict. Consequently, a powerful maritime protest was in the making.

2.3 The Great Pirate War and Aftermath

The Ming government in effect arbitrarily disrupted the rising trend toward commercialization. By mid-Ming a commercialized economy had reached a high level. Urban centers specializing in handicraft industries, such as iron work, porcelain, cotton, silk, stains, papers, lumber, lacquer, and the like, grew like mushrooms, in particular in the lower Yangzi 扬子 delta, in Jiangxi River valley, and in the southeast seaboard. Suzhou 苏州 in the Yangzi delta became a major silk town, in which assembled so many workers that the dyers alone amounted to 10,000. Jingdezhen 景德镇 in Jiangxi 江西 emerged to be a great porcelain city crowded by over 10,000 working families.[19] Demands for manufactured goods in towns and cities inevitably drew laborers from villages.[20]

Commercialization was also evident in the wider circulation of silver as medium of exchange. Both public and private treasures were immensely enriched.[21] The expansion of the private section of the economy was particularly noteworthy. Prior to the Ming, China had no significant private handicraft industry to speak of. Even during the early Ming, the state monopoly left little room for private business. Traditionally, the artisan system registered all skilled craftsmen for public service. By the sixteenth century, craftsmen were finally released from state control and started working in privately owned factories. Private employers thus rose sharply

[18]See *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao*, pp. 2–3.

[19]Cf. Ke Jianzhong, "Shilun Mingdai shangye ziben yü zibenzhuyi mengya de guanxi" p. 83; Hong Huanzhuang, "Lun shiwu shiliu shiji Jiangnan diqu zibenzhuyi shengchan guanxi de mengya" p. 241; Li Guangbi, "Mingdai shougongye de fazhan," p. 39; Chen Shiqi, "Mingdai de gongjiang zhidu," p. 460.

[20]See Hong Huanzhuang, "Lun shiwu shiliu shiji Jiangnan diqu zibenzhuyi shengchan guanxi de mengya," p. 239; Cf. Hou Wailu, "Shiqishiji de Zhongguo shehui he qimeng sichao de tedian," p. 94.

[21]See Chen Shiqi, "Mingdai de gongjiang zhidu," vol. 1, p. 451 and Atwell, "Notes on Silver, Foreign Trade, and the Late Ming Economy," pp. 1–33.

and many of them became exceedingly wealthy.[22] In the porcelain city Jingdezhen, for example, twenty out of seventy furnaces in the 1530s were privately owned, and the growth rate of private furnace was far greater than that of state furnaces.[23] Examples of making rapid fortunes were numerous. An owner of a textile factory often owned twenty to thirty machines. A modest person, once taking up commercial enterprises, could become an amazingly rich man.[24]

Indeed, the latter half of the sixteenth century witnessed immense socio-economic changes. A class of "wealthy merchants" (*fushang* 富商) and "giant traders" (*dagu* 大贾) was born. They owned large shops and factories. Their success almost reversed the traditionally negative social standing of the merchant class. Quite few of them actually came from an elite background, and some were degree holders. Obviously scholars were no longer ashamed of doing business. The scholarly gentry tended to transfer its wealth from land to commerce, while the merchants had no interest in investing their money in land and elevated themselves into the class of gentry.[25] This social phenomenon alerted the celebrated late Ming scholar Gu Yanwu 顾炎武 (1613–1682) that there had been more rich merchants than rich landlords since the early sixteenth century, which he considered a "strange trend".[26] It is quite true that most rich men in the Yangzi delta at the time were no longer landowners. The modern historian Fu Yiling 傅衣凌 convincingly concluded that the supremely wealthy households in Jiangnan, south of the Yangzi, made their fortune through industry and commerce.[27]

The booming handicraft industries and their products, such as silk and porcelain, needed markets, and sea-borne commerce was no doubt an essential stimulant for manufacturing. The outflow of a large quantity of goods to foreign countries would open lucrative external markets. But the seafaring interdict deprived the manufacturers of such opportunity.[28] Nevertheless, the prominent merchant families had already formed powerful business alliance to pursue their vital interest. Taking the merchants from southern Anhui for example, they were often bound together by marriage and set up well-organized commercial networks almost all over China. Regardless the interdict, they managed to sell their merchandise overseas and purchased foreign goods abroad through traders and smugglers on the Fujian-Guangdong coast.[29]

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[22]See Chen Shiqi, "Mingdai guan shougongye de yanjiu," pp. 70–106.

[23]See Ke Jianzhong, "Shilun Mingdai shangye ziben yü zibenzhuyi mengya de guanxi," vol. 2, pp. 99, 101, 104.

[24]See Li Guangbi, "Mingdai shougongye de fazhan," p. 37.

[25]Cf. Zhang Dechang, "Mingdai Guangzhou zhi haipo maoyi," pp. 1–18; Fujii Hiroshi, "Shin-an shōnin nō kenkyū," pp. 1–44.

[26]Cited in Liu Yan, "Mingmo chengshi jingji fazhanxia de chuqi shimin yundong," p. 404.

[27]See Fu Yiling, "Mingdai jiangnan fuhu de yanjiu," p. 540.

[28]Fu Yiling, "Mingdai Jiangnan dizhu jingji xinfazhan de chubu yanjiu," p. 54; Jia Jingyan, "Mingdai ciqi de haiwan maoyi," pp. 49–50.

[29]See Fujii Hiroshi, "Shin-an shōnin nō kenkyū," vol. 36, no. 1 pp. 1–44.

This being the case, however tough the maritime interdict appeared, it seemed unable to eliminate the sea-borne commerce altogether. But the interdict disrupted the normal growth of trade; in effect, it made smuggling rampant. The smugglers, who had to behave in a very wary and highly restricted fashion, could carry none but small articles of luxury, such as horns, ivory, and spices. Given the reality, there was no prospect whatsoever of importing or exporting large quantity of goods, which would stimulate a major break-through in manufacturing and commerce. Without substantial imports of raw cotton from abroad, for example, the traditional Chinese technology, which was sufficient to handle the products in lower Yangzi, had no incentive for technological revolution to accelerate production. This situation made Chinese economy fall into what Mark Elvin termed "the high-level equilibrium trap".[30]

Illegal trade or smuggling required huge budgets to pay for the protection of contrabands, the bribery of officials, the employment of smugglers, and fighting government troops. These expenses could have otherwise been used for further commercial investment. All in all, the Ming government policy kept a commercial society from rising in sixteenth century China. The infantile commercialism failed to win over, or even to exercise significant influence on, to use Edward Fox's term, the "territorial society".[31] On the other hand, the territorial society in Mainland China with its monarchic power had little hesitation to suppress the commercial society for the sake of political security and social stability. Accordingly, unlike seventeenth century England, where social mobility gave rise to a new social control in the form of authority representing considerable upward mobility by the merchant class, sixteenth century China, though experiencing considerable upward mobility by the merchant class, kept its old social control intact, which did not work to the profit of the merchant class.

For about three decades after 1525, in spite of the maritime interdict, trading activities in one form or another had gone on in an abnormal fashion. The gigantic smuggling mechanism involved the various classes of people. Wealthy merchants, who invested in shipbuilding and overseas trips, operated at the center. They built up solid social ties with local gentry and the latter joined their hands in smuggling up to their necks.[32] The combined efforts of wealthy merchants and local gentry made it well nigh impossible for the authorities to enforce interdict. Just too many local officials would rather take bribes than carry out their onerous duties. Bribes thus established the illicit relationship between the corrupt officials and the greedy smugglers. So long as they were also the beneficiaries of the illegal operation, the officials were unlikely to enforce the law.[33] Whenever a smuggler's runner was

[30]See Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past*, pp. 248–45.

[31]See Fox, *History in Geographic Perspective: the Other France*, pp. 54, 64.

[32]See Zhang Xie, *Dongxi yang kao*, p. 265; Sakuma Shigao, "Mindai kaigai shiboeki nō rekishi-teki haikei—Fukken-shō chushin tōshite," p. 10. Refer also to *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao*, p. 6.

[33]Cf. Mitamura Taisuke, "Tōyō nō rekishi—Miteikoku tō wako," pp. 269–272; Pelliot, "Le Hoja et la Sayyid Husain de L'histoire des Ming," pp. 81–292.

caught, government officials would lend helping hand, either to play down the matter or simply to release the criminal. The local powerful families really kept smuggling alive and kicking.[34]

The sea-going traders, with the powerful and wealthy families behind the scene, took the actual risks to keep business going. They went abroad and traded overseas. Normally, they borrowed or rented ocean-going ships from their rich sponsors and shared the profits with them after the trip. Some of them simply became the employees or the managers of powerful families, setting sail to and from Japan or Southeast Asia to earn their wages. They as well had their own employees—sailors, servants, runners, warehouse keepers, and guards, who were often the destitute coastal inhabitants, particularly from the overfish Fujian coast. Since the maritime interdict denied the livelihood of the poor, there was no shortage of desperate men to run the risks.[35] In an ironical way, smuggling seemed to have eased the serious unemployment problem at the time. Smuggling thus carried on indefinitely.

The smugglers were preys of not only the troops but also the pirates. Some smugglers, however, became pirates themselves under different circumstances, for instance, in revenge on their bosses or partners for betrayal or maltreatment. Many Japanese, Korean, and European traders also fell into the pirate category either for the resentment of the maritime interdict or simply for envying high profits.[36] Threaten by the growing piracy, the wealthy families, which invested their money in smuggling, raised their own arm forces, or established a foreign connection, or drew pirate gangs into their orbit to protect their business interest.[37]

The coastal defense of the Ming government was a highly defensive one. Just like the Great Wall and Weiso 卫所 garrison posts on the northern frontiers,[38] the coastal guards (yanhaiwei 沿海卫) the government set up along the coastline was to supervise a chains of command, including defense chiliads, barracks, castles, water stockade, watchtowers, and outposts. Such a defense, according to the study of Kawagoe Yoshiro, required one of every four male inhabitants in the littoral regions to serve.[39] Ideally defense should not just be a shield; rather, a shield from behind which to deal out many well directed blows.

In the early Ming, the naval task forces were still able to patrol the shore beyond the fortified towns and villages regularly. They were even capable of launching offensive expeditions. Since the pirates came by sea, they had to be dealt with at

[34]See *Mingshilu*, 85, 350, pp. 6326–27; Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben*, p. 109.

[35]See Zhang Weihua, *Mingdai haiwai maoyi jianlun*, pp. 76–88; Sha Shiwu, "Ming Qing Fujian yanhai jianshang kao," pp. 1–5.

[36]See Hu Zongxian, *Haifang tuzhi*, juan 4, p. 34.

[37]See Zhang Xie, *Dongxi yang kao*, p. 243.

[38]See Taylor, "Yuan Origins of the Wei-so System," pp. 23–40.

[39]See Kawagoe Yoshiro, "Ieidai kaibō taisei nōkeisei ni tsuite," pp. 169–182; Xu Tiantai, "Mingdai Fujian wohuan chugao," p. 18.

sea.[40] For several decades, the Ming was able to sweep away pirates and secure the sea routes. But its defense capability dwindled rapidly through the onset of supine attitudes toward maritime activities.[41] The defense line of the Fujian coast had been consistently moved inward since 1444. The fortifications on the outer islands, known as "advancing naval posts" (*shuizhai* 水寨) almost ceased to exist except in name. Defenses were concentrated on the islands much closer to the shore, and many coastal towns were only thinly garrisoned because of inadequate funds and massive desertion. By 1550, according to Chen Maoheng's 陈懋恒 estimation, the coastal garrisons in Zhejiang, for example, had left no more than 22% of their original strength due largely to desertion. Desertion in Fujian was as high as 44%.[42]

And the poorly motivated and inadequately equipped defense troops, mostly temporarily recruited, proved no match for the energetic pirate force. Especially the Japanese pirates, thanks to their superior ships and weapons, swarmed violently over the walled towns and carried the fortified castles without regard to heavy casualties.[43] The extent of havoc caused by pirates was truly alarming, and the Ming government found itself embarrassingly unable to affect the defense of the shoreline. Ironically, the maximum efforts the government tried to assure security and stability ended up in fiasco.

The garrison farms on the coast, which supplied grain for local defense forces, were also in trouble because of corruption and land annexation. When the economic base of the defense system deteriorated, all sorts of consequences ensued. The morale was low and the defense was poorly maintained. The shortage of weapons and ammunitions was rife. When dangers actually arose, garrison commanders often enlisted private ships for re-enforcement, as government warships were not serviceable because of chronic lack of maintenance, and new ones were yet built. Disciplinary problems of the troops were also on the increase, and the ill-behaved service men abhorred the local inhabitants, who complained of "oppressive soldiery" (*bingzai* 兵灾).[44] Henceforth the Ming government lost its ability and credibility to police the sea.[45]

The fragile defense, once being exposed, inevitably encouraged piracy. 1553 marked the prelude of the great pirate war for years to come. As the late-Ming scholar Cai Jiude 采九德 noted in his 1558 book, a foreign vessel with more than sixty persons on board anchored at Haiyan 海盐 in Zhejiang on 13 May 1553. When Commander Wang Yinglin 王应麟 and his troops made an inquiry, the foreigners told in writing that they were Japanese to come here because of the

[40]See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 12, p. 3754; cf. Jung-pang Lo, "The Decline of the Early Ming Navy," pp. 150–52; Jung-pang Lo, "The Termination of the Early Ming Naval Expeditions," pp. 127–40.

[41]See Lo, "The Decline of the Early Ming Navy," p. 167.

[42]See Chen, Maoheng, *Mindai wokou kaolue*, p. 35. cf. pp. 34–36.

[43]See Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, p. 179.

[44]See *Ming jingshi wenbian xuanlu*, vol. 1, pp. 18–19. cf. Xu Tiantai, "Mingdai Fujian wohuan chugao," pp. 18–20.

[45]See Xu Tiantai, "Mingdai Fujian wohuan chugao," p. 18.

failure of their ship's rudder. And they would leave when the rudder fixed and provisions replenished. The seemingly harmless foreign visitors drew a large curious crowd from nearby towns. When the Chinese approached to the ship, however, the Japanese, all sudden, shot sharp arrows at few to their instant death. The rest took fright and ran away to the walled city for protection. After sunset, some of the Japanese left their ship and were on the rampage. When the sun rose next morning, the officer Hu Shicheng 胡士澄 brought men and gunpowder with him to burn down the ship. A dozen Japanese were killed, while six of them captured, and took Ming troops quite a while to eliminate the rest. The total Ming casualty amounted to eighteen, including officer Hu. Their heads were brutally chopped off and displayed in a row on a bridge. This eyewitness's observation dramatically inaugurated the decade-long crisis on the coastal region.[46]

The knowledgeable local residents soon discovered that many unsuccessful and frustrated Chinese, including some elite, took part in piracy.[47] As the Qing historian Gu Yingtai 谷应泰 confirmed, those who led the Japanese pirates were often Chinese, such as Wang Zhi 汪直, the most powerful one, Xu Hai 徐海, ranked second, and dozens of less well-known chiefs.[48] They led the way to raid the vast coastal regions from north of the Yangzi to Hainan Island in the south, and loot deep inside Jiangsu and Zhejiang. There came pirate coalitions consisting of different nationalities.

Wang Zhi was originally a wealthy trader and smuggler from southern Anhui. The noted "Anhui merchants" (*Huishang* 徽商) had long since established their name in business. Wang succeeded in overseas trade by establishing commercial ties with foreigners, mostly Japanese and Portuguese. In 1530, when Wang was still a salt merchant at home, bad business compelled him to go overseas without regard to the government prohibition. He joined a large number of traders of different nationalities to seek trade profits and challenge the maritime interdict imposed by the Ming authorities. They actively engaged in massive smuggling on the southeast China coast. No later than 1535, a decade after the issuance of the maritime interdict, Yuegang 月港, literary Moon Haven, later known as Haicheng 海澄, near Zhangzhou in Fujian became the notorious hub of smuggling. About the same time, the Fujanese pirate Deng Liao 邓獠, who had escaped from a Fujian prison earlier, brought the Portuguese to Shuangyu 双屿, literary A Pair of Isles, at the southern tip of the Zhoushan islands, where quickly emerged to be a booming harbor filled up with Chinese and foreign trader-smugglers from India, Burma, Malaya, Ryūkyū, Japan, as well as the Europeans and the Africans. They penetrated deep into the hinterland.[49] The illegal operations in Yuegang and Shuangyu, as a recent scholar put it, "crowded with big ships, smugglers, and pirates of various nationalities".[50]

[46]Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 1–3.

[47]Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 5–6.

[48]Gu Yingtai, *Ming wokou shimo*, p. 7.

[49]See Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiaqing jian de huijin zhengce*, p. 128.

[50]Cited in Fu Yiling, *Ming Qing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben*, p. 110.

In 1542, the Anhui merchants Xu Er 许二 and his brothers established a lucrative smuggling headquarter at Shuangyu and sent his fellow provincial Wang Zhi to seek market in Japan. In 1542, Wang set foot on Hirado 平户 in southwest Japan, where he operated his illegal China trade. In the summer of 1543, when Wang took three Portuguese and 100 other customers from Burma to China, his ship was brought by storm to southern Kyūshū. The accident turned out to be a major historical event, the arrival of the Europeans and their firearms in Japan. Wang henceforth ran his lucrative smuggling between Shuangyu and Hirado. Not until after the Ming military forces attacked Shuangyu in 1547 that smuggling came to a halt at least temporarily. When the smugglers killed nine members of the prominent Xie 谢 family in Zhejiang apparently over financial dispute, Zhu Wan 朱纨 (1492–1549), the governor of the province, was entrusted to crack down violence.

Governor Zhu was given a specific instruction to enforce law and order along the coastline south of the Yangzi from Zhejiang to Guangdong.[51] He took his duties seriously. He dispatched a naval task forces to attack Shuangyu. Numerous smugglers, including some Japanese, were first put into custody and then ninety-six of them were executed.[52] Zhu virtually destroyed the smuggling center. The Portuguese abandoned their base, eventually settling down at Macau, while the Xu brothers were missing, presumably dead, and then Wang Zhi led few surviving escapees to safety.[53] Zhu's action was forceful, but it ran counter to the lucrative interest groups, including prominent and influential regional and local families. The governor was fully aware that it was easier to crack down on common criminals than to deal with "the criminals dressed in gentleman's robe",[54] to whom he clearly referred members of the prestigious elite class, or members of the powerful families in the region. Although the governor had no fear of tracking down the powerful people who had been involved in smuggling,[55] the latter showed their teeth. They got a Fujian censor to accuse the governor of unjustly bringing many innocent good families to ruin. Before long, another censor initiated an impeachment proceeding against the governor for his "unconscionable executions".[56] When the governor was under attack, no high-ranking official in Beijing came to his defense. Nor did his political skills match his administrative forcefulness. His memorial to the imperial court in response to the accusations was deemed "arrogant".[57] Lacking independent judgment, the Ming emperor hastily dismissed the man whom he had entrusted to

[51]See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, pp. 5403–04; cf. So Kwan-wai, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China*, pp. 41–72.

[52]See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, p. 5404 and Zhang Xie, *Dongxi yang kao*, p. 266.

[53]See Tang Jintai, *Kaiqi Taiwan diyiren Zheng Zhilong*, pp. 16–17.

[54]See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, p. 5405 and *Ming jingshi wenbian xuanlu,* vol. 1, p. 16.

[55]Cf. Chen Wenshi, *Ming Hongwu Jiaqing jian de haijin zhengce*, pp. 140–150.

[56]See *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao* p. 17. Cf. Pelliot, "Le Hoja et la Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming", p. 196. Li Liyue, "Minnan shishen yu Jiajing nianjian de zousi maoyi," p. 105.

[57]See *Mingshilu minhai guanxi shiliao,* pp. 14–15.

do the difficult job and did it effectively. The heart-broken governor committed suicide in the end.[58]

The governor's relentless efforts before his tragic death, to be sure, had weakened the smuggling mechanism. But his incomplete work soon invited pirate gangs, former smugglers, and foreign adventurers to come back *en masse*. Many of the governor's naval men were so disillusioned that they themselves joined pirate gangs after the death of their revered leader.[59] No regional and local officials ever wanted to tackle the problem again. When the coastal disorder was turning from bad to worse in the 1550s, the pirates finally waged a war against the Ming dynasty. The decade-long pirate war had placed several coastal provinces in ruin.

Wang Zhi took the leadership and re-organized his trading business, traveling between Hirado and the Zhejiang coast. He gained strength by playing the rule of the jungle, attacking and annexing pirate gangs as well as the maverick smuggling groups. Also he was able to establish secret contacts with some members of the Zhejiang authorities. More than once he actually helped the authorities raid and capture violent criminals. What Wang really struggled for was to legalize the trade, and he made it clear to the Ming authorities what he wished. But the Ming court was hesitating, to say the least, to answer Wang's call. The Ming government's refusal to legalize and open up trade stiffened Wang's defiance and resorted to violent actions. The Wang gang consisting of traders, smugglers, and pirates soon emerged to be the dominant force on the Zhejiang coast. The flag ship he built 120 feet long had the capacity of carrying 2000 men, and he even proclaimed himself as the "King of Anhui" (Huiwang 徽王).[60] He was in effect "the king at sea".[61]

The Ming court was most reluctant to lift the trade ban because the civil war in Japan at this time drove numerous wandering *samurai* to be pirates active on the China coast. When Wang's trading base on Zhoushan was attacked, he decided to build a navy of his own to resist. In his name, the rebels started waves of assaults in 1553 on the coastline and wrought havoc to no less than thirty prefectures in the Yangzi delta, where towns and cities were occupied for as long as three months.

In the years that followed they laid waste the lands north of the Yangzi, blocked the vital grain transport at the Grand Canal, and sent their foregoing parties as far as into Shandong. Subsequently, great southern cities, such as Suzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou 扬州, Songjiang 松江, and Nanjing (Nanking) all fell prey to destruction.[62] The Ming government conveniently addressed all its enemies at sea as pirates. But most of them were in effect seaborne merchants, who had been driven by the seafaring interdict into smuggling and piracy. They became the sea rebels

[58]See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, p. 5405 and Zhang Weihua, *Mingdai haiwai maoyi jianlun*, p. 84.

[59]See Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, pp. 177–78.

[60]See Chen Maoheng, *Mingdai wokou kaolue*, p. 103; Cf. Zheng Guangnan, *Zhongguo haidao shi*, pp. 183–98.

[61]Zheng Guangnan, *Zhongguo haidao shi*, pp. 189–91.

[62]See Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 27, pp. 8352–53 and *Mingshilu minha iguanxi shiliao,* pp. 18–22.

because they had been denied their right to trade. Their wealth and skills made them no ordinary pirates. Their capability of inflicting great havoc on the coast was not at all surprising.

The immensely successful Wang Zhi was condemned as the "pirate chief" by the Ming government; however, he was honored as the "Senior Captain" (*lao chuanzhang* 老船长) by his followers and supporters. Indeed, he displayed his great power at sea from 1553 to 1556. From his base in southern Japan, he recruited numerous unemployed Japanese as his vanguards. His blue sea fleets, which consisted hundreds of ships and thousands of men, raided coastal cities at will in 1553. As the government sources record, they slaughtered innocent people by the thousands and robbed whatever was valuable in the opulent towns.[63] Wang's violent action for him was to stage his revenge and protest. In his message to the Ming court in the midst of war, he identified himself as a "sea merchant" (*haishang* 海商). He complained about the maritime interdict and accused government officials of illegally seizing his properties and imprisoning members of his family. He still wanted to seek a compromise, however. He concluded by suggesting that should the imperial court agree to legalize trade and pardon him, he would surrender himself and help restoring coastal peace.[64] Wang's message most unlikely reached the emperor, because the delivery of it from such an "outrageous" person was an offense. Besides, the message plainly laid out the demands that ran counter to the standing government policy.

From 1553 onward, the "riots of the pirates" (*wobian* 倭变) caused very serious crisis on the coast. On June 28, the pirates attacked Pinghu 平湖 and killed more than hundred people; shortly afterward, they pillaged villages near Haining 海宁 on June 8 in the same year. The sudden assaults resulted in increasing casualty and kept local defense busy. By the end of 1553, Haiyan was being attacked four times and approximately 3700 of its inhabitants killed. In the following year, the pirates penetrated into inlands, "committing murder and looting of unparalleled savagery." In Jiaxing 嘉兴, they intruded into the residence of the Jiang family, killed six, including a baby in bed, and drank the blood stains with wine. In Jiashan 嘉善 county, they demolished civilian homes and robbed storehouses empty. In Haining, they sacked people, using men as shields in battle and women to be slaved during the day while being rap and rend at the night. Ostensibly, the Ming authorities lacked coordination; each town or city hid behind the walls leaving villagers at the mercy of the pirates. The local Ming authorities did fight the invaders hard; for instance, it took forty-two days to get pirates out of Shidun 石墩, but apparently costly and ineffective. Thousands of people were dead, tens of thousands homes destroyed, and pirates kept coming. On 13 July 1554, thousands of pirates stormed the Tan 谭 family's rice depot before marching into Suzhou, where the defense

[63]Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 27, pp. 8353–54; Gu Yingtai, *Ming wokou shimo*, 7–15.

[64]See Wang Poleng, *Lidai zhengwo wenxian kao*, pp. 208–09; Zhang Tingyu, *Mingshi*, vol. 18, p. 5410; cf. Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's Campaign against Hsu Hai, 1556," pp. 273–307; Wills, "Maritime China from Wang Chih to Shi Lang," pp. 210–13.

force bore down and Commander Xia 夏 died with hundred of his men. The situation appeared quite hopeless.[65]

In response to the outbreak of the rampant pirate war in 1553, Wang Shu 王纾, the newly appointed coastal commander of Zhejiang, still conceived the enemy in the old fashion way. He believed the pirates would only attack the three coastal towns, namely, Ningbo, Taizhou 台州, and Wenzhou 温州, between April and June and would depart soon after raiding. Should he hold the ground tight, he would get over with it. But, to his great surprise, the garrisons and walled fortifications were woefully deteriorated. When the pirates forcefully invaded the greater Yangzi delta and penetrated deeply into the hinterland in 1553, the Zhejiang commander had no way to stop them, thus losing his job.[66] In desperation, the Ming court dispatched Zhang Jing 张经, the President of the Board of War, to Zhejiang as Governor-general (*Zongdu* 总督) in co-ordination of the anti-pirate war. Zhang had no new strategy. Like his predecessors, he simply constructed walls to surround towns and recruited men to do fighting. Even so, he had great difficulty in financing his project. The local gentry, unhappy with Zhang's incompetence, suggested their own way of defense. They favored a more professional army on the local level, to which Zhang disagreed. The repeated defeats resulted in the recall and arrest of Governor-general Zhang Jing in 1555.[67]

Zhang's successor was Hu Zongxian 胡宗宪, a more experienced men in dealing with the pirates. Hu at last abandoned the old strategy and pursued the enemy more aggressively. More importantly, he won the confidence of local elites. In accordance to their wishes, he started training "village army" (*Xiangjun* 乡军) as a permanent local defense force. Eventually, the well-trained new army under the commands of Qi Jiguang 戚继光 and Yu Dayou 俞大猷 gradually ended the pirate war in 1560.

We may add, however, that Governor-general Hu's success owed much to his treacherous tactics. Once, for example, he dispatched two boats carrying hundred pots of poisonous wine, awaiting pirates to grab, and many were killed by poison.[68] Hu also focused his attention on the top leader Wang Zhi, who happened to be a person from the same Anhui province. Provincial fellowship helped Hu succeed in establishing an intimate personal relationship with Wang. In response to the governor, Wang sent Mao Haifeng 毛海峰, his adopted son and a pirate chief in his own right, to the Hu camp for negotiation. Wang had all the intention for compromise, as his prime interest was trade rather than piracy. In fact, to show his sincerity, Wang secretly helped Hu win several victories during pirate raids. Also, meeting Hu's request, Mao circulated among many other pirate chiefs Wang's intention of accommodating the government's call for appeasement.

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[65]Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 18–19, 21–22, 27, 32–33, 34, 41–42.

[66]See *Ming jingshi wenbian*, *juan* 283, pp. 2992–2993.

[67]See Gu Yingtai, *Ming wokou shimo*, p. 12. Cf. Wu Daxin, "Jiang Zhe defang shishen yu yuwo zhengce," pp. 8–12.

[68]Cai Jiude, *Wobian shilue*, pp. 68–69.