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THE FUJIANESE, RYUKYUANS AND PORTUGUESE (C. 1511 TO 1540s): ALLIES OR COMPETITORS?

por

RODERICH PTAK

The Fujianese in Melaka

When the Portuguese arrived in India, Zheng He's famous expeditions were already a matter of the distant past. Stories of Chinese ships and fleets sailing to Sri Lanka, Calicut, Hormuz and other places still circulated in the early sixteenth century, but few if any details could be obtained as to what Zheng He had achieved. This may surprise in view of the current debate on possible Chinese voyages through the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in pre-Portuguese times. Whatever had occurred under the Yongle and Xuande emperors, it is certain that Fujianese expertise and nautical traditions had significantly contributed to Ming-China's maritime expansion. The Fujianese, it is often assumed, constituted the most important element in this crucial period of China's history, whereas the Cantonese were probably less active on the high seas. They had always profited from the position of Guangzhou as China's southern entry gate, a port much frequented by foreign tribute ships, and probably had developed what may be called a «receiver mentality»¹.

The story of the first known encounters between the Portuguese and the Chinese, some seventy years after the end of Zheng He's last voyage, just before and after the conquest of Melaka in 1511, has often been told and does not need to be repeated here². Only a few observations shall be made. At around 1500 the Chinese had their own quarter in Melaka, along the

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¹ See R. PTAK, «Ming Maritime Trade to Southeast Asia, 1468-1567: Visions of a "System"», in Claude GUILLOT, Denys LOMBARD and R. PTAK (eds.), *From the Mediterranean to the China Sea. Miscellaneous Notes* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), pp. 157-191.

² On the significance of Melaka's conquest for China, see JIN Guoping's study «1511 nian Manlajia lunxian dui Zhonghua diguo de chongji – jian lun Zhongguo jindaishi de qishi», in JIN Guoping and WU Zhiliang, *Jinghai piaomiao (História[s] de Macau – ficção e realidade)* (Macau: Aomen chengren jiaoyu xuehui, 2001), pp. 13-37.

western bank of the river running through that town. If later maps and sketches can be trusted, this area, then (?) called Kampung Cina, consisted of one or two streets, possibly a few blocks. Behind it, to the north, was a *tranqueira*, a kind of stockade for defensive purposes. The concerns of the Chinese were looked after by a *shahbandar* or harbour-master, who also took care of the ships arriving from the Ryukyu Islands, Champa, «Chinchéu», etc. Obviously some Chinese then resident in and around (?) Melaka, or at least in regular touch with that port, were on bad terms with the local Malay government. When the Portuguese moved in, they sided with them, and a certain Cheilata even assisted the conqueror, Afonso de Albuquerque, in opening diplomatic relations with Siam ³.

Almost nothing is known on Cheilata. His «title», *lata*, an expression occasionally found in Chinese texts (as *lada*, different forms) and related to the more common word *nakhoda*, suggests that he was an important merchant with a sizeable amount of capital to his disposition. But the name Chei cannot be straightforwardly linked to any of the private Chinese entrepreneurs trading along the China coast at around that time. That also applies to the forms «Chulata» and «Fulata», apparently variant readings of his name, encountered, for example, in the works of Castanheda, Francisco de Faria and some modern texts ⁴. Be this as it may, we briefly hear of Chei/Chu/Fu *lata* in 1509, 1511, 1513 and again in 1517 – usually in the context of trade. At one point, he also fitted out a junk which left for China together with the fleet of Fernão Peres de Andrade. Given that he assisted the Portuguese in many ways, he certainly was a well-connected man, with good contacts not only to China and Ayuthaya, but also to other areas.

Here a second point deserves our attention. Early Portuguese texts often refer to the «Chinchéus» (various spellings), as in the above case. At the same time they also speak of the «Chins», «Chyna», etc. It seems that in most cases «Chins» designated (all?) Chinese, just as «Chyna» stood for the entire

³ See, for example, Luís Filipe F. R. THOMAZ, *Early Portuguese Malacca* (Macau: Comissão Territorial de Macau para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses and Instituto Politécnico de Macau, 2000), pp. 77-78, his *De Ceuta a Timor* (Linda-a-Velha: Difel, 1994), pp. 524-525, and his «Malaka et ses communautés marchandes au tournant du 16e siècle», in Denys LOMBARD and Jean AUBIN (eds.), *Marchands et hommes d'affaires asiatiques dans l'Océan Indien et la Mer de Chine, 13e-20e siècles* (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1988), pp. 38-39. These and other works are based on Thomaz' earlier (unpublished) *Os Portugueses em Malacca (1511-1580)* (diss., Universidade de Lisboa 1964); see vol. 1, pp. 191-192 there.

⁴ On the title and its variant forms in Chinese, see, for example, NIE Dening, «Mingdai Jiajing shiqi de nada», in Xiamen daxue Nanyang yanjiusuo (ed.), *Nanyang yanjiu lunwenji* (Xiamen 1992), pp. 354-367. There is also earlier Japanese work on the Chinese title. – Regarding the name Chei / Chu / Fu: Perhaps «Chu» was identical with one of the four Xu brothers (?) – see, for example, LIN Renchuan, *Mingmo Qingchu siren haishang maoyi* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1987), pp. 85-87, and sources there – although the recorded activities of these persons relate to later periods (private discussion with James Chin and Jorge M. dos Santos Alves).

country, whereas «Chinchéu» was mostly reserved for the Fujianese context. According to Jin Guoping the latter could point to a number of entities: (a) the city of Zhangzhou, (b) the entire province of Fujian, (c) Wuyu, near Xiamen, (d) the area between Yuegang and Anpinggang, (e) the mouth of the Jiulong River, and (f) the people of Minnan, particularly those from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou⁵. There can be no doubt then, the «Chinchéus» in early sixteenth century Melaka must have come from southern Fujian and they were occasionally perceived as a separate group, in distinction to the «Chins».

In all likelihood Cheilata was also related to Fujian and the Fujianese. His good connections to Siam and the difficulties between the Melaka-Chinese and the local sultan suggest that he, like many of his countrymen, did not profess the Muslim faith. There is a very general reason for this assumption: In the early sixteenth century the Islamic tradition in Fujian already belonged to the past. Quanzhou, which had once hosted a sizeable foreign community under Mongol rule, was destroyed during the transition from Yuan to Ming, and many Chinese Muslims had then left for other ports around the South China Sea, probably reinforcing the Islamic communities in the Brunei and Sulu areas⁶. It thus seems that most Fujianese, who came to Southeast Asia in the days of Cheilata, were no longer associated with the former Islamic «stratum», but belonged to a different context – which is to say, they probably believed in Chinese popular cults and Confucian ideals.

However, some descendents of those who had left Fujian in earlier times could still be encountered in sixteenth-century Southeast Asia. They continued to be Muslims and they resided in different ports, particularly on northern Java. Several years after the conquest of Melaka, these third and fourth generation Chinese Muslims were said to have supported military efforts to oust the Portuguese from their new stronghold⁷. Possibly they had also traded to Melaka in pre-Portuguese times and some of them may even

⁵ JIN Guoping, *Xi li dong jian* (Macau: Aomen jijinhui, 2000), especially p. 73.

⁶ See, for example, CHEN Dasheng, «Quanzhou Yisilan jiaopai yu Yuanmo Yisibaxi zhan-luan xingzhi shitan», *Haijiaoshi yanjiu*, 4 (1982), pp. 113-119; R. PTAK, «From Quanzhou to the Sulu Zone and Beyond: Questions Related to the Early Fourteenth Century», *Journal of South-east Asian Studies*, 29.2 (1998), p. 277; Billy K. L. SO, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China. The South Fukien Pattern, 946-1368* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 122-125.

⁷ See, for example, H. J. de Graaf and Th. G. Th. Pigeaud (trans.), M. C. RICKLEFS (ed.), *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries. The Malay Annals of Semarang and Cerbon* (North Melbourne: Ruskin Press, 1984), pp. 30, 32; M. A. P. MEILINK-ROELOFSZ, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), pp. 112, 147. – For a recent survey of the ports in the Archipelago at around 1500, also see Uka TJANDRASMITA, «The Indonesian Harbour Cities and the Coming of the Portuguese», in Ivo Carneiro de SOUSA and Richard Z. LEIRISSA (eds.), *Indonesia-Portugal: Five Hundred Years of Historical Relationship. Cinco séculos de relações históricas* (Lisbon: Centro Português de Estudos de Sudeste Asiático [2000?]), pp. 43-65.

have stayed there permanently until the very last day. When Melaka fell, they had all reasons to leave for Bintam, Johore and other places. If indeed so, then we are looking at two different Chinese «blocks»: the non-Islamic Fujianese, who collaborated with the Portuguese, and a conglomerate of other merchants, mostly of Muslim background, who supported Portugal's enemies. Many individuals belonging to this second group, it would seem, were already disconnected from their old homes back in Quanzhou.

While those Chinese, who favoured the Islamic case, certainly also assisted the exiled Melaka ruling house in its well-known quest for China's help against the Portuguese, the merchants of South Fujian played an entirely different game. It is possible, indeed, that both Chinese groups constituted rival factions, trying to influence the course of events in China, when the Portuguese and Malays sent official embassies to the Ming court at around 1520. However, this is another complex story, involving the dubious role of Huozhe Yasan (or Khoja Hassan, plus variant forms) in a chain of complicated events that cannot be disentangled in the present note ⁸.

Instead we shall go back to the «Chinchéus» in early Portuguese Melaka. In the first few years following Albuquerque's conquest, both the Portuguese and Fujianese wished to attract more Chinese to that port. As late as 1520, an embassy going from Melaka to Pahang was accompanied by some Chinese, probably again from Fujian, who hoped to persuade their colleagues on the eastern side of the Malay peninsula to move over to its western side. But these plans did not materialize. Records pertaining to the history of Melaka under Portuguese rule are almost silent in regard to the further destiny of the Melaka-Chinese after the 1520s or 1530s. It seems that very few Chinese, if any, moved to that port. Apparently, Melaka's Chinese (or Fujianese?) population became less significant in the course of the sixteenth century, especially in the later part of that century ⁹.

We shall take up some of these ideas further below. The important thing here is that, obviously, for some reasons the Pahang-Chinese and other Chinese were hesitant to work together with the Melaka-Portuguese during the late 1510s and early 1520s. Pahang was an important stopover for trade

⁸ Western studies on this include, for example: Paul Pelliot, «Le Hoja et le Sayyid Husain de l'histoire des Ming», *T'oung Pao*, 37 (1948), pp. 81-210; CHANG T'ien-tsê, «Malacca and the Failure of the First Portuguese Embassy to Peking», *Journal of Southeast History*, 3 (1962), pp. 45-64, and in *Boletim do Instituto Luís de Camões*, 15.1-2 (1981), pp. 149-163; Geoff WADE, «Melaka in Ming Dynasty Texts», *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 70.1 (1997), especially pp. 49-53; Rui Manuel LOUREIRO, «A malograda embaixada de Tomé Pires a Pequim», in Jorge M. dos Santos ALVES (coord.), *Portugal e a China. Conferências no II curso livre de história das relações entre Portugal e a China (séculos XVI-XIX)* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 1999), pp. 39-55.

⁹ See, for example, Paulo Jorge de Sousa PINTO, «Traços da presença chinesa em Malaca (século XVI – 1.^a metade do século XVII)», in Jorge M. dos Santos ALVES (coord.), *Portugal e a China. Conferências nos encontros de história luso-chinesa* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 2001), p. 136.

between southern China and various destinations in the Malay world, but just what motivated these merchants to stay on the eastern side of the peninsula, particularly at that time, remains unclear, at least at this stage of our analysis ¹⁰.

The above seems to indicate that cooperation between Portuguese-Melaka and the Fujianese was restricted to a few individuals like Cheilata. These merchants had good connections to Siam, as was already said. We must therefore look at Siam as well. Later sources tell us that many Fujianese would regularly sail to that area and there is also evidence, already from earlier periods, that some Siamese sending tribute to the Ming court were overseas Chinese, probably mostly from Fujian. There were thus close ties between the Siamese and Fujianese and it is possible that Cheilata and his countrymen in Melaka formed part of this Siamese-Fujianese trading network which is important to keep in mind for the further discussion below ¹¹.

The Ryukyu Mystery

One element in the Sino-Siamese network was the port of Patani, again on the eastern side of the Malay peninsula, only some two or three hundred kilometers north of Pahang. On the presence of Chinese traders in Patani during the first one or two decades after 1500 little is known. But a few years later, in the 1530s and 1540s, clear evidence shows up through Portuguese materials ¹². We are told that Chinese vessels would frequently call at this port which lay *en route* to Johore, the Riau group, Bangka, Sumatra, western Java, and so on.

Since Patani was not too far from other ports and inlets along the Malayan east coast, it is likely that all these places competed with each other for trade with China, Ayuthaya, the various locations on the western side of the peninsula, including Melaka, as well as the many ports in what is now western Indonesia. Within this context Patani also attracted merchants from the Ryukyu Islands. Evidence drawn from the *Lidai bao'an* collection shows that ships from Naha sailed to Patani in the later part of the fifteenth century

¹⁰ On Pahang the old work by W. LINEHAN, *A History of Pahang* (rpt. Kuala Lumpur: Charles Grenier Sdn. Bhd., 1973; originally as vol. 14.2 of the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1936), is still good.

¹¹ Western studies on Sino-Siamese relations include Promboon SUEBSAENG's, *Sino-Siamese Tributary Relations, 1282-1853* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971, unpublished), especially pp. 149 et seq. and 224 et seq., and Geoff WADE, «The *Ming shi-lu* as a Source for Thai History – Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries», *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31.2 (2000). On Luso-Siamese contacts see Maria da Conceição FLORES, *Os Portugueses e o Sião no século XVI* (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1995), especially the first few chapters.

¹² Rui Manuel LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos, missionários e mandarins. Portugal e a China no século XVI* (Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 2000), for example pp. 319, 320, 369, 377.

and more regularly between circa 1514 and circa 1530 (the last recorded voyage occurred in the 1540s)¹³. The early presence of Ryukyuan traders in Patani, already before and right after 1500, suggests that they contributed to the growth of that port at a time when the Fujianese were not yet as active there as they were to become after circa 1520.

Another facet of trade in that period brings us back to Melaka. Between 1463 and 1511 one, two or more Ryukyuan vessels would sail to that port every year¹⁴. After 1511 we no longer hear of Ryukyuan ships going to Melaka. Obviously the Ryukyuan traders were not pleased with the new masters of that port, so that they began using Patani as an alternative entrepôt for their business transactions in Southeast Asia. This was also observed by Vasco Calvo (in the 1530s), who wrote that, formerly, they would sail to Melaka for trade, now «[they] sell merchandise to Patane...»¹⁵

The shift of Ryukyuan trade from Melaka to Patani may indicate a certain degree of competition between the Ryukyuan traders and the Fujianese. Had the former sided with the latter, they certainly would have stayed on in Melaka, just like Cheilata. This is significant in view of the frequently-found assumption that both the Fujianese and Ryukyuan networks overlapped to some measure. Indeed, in the earlier parts of the fifteenth century Fujianese families had moved to the Ryukyu Islands and the Ryukyu network probably owed much of its technical and commercial expansion to a steady input of Fujianese «ingredients»¹⁶. The Ryukyu Islands, in the perception of many Chinese,

¹³ See, for example, CHANG Pin-tsun, *Chinese Maritime Trade: The Case of Sixteenth Century Fu-chien (Fukien)* (PhD diss., Princeton University 1983, unpublished), pp. 353-354. Also see KOBATA Atsushi and MATSUDA Mitsugu, *Ryukyuan Relations with Korea and South Sea Countries. An Annotated Translation of Documents in the Rekidai Hôan* (Kyoto 1969), pp. 177-182; José YAMASHIRO, *Okinawa, uma ponte para o mundo* (São Paulo: Cultura Editores Associados, 1993), p. 157. The *Lidai bao'an* collection was published by the Guoli Taiwan daxue. The first volume is particularly useful for the period considered here.

¹⁴ CHANG Pin-tsun, *Chinese Maritime Trade*, pp. 353-354; KOBATA and MATSUDA, *Ryukyuan Relations*, pp. 101-129; YAMASHIRO, *Okinawa*, pp. 151-154.

¹⁵ See the collection of texts in Georg SCHURHAMMER, «1543-1943 – O descobrimento do Japão pelos Portugueses no ano de 1543» (trans. from German), *Anais da Academia Portuguesa da História*, 2.^a sér., vol. 1 (1946), p. 67, or Donald FERGUSON, *Letters from Portuguese Captives in Canton Written in 1534 and 1536...* (rpt. Bombay: Education Society's Steam Press, 1902; originally in *Indian Antiquary*), pp. 94, 100, 156, 163. – I have not seen Patrick BEILLEVAIRE (ed.), *Ryukyuan Studies to 1854. Western Encounter. Part 1*, 5 vols. (announced by Curzon Press for 2000).

¹⁶ See, for example, Gerhard MUELLER, *Wohll wollen und Vertrauen. Die Investitursandtschaft von Chen Kan im Jahr 1534 vor dem Hintergrund der politischen und wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen des Ming-Reiches zu den Ryûkyû-Inseln zwischen 1372 und 1535* (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 1991), pp. 44-47. There are many studies on early Ryukyu-Fujian relations and the so-called thirty-six families. These works cannot all be listed here. Some useful articles may be found in *Haijiaoshi yanjiu*, for example in the first issue of 1997. Other articles, in Japanese and Chinese, are contained in the various proceedings of the regular conferences on Sino-Ryukyuan relations. The last volume is the one of the eighth meeting (2001).

constituted a loyal vassal state of the Ming, official ties between both sides were nearly always cordial. The question thus arises, whether this *entente cordiale* was also observed by Ryukyuan and Fujianese traders sailing to Southeast Asia. If not, then it is possible that some Fujianese were quite pleased with the Ryukyuan withdrawal from Melaka and perhaps, later on, even displaced them in Patani.

On the other side, Ryukyuan vessels almost regularly sailed to Siam, both before and after the fall of Melaka. Even Vasco Calvo knew about this. The Naha-Siam trade may thus imply a certain degree of cooperation between merchant groups from both Ryukyu and Fujian. The Fujianese, it will be recalled, constituted an important element in Ayuthaya's foreign relations, and perhaps the true or alleged Siamese-Fujianese «amalgamate» should be extended to include some Ryukyuan as well. Another area where Ryukyuan vessels could be encountered, probably side by side with Fujianese private traders, was the region around Xiangshan and modern Macau, in the Pearl River estuary¹⁷. The presence of Ryukyu ships there is already attested for the fifteenth century. Further references relate to Hainan. Vessels from both Siam and Naha occasionally made stopovers in the ports of that island, or were forced to land there, due to unfavorable currents and winds¹⁸. In short, then, it is quite possible that the «Ryukyu-Fujian sector» worked well in Ayuthaya and certain other regions, while it did not function in Melaka and Patani.

Interestingly, after the arrival of the Portuguese in the Pearl River estuary, we rarely hear of Ryukyuan ships going to that area; one of the last references occurs in the context of Fernão Peres de Andrade's voyage in the late 1510s¹⁹. It thus seems as if the Ryukyuan disappeared from central Guangdong at some point in the early sixteenth century. By contrast, the Siamese (jointly with their Fujianese partners?) continued to visit Guangzhou, bringing tribute and other merchandise. Obviously they were well-received by the Cantonese because in later years, after the collapse of initial Luso-Chinese contacts, the Portuguese would often disguise themselves as Siamese in order to slip through China's coastal inspection posts²⁰. Clearly,

¹⁷ For contacts between Siam and Ryukyu, see sources in note 13, above. For Ryukyuan in the Pearl River area near modern Macau, see sources in TANG Kaijian, *Ming Qing shidafu yu Aomen* (Macau: Aomen jijinhui, 1998), pp. 5-6, and *Aomen kaibu chuqishi yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), pp. 67-68, 72.

¹⁸ See, for example, KOBATA Atsushi, *Hainandao shi* (Chin. trans.; Taipei: Xuehai chubanshe, 1979), p. 164. Also cf. R. PTAK, «Hainan's Außenbeziehungen während der frühen Ming-Zeit (Hongwu bis Hongzhi)», in Claudine SALMON and R. PTAK (eds.), *Hainan: De la Chine à l'Asie du Sud-Est. Von China nach Südostasien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2001), and R. PTAK, «Hainan's Position in Maritime Trade, c. 1000-1500», paper read at the international symposium «China and Southeast Asia: Historical Interactions», University of Hong Kong, July 2001.

¹⁹ See, for example, João de BARROS, *Década III*, bk. 2, ch. 8.

²⁰ See, for example, LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, p. 321.

whether the Portuguese or Siamese / Fujianese were a decisive factor behind the Ryukyuan withdrawal from the Xiangshan area, will never be known, but the impression remains that the Ryukyuan were losers in some way. In other words, it could very well be that we are looking at a second scenario here, after the one in Melaka, where Portuguese and / or Siamese-Fujianese activities – plus the temporary closure of Guangzhou in the 1520s (we shall return to that farther below) – had a certain impact on the Ryukyuan trading sector.

One issue remains unclear, however. Why did the Ryukyuan avoid Melaka and the Portuguese in the 1510s? First, there may have been purely economic reasons which will be discussed further below. Second, the decision to leave Melaka could be seen as a move against the local Fujianese, who, because they sided with the Portuguese, were now looked down upon or considered more dangerous than before. Third, perhaps some of the merchants from Naha were influenced by Islamic groups who taught them to stand up against the Portuguese. Before 1511 Ryukyuan ships had occasionally sailed to other Southeast Asian ports with strong Islamic communities and probably this tradition *per se* excluded any cooperation with the Portuguese. Fourth, a very different possibility would be to relate some of the earlier Fujianese «ingredients» associated with the Ryukyu network to the former Islamic communities in Quanzhou. This, of course, is purely speculative – and perhaps wrong. But a handful of Chinese and other Muslims staying in that city during the so-called Isfahan rebellion (fourteenth century) certainly survived the purge against them, hiding themselves in Fujian's coastal areas as best as they could. In the course of the fifteenth century some of their descendents may have absconded to Okinawa. Interestingly, fifteenth century tribute trade between Naha and Ming-China was handled by a *shibosi* or «Maritime Supervisorate» initially located in Quanzhou, the former Islamic «stronghold», and only transferred to Fuzhou much later, in 1474 ²¹. It thus could be that memories of a neglected Islamic dimension, linking Quanzhou and Naha, contributed to the reservation of Ryukyuan traders vis-à-vis the Portuguese. Fifth, more simple than that would be the assumption that relations between certain families in Fuzhou and Naha, especially during the last quarter of the fifteenth century, brought some Ryukyuan traders in opposition to the southern Fujianese – and thereby to the Portuguese. This hypothesis would presuppose some degree of competition between the Chinese of the Fuzhou area and those hailing from places farther to the south.

Finally, as already mentioned, the *shahbandar* in Melaka, who was responsible for the Fujianese and Ryukyuan, also had to administer the

²¹ For the *shibosi* offices, see, for example, Roland Louis HIGGINS, *Piracy and Coastal Defense in the Ming Period. Government Response to Coastal Disturbances, 1523-1549* (PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota 1981, unpublished), pp. 53-55. For Quanzhou's role in Sino-Ryukyuan trade, see ZHUANG Jinghui, «Quanzhou zai Ming Liu jiaowang zhong de diwei he zuoyong», *Zhongguo shehui jingjishi yanjiu* (1/1990), pp. 43-48.

affairs of the Champa community in that port. Presumably most merchants from Champa professed the Islamic faith. Moreover, there were links between them and the Sanya region on southern Hainan, which can be traced to the Song and Yuan periods (during which they even extended to Quanzhou)²². Clearly, through Melaka, the Champanese were also in touch with their colleagues from Naha, although very little is recorded on these contacts. Furthermore, in 1471 the seizure of much of Champa's territory through Đai Viêt had caused an exodus of many Champanese to different places in South-east Asia and a gradual strengthening of relations between Melaka and Champa²³. Probably this also strengthened ties between the Champa and Ryukyu communities in Melaka. Indeed, Shiro Momoki has collected evidence to show that Melaka, Champa *and* the Ryukyu kingdom formed something like an «alliance» in the period just prior to the arrival of the Portuguese²⁴. Perhaps then, this in itself is the strongest argument to explain why the Ryukyuans (and Champanese) withdrew from Melaka after 1511.

Whether the «alliance» between Melaka, Champa and the Ryukyuans was paralleled by close mercantile relations between the South Fujianese and Đai-Viêt is hard to tell. During certain periods Jiaozhi (or Annan, as the latter was usually called in Chinese sources) and Champa competed for Ming-China's favour and protection, and apparently Đai-Viêt also competed with Ryukyu, but the possible attitudes of private Minnan traders towards Đai-Viêt remain to be studied more thoroughly. Suffice it to say here that a short-lived constellation where the Fujianese and Vietnamese stood against a «joint» Melaka-Champa-Ryukyu «group» prior to the arrival of the Portuguese cannot be fully excluded, although it seems somewhat unlikely. It would perhaps be more safe to assume that the «disassociation» of the Ryukyuans from the Fujianese was more or a less restricted to Melaka, while in other areas no clear «frontiers» were drawn between both these «camps».

²² See, for example, Jitsuzô KUWABARA, «On P'u Shou-kêng, a Man of the Western Regions...», *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, especially 7 (1935), pp. 4, 21-22 n. 18; Pierre-Yves MANGUIN, «Études Cam. II: L'introduction de l'Islam au Campa», *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 79 (1979), especially p. 259; CHEN Dasheng and Claudine SALMON, «Rapport préliminaire sur la découverte de tombes musulmanes dans l'île de Hainan», *Archipel*, 38 (1989), pp. 75-106; ZHANG Xiumin, *Zhong Yue guanxishi lunwenji* (Beijing: Wen shi zhe chubanshe, 1992), pp. 311 et seq.

²³ For example, Denys LOMBARD, «Le Campa vu du sud», *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 76 (1987), p. 315.

²⁴ Shiro MOMOKI, «Was Đai-Viêt a Rival of Ryukyu within the Tributary Trade System of the Ming during the Early Lê Period (1428-1527)?», in NGUYỄN Thê Anh and Yoshiaki ISHIZAWA (eds.), *Commerce et navigation en Asie du Sud-Est (XIV^e-XIX^e siècle). Trade and Navigation in Southeast Asia (14th-19th Centuries)* (Paris, etc.: L'Harmattan, 1999), especially pp. 105-108, and sources there.

The Pepper Trade

The above suggests an initial period of Luso-Fujianese understanding and cooperation based on common interests. Other Chinese trading groups and the Ryukyuans did not share the views of their southern Fujianese competitors. They certainly harboured hopes that the Ming court would eventually send a major fleet and restore Melaka to its former position. The implicit calculation was, logically, that once Melaka would be returned to the exiled sultan, they – *i.e.*, the Ryukyuans, Champanese and others – would move back to that port, where, under China's renewed protection, they would possibly enjoy even greater privileges than they had ever been able to enjoy before.

Beyond these «purely» political calculations, economic considerations must also be looked at in determining the behaviour of the above trading groups just prior and after the conquest of Melaka. Pepper and sapanwood are of major concern in this context. China needed large quantities of both commodities. Korea and Japan also absorbed spices and other products originating from tropical Southeast Asia²⁵. Demand for pepper, in particular, expanded in the course of the fifteenth century and certainly also after 1511. Data pertaining to the trade going through Naha suggest that China imported sizeable quantities of pepper through the Ryukyuan network²⁶. Undoubtedly, additional amounts were furnished by the Fujianese, who, like their competitors, tried to obtain pepper in various Southeast Asian ports.

At around 1500 pepper was produced in the following areas: near the ports on northwestern Sumatra, especially in the Pasai and Aceh regions, on southeastern Sumatra, near the Sunda Strait, and along the east coast of the Malayan peninsula. Chinese *lishi dili* records contain many references to the trade in and the production of pepper in different Southeast Asian places. Portuguese references also abound. Calvo, for example, mentions the rich pepper supplies of Pasai, Pedir, Patani and «Banda», the latter undoubtedly referring to the Bantem area²⁷.

The early Portuguese quickly adjusted to China's unsatiable demand for tropical spices. Almost immediately after the conquest of Melaka and the first few voyages to the Pearl River area, they learned that pepper would be profitably sold in China²⁸. Proposals were thus made to develop the pepper trade from various ports in Southeast Asia. One area where Portugal thought of establishing a permanent post was Samudra-Pasai. Giovanni da Empoli,

²⁵ TS'AO Yung-ho, «Pepper Trade in East Asia?», *T'oung Pao*, 47.4-5 (1982), pp. 221-247, and for earlier periods T' IEN Ju-kang, «Cheng Ho's Voyages and the Distribution of Pepper in China», *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1981), pp. 186-197.

²⁶ See, for example, CHANG Pin-tsun, *Chinese Maritime Trade*, pp. 355-357.

²⁷ FERGUSON, *Letters*, pp. 99, 162.

²⁸ See, for example, LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, p. 159.

Fernão Peres de Andrade and other names can be associated with these early ventures²⁹. After 1520 a half-hearted initiative was also undertaken in the Sunda-Bantem region, but this place was far away from Melaka and the Portuguese were unable to maintain a stable commercial «base» there³⁰.

Shipping large quantities of pepper to China inevitably meant that Portugal had to think about its position vis-à-vis the Fujianese. Was it possible to maintain friendly contacts with them, or were both groups «doomed» to become rivals in the pepper sector? – As was said, already before the fall of Melaka, Chinese junks had begun sailing to various Southeast Asian «pepper regions». This included Samudra-Pasai, Pedir, Pahang and even the Sunda-Bantem area. In other words, Chinese pepper merchants were in the midst of expanding their business, geographically and quantitatively, when the Portuguese started to move in. The same assumption may be valid for the trade in sapanwood, which chiefly came from continental Southeast Asia, for example modern Thailand, and played an important role on China's domestic market. More generally still, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century witnessed economic growth under the Ming, after a period of depression in the middle of the fifteenth century, and this new growth led to an expansion of the southern Fujianese trade sector.

Here some more «micro» data pertaining to the expansion of that trade sector must be considered, before we can return to the question of Luso-Fujianese relations. Early in the fifteenth century Ma Huan had called Samudra the «principal centre for the Western Ocean»³¹. Obviously a sizeable community of private Chinese traders had remained in that port after the termination of Zheng He's voyages. Moreover, as in Melaka, there had been a Kampung Cina, next to the trading quarters reserved for various other «nationalities». However, towards the end of the fifteenth century, nothing else is recorded of the Chinese associated with Samudra-Pasai³². Perhaps they had left for Melaka or other places – during a period of weak

²⁹ See, for example, Jorge M. dos Santos ALVES, *O domínio do norte de Samatra. A história dos sultanatos de Samudera-Pacém e de Achém e das suas relações com os Portugueses (1500-1580)* (Lisbon: Sociedade Histórica da Independência de Portugal, 1999), ch. 3, especially p. 104 n. 171 and p. 126; Laurence A. NOONAN, *John of Empoli and His Relations with Afonso de Albuquerque* (Lisbon: Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1989), pp. 95-96; LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, pp. 198-200. Also see Marco SPALLANZANI (ed.), *Giovanni da Empoli. Um mercante navigatore fiorentino* (Florence: Studio Per Edizione Scelte, 1984), pp. 51-67, and his *Mercanti fiorentini nell' Asia Portoghese (1500-1525)* (Florence: Studio Per Edizione Scelte 1997), pp. 90, 130, 133 et seq.

³⁰ Claude GUILLOT, «La nécessaire relecture de l'accord luso-soudanais de 1522», *Archipel*, 42 (1991), pp. 53-76; Jorge M. dos Santos ALVES, «L'inscription du padrão português de Banten (1522)», *Archipel*, 47 (1994), pp. 23-33; LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, p. 295.

³¹ Ma Huan (author), J. V. G. MILLS (ed. and tr.), *Ying-yai sheng-lan. The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores [1433]* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1970), p. 115. On Samudra recently also ALVES, *O domínio*, especially ch. 3.

³² For example, ALVES, *O domínio*, pp. 116, 122.

economic performance or political crisis –, or perhaps they had simply assimilated to the local population. Pedir was a different case. When the first Portuguese came to Southeast Asia, Chinese traders were encountered in that port, which lay to the west of Samudra-Pasai, in the vicinity of Aceh³³. The Sunda-Bantem region, already mentioned in Chinese texts before 1500, for example in Zhao Rugua's famous *Zhufan zhi* (preface 1225), was another area where trade continued to flourish after the fall of Melaka³⁴. Various Portuguese documents refer to Chinese junks trading in that area, especially during the 1540s. One such text, which is of an earlier date (1527), says that on one occasion thirty junks had left Fujian, the majority of which were heading for Sunda. It was also argued that Chinese merchants competed with the Ryukyuan in Sunda, but the latter never sent very many ships to that place. Much later, when the Dutch appeared on the scene, Chinese merchants were probably the chief buyers of pepper in these lands³⁵. Patani was already referred to in the second section of this paper. Little is known on its early years. In the 1540s, however, its position in international trade emerges more clearly. Moreover, through the Chinese network, Patani was also connected to Japan, and during the heyday of Wokou activities it became one of the destinations of the He Yaba trading «group»³⁶. Other places where Fujianese junks would occasionally stop, were the many islands along the way from Pulau Tioman to western Java. Recent sketches and the detailed analysis provided by Lin Woling show that sailing routes through that area touched Batam, Lingga, Singkep, Bangka, and so on³⁷.

The above, as rough a picture as it may be, suggests that Chinese traffic along the «axis» from Fujian to the pepper producing areas near Patani, Pahang and in the Sunda-Bantem region did indeed expand during the early sixteenth century, while China's presence to the west of Johore decreased (Samudra-Pasai) or stagnated (Melaka). Two possible explanations for this implied reorientation of Chinese trade to the ports east of Johore may be thought of: First, it was faster, safer and cheaper – in terms of seasonal winds and transportation costs – to pick up pepper and other goods in Patani, Pahang, Batam, Sunda and so on, than sailing through the narrow sea lanes around the Riau archipelago in order to reach Melaka and the ports of

³³ SPALLANZANI, *Giovanni da Empoli*, p. 150.

³⁴ Han Zhenhua zhuzuo zhengli xiaozu (ed.), *Zhufan zhi zhubu*, Han Zhenhua xuanji, vol. 2 (Hong Kong: Xianggang daxue Yazhou yanjiu zhongxin, 2000), especially pp. 47, 55-56, 63, 75-77, 102, 110.

³⁵ See, for example, LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, pp. 317, 377, 384; PINTO, «Traços», p. 137, and n. 14. On China-Bantem relations, more generally, CAO Yonghe, «Mingmo Huaren zai Zhaowa Wandan de huodong», in *Zhongghuo haiyang fazhanshi lunwenji weiyuanhui* (ed.), *Zhongguo haiyang fazhanshi lunwenji*, vol. 2 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Sanmin zhuyi yanjiusuo, 1986), especially pp. 221 et seq. and 226 et seq.; LIN Woling, *Longyamen xinkao* (Singapore: Nanyang xuehui, 1999), pp. 114-118.

³⁶ See, for example, LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, p. 369; LIN Renchuan, *Mingmo*, p. 98.

³⁷ LIN Woling, *Longyamen xinkao*, ch. 4.

northwestern Sumatra. Second, those Chinese who had formerly traded in Samudra, were possibly mostly Muslims, just like their colleagues who had settled in the ports along the north coast of Java. Those sailing to Patani, Pahang and Sunda – now, in the early sixteenth century – mostly hailed from southern Fujian. These Fujianese, we may presume, were not at odds with the Portuguese, but they no longer wanted to go to Melaka, either because they competed amongst themselves, for example with merchants like Cheilata, or more likely, because Melaka was no longer as attractive as before, due to a general decline in its overall trade volume after 1511, or simply because it lay too far off the main «pepper route». In other words, it were cost considerations that mattered for the implied eastern «shift» of Chinese trade, and not political concerns. If these conclusions are acceptable, our earlier image of an expanding Fujianese-Siamese(-Portuguese) sector can be maintained, at least for the initial period of Luso-Chinese contacts.

Several other assumption could of course be added to this highly speculative mosaic. Perhaps many Fujianese thought of specializing in the pepper trade along the Patani-Pahang-Sunda «axis», harbouring hopes the Portuguese would complement their shipments by bringing pepper from the Samudra region via Melaka, or would stay out of the pepper business altogether and focus on other imports instead, particularly of costly goods originating from the countries around the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, it is also possible that the early Portuguese, who had efficient fire arms, were perceived as a potential protective power among the southern Fujianese communities. Finally, some of those who had assisted the Portuguese against Melaka, were probably afraid of going to the ports of Northwest Sumatra, fearing they might no longer be welcomed by the local Islamic communities.

Here the above may be summarized: First, the Portuguese did not push the Fujianese out of the pepper business, at least not during the years immediately after the fall of Melaka. Second, the Fujianese had no reasons to disassociate themselves from the Portuguese during this early period. Finally, the conquest of Melaka, which occurred when Fujianese trade was swiftly expanding, must have motivated many of them to strengthen their position in other ports, however *not* because they feared the Portuguese, but chiefly because they considered material advantages. Thus, Portugal's arrival on the scene accelerated the growth of Fujian's private overseas sector in an indirect way. This in turn, may have provoked other reactions, one being perhaps, that the Fujianese were now forced to gradually move from cooperation with the Ryukyuans to competition with them in such places as Patani.

At the Chinese End

The scenario described in the previous paragraphs cannot be completely disconnected from yet another scenario – the central Guangdong coast in the late 1510s and early 1520s. This is the time of Tomé Pires' unsuccessful

mission, of Simão d'Andrade's true or alleged misdeeds, and of violent encounters between Chinese and Portuguese ships. The sequence of these events has often been presented in the literature and does not need to be retold here ³⁸.

What matters is that turmoil in the Pearl River estuary provoked a temporary closure of Guangzhou. Portuguese merchants were no longer allowed to set foot on Chinese soil and some of their countrymen, originally belonging to Pires' mission, were detained. During the next one or two decades the *Estado da Índia* still kept an eye on China as a gigantic market to be explored in the future, under more favorable conditions, but Goa's attention was now directed towards the Moluccan Islands. Spanish interests in the Philippines and the Sulu zone – Magalhães had just traversed the Pacific – became a constant source of concern, which made this «shift» obligatory. Furthermore, the Moluccan Islands produced cloves, an important commodity for the Gujaratis, who were enemies of the Portuguese. Enforcing controls over the Spice Islands, then the only producer of cloves, would weaken the position of the Gujaratis and their Muslim allies ³⁹. Finally, the *Estado* simply had too few men, ships and funds to deal with two major «trouble» areas at one and the same time, namely Guangdong and «eastern Indonesia».

In China, the temporary closure of Guangzhou and increased military vigilance along the coasts around the Pearl River estuary disturbed the activities of various trading groups. But Ming controls were not fully efficient and some merchants managed to move in and out as they pleased. Presumably many Siamese were among them and most likely they closely cooperated with the Fujianese, as they had always done, while the Ryukyans were pushed out of business now, if they had not been pushed out earlier. There is of course no way of estimating the volume of foreign trade going through central Guangdong during these years, but we may assume that, generally, Guangzhou's imports declined considerably.

Probably, the efficient use of modern European artillery during the clashes of the early 1520s led to another unwanted reaction in China: Many Fujianese began to fear the Portuguese. Heavily armed Portuguese ships and Fujianese junks had followed the same route when sailing from the Malayan peninsula to China and back. This route was a narrow alley, particularly near the Vietnamese coast where it passed the Paracel Islands on their western side, hence Fujianese and Portuguese vessels would easily encounter in the

³⁸ Recently, detailed coverage is provided, for example, in LOUREIRO's *Fidalgos* and in an article with some fresh ideas, printed in JIN Guoping's *Xi li dong jian*, pp. 1-18.

³⁹ See, for example, R. PTAK, «Asian Trade in Cloves circa 1500: Quantities and Trade Routes – A Synopsis of Portuguese and Other Sources», in FRANCIS A. DUTRA and João Camilo dos SANTOS (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Colloquium «The Portuguese and the Pacific»* (Santa Barbara: Center for Portuguese Studies, University of California, 1995), pp. 149-169.

South China Sea and no one could predict whether these encounters would remain peaceful or turn violent ⁴⁰.

But Fujianese fears cannot have lasted very long. As was said, the official layers of the *Estado da Índia* had become more interested in the Moluccan Islands and practically no further clashes are reported between Portuguese and Chinese ships immediately after the disastrous events of the early 1520s. Moreover, from the Fujianese viewpoint these clashes had mostly involved Cantonese men and junks, and no or only very few Fujianese elements. Thus, there was a realistic chance to continue cooperation with the Portuguese, although one had to be more careful with them than before.

Here we can return to Guangzhou's economic performance. The results of the closed-door policy after the early 1520s became obvious when Lin Fu, grand-coordinator of the two Guang provinces, complained about a lack of funds. This occurred in 1529 ⁴¹. He argued that local revenues could be improved again if Annam, Cambodia (Zhenla), Pahang, Champa and other countries would be permitted to revive tribute trade to Guangzhou, but he excluded the Portuguese from his proposal. More important still, he also said the closure of Guangzhou had diverted trade to the Zhangzhou area in South Fujian. Obviously, Fujian's local officials and mercantile elite handled the central government's trade prohibitions (originally imposed under the Hongwu emperor) in a very relaxed manner – to the advantage of places like Zhangzhou and Yuegang – and quite in contrast to the Cantonese, who followed the laws very strictly without deriving any profit thereof. Even Cristóvão Vieira, prisoner in Guangzhou, remarked that Guangzhou «is at present poor», because no ships and no goods came in ⁴². Differently put, the institutional changes set off by the Portuguese in Guangzhou contributed to a temporary decline of the central Guangdong economy and this may have forced the Fujianese to ship more commodities to Fujian, which in turn strengthened Fujian's mercantile sector and coastal towns. Thus, the Fujianese had profited twice, from the events in Melaka and from the events near Guangzhou.

Lin Fu's quest led to a reopening of Guangzhou. Only the Portuguese had to stay out. The Fujianese, we may assume, immediately reacted by reviving

⁴⁰ The most detailed study of this route still is Pierre-Yves MANGUIN's *Les Portugais sur les côtes du Viêt-Nam et du Campa. Étude sur les routes maritimes et les relations commerciales, d'après les sources portugaises (XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1972).

⁴¹ See, for example, NG Chin-Keong, «Trade, the Sea Prohibition and the "Fo-lang-chi", 1513-1550», in DUTRA and SANTOS, *Proceedings*, pp. 390-391; FOK Kai Cheong, *The Macao Formula: A Study of Chinese Management of Westerners from the Mid-sixteenth Century to the Opium War* (PhD dissertation, University of Hawaii 1978, unpublished), pp. 52-54; R. ПТАК, «Sino-Portuguese Relations, circa 1513/14-1550s», in ALVES (coord.), *Portugal e a China. Conferências no II curso livre*, pp. 24-25.

⁴² FERGUSON, *Letters*, pp. 76-77, 131.

their trade to the Pearl River area in the context of trade to Southeast Asia. Since the Portuguese were no longer around and since the Ryukyuans were on the retreat as well, the Fujianese probably profited most from this new situation.

As we move into the 1530s and early 1540s further developments occur. By now, the Fujianese were firmly established in Patani and other Southeast Asian ports. Meanwhile the Moluccan issue was also solved through the agreement of Zaragoza in 1529 and the new Portuguese king, D. João III, began to look at China again. At around the same time, information was received that some Chinese vessels had returned to Melaka for trade. These were ships from Fujian. Apparently earlier fears, in Melaka and China, that both sides might run into open conflict, were off the table now⁴³. The Fujianese wanted to arrange themselves with the Portuguese, wishing to further expand their trade because they had to satisfy growing demand back at home.

But this may not be the entire story. Occasionally some Portuguese had gone to Patani in the 1520s and the *Estado da Índia* had also undertaken efforts to gain a firm foothold in the Sunda area, mainly for fear of Spanish activities farther to the east and in support of earlier claims to the Moluccan Islands⁴⁴. Although the Sunda «intermezzo» was a short-lived affair, it concerned the vital interests of the Fujianese. More generally, the Fujianese needed to come to terms with the Portuguese, not only because they sought cooperation with them, but also because they wanted to avoid friction on western Java, in Patani and elsewhere.

The Portuguese, believing that China had turned more friendly again, now started to re-explore the possibilities of trade in the Guangzhou area. Several tentatives are recorded, but few details can be established⁴⁵. The following may be said, however: First, these rather obscure voyages were not necessarily supported by the official institutions in Melaka. They were often semi-private or entirely private ventures. Second, seen through Chinese eyes, the Portuguese no longer formed one dangerous «block». They were now fragmented into groups with different interests and often easier to deal with than before. Third, in all likelihood it was still impossible for a Portuguese merchant to move around freely in Guangzhou and the Pearl River region without risking his life and cargo. By contrast, the Fujianese were more openminded and ready to welcome their Portuguese colleagues.

⁴³ See, for example, the concise account in João Paulo Oliveira e COSTA, «A coroa portuguesa e a China (1508-1531) – do sonho manuelino ao realismo joanino», in António Vasconcelos de SALDANHA and Jorge M. dos Santos ALVES (eds.), *Estudos de história do relacionamento luso-chinês, séculos XV-XIX* (Macau: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1996), pp. 52-55 (an earlier version of this article appeared in *Sivdia* 50 [1991]), and LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, ch. 12.

⁴⁴ For the Spanish dimension in the Sunda plans, see, for example, Oliveira e COSTA, «A coroa», p. 51.

⁴⁵ See, for example, LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, ch. 12.

Fourth, Fujian was then perceived as a wealthy province – a «good thing» in the words of Vasco Calvo, much in contrast to Guangzhou. Even Zhejiang, to the north of Fujian, enjoyed a better reputation than the city of Guangzhou ⁴⁶.

The Portuguese had thus to decide whether they should continue to direct their attention towards Guangdong, or whether Fujian was the better alternative. In the end, they opted for Fujian. That is to say, private Portuguese merchants opted for Fujian, the official part of the *Estado da Índia* remained in a wait-and-see position. This was an ideal solution for the «Chinchéus». The Portuguese were kept out of the Guangzhou region, which remained in the «hands» of Fujianese merchants and their allies, if such an exaggerated image be allowed here. The official Portuguese were busy fighting Muslims and once again concerned with the Moluccan trade, especially in the second half of the 1540s, when Spain sent new missions across the Pacific. Next, by cooperating with the Portuguese in Patani, as was increasingly the case throughout the 1530s and 1540s, more pepper could be channelled to Fujian ⁴⁷. Finally, although some Portuguese appeared in other Southeast Asian places as well, such as Pahang, they probably remained concentrated in Patani for most of the time, which gave the Fujianese a good chance to expand their own trade to new areas, without interference by the Portuguese.

Images

As already mentioned, Luso-Fujianese cooperation lasted well into the 1540s. There was thus a long tradition of bilateral contacts and «joint ventures», which had begun with Cheilata and his colleagues. One early event associated with this tradition was the voyage of Jorge de Mascarenhas in 1518. Mascarenhas had set sail for the Ryukyu Islands, but landed in Fujian, where he was obviously most impressed by what he saw ⁴⁸. It is tempting to think that he was probably deliberately detoured to that province so as to keep Portuguese and Ryukyuan interests apart. But that is pure speculation. Whether the Fujianese had a «helping» hand in this, will never be known. What counts is that, according to João de Barros, Mascarenhas found trade in Fujian more profitable than in Guangzhou. The positive image of Fujian, which many Portuguese had in their minds, thus began in these early days. It was carried on by Vasco Calvo and others, and it obviously contributed to good relations in the 1530s and thereafter.

⁴⁶ FERGUSON, *Letters*, pp. 99, 163.

⁴⁷ Examples for the use of Patani by the Portuguese, in LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, pp. 319-321, 369, 377, 384, 386-388. Note, during later stages Patani was not only used for trade to Fujian, but also for trade to the Guangzhou region and even Japan.

⁴⁸ This is mainly based on BARROS, *Década* III, bk. 2, ch. 8.

Even much later, in the accounts of Galeote Pereira and Gaspar da Cruz, Fujian is often depicted positively. Pereira sailed along the China coast in the 1540s. Of all Chinese provinces and cities described by him, Fujian and Fuzhou come first; Guangzhou being «not so great in quantity» appears in *secundo loco*. Furthermore, although Pereira was imprisoned in Fujian, he was obviously impressed by the local elite: «The gentlemen show great courtesy unto strangers, and so we did find at their hands» – Portuguese prisoners, it seems, were treated well in Fujian.

Another feature of his text is that it describes China's legal apparatus in some detail. This also applies to the treatise by Gaspar da Cruz, which came out in 1569. True, both works do not fail to list the various forms of cruel punishment commonly applied to criminals in Fujian, but by the standards of their time, they remain fairly «neutral»⁴⁹.

The images created by Vasco Calvo and Cristóvão Vieira, both detained in Guangzhou, are of a different nature. Both men were so frustrated, indeed, that they advocated military moves against China. They believed that cities like Guangzhou and even Hainan Island could be taken by force and they also recommended to put Patani and other non-Chinese areas under Portuguese control⁵⁰.

Clearly, while central Guangdong was weak and poor, coastal Fujian was rich and advanced, and while the former showed no interest in the Portuguese, Fujian's local gentry and merchants were much more open-minded, not sharing the radical views of the central government, which still opposed foreign trade.

To round off the above picture, two points should be added. The first concerns the case of Lin Xiyuan, who spoke out in favour of the Portuguese during the Wokou crisis in Fujian and Zhejiang (late 1540s). Lin's story is well-known⁵¹. The important part is that he was willing to support the Portuguese at a time when the central government put considerable pressure on the coastal provinces. Though not completely free of purely rhetorical and other considerations, Lin's intervention can be seen as yet another indication

⁴⁹ See, for example, NG Chin-Keong, «Trade», pp. 397 et seq. (on the situation in China); LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, pp. 435-437 (views of the legal system); Charles R. BOXER (ed.), *South China in the Sixteenth Century. Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, O.P., Fr. Martín de Rada, O.E.S.A.* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1953), pp. 3-4, 17-25, 175-185.

⁵⁰ This is discussed by many modern authors. For recent observations, see for example, Francisco Roque de OLIVEIRA, «A China em três leituras europeias do século XVI. Das notícias de Cantão de 1534 e 1536 ao "país visitado" em 1590», *Garcia de Orta, Geografia*, 15.2 (1996), especially pp. 22 et seq., and LOUREIRO, *Fidalgos*, pp. 351-355. Also see R. PTAK, «Hainan in the Letters by Cristóvão Vieira and Vasco Calvo», presented at the international conference on King D. João III and his times, Lisbon, June 2002.

⁵¹ See, for example, NG Chin-Keong, «Trade», pp. 397 et seq.; So Kwan-wai, *Japanese Piracy in Ming China during the Sixteenth Century* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1976), pp. 68-70.

of where the majority of Fujian's mercantile elite stood, once it came to judge the Portuguese.

The second point concerns the Ryukyu kingdom. Most Portuguese writers referring to this place present a positive image of its inhabitants and the land itself. The Ryukyans are usually depicted as clean and cultivated, and they are believed to own some gold and other valuables⁵². The interesting part is that very few Portuguese ever had a chance to travel to the islands themselves. Although the Ryukyans avoided the Portuguese by no longer going to Melaka, Portuguese and Ryukyuan sailors certainly met in Patani, Siam and perhaps also along the China coast. The question thus arises, why did the one side draw a positive image of the other, whereas the latter did not want to collaborate with the former, as had been explained? A possible answer could be this: In the eyes of the Portuguese, the Ryukyans – on account of their appearance – suited Iberian expectations of an honest and respectable people, fair in complexion and with refined manners. Since very few Portuguese had a chance to visit the Ryukyu Islands, the initial positive image was transmitted from one writer to the next without major modifications. Ryukyuan attitudes towards the Portuguese were rarely addressed, a serious investigation was never made. In sum, Ryukyu remained a mysterious kingdom, far off the route to China and Japan, but with some positive characteristics.

The Fujianese, although closely tied to the Ryukyans in one way, displaced them in other ways, as we had said. There was thus a certain degree of competition between both sides and, as suspected in the context of Mascarenhas' voyage, the Fujianese probably did their best to keep the Portuguese and Ryukyans separated. A reinforcement of the Ryukyuan trading sector by the Portuguese would have implied difficult times for the Fujianese. The Fujianese had no interest in that. Therefore, the non-existence of any major Portuguese account on the Ryukyu kingdom could be the result of Fujianese commercial «tactics» – and might thereby also explain the seemingly paradoxical findings just addressed above.

By the 1540s and 1550s, needless to add, the Ryukyans had almost completely withdrawn from Southeast Asia. Siam was the only place they would still visit. Accordingly, Chinese pepper imports via Naha came down to very low levels. Institutional changes in the tribute system also contributed to this decline⁵³. True, some Ryukyuan ships operated outside of the tribute system, but they were probably few and certainly absorbed into different Wokou groups, then mostly under Chinese control.

⁵² See, for example, texts collected in SCHURHAMMER, «1543-1943 – O descobrimento do Japão», pp. 62 et seq.

⁵³ On the tribute system governing Ryukyu-China relations and its changes, see, for example, CHANG Pin-tsun, *Chinese Maritime Trade*, pp. 184 et seq.

Concluding Remarks

The above is a set of rather uncoordinated jottings and largely based on secondary sources. Admittedly, it is also an incomplete picture leaving aside, for example, early sixteenth century references to Chinese traders in the Bay of Bengal, on northwestern Sumatra, along the eastern trade route to Luzon, Mindanao, Brunei, and so on. A reinvestigation of these elements and, more generally, of the primary documents related to our theme, especially the Ryukyu Islands, will be necessary to verify some of the rather hypothetical points presented in the foregoing discussion. Yet, a brief summary of the more essential suggestions made here, will be of some use. It was argued that, in 1511, the Portuguese were faced with several Chinese groups. The Fujianese – or at least some of them – were open for cooperation with the Portuguese, other Chinese groups withdrew from them, just like the Ryukyuan who found themselves in an ambiguous position. Luso-Fujianese cooperation, partially driven by the desire to ship pepper to China, was endangered after the clashes in the early 1520s. But both sides quickly arranged themselves. Throughout the 1530s and early 1540s we thus find individual Portuguese merchants, as private entrepreneurs, trading in the Fujian region and in Patani and other Southeast Asian pepper ports, often side by side with the Fujianese.

There was one loser: the Ryukyuan. Furthermore, during the 1520s Guangzhou also suffered, in contrast to Fujian. The major winners, it is clear, were the Fujianese – together with the Portuguese. Indirectly, the Fujianese profited from Melaka's fall *and* from the clashes in the early 1520s, which weakened Guangzhou. Both scenarios required flexible responses. «Streamlining» pepper shipments by concentrating on trade along the eastern side of the Malayan peninsula was one reaction, strengthening direct trade to Fujian, often bypassing Guangzhou, was a second response. At the same time, the Fujianese remained in close association with the Siamese and also undermined certain segments of the Ryukyuan trade sector.

Towards the late 1540s and in the 1550s the picture begins to change anew. This is the time when the Wokou crisis gradually gets out of hand. By then one can no longer speak of «one» Fujianese merchant «block», or a few trading groups. There were in fact many groups and these were fighting each other just as much as they were opposing Ming government forces in the coastal areas of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian. Although the Wokou problem also affected Guangdong and even Hainan, the Portuguese decided to gradually disassociate themselves from these groups, moving back to the central Guangdong market instead. Regularizing trade to Japan – to the advantage of Guangzhou, which needed silver – and offering military assistance to the Cantonese in combat against coastal bandits, became a new alternative for the Portuguese, which local officials in the Xiangshan area, and later in Guangzhou and Beijing, were ready to take up. This was not necessarily to the taste of the Fujianese, which however is yet another story for a different paper.

**Chinese Glossary:
Autors, Institutions, Primary Texts, Place Names, Terms**

Annan 安南	Minnan 閩南
Anpinggang 安平港	Nie Dening 聶德寧
Cao Yonghe 曹永和	Quanzhou 泉州
Chen Dasheng 陳達生	Sanya 三亞
Fuzhou 福州	<i>shibosi</i> 市舶司
Guangzhou 廣州	Tang Kaijian 湯開建
Han Zhenhua zhuzuo zhengli xiaozu 韓 振華著作整理小組	Wokou 倭寇
He Yaba 何亞八	Wu Zhiliang 吳志良
Huoze Yasan 火者亞三	Wuyu 浯嶼
Jiaozhi 交趾(趾)	Xiamen 廈門
Jin Guoping 金國平	Xiangshan 香山
Jiulong River 九龍江	Yuegang 月港
Kobata Atsushi 小葉田淳	Zhang Xiumin 張秀民
<i>lada</i> 喇噠	Zhangzhou 漳州
<i>Lidai bao'an</i> 歷代寶案	Zhao Rugua 趙汝适
Lin Fu 林富	Zheng He 鄭和
Lin Renchuan 林仁川	Zhenla 真臘
Lin Woling 林我鈴	Zhongguo haiyang fanzhanshi lunwenji weiyuanhui 中國海洋發展史論文集委 員會
Lin Xiyuan 林希元	Zhuang Jinghui 莊景輝
<i>lishi dili</i> 歷史地理	<i>Zhufan zhi</i> 諸蕃志
Ma Huan 馬歡	