The Unthreatening Alternative:
Chinese Shipping in Southeast Asia, 1567-1842

Anthony Reid

The peaceable, unambitious and supple character of the Chinese, and the conviction, on the part of the native governments, of their exclusive devotion to commercial pursuits, disarm all jealousy, and make them welcome guests everywhere. This very naturally and very justly gives them an equitable monopoly of the carrying trade, from which the ambition of Europeans, and the impolitic restraints of their own commercial policy, have excluded them (Crawfurd 1820 III, 185-6).

For most of the past millennium China was the major trading partner of Southeast Asia. In the thirteenth century Marco Polo (1298, 209) pointed out that for every shipload of tropical Asian spices that arrived in Venice there were a hundred arriving at the Chinese port of "Zaiton" (Quanzhou). That advantage was lost during the enormous explosion of European demand for spices in the "age of commerce," but as late as the 1820s there was still a larger tonnage of Chinese than of European shipping in the South China Sea. Until the Nanjing Treaty of 1842 the bulk of the foreign trade of Vietnam, Siam and Cambodia, and a substantial proportion of the remainder, was carried in "Chinese" junks – though frequently Southeast Asia-based.

There was a natural complementarity between the densely populated and technically advanced Middle Kingdom and the sparsely settled tropical regions to its south. China exported manufactures almost exclusively – ceramics, silks, paper, and a great variety of metal tools and utensils - "cast iron kettles, bowls, basins... boxes, fans, plenty of needles of a hundred different kinds... and things of very poor quality like those which come to Portugal from Flanders," as Tomé Pires (1515, 125) put it. In exchange it took from Southeast Asia an extraordinary variety of exotic spices, medicines and aromatics (Chang 1991 lists the 115 import items of a 1618 Chinese catalogue of import duties) along with some bulkier goods such as Malayan tin, Indonesian pepper, cotton and at times even rice.

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1 Viraphol (1977, 180) reckoned the tonnage of "Chinese" (both China- and Southeast Asia-based) junks in inter-Asian trade in the 1820s at 85,000 tons, whereas the British East India Company, which monopolized British trade with China before 1833, never had more than 30,000 tons.
Two factors explain the continued dominance of the junk trade long after the technical superiority of European-rigged ships might have been expected to make it obsolete. The first was the understandable suspicion of China's rulers towards the heavily armed Europeans. Most eastern Asian states tried to keep the Europeans at arms length after the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) had demonstrated its effectiveness in enforcing monopolies, but China had the size and self-sufficiency to do so successfully. Apart from the minor foothold for Portuguese shipping at Macao, it was virtually impossible for Europeans to trade directly with China before the Ming lifted their ban in 1684. Thereafter European-rigged ships could unload their cargoes only under severe disabilities. They could trade only at Canton, under the control of the formidable Fong merchant, and they faced much higher tariffs than Chinese-style junks.

The second factor was the peaceful record of Chinese shipping in Southeast Asia, in contrast to European. After the reign of the Yongle Emperor (1402-24) there were no further Chinese naval adventures in Southeast Asia. The junks sailing to or from China with government approval the great majority after 1684 were limited in the armaments they could carry to two cannons and eight rifles, because of Chinese official fears that they might otherwise engage in piracy (Blussé 1986, 106). Even when Chinese numbers reached dozens of junks and thousands of men in ports such as Bangkok, Hoi An, Phnompenh, Riau and Sulu they presented little threat to the local regime, whereas the lesson was not lost of what had happened to indigenous rulers in Melaka, Ternate, Jakarta, Makassar or Banten at European hands. Hence many Southeast Asian rulers also raised tariffs and other obstacles to European shipping which did not apply to Chinese. As Savary des Bruslons (1723 I, 1183-84) remarked of Cambodia, "the king and people there cannot be relied on in their commerce with Europeans, as the English and Dutch have often experienced; they are nevertheless ordinarily quite reliable with the Chinese."

Because the literature on this branch of Southeast Asia's trade (at least in European languages) is much weaker than that on European and American trade, it is often assumed to have been either unimportant or somehow an historical constant, an unchanging relic of an earlier Asian era. The reality appears to be the reverse. The abrupt changes in Imperial policy towards foreign commerce caused discontinuities in the junk trade which were more marked than those even in the European and Indian trade. To understand the development of Southeast Asian states, all of which were dependent on trade revenue to a greater or lesser degree, it is important to examine these discontinuities.

In general, foreign maritime trade was not important in the eyes of the Chinese court. Trade was tolerated as a by-product of tribute missions from the south, and the standing rule that Chinese should not journey abroad on their own account was enforced rigidly. Until the Southern Sung dynasty Southeast Asians and Arabs conducted most of the maritime trade, often in the guise of tribute, and Southeast Asian-based traders continued to play a major role until the end. There were, however, two periods of massive Chinese imperial intervention in the Nanyang (South Seas): first under Kublai Khan in the 1290s and again under the Yongle Emperor in 1402-24. In both cases hundreds of ships and tens of thousands of men were sent to Java, and many failed to come back. In both cases there were major technical innovations as ships of Chinese or hybrid Southeast Asian/Chinese style began to be used, and new Sino-Southeast Asian maritime elites evolved to play the leading role in trade in the South China Sea (Reid 1992). In both cases the flurry of activity was followed by a retreat into isolationism, so that the Chinese marooned in Southeast Asia were left to adapt as best they might.

The beginnings of regular trade

Although I have argued (Reid 1990) that the Cheng Ho (Zheng He) voyages under the Yongle Emperor marked the most appropriate beginning of Southeast Asia's "Age of Commerce," they by no means initiated any kind of stable private junk trade to the south. On the contrary private trade was strictly banned by the early Ming Emperors, while the Imperial court itself rapidly lost interest in sending official envoys to the south. It is striking that at the time the early Portuguese reports give the first quantifiable survey of Southeast Asian trade, around 1510, specifically Chinese junks were a minor factor, and the bulk of trade between the Malay world and China was carried by Southeast Asian ships owned by merchants whom the Portuguese called "Malay," "Javanese" and "Luzon" (Pires 1515, 119-24), though I do not doubt that some of these traders had Chinese ancestry. For the Portuguese, and for other European observers down to about 1620, the term "junk" (derived from Malay and Javanese jong) referred to the large ships of the South China Sea whether crewed by Malays, Javanese or Chinese. It was only when Southeast Asians abandoned these large ships under pressure of European naval warfare in the early seventeenth century that the large Asian junks of these waters became identified as exclusively "Chinese."

It was in 1567 that the Chinese junk trade began on an orderly basis with approval from the Imperial authorities. A new Ming Emperor approved the repeated plea of Fujian authorities that junks be allowed to trade legally and thus bring profit to the government. Fifty junks a year were initially granted licenses (wan-yin) to trade in Southeast Asia. In 1589 the number of junks licensed for the south was raised to eighty-eight, in 1592 to 110 and in 1597 to 137.

For the eighty-eight Chinese ships licensed in the each of the three years 1589-91, we know the regional breakdown of ports
cleared for, though numerous confusing toponyms are recorded, perhaps
to disguise the fact that multiple ships were clearing to the same port.
The additional licenses issued in 1589, 1592 and 1597 appear to have
been based on the fiction that they were going to different ports.

Table 1
Junks licensed from Fujian, 1589-91

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To</th>
<th>1589-91</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Luzon&quot; (Manila)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other Philippines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaya</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other &quot;Eastern Seas&quot;</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total &quot;Eastern Seas&quot;</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese ports</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champa</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siam</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ligor (Nakhon Sithammarat)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Portuguese) Melaka</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuket (Bangkokh)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asean ports</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sumatra ports</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Java ports</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Borneo ports</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unidentified &quot;western ocean&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total &quot;Western Ocean&quot;</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corroborating information is available particularly for the
western Java ports, listed as Banten, Sunda and Kelapa in the Chinese
record. These had been the principal centres for Portuguese pepper-
ships supplying the Chinese market through Macao, but within a few
decades the large Chinese junks had driven them out of the business
(Ledewycksz 1958, 106). From Dutch reports it appears that annual
Chinese fleets to Java remained of a similar size through the first
three decades of the seventeenth century — about eight junks divided
between Banten and Jakarta/Batavia, each of five or six hundred
tonnes (“Verhael” 1597, 25; Coolhaas 1964, 1; Melijn-Roelofsz 1962,
398; Blusse 1986, 109-15). Thereafter the global crisis, particularly
severe in China, the collapse of the Ming dynasty (1644), and the
continued rebellion of the Zheng dynasty in Fujian and Taiwan, kept
Chinese shipping at a low level until the 1680s.

For Manila, Chaunu (1960, 148-75) has provided an exceptionally
detailed record of shipping from 1620 onwards, which would give the
following ten-year averages for the number of ships arriving from
China and Formosa:

Table 2
Chinese ship arrivals per year in Manila

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Century</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1620-29</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630-39</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1640-49</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1650-59</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1660-69</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1670-79</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1680-89</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1690-99</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700-09</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1710-19</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the arrivals in the 1650s, 1660s and 1670s were in fact
ships belonging to the Ming-loyalist Zheng (Koxinga) regime based in
Taiwan and Fujian, or else Southeast Asia-based ships. The Qing
Imperial government tried to close down foreign trade altogether and
even forced the evacuation of the coastal regions of Fujian, so that
virtually no junks sailed to Southeast Asia with the blessing of the
authorities. In 1683, however, a Qing admiral conquered Taiwan for the
Emperor and ended the Zheng rebellion, and the following year the ban
on trade with Southeast Asia was lifted. The junk trade expanded
rapidly, with a peak of twenty-seven ships reaching Manila in 1686
and forty-three in 1709. For Batavia the busiest year was 1694 when
twenty-one junks entered the port (Wills 1991, 63). The period between
1684 and a renewed imperial ban on Southeast Asian trade in 1717
represented a second boom for the junk trade, though probably not at
quite the level of the earlier peak in 1590-1630. The figures for Batavia
(see Table 3) show that Chinese shipping to that port not only
increased until the imperial ban of 1717, but continued its upward path
in 1722 after an interruption of only four years, even though the ban
remained in force until 1727 (Cushman 1978, 141-2). The junk trade to
Batavia grew steadily until the 1740 massacre of Chinese in that city.
This period also coincides with that of the most effective VOC
monopolies or quasi-monopolies of cloves, nutmeg, pepper, cinnamon,
Indian cloth and a number of other crucial items, however, so that
Chinese trade was undoubtedly more concentrated on Batavia in this
period than it was in any port in the earlier period.

2 Zhang Xie 1618, 131-32; also Chang 1991, 161-63; Innes 1980, 52-53; Chen
1974, 12.
The Tōsen trade to Nagasaki

Fortunately we are not wholly reliant on European sources in our attempts to estimate the dimensions of the Chinese junk trade in Southeast Asia. After the closure (sakoku) of Japan in the 1630s, Japanese were forbidden to travel overseas on pain of death, and foreign commerce was strictly limited to Nagasaki where only the VOC and Chinese junks were permitted to trade. A triangular form of trade developed, with Chinese vessels, often based in Southeast Asian ports, travelling between one or more Southeast Asian ports, one or more Chinese ports, and Nagasaki.

The captain of each Chinese vessel (Tōsen) arriving in Nagasaki was interviewed by Chinese interpreters, and a report on each vessel (Tōsen-fusetsugaki) was duly filed. This process began in 1644, but a consistent pattern of reporting on the junks dates only from 1674. From then until 1724 there is a remarkable series of documents preserved in a collection known as the Kai-hentai. Although they have been used by a number of scholars, few Southeast Asianists have been able to make use of them because of the difficult Japanese in which they are written. Professor Yoneo Ishii of Sophia University has now undertaken a translation of all these documents for ships arriving from Southeast Asia. The Batavia shipping lists are a richer source of figures compiled by Iwao Seiichi. During this period there was a flood of junks set out from southern and eastern China for Nagasaki, and junks reporting in from Southeast Asia never again represented more than one-fifth of the total. The totals arriving from different Southeast Asian ports are given below by decade.

Unfortunately the size of the vessels and their cargoes were not recorded in these Tōsen documents. The Batavia shipping lists are a better guide to these matters, and show that 80 percent of the junks arriving in Batavia from China between 1685 and 1715 were between 150 and 200 tons (Blussé 1986, 123). One Batavia junk measured by the Japanese was ninety-six feet (10 m) long and 18.8 feet wide (ibid., 120). It is probably safe to assume the junks trading to Nagasaki from the Archipelago and Siam were of similar dimensions, as indicated by the crew numbers in Table 5 (which would suggest around 200 tons if we can accept Crawford’s formula of forty men for 100 tons), and smaller junks ran from Cambodia and the Vietnamese ports. One of the captains who had made the trip from Cambodia to Nagasaki made the point that Cambodian-based junks “are mostly of small construction and are not big enough to load cargoes for Japan” (Ship 26 of 1695). Such junks presumably concentrated on the coastal trade to south China, leaving it

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Ships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1681-90</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1691-1700</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1701-10</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1711-20</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1721-30</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1731-40</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1741-50</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1751-60</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1761-70</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1771-80</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791-90</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791-1800</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Junks to Tonking</th>
<th>Junks to Cochinchina</th>
<th>Junks to Cambodia</th>
<th>Junks to Siam</th>
<th>Junks to Fujian</th>
<th>Junks to Ryukyu</th>
<th>Junks to Dutch</th>
<th>Total Ports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1651-60</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1661-70</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1671-80</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1681-90</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1691-10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1701-10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1711-19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1720-24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes

3 This translation will be published as a Data Paper of the Economic History of Southeast Asia Project at the ANU. See also Professor Ishii’s summary of the documents relating to Siam in Ishii 1988, 5-7, 12-15. My attempts to aggregate the Kai-hentai data are further indebted to the labours of Tsuy Lieh-cheng and Wu Yugi, to whom many thanks.

4 This table is derived from combining Li Tana’s (1992) and Yoneo Ishii’s readings of figures compiled by Iwao Seiichi. During this period there were two Vietnamese states known to foreigners as Tongking and Cochinchina, respectively the Trinh-ruled Red River Delta and the Nguyen-ruled central coast of today’s Vietnam.
to the bigger junks based in South China or Siam to collect Cambodian deerskins for Japan.

Another series of reports from Nagasaki, the Tōsen Kamatsuchō, did record cargoes, but only five such reports on junks from Siam have survived, covering the years 1711-12 (Ishii 1988, 6), and these are not available to me. We know in general terms, however, that Japan imported large quantities of deerskins from the forests of Siam and Cambodia, sugar from Siam and Java and silk from Vietnam (and China), exporting in exchange primarily metals.

The Tōsen documents do provide details of the voyages of the junks arriving in Nagasaki, and of their complement of crew. This information, summarized in Table 5, is of considerable interest. The crew of all vessels were simply listed as Chinese (Tōjin) except when Siamese or Khmer were specifically mentioned. The fact that most of the vessels arriving from Ayutthaya were based there, with crews who may not have seen China for a long time if at all, appears only indirectly from the data. Only the vessels from Ayutthaya regularly carried a small minority of indigenous crew-members, ranging from one to a maximum of nine, who probably represented the interests of the Thai royal or aristocratic owners of the vessels in question. Three vessels from Cambodia were also reported as each carrying one indigenous Khmer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tōsen voyages from Siam, Patani and Cambodia</th>
<th>Ayutthay</th>
<th>Songkhla &amp; Chumphon</th>
<th>Patani</th>
<th>Cambodia</th>
<th>Malacca</th>
<th>Batavia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. reported</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of which royal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave. crew</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of which native</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave. days to Nagasaki</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The picture given by John Crawfurd (1820 III, 177) and repeated by Hsieh Chao-chih (cited Blusse 1986, 108-09) was that despite the unwieldiness of the ships and the poor navigation skills of their crews there were relatively few mishaps in the junks because they did not attempt to tack against the wind or sail at unseasonable times, but simply sailed a straight course before the reliable monsoon winds. The vessels did indeed obey the rhythm of the monsoons absolutely, always travelling north in the fourth, fifth or sixth Chinese month (June or July), south from China in the twelfth or first month (January or February), and south from Japan a little earlier than that. Nevertheless a very high accident rate is recorded in these figures. Cargo was frequently thrown overboard to avoid foundering, ships were dismasted or holed, and the sense of having “nearly sunk” is conveyed in many of the documents. The total shipwrecks emerge only piecemeal through the reports of other masters. In addition to the nine wrecks itemized in the table as ships coming from a particular Southeast Asian port, there were six further reports or rumours of wrecks. The commonest scene of disaster was the south China coast (six reports), followed by the Japanese islands off Nagasaki (three) and the Champa coast of southern Indochina (one).

The ships from Ayutthaya (the Siamese capital) most often appear to have made a simple voyage to Nagasaki and back, with numerous cases of ships and captains making repeated trips in successive years. Of the forty-two captains who reported on the subject, thirty-one had previously visited Nagasaki. Only a small minority (one in eight) of the ships from Ayutthaya reported stopping on the China coast on their way to Nagasaki. Since these were larger ships, typically owned and based in Siam, they probably used the Chaophraya River already with a full cargo and had no reason to stop.

The picture is more complicated at the smaller ports, where captains might sometimes call on a speculative basis. The traffic from Cambodia typically went in a triangular fashion, from a south China port to Cambodia to Nagasaki and back to China. A slightly larger proportion of ships than the Siamese, one in six, also reported stopping at a Chinese port (Putaoshang or Ningbo) for a week or two on the outward voyage to Nagasaki. One captain (ship 52 of 1689) reported that his ship had visited Nagasaki the previous year from Cochin-China (the southern Vietnamese state) and then “returned” to Fuzhou. From there he had set out for Cambodia in the second month, but discovered (presumably in Hoa An, the Cochin-China port near modern Danang) that Cambodia was in turmoil. He therefore left his junk in

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>44</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>18</th>
<th>34</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. reported</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of which royal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave. crew</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of which native</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave. days to Nagasaki</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chinese junks plying the waters between Nagasaki and Ayutthaya belonged to the Siamese king, members of the royal family, high officials, or especially authorized merchants” in Ayutthaya. The Siamese royal ships alone constituted 54 percent of those listed after 1690.
Hoi An and hired a smaller craft to take his cargo up the Mekong to Cambodia and carry the Cambodian produce back to Hoi An, whence he left for Nagasaki in the seventh month. Another ship (83 of 1697) set out from Amoy in early 1694 for Cambodia and used it as a base for three years, trading to other Southeast Asian countries and accumulating a return cargo with which it sailed to Nagasaki on the fifth month (June) of 1697.

Ships from the Peninsula ports, which did not provide the Japanese import requirements which deerskins and sugar represented in Siam and Cambodia, were still more interested in stopping at Chinese ports. Those reporting from Dutch Melaka were openly using the quota provided for Melaka in Japan to carry Chinese silks to Nagasaki. They invariably carried Malayan tin and pepper to China (usually Guangdong) and there loaded Chinese silks for Japan. Two thirds of the ships from Patani and Songkhla, and all those from Melaka, reported calling at Ningbo, Putaoashang, Lu-wan, Amoy or Zhoushan, for periods of between one and four weeks, or in one case for ten months. Ship 115 of 1687 was based in Amoy. Its captain had visited Nagasaki fifteen years earlier on the run from Amoy, but on this occasion decided to sail to Patani because he believed there was little competition on the Patani-Nagasaki route. The ship left Amoy on the 26th day of the first Chinese month, 1687, and arrived in Patani twenty-eight days later.

However we found little produce there and were wondering what to do when a ship from Cambodia entered Patani on the 28th day of the third month with Cambodian deerskin, lacquer and so forth, which we bought. With this cargo supplemented by some Patani products such as cowhide, Patani deerskin, sugar, honey, camphor and aloes wood we left Patani on the eighth day of the sixth month.

They reached the Guangdong coast at Peiliaoyu twenty-eight days later, paused for five days to collect water and firewood, then sailed for thirteen days towards Nagasaki. Just off Tsushima they encountered a strong southeast wind which caused them to jettison their deck cargo and their only gun. Having survived this storm, they were wondering what to do when a ship from Cambodia entered Patani on the 28th day of the third month with Cambodian deerskin, lacquer and so forth, which we bought. With this cargo supplemented by some Patani products such as cowhide, Patani deerskin, sugar, honey, camphor and aloes wood we left Patani on the eighth day of the sixth month.

Despite the freeing of Chinese trade after 1684 and the rise of Amoy (Xiamen) to a dominant position in Chinese coastal and overseas shipping (Ng 1983), the junk trade in Southeast Asia remained at relatively modest levels during the following half-century. The period (1690-1740) which Blussé (1986, 121-37) identifies as "the heyday of the junk trade" must not be understood as applying to Southeast Asia as a whole, but basically to Batavia. As mentioned, this was the period when Archipelago produce was most nearly monopolized by the VOC, so that there were few cargoes to be found at independent ports. It was a period of sharp decline in the Japan branch of trade, while the reign of Pettra (1688-1701) represented the absolute doldrums for the major Chinese base in independent Southeast Asia, at Siam. The Kangxi Emperor did not help matters by returning to a policy of banning private trade to the south in 1717, out of alarm that Chinese rice and ships were being sold abroad. This ban was only gradually lifted after 1727, primarily on the new grounds that rice could be imported from Siam (and to a lesser extent Luzon), which was a vital supplement to the diet of coastal Fujian (Viraphol 1977, 55-57; Ng 1991, 378-79; Suebsaeng 1971, 262). By the 1740s the fleet of Chinese junks annually trading to Southeast Asia had climbed back to 110 (Viraphol 1977, 72; cf. Ng 1991, 381), roughly the same level as during the peak of the "age of commerce" in 1590-1620.

While the trade associated with tribute missions was only one aspect of relations between China and Southeast Asia, its intensity is one index of the strength of official relations between the two regions. Even during the periods of official bans on private trade, Southeast Asian states, using locally-owned Chinese junks, were able to conduct a substantial trade. The Siamese missions, for example, were officially permitted to take three junks laden with trade goods on each of their missions, and they sometimes took a chance on exceeding regulations by sending four ships or even sending two tribute missions in the one year (Suebsaeng 1971, 257). It is therefore significant that the whole period between 1640 and 1760 was something of a trough in tribute relations.
between the two great peaks in the periods 1370-1430 and 1760-1820 (see Graph 1). A particularly sustained trough occurred between 1670 and 1750, when Siam — the most assiduous sender of tribute by sea — managed to send on average only one mission every seven years, as opposed to nearly one every year during the peak periods (Suebsaeng 1971, 105-123). This trend, combined with the cessation of tribute missions from the Archipelago after the arrival of the Spanish and Dutch, would have suggested that the aspect of the junk trade linked to tribute missions was on its way to extinction.

The boom years, 1760-1840

As Graphs 1 and 2 show, there was in fact an extraordinary leap in the sending of tribute missions to China after 1780, which lasted until 1850. Not only did Siam send nearly one mission by sea every year in the 1790s and early 1800s, but Vietnam, Laos and Burma increased the tempo of their missions by land to a level not seen for centuries. This phenomenon needs fuller examination. Undoubtedly one factor was the economic opportunity these missions offered at a time of global population increase and trade expansion. As Crawford (1828, 409) pointed out, “under pretext of it [tribute] the Siamese court is enabled every year to send two large junks of between 900 and 1000 tons each, to Canton, which, at the expense of a few trifling presents, are exempted from the payment of all duties.” Another factor was probably the increasing anxiety of independent Southeast Asian states about the dangers of encouraging the major commercial alternative — frequent visits by armed European ships.

A surprising feature of these graphs is the reappearance of the Archipelago after a gap of two centuries, in the form of the Sulu sultanate renewing its fifteenth-century links with the Middle Kingdom. This is a particularly striking demonstration of a broader but little-studied phenomenon in Southeast Asian trade in the mid-seventeenth century. The erosion of the effectiveness of the VOC’s control of Archipelago trade, the growth of population and prosperity in China during a period of remarkable peace there, and the increasing vigour of East-West trade in various forms, created new opportunities for trade-based states in Southeast Asia to build a symbiotic relationship with Chinese shippers. Sulu had been among the ports which profited from the freeing of Chinese trade in 1684, but regular

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6 The data for Siam is taken from Suebsaeng 1971, while for the other countries I am indebted to Li Tana’s assistance in reading the Qing Shi Lu.

7 I hope that a project which I am coordinating for the Toyota Foundation on "The last stand of autonomous states in eastern Asia" will help to resolve this and other mysteries.
annual visits of junks seem to have begun in the 1720s, while by the 1750s there were on average two junks from Amoy every year. Sulu became a major regional base for the collection of sea-slugs (tripang), pearls, tortoise shell and other marine produce for shipment to China. In 1725 some of the enterprising Chinese captains engaged in this trade began overtures for formal tributary relations, which led in 1726 to the first formal tribute mission to Beijing. Further missions followed in 1728, 1733, 1742, 1746, 1753, 1754 and 1763, each sending pearls, birds' nests and other delicacies to the Imperial court. These missions represented for the sultans of Sulu both opportunities for trade more profitable than those in the ordinary annual voyages, and some degree of moral protection against Spanish, Dutch and English attempts to establish control of the Sulu Archipelago (Warren 1981, 5-9; Majul 1973, 249-55; 347-52; Ng 1991, 391-93).

Riau was another beneficiary of the rising numbers of Chinese junks annually travelling to the south in the 1750s and '60s, though its location made it more vulnerable than Sulu to political and military threats from Dutch, Bugis and Minangkabau. In Cochín-China the period around 1750, just before the chaos wrought by the Tayson rebellion, was a peak for the junk trade, with fifty to seventy vessels a year visiting the port of Hoi An (Faifo) (Li Tana 1992, 95, 98; Chen Chingho 1974, 261).

The major centre in Southeast Asia for the junk trade, however, was Siam. As we have seen Ayutthaya had been the Southeast Asian court most interested in tribute missions, and one of the ports most reliant on Chinese-manned shipping. This great city fell to the Burmese in 1767 and was almost totally destroyed. Siamese fortunes were restored by the efforts of Phya Tak, son of a Teochiu immigrant father and a Thai mother, who had been brought up in the household of a Thai nobleman and spoke fluent Thai and Chinese as well as some Malay and Vietnamese. He fled the Burmese advance to the southeast, where Teochiu immigrants were particularly concentrated, rallied support to drive the Burmese out, and founded a new capital lower down the Chaophraya at Thonburi. During his reign, and that of his equally half-Chinese successor and son-in-law, Rama I, at Bangkok (1782-1809), Chinese shippers, shipbuilders and traders were particularly encouraged to locate themselves on the Chaophraya. Bangkok rose rapidly to become the busiest port between Calcutta and Canton, and the new prosperity of Siam was built on an exceptionally harmonious Sino-Thai relationship.

The dimensions of the junk trade at its height in the first two decades of the nineteenth century will probably never be known with precision. Our best guide to the subject is John Crawfurd, who took particularly careful notes on the trade during the many years he spent in Java (1811-16), Singapore (1823-26), and on an important British mission to Siam and Vietnam (1821). Table 6 is based on the data in Crawfurd's History of the Indian Archipelago (1820 III, 182-84), supplemented by the fuller data on Siam and Vietnam resulting from his 1821 mission (Crawfurd 1828, 410-12, 511-13).

The largest vessels in Crawfurd's survey were the three Amoy (Xiamen) junks sailing annually to Batavia, each of 1100 tons burden. In general all vessels making the long voyage to the Archipelago were of 500 tons or more. By contrast the host of small vessels crowding the harbours of Vietnam were seldom more than 200 tons. Chinese junk captains told Crawfurd (1828, 512) that junks of 3000 pikuls (187 tons) were the largest which could navigate the Red River for the ports of Hanoi. The largest number of small vessels trading to Vietnamese and Siamese ports was in fact from Hainan (though classified here with Guangdong). Crawfurd noted that "seldom less than fifty" small vessels of between 125 and 210 tons burden visited Bangkok each year from Hainan.
Southeast Asian entrepot for trade with China. Already in the official
immediately
The establishment of the British port of Singapore rapidly altered the
The transformation of Chinese shipping, 1819-1850

Fujian and Guangdong, and sailing with the blessing of the Chinese
authorities there. It appears that these junks had grown bigger,
particularly the richest ones from Amoy, but their number had not
grown much in the previous half-century. There was increasing
competition for them from European-rigged ships, which could
complete three voyages between Canton and Batavia per year in
comparison with one for the junks, and with greater security according
to Crawfurd (1820 III, 178).

On the other hand there was a meteoric rise in Southeast Asia-
based Chinese shipping. Crawfurd had the opportunity for a careful
study of the shipping of Bangkok in 1821, and recorded this neglected
phenomenon there. The likelihood is, however, that there were
numerous other junks based at Ha Tien, the lower Mekong and
elsewhere which escaped his notice, and which took some part in the
China trade as well as along Southeast Asian routes. His own
calculations showed that building a junk in Siam or southern Vietnam
cost only half what it did in a Fujian port — fifteen-sixteen Spanish
dollars per ton as opposed to thirty in Fujian and twenty in Canton
(Crawfurd 1828, 49). Southeast Asian owners of Chinese junks therefore
began with a considerable price advantage.

In addition to the expansion of Bangkok-based shipping to China in
the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was a rapid
growth role in intra-Southeast Asian trade carried in Siamese junks. At
the time of his visit in 1821, Crawfurd considered about 200 Bangkok-
based junks were trading within Southeast Asian waters, about fifty of
them to Vietnam (principally Saigon), a similar number to the Malacca
Straits ports, and the remainder chiefly to the east coast of the
Malayan Peninsula, western Borneo, Palembang and Java. To some
time this trade was gathering Archipelago goods for the China
market, but increasingly too it was collecting Indian and European
cottons to provide Siam itself, in exchange for the Thai aristocracy, yet the advantageous tariffs enjoyed by
junks kept their numbers growing right up until the Burney Treaty of
1855. Eighty-five Siamese junks arrived in Singapore in 1853-4, against
only thirty-seven European-rigged ships (ibid., 139-40, 278-79).

Some Southeast Asia-based Chinese traders already employed
square-rigged vessels, and occasionally also European captims, before
the Nanjing Treaty of 1842. The process had begun in the seventeenth
century for the inter-island trade. The opening of the Treaty ports of
Canton, Shanghai, Fuzhou, Ningbo and Amoy to European shipping,
had removed the most powerful economic incentive to retain
traditional ship styles. Gradually even Singapore Chinese began to use
European-rigged vessels to ship their goods to China more quickly and
cheaper. By 1865-66 the tonnage of junks on the Singapore-China routes
was only 4,500, about one-hundredth of the capacity of square-rigged
ships (ibid., 123).

The Chinese entrepreneurs of Southeast Asia and southern China
remained in the shipping business. They continued to play a major role
in the shipping network which linked Southeast Asia to Singapore,
Canton, Hong Kong and Amoy. But the characteristic features which
had made the Chinese junk trade a real alternative to Western-
dominated shipping networks gave way in the mid-nineteenth century.
This shift was connected with the loss of effective independence of the
remaining countries of Southeast Asia in the decade which followed.

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The transformation of Chinese shipping, 1819-1850

The establishment of the British port of Singapore rapidly altered the
complexion of Sino-Southeast Asian trade. Singapore almost
immediately became the principal Straits port for junks to collect
Western and Indian goods, and eventually also replaced Bangkok as a
Southeast Asian entrepot for trade with China. Already in the official
year 1829-30, sixty-six square-rigged vessels and twelve Chinese junks
cleared Singapore for China, figures which grew to 134 and eighteen in
1855, and to 187 and nine in 1841-2 (Wong 1961, 276).

The junks, which had tended to focus the trade of the Gulf of Siam
in Bangkok at the beginning of the century, progressively made
Singapore their major entrepot. In 1829-30 there arrived in Singapore
thirty-one Siamese junks and forty-nine from Vietnam. The Saigon-
Singapore junk trade continued to grow rapidly, turning southern
Vietnam's trade to Singapore rather than China. In 1847-8 162 junks
arrived in the British port from Vietnam. In the Bangkok-Singapore
trade there was a challenge from square-rigged ships, some of them
owned by the Thai aristocracy, yet the advantageous tariffs enjoyed by
junks kept their numbers growing right up until the Burney Treaty of
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In the Indonesian archipelago perahu shipping was superseded but not eliminated by steam shipping. This paper explores the patterns of competition of steam and sail, with a special focus on the period 1870-1914. It concludes by reviewing the policy of the Koninklijk Pakketvaart Maatschapij (KPM) in its dealings with sailing ships.

Introduction

The displacement of sailing vessels by steamships is a phenomenon which at first appearances encompassed the entire world with a seeming inevitability. The famous Dutch poet Slauerhoff, medical doctor on the Dutch Java-China-Japan Line, in his "Praise of Steam Shipping," described sailing vessels as "shades from an old, oft told and now bygone tale" (Slauerhoff 1988, 593). But given the extent to which sailing ships are still used to this very day in the Indonesian archipelago, this certainly was premature (Dick 1975; 1987). Much less was it a foregone conclusion in the course of the nineteenth century that wind would be replaced by steam as a source of energy. As late as 1880 brochures were being published in which Dutch business interests were actually called upon to deploy special new (iron) sailing vessels in order to safeguard the shrinking Dutch share of world freight shipping. 1

The superseding of one technology by another is not a natural or mechanical phenomenon but rather a social process. Substitution is seldom complete, and from a contemporary point of view it is not often easy to indicate exactly where a new equilibrium will arise between the old and new technologies. The relationship is not only determined by the nature of both technologies, but can also easily be influenced by economic developments (patterns of demand, cost structures) and by changes in the social esteem given to both technologies.

Zeverijn 1881, 38-41; "Oedipus" (pseudonym) 1881, 19-21. This should not be seen as just a symptom of the industrial retardation of Dutch shipbuilding. Even in Great Britain there were proponents of iron or steel-hulled sailing ships (Haley 1979, 226). In Great Britain, the ups and downs in the building of sail to steamship tonnage between 1835 till 1870 paralleled one another; after that these movements were contrary (see MacGregor 1984, 17). So this focus on the early eighties may have been prompted by the crisis in the building industry.