CHAPTER 2

Maritime Frontiers, Territorial Expansion and Haifang (Coastal Defense) during the Late Ming and High Qing

Introduction

China’s perceptions of its maritime frontier during imperial times are often dismissed as passive and monotonous. The story that the imperial governments imposed restrictions and prohibitions to prevent their own people from putting out to sea and outsiders from coming at will to visit the China coast is uncritically repeated without any further reflection. Furthermore, although for centuries China had been concerned with military threats from the northern and Inner Asian steppes, it was only in the nineteenth century that China finally faced a major challenge from the sea mounted by the Western powers. Prior to this change, there were indeed maritime disturbances such as those caused by the arrivals of the Japanese and Western intruders in the sixteenth century, but the coastal boundary was considered relatively secure and did not require urgent attention or projections of state might. Consequently, imperial China failed to develop active policies toward its maritime frontier and instead was caught up in illusions, unable to rationalize beyond a certain point. Hence it became an empire without empire builders.1

The story is not so simple. The apparent inertia in China’s long maritime history is deceptive. For more than two thousand years, imperial governments had in fact been responding to coastal conditions in rational and pragmatic ways. During the Qin Dynasty (221–207 BC) and the early stage of the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220), a unified China expanded to establish a natural coastal boundary from the Liaodong

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Boundaries and Beyond

Peninsula in the northeast to the Guangdong coast and Hainan in the south through a series of conquests and re-conquests. The following centuries, until the Tang Dynasty (618–907), were a time of consolidation. The same period also witnessed more frequent contact between China and the maritime world especially of the South Seas region, a development that gained momentum after the fifth century. The ties were built upon a mutually beneficial and flexible framework of “tribute and trade” that allowed participants from either side to interpret the nature of their relations in different ways to suit their own purposes.\(^2\) During the long period of Tang, Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1260–1368) rule, China was linked to the maritime world through prosperous trade. Founded in the ninth century, by Yuan times the port city of Quanzhou had risen to become one of the world’s largest seaports. In the tenth century, a specialized bureau—the Supervisorates of Maritime Trade and Shipping (shibo si)—was established to govern maritime relations and trade. Until the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), such offices operated almost without interruption in Guangzhou, Ningbo and Quanzhou (Fuzhou in the mid-Ming). Breaking with the traditional approach, Khubilai Khan (r. 1260–94) and the Ming Yongle Emperor (r. 1403–24) briefly followed an active forward policy by sending expeditions overseas. In a nutshell, this long process of Chinese maritime history was certainly eventful, although existing scholarship has barely begun to scratch the surface of its progress and innovations. Unquestionably the imperial governments were aware of the maritime world and they in fact played a major role in it.

Imperial China’s seaboard remained relatively unthreatened by domestic and foreign forces up to the mid-Ming. The long period of tranquility gave the Chinese state ample time to consolidate and digest its hold of its maritime frontier-lands and saw the rise of seaports as transit points for the supply of such precious goods as rhinoceros horns, elephant tusks, tortoise-shells and pearls from foreign countries. More commodities, including aromatics, pepper and medicinal ingredients were added to the list in later periods. Through trade the coastal region became well integrated into other parts of the empire, politically and economically. By the late Ming, the southeast coast could no longer be considered a peripheral zone that the state could afford to ignore.

It was during the decades after the 1520s that a state of such maritime disorder prevailed along the southeast coast. It gave rise to the security

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2. A more recent review of the literature on the “tribute system” and its dualism is provided in James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, pp. 9–15.
issue of coastal defense (haifang) that subsequently became a major policy concern for both the Ming and the Qing (1644–1912) governments. This chapter revolves around these observations. It begins with a long view of the pre-Ming period that illustrates the formation of maritime frontiers up to the Han and the subsequent consolidation from Han times to the mid-Ming. The late Ming and the Qing prior to the Opium War (1839–42) will form the backbone of the present investigation. Through the lenses of scholars of statecraft during the period in question, the discussion hopes to reveal what were the actual approaches to the haifang issue and the rationale behind them, instead of what should have happened.

**Boundaries, Frontiers and Lands Beyond**

During imperial times, the Chinese rulers maintained a strong sense of the empire’s boundaries. In his letter to King George III of England, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95), explained that “the borders of the heavenly empire are peremptorily drawn and their crossing by the people from outside the boundaries is strictly prohibited.... Every length of the land within the empire is covered by the register of population. The boundaries are precisely drawn. Even the islets and shoals have also been divided and demarcated. Each is under a particular jurisdiction.” He was not exaggerating the situation. As Owen Lattimore observes, there was an inherent bias in the Chinese historical processes toward the evolution of “rigid frontiers.”

This territorial concept contributed to the long tradition of compiling and publishing numerous geographical writings to define the borders. Maritime frontiers were no exception. The Yugong has often been cited as an early work that describes what were known as the “nine geographical divisions” (jiuzhou zhidi) under Yu the Great (according to tradition, approximately the twenty-first century BC). Some of the divisions extended eastward to the sea from modern Shandong to northern Fujian. During the Xia and Shang dynasties (c. 2100–1028 BC), the eastern region where the Yi people resided was considered “a land

3. A literal translation of the term is “sea defense”, but more precisely it meant “coastal defense”.
within the reach” (yaofu) of the state and therefore under Chinese (Huaxia) influence. The south, including modern Guangdong, was the land of the Man people. It was not under Xia and Shang influence and was classified as a land far from the capital or “a land beyond reach” (huangfu). The Man people were perceived to be more obstinate than the Yi. This was a not unwarranted designation as they actually did begin to cause border disturbances during Xia and Shang times. Between 401‒381 BC, the renowned military strategist Wu Qi had helped the Kingdom of Chu to annex the region around Lake Dongting and Changwu.6 Thereafter, Chinese influence slowly penetrated the region south of the Yangzi River and the description yaofu was then extended to it. In other words, the two terms yaofu and huangfu did not indicate the geographical distances of those lands from the Chinese capital, as traditional Chinese texts would tend to imply; their actual usage pointed more to whether they fell within the perimeter of regular contacts, ritualized by tribute relations. The lands of the Rong and Di people in the west and north respectively, for example, were considered faraway and inaccessible. Another interesting example was Sulu in the South Seas. As a Qing source puts it, “it had long been an area beyond [our] reach (huangfu zhidi)…. During the 15th year of the Ming Yongle Reign, … [the three kings of the country together with their consorts] came to pay tribute.”7 From then on, Sulu was placed within the orbit of yaofu.

During Qin-Han times, China’s eastern and southeastern borders were extended to the sea; the former Yi and Man regions became parts of China proper. In the south, the Qin formed three new prefectures, namely: Nanhai, Gueilin and Xiangjun, roughly corresponding to modern Guangdong, Guangxi and northern Vietnam. The region around present-day Guangdong, once categorized as an inaccessible land, now became an integral part of the imperial domain.8 With the exception of the border between China and modern Vietnam, that remained an unstable and shifting entity, the sea now became a natural and stable boundary and the coastline formed, using Owen Lattimore’s phrase again, part of China’s new “rigid frontiers”. This factor had the effect of constricting any further expansion on the part of China.

Terms such as *yaofu*, *huangfu*, Yi, Man or Fan remained in use, but now indicated lands and peoples farther away, beyond the new Chinese boundaries. Within China proper, the terms *bantu* (household register and territorial map) and *banji* (household register) came into use as alternate terms to indicate the imperial domain or territories in which the *junxian* (prefecture-district) administrations were formed. The *junxian* administrative units served to enhance the awareness of territorial boundaries since each unit was meticulously demarcated for tax collection and other responsibilities. This institution subsequently became the essential mechanism in establishing territorial control. For example, from the early Ming Dynasty, the establishment of *xian* administrations was used as an effective way to tackle the problem of local disturbances caused by banditry or rebellious forces. When a territory was placed under the jurisdiction of a local official, education and sacrifices would be encouraged and the people would be led to observe the proprieties and become governable. Chinese civilization was thereby enabled to embrace the new territories, and that in turn helped to strengthen the governance.

Following the Qin conquest, the Chinese control of the south had still not been firmly established, and this explains why military officers were appointed to head the regional administrations. In the words of Gu Yanwu (1613‒82), when the refined influence of culture and virtue was insufficient, then force would be needed (*wende buzui er hou you wugong*). Territories falling into this category were the faraway lands of Guangdong and Guangxi in the south, that were conquered by the Qin and named Nanhai and Gueilin prefectures, and that required military rule under a “commandery defender” (*junwei*). Unfortunately the high-ranking regional officials were often grasping and their exactions led to numerous rebellions by lower officers (*li*) and the common people. Insurgencies among the minority peoples were also a frequent occurrence. A civil official with the rank of prefect was first appointed only after the early Han re-conquest of the region.

In traditional Chinese historiography, conquests were not often advocated. This assertion can be best illustrated in the following passage taken from the *Bei shi* (Standard history of the Northern Dynasties):

> Since early times, it was because the rulers were ambitious and the ministers were fond of meddling that the country reached the faraway people and extended itself to the distant lands… Once the ruler is eager to advance the distant people, he will have the

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9. *TXJGLBS*, 26: 24a  
10. Ibid., 27: la–2a, 3a, 4a–b.
service of ministers who follow the virtue that regards life lightly.

The wise kings in ancient times governed a land of fifty thousand li. They saw it their duty to pacify the many states among the Xia (Chinese) people and did not pay attention to the matters in the frontier lands and the distant lands. It was not because they could not subdue or influence them by virtue. It was because they did not want China (Zhongguo) to be wearied by the foreign people from all directions (si yi) and waste the useful resources on useless things.

Its compiler was especially critical of the expansionist policy during the times of the First Emperor of the Qin (r. 221–210 BC) and Emperor Wu of the Han (r. 140–87 BC), who were seen to have paid a high cost for their conquest and to have caused their people suffering by such endeavours. Another compiler of a Song text also commented, “China’s relations with the Yi and Di were based on a continuous loose rein (jimi) only. When it is necessary to manifest power and send conquering troops, it is to subdue the ungrateful, stop humiliation, express majestic spirit and rid the people of calamity, but all these are the last resort.”

The model of the Zhou Dynasty was upheld because “the Zhou had adopted the best approach…. Since the ruler’s name and influence could not reach the distant land, he did not want to send an expeditionary force to attack it when it rebelled; nor did he lower his guard when it had surrendered.” Although there were exceptions, on the whole China learned the lesson that long wars damaged an agrarian economy and the gains were short-lived because its troops were often forced to retreat when their position weakened.

Although imperial China gradually expanded its domain over the course of two millennia beginning in the Qin-Han periods, it took even longer to consolidate China’s boundaries. There were conquests, losses, re-conquests and voluntary abandonment of territory. Despite the Chinese rhetoric that “all lands under the heaven belong to the imperial domain” and the literary expression that China’s territory extended to the “four

11. The above quotation is cited from Bei shi 北史 [Standard dynastic history of the Northern Dynasties], 97: 38b–39a. The same passage is repeated in Sui shu 隋書 [Standard dynastic history of the Sui], 83: 212b–23b.
seas” (guojia fuyou sihai),15 the territory extended only up to the sea-coast in the east. As the author of the Haiguo tuzhi, Wei Yuan (1794‒1857), observed, even when China was ruled by the great emperors, who were “diligent in conquering new territories” (hao qin yuanlue zhi jun), it did not reach the ends of the land mass except on the eastern coastline. An unprecedented expansion [beyond the coastline] into the South Seas took place during the times of the Great Khan Khubilai, but the Yuan forces only temporarily occupied Champa and Java.16

Conversely, domains were lost from time to time. One example is the 16 districts ceded by Shi Jingtang of the Later Jin during the Five Dynasties period (907‒60). Shi, who was aided by the Liao in his founding of the Later Jin, ceded 16 districts in the northern part of modern Hobei and Shansi provinces to the Qidan (Khitans). Nevertheless, Yue Shi, a Song Dynasty compiler, continued to include these places as part of the Song territories. However, an introduction to his work prepared by the chief compilers of the Siku quan shu (The complete library of the four treasures) during the Qianlong reign point out that these districts had not in fact formed part of the Song domain; their inclusion in Yue Shi’s works probably indicated that the early Song government was determined to recover the lost territories.17 Apparently, in the minds of the chief compilers during the Qing, the term domain (bantu) implied only the territory under effective administration with demarcated boundaries, within which the registered households (hukou) and the land tax (tianfu) subsequently paid formed two foundations of the administration.

Although the Song government was not responsible for the loss of the 16 districts, it perceived their cession as a humiliation and therefore it had a moral obligation as a successor dynasty to recover them. There were also rare occasions on which territorial losses were accepted matter-of-factly. The Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723‒35), for example, showed flexibility and generosity in conceding a loss of territory to Annam in 1725, when the Yun-Guei Governor-General, Gao Qizhuo, reported the encroachment on China’s borders by Annam. The emperor replied that, in a choice between boundary demarcations and neighborly spirit, between the use of force and inducing willing submission, he would prefer the latter in each case. He said:

15. HGTZ, 49: 11b.
16. Ibid., 2: 24a.
Regarding Dulong, Nandan and other places, Annam occupied them during the closing years of the Ming dynasty, not during the times of our dynasty. As Annam has been complaisant for several generations since the founding of this dynasty, their attitude is commendable and merits rewards. How can we contest against them for every inch of the land? ... Even the land has its usefulness, how can the heavenly country contest the claim of a small country to it? If the land has no use at all, why should we contest it with them?

However, when Annam tried to acquire more land, its efforts were promptly rejected and it was reproached for being ungrateful.

After a long period of a thousand years up to the Song, with the exception of Annam, the southern frontier along the coastline had been greatly consolidated. The latter was first annexed into the imperial domain under the First Emperor of Qin and named Xiangjun. It was divided into three administrative units in the early Han, namely: Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen and Rinan. The term Jiaozhou also came into use as the designation for a regional administrative unit that covered the nine sub-units in present-day Guangdong, Guangxi and northern Vietnam. The southernmost boundaries were drawn after the re-conquest by General Ma Yuan (14 BC–AD 49) of the Eastern Han Dynasty. In AD 43 he erected two “bronze pillars” (tongzhu) in the southern parts of Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen and Rinan prefectures to demarcate the imperial border from that of Champa. In the third century, Jiao was restricted to being a territorial designation applied exclusively to Jiaozhi. In the seventh century (early Tang), Jiaozhou, that encompassed the previous units, was added to Guang to form one of the country’s ten circuits, but it was not long before the name Annam was adopted to replace Jiao to refer to the administrative unit embracing what is now northern Vietnam.

Under the Song, Annam was recognized as an independent state. As Gu Yanwu commented, “Jiaozhi had been integrated into the Chinese territory since the Qin-Han... It was not until the early Song that its [leader] was granted the overlordship [by China].... However, he continued to act in the same way as a Chinese minister (neidi zhi chen) and did not declare statehood (guo). Even when he had the title of Prince of Nanping conferred on him, he referred to his territory as the circuit of An-nan in memorials

18. For the citation and the later event, see “Shizhong xianhuangdi shengxun” 世宗先皇帝聖訓, 35: 13b–14a, 17a–19a, in SKQS, “History Section”.
19. Zhou Qufei 周去非 (South Song), Lingwai daida 嶺外代答 [Answering questions concerning matters beyond the Lingnan mountains] (hereafter LWDD) (completed in 1178), 1: la–b, 10: 7b–8a; TXJGLBS, 28: 36a–37a.
In 1164, the South Song government granted the title of kingship to Jiaozhi. This action indicated Song recognition of Annam’s statehood and the state of Annam (An-nan guo) was also mentioned in Chinese writings for the first time.\(^{21}\) Thereafter, as Gu Yanwu lamented, “this country (China) therefore saw it as the like of Korea and Zhenla (Cambodia) and no longer knew that it used to be an integral part of China”.\(^{22}\) The Song author Zhou Qufei was aware of Annam’s independent status and its adoption of the name Dayue Guo (the Kingdom of Great Viet) and in fact listed it in the chapter of “foreign states” (waiguo), calling it the “State of Annam”. However, he refused to acknowledge its legitimacy and labeled it an illegitimate (wei) political institution.\(^{23}\) Another Song text also comments, “Annam ... had been under China’s prefecture-district administration right up until our own times when it has no longer been included in the domain (bantu) for the first time.”\(^{24}\) Ouyang Min, another Song author, designated Annam a “prefecture beyond the pale” (huawai zhou), a disguised acknowledgement of Annam’s independent status. One indication of the contraction of the frontier bordering Annam during the Song can be seen in the erection of two pavilions called Tianyai ting (Pavilion at the Uttermost Ends of the Earth) and Haijiao ting (Pavilion at the Edge of the Sea) respectively in Qinzhou and Lianzhou in Guangdong.\(^{26}\) Today, the combined term “Tianyai Haijiao” refers to the southernmost point of Hainan. The shifting borders were also indicated by the erection of “bronze pillars” on the Chinese side of the modern border on several occasions after Han times.\(^{27}\)

In 1400, the Tran monarch in Annam was deposed by Le Qui Li and partisans of the Tran Dynasty decided to request Chinese aid to redress the situation. Their action provided the Yongle Emperor with the pretext to send an expedition to Tonkin in 1407, where it occupied Hanoi and

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20. TXJGLBS, 32: 125a.
22. TXJGLBS, 32: 125a.
23. LWDD, 2: 1a, 2b, 3a–b.
26. LWDD, 1: 16a–b.
27. Ibid., 10: 7b–8a; TXJGLBS, 28, 36a–37a.
seized the usurper. However, two decades later a Thanh-hoa chieftain named Le Lo’i scored a victory over the Ming force in 1428. Commenting in the early Qing Dynasty on the failure to recover Annam, a seventeenth-century text included in Gu Yanwu’s geographical work had this to say:

Alas, since the Qin annexation of hundreds of prefectures, Jiaozhi together with Nanhai and Gueilin had become an integral part of China.... But, after the rule of the Five Dynasties, why was the place occupied by local rogues, so that even the rising Song failed to reconquer it? [This former domain] therefore became a Yi Di area.... Despite one successful campaign in the Song that led to the expulsion of its king and later the entry into its capital of the Yuan dynastic forces, China still failed to re-possess it.... Today’s boundaries surpass [those of] the Song, and are comparable to those of the Tang, but smaller than those of the Han; [this] is because of the loss of the three prefectures [namely: Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen and Rinan]. [China] had been fortunate to gain them, but lost them later. What a pity!28

The phrase “our dependency (shuguo) An-nan” appears in a Qing source cited by Wei Yuan.29 It is possible that this perception was based on the Chinese version of the events. As shown in the Chinese records, in 1659 Annam paid tribute to the rising Qing Dynasty after the latter’s pacification of Yunnan. This friendly exchange led to the award of kingship to Annam in 1666. When King Chieu Thong of the Le Dynasty fled the capital then under attack by the Tay Son troops led by Nguyen Hue in 1787, he sought help from the Qing government. Shortly afterwards, after scoring initial successes and briefly restoring King Chieu to the throne in late 1788, the Qing army was routed by Nguyen Hue. However, the victor decided to make a reconciliation with the Qing. The Qing record claims that Nguyen Hue “came and surrendered himself” (lai xiang) and, in return, was proclaimed “King of An-nan” by the Qing. After a new Dynasty, the Nguyen, was founded by Gia Long in 1802, the Qing proclaimed him the “King of Yuenan (Vietnam)”. The name Vietnam was adopted at the request of Gia Long during a tribute mission, according to the Chinese record.30

At the time of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589), imperial China perceived the islands in the vast sea in the south as tributary states. It called them “the various states in the Nanhai (South Seas) located beyond the frontiers (jiaowai) of Rinan. They have all sent

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29. HGTZ, 3: 9b.
30. For the events cited above, see ibid., 3: 13b–14a, 5: 12b.
tribute to China since the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han.”

Yue Shi of the Song Dynasty also mentions the Nanhai states, describing them as “countries beyond the frontiers” (jiaowai zhuguo). They numbered more than 30.

During the early Ming, the founding emperor, Taizu (Hongwu, r. 1368‒98), designated the countries in the east and the Nanhai, including Korea, Japan, Liuqiu (Ryukyu), Xiao Liuqiu (Lesser Ryukyu), Annam, Champa, Cambodia, Siam, Sumatra, Java, Pahang and Borneo, as countries “not to be invaded” because they were separated by mountains and seas and located faraway, “hidden in a corner”. As long as they continued to act peacefully toward China, they should be left alone. Despite the fact that they were designated “tributary countries”, this imperial injunction was the clearest declaration that they were considered independent states.

The incompatibility between the imperial rhetoric and reality can also be deduced from the term waiguo (foreign countries), used interchangeably with “tributary countries”. It appears in two standard dynastic histories, the Jiu wudai shi (Former standard history of the Five Dynasties) and the Song shi (Standard dynastic history of the Song). The latter was compiled under the Yuan and completed in 1345. Among the countries to the east and south mentioned in it are Korea, Jiaozhi (Annam), Champa, Zhenla (Cambodia), Pagan (in Burma), Srivijaya, Java, Borneo, Liuqiu and Japan.

By Qing times, the Chinese perception of the maritime frontiers had become a mix of rhetoric and reality. Gu Yanwu, for example, states that the China coast began where Guangdong bordered Annam and ended at the Yalu River bordering Korea. Another Qing text published in the early eighteenth century gives a detailed description of the maritime boundaries that covered seven provinces from Liaodong to Guangdong. Among the three most strategic maritime provinces, namely: Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang, it said that Fujian held the key to the maritime frontier. The most strategic offshore islands included Nan’ao (between Guangdong and Fujian), Jinmen, Amoy, Haitan and Zhoushan. Hainan, the Penghu Islands (Pescadores) and Taiwan were considered territories located in the Outer Sea (waihai). Aomen (Macao) is listed among the “foreign countries”. As the text explains, Aomen was “where the people

31. Ibid., 3: 13b–14a, 5: 12b.
32. TPHYZ, 176: 1a–2a.
33. For the quotes, see Ming hui dian 明會典 [Collected administrative statutes of the Ming Dynasty] (1509), 96: 9a–10b.
34. Ibid., 96: 3b–4a; and DQYTZ (1764), juan 421–424.
35. TXJGLBS, 26: 1a, 3a.
from the Western Ocean (Xiyang ren) rented their lodgings”. Other “foreign countries” included Luzon, Borneo, Ka-la-pa (Dutch Batavia), Siam, Annam, Cambodia and Japan on the one hand, and Portugal, Spain, France, and England on the other. The countries in the latter group were located at a distance of “two years’ voyage” and hence had never been visited by Chinese junks.36

In the meantime, the imperial rhetoric continued. Liuqiu is a case in point. It had been considered a most loyal and respectful tributary state by both the Ming and Qing governments. Soon after the founding of the Ming, Liuqiu responded to a Ming mission to the kingdom in 1372 by sending a tribute mission to China for the first time. In 1392 during the Hongwu Reign, the King of Zhongshan in Liuqiu sent students to study in the imperial capital.37 The Chinese were impressed by Liuqiu’s compliance with the Chinese lunar calendar, which was considered in the Chinese political concept a symbol of submission. Since the Chenghuareign (1465–87), it had been a practice of Liuqiu to send high-ranking officials to inform China of the accession of new kings and request the conferment of titles.38 A Chinese imperial proclamation sent in 1532 observed that, despite Liuqiu’s location in a distant part of the seas, it had long been influenced by Chinese culture (shengjiao). Following compliance with the emperor’s duty of benevolence, the Ming Jiajing emperor (r. 1522–66) sent Censor Chen Kan as envoy to confer on the new king of Liuqiu, Shangqing, the title “King of Zhongshan of the Liuqiu State”. The king was instructed to perform the duty of a minister and perpetuate peace and tranquility.39 In 1600, Shangning, then the king of Zhongshan, sent a memorial to request the conferment of kingship. This was 12 years after he had acceded to the throne. The delay had been occasioned by Japanese incursions. Censor Xia Ziyang was appointed envoy for the conferment mission. The delegation left the capital for Fujian in 1603. The conferment vessel was specially built in Fujian and took three years to complete. The envoy left Fujian for Liuqiu in 1606. The presence of Japanese troops in Liuqiu during this time might have involved the envoy in a confrontation, a prospect that aroused great anxiety among high-ranking officials in Fujian.40 Both the touring censorial inspector, Fang Yuanyan, and the

36. Qingchu haijiang tushuo 清初海疆圖說 [Illustrated descriptions of the boundaries during the early Qing Dynasty] (hereafter QCHJTS), in Taiwan wenxian congkan 台灣文獻叢刊 (hereafter TWWXCK), no. 155, pp. 5, 7–9, 11, 59.
39. Ibid., p. 3.
40. Xia Ziyang 夏子陽, “Shi Liuqiu lu” 使琉球錄, in TWWXCK, no. 287, p. 171.
governor, Xu Xueju, memorialized the throne that “the turbulent state of the seas cautions us to safeguard the dignity of our country. We appeal to the throne to reconsider the dispatch of the conferment envoy.” They feared that the country’s dignity would be jeopardized were the two envoys to be confronted by the Japanese. Their concern also extended to the few hundred lives on board the ship. In the end, their anxiety proved unwarranted. The Japanese soldiers chose to play the role of observers at the ceremony and did not cause any trouble. Envoy Xia clearly sensed the precarious position of Liuqiu, and he said in his record of the mission that, “Liuqiu is so close to Japan that, once Korea is lost to the latter, it would not be able to survive.” By then, the Chinese were under no illusions about the threat of an expansionist Japan on the maritime frontier.

The practice of sending an imperial conferment mission upon request continued under the Qing. During the reign of Kangxi (r. 1662‒1722), a scholar-official named Wang Shizhen comments that, “among the various countries, Liuqiu was the most keen on Chinese culture. China also treated it most favorably.” Another scholar, Jiang Dengyun, thought Liuqiu was no different from a Chinese domain because it had observed the duty of ministers for generations. “Their cap and robes (yiguan) and culture (wenwu) manifest Chinese influence. Other countries cannot compare with them [in this regard].” By the mid-nineteenth century, reform-minded scholars equated tributary states with “dependencies” in the modern meaning of the term. For example, the well-known expert on the management of foreign trade and maritime defense, Liang Tingnan (1796–1861), lists Liuqiu as a “shuguo” (dependency). The late-Qing author Wang Tao (1828–97) also perceived that, following the first sending of a tribute mission in the early Ming, “[Liuqiu] became a Chinese dependency for successive generations (shi wei shuguo).” Wang was aware of Japanese records indicating that Satsuma had once occupied Liuqiu, in 1609, and that from 1670 to 1842 Japan had received ten tribute missions from Liuqiu. Nevertheless, Wang Tao argues that, while Liuqiu was sending tribute missions to Japan, it remained a Chinese vassal because “when it paid tribute to Japan, it had long submitted itself

41. See TWWXCK, no. 289, p. 196.
42. Xia Ziyang, “Shi Liuqiu lu”, p. 171
44. In XIAOFANGHU ZHAII YUDI CONGCHAO 小方壺督緒叢鈔 [Collected texts on geography from the Xiaofanghu studio] (hereafter XFHZYDCC), comp. Wang Xiqi 王錫祺 (1855–1913) 編撰, 10: la.
to China". Unlike his traditional predecessors, Wang Tao lived at a time when China had commenced efforts to modernize. Not surprisingly, his view was imbued with nationalistic flavor.

Another country that was seen by the Chinese as a model tributary state was Korea. Again, Jiang Dengyun, probably writing during the Kangxi reign, said that Jizi (Kija) was granted the feudality of Choson (Korea) under the Zhou Dynasty. Korea was beyond the frontiers of Liaodong in Qin times, but Emperor Wu of the Han conquered it and formed four prefectures. Chinese power in the area deteriorated after the Han. From the Tang Dynasty, Korea again sent tribute to China and was restored as a Chinese domain during Khubilai’s times. After the founding of the Ming, King Kongmin sent a congratulatory mission to the new dynasty and had the title of King of Korea (Koryo) conferred on him. After four generations, Yi Song-gye usurped the throne and asked the Ming’s permission to restore the name Choson for his kingdom. The Yi Dynasty continued sending tribute to the Qing and also adopted the Chinese prefecture-district system.

Coastal Defenses

Despite its possession of a lengthy sea-coast ever since its eastward and southward expansion, coastal defense, haifang, only really became a concern of officials and defense strategists from the Ming period when the country faced a serious threat to law and order from the sea. From the Jiajing reign, haifang became one of the main policy concerns of the government. The sea-prohibition policy enacted by the founding emperor, Hongwu, was now being strictly enforced in an effort to cope with the new situation. Among its many targets was the menace caused by the Wo (or Wokou, meaning “Japanese” pirates, real or disguised). During the period from the sixteenth century to the Opium War, writers on statecraft deliberated over the issue of coastal defense and contributed to a large volume of literature on the matter.

The Ming government established garrisons (wei) and military stations (so) to guard the land; marine palisades (shuizhai) were also constructed to protect coastal waters. The so were subdivisions of the wei and formed units of either battalions (qianhu so) or companies

47. Ibid., p. 276.
48. In HFHZYDCC, 10: 1a.
49. Ibid., 9: 12a.
50. TXJGLBS, 26: 17b.
(baihu so) that were actively involved in coastal defense. In 1369, a Ming expedition was sent by the founding emperor to capture Guangdong from a contesting force. After the pacification of the region, the weiso defense system was established along the coast. For this purpose the Guangdong coast was divided into three sectors. In the western sector bordering Annam, 3 wei and 11 so were built; the central sector consisted of 3 wei and 6 so; and the eastern sector had 2 wei and 8 so. Qiongzhou (Hainan) was considered to be located in isolation “beyond the seas” (haiwai) and therefore it formed a separate brigade. Under the weiso system, farm lands were given to military colonists to make them self-supporting. Beacon mounds were constructed in order to send warning signals from one to the other along the coast.\footnote{51}

To prepare for Wo attacks in the Fujian seas (Minhai), in 1387 Dukes Tang He and Zhou Dexing were sent by the court to investigate maritime conditions. Subsequently the unstable condition led to the establishment of 5 garrisons and 12 military stations along the Fujian coast, at the suggestion of Zhou Dexing. Itinerant inspectors (xunsi) were appointed to patrol the areas not covered by the weiso units and war junk were stationed at the three marine palisades of Fenghuo (in Funing), Nanri (in Putian) and Wuyu (in Tong’an). During the Jingtai Reign (1450–56), 2 additional marine palisades, each guarded by 40 patrol boats, were constructed at Xiao Cheng in Lianjiang and Tongshan in Zhangpu. However, by 1500, a long period of peace and the absence of any Wo troubles for some time led to the abolition of such military installations. Sixty years later, in 1563, when a recurring outbreak of Wo attacks was at its peak, Governor Tan Lun recommended the appointment of a brigade-general and three lieutenant-colonels to strengthen the coastal defenses.\footnote{52} By the late Ming, there were 11 garrisons, 14 military stations and 15 patrol inspectorships in Fujian.\footnote{53} The density of the concentration gives a good indication of Fujian’s strategic position in the coastal defense against the Wo and later the Dutch.\footnote{54} Quanzhou prefecture alone had a coastline of 300 li and, as a center of maritime trade, it was vulnerable to attacks by foreign mariners. Stretched along its coast, the most strategic locations were Chongwu to the east of Hui’an, Liaole to its south and

52. Ibid., 4: lb–2a; also TXJGLBS, 26: 129b–130a.
53. Dong Yingjü 董應舉, Chongxiang ji xuanlu 崇相集選錄 (hereafter CXJXL), in TWWXCK, no. 237, pp. 135, 137.
54. QCHJTS, in TWWXCK, no. 155, pp. 11–2.
Wuyu in the east of Tong’an. Jinjiang, Nan’an and Tong’an districts were also dotted with fortresses and beacon installations.\textsuperscript{55}

In the mid-sixteenth century, Zheng Ruozeng, who served as Hu Zongxian’s advisor during the anti-Wo campaigns in the 1550s, showed a revived interest in seaborne transport, seeing it as a means to enhance naval strength. Zheng was a keen maritime observer and produced perhaps the most original and best drawn maps of coastal defenses during Ming times. He strongly recommended the use of sea-going vessels as a means of transporting goods. The idea, as he pointed out, was not new. It had been adopted under the Qin, and the Yuan governments also began to encourage sea transport in 1282. However, the practice was stopped in 1412, somewhat ironically during the Yongle Reign that saw the unprecedented sea expeditions under the command of Zheng He. In an essay on sea transport, Zheng Ruozeng explained that, “[such a plan] will prepare the country for naval battles”\textsuperscript{56}

Since Zheng Ruozeng was very much involved in the suppression of piracy, his failure to mention Japan as a primary threat at the time is puzzling. An anti-Wo general, Wang Yu, describes the maritime condition in a memorial as follows:

\begin{quote}
I heard that the Wo bandits in the southeast are like the Xiongnu in the northwest. They are crafty and valiant. They are so powerful it is difficult to resist them. They come swiftly on favorable winds and are unpredictable. Therefore, our defenses against the Wo run from Shandong in the north to Fujian and Guangdong in the south. The strategic planning is no less than that in the northwest. Moreover, contacting the barbarian lands and putting to sea had been strictly prohibited; the restriction to ten-year intervals for the arrival of the tribute missions has also been implemented. [Both are for the purpose of enhancing the defense.]
\end{quote}

Not all scholars were impressed by the Ming efforts. An early Qing author attributed the Ming’s weaknesses in coastal defense to its failure to maintain a regular water-borne or naval force. A battle-ready navy came into existence only to deal with exigencies. At other times, patrol

\textsuperscript{55} TXJGLBS, 26: 78b–79b.
\textsuperscript{56} ZKYZZ, 2: 71a.
\textsuperscript{57} In Wang Yu 王忬, “Wo yi rongliu panni jiujie rukou shu” 倭夷容留叛逆糾結入寇疏 [A memorial about the joint invasion of the Japanese and Chinese rebels], in TWWXCK, no. 289, p. 67; see also Ming jingshi wenbian 明經世文編 [Collected essays on statecraft from the Ming Dynasty] (hereafter MJSWB), comp. Chen Zilong, Xu Fuyuan, et al. 陳子龍 (1608–47)、徐孚遠 (1599–1665) 等選輯 [comp. 1638] (reprint; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 283: 30a–32a.
boats, vessels of small size and unfit for war, were only thinly deployed.\footnote{QCHJTS, in TWWXCK, no. 155, p. 11.} This description of the Ming waterborne-force might have been true in peacetime. Nevertheless, in emergencies, the Ming authorities were able to assemble war junks that were large and solid. They were also effective in attacking their targets in the outer coastal waters (waiyang), thereby preventing the hostile vessels from entering harbors. Later, tactics changed and government vessels attacked an advancing force only after it had entered a harbor. This was a recipe for disaster as the large war junks lost their maneuverability in the shallow waters and the smaller pirate vessels had no difficulty in avoiding a head-on clash with them.\footnote{TXJGLBS, 26: 18a.} Consequently, the sailors who served in the naval force also suffered from low morale and were often afraid of going to sea, offering an explanation of the reason the Wo could come ashore at will. Although a decisive victory over the intruders was eventually won on land in Xinghua by the prominent Ming general Qi Jiguang (1527–87), his success owed much to an effective blockade by war junks under the command of Yu Dayou (1503–80) in Nanri that cut off the route of the enemy’s retreat.\footnote{QCHJTS, in TWWXCK, no. 155, p. 11.} During the late Ming, there was no consensus about where intruders should be confronted. Some officials argued that the best way to deal with pirates was to stop them at sea. Others believed that pirates could be more effectively dealt with after they had landed because the ocean was too vast to discover and crush them. The pirates would change course once they had spotted the war junks. Even if a few pirate vessels were destroyed, the pirate band could still afford the loss. As far as they were concerned, the sinking of a few boats was not much different from losing them to shipwreck in a storm, a disaster that occurred from time to time. The lack of success at sea might explain why defense strategists thought that the bandits could best be rounded up and annihilated in a decisive land battle.\footnote{Guangdong haifang huiyan 廣東海防彚覽 [A comprehensive compilation of source materials relating to the coastal defense of Guangdong] (hereafter GDHFHL), comp. Lu Kun, et al. 魯坤 (1772–1835) 等編撰 (printed in 1838), 12: 4b–5a.}

The defensive approach employed in the past led Wei Yuan, in his investigation of maritime affairs in the wake of the Opium War, to observe that, “there was a (coastal defense [system] but no sea battles” (you haifang er wu haizhan). As he saw it, ships had been employed as troop convoys but battles were fought on land. Zheng He and Zheng Chenggong (Coxinga) were two partial exceptions. The former led a
fleets to explore the Western Ocean in the early fifteenth century and the latter confronted the Dutch fleet and seized Taiwan from them during the Ming-Qing transition.\(^{62}\) Wei Yuan also went on to compare the Ming and Qing resistance to the Wo with the reaction to the British invasions. His opinion was that the Wo could fight better on land than at sea because, by and large, they were poor and could not afford to equip themselves with big ships and cannon. They were desperados of great courage. Once they had landed, they became invincible. Had they been confronted at sea by the superior Fujian and Guangdong junks armed with cannon and firearms, the naval force could have crushed them like “a stone roller husking rice” (ru shi nianmi). However, even such prominent anti-Wo generals as Qi Jiguang, resorted to land battles. They won some decisive victories, but paid a high price in the loss of life and property. During the anti-Wo campaigns in the mid-sixteenth century, only Tang Shunzhi and Yu Dayou advocated defeating the pirates at sea. They said, “It was better to crush an incoming rather than a homeward-bound fleet.” Wei praised the two for their good grasp of the art of how to suppress the Wo. General Yu was cited as saying that, “there was no other way to defeat the Wo than to use [our] large vessels to crush [their] small boats and outnumber them.” His reason was that the Wo were skilled swordsmen; once they had landed, who could then stop them? Finally, Wei lamented that, “the Ming defenders who opposed the Wo were not aware of the necessity of fighting them at sea, and those who resisted the British did not opt for setting traps in the interior”.\(^{63}\) Wei himself proposed defensive tactics that involved confronting the British on land, arguing that the British naval force was superior to that of the Qing.

Despite all the shortcomings of the Ming maritime defense force, given time and experienced commanders, it did develop the capacity to suppress intruders, although it could be argued that this success came at a high price. In the early decades of the seventeenth century, the greatest threat to the China coast was posed by the Dutch and by native Chinese piracy. It has to be said that, for the most part, the Ming authorities managed to deal with this challenge. Often, the Ming naval force utilized favorable winds to send fire-ships to burn the better-armed foreign sailing ships. This was precisely the strategy employed by Zheng Zhilong (Nicholas Iquan) in his confrontation with the VOC naval force. When his son, Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga), was confronted by more than a dozen Dutch sailing ships (East Indiamen) in his attempt to capture Taiwan in

\(^{62}\) Ding Yuejian 丁曰健, *Zhi tai bigao lu* 治臺必告錄, in *TWWXCK*, no. 17, p. 71.
\(^{63}\) For the quotes in this paragraph, see *HGTZ*, 1: 13a–14a; and Dong Yingju, *CXJXL*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 237, p. 17.
1661, he also applied the same tactics by setting the Dutch vessels on fire. In contrast to the unknown quantity of the Dutch, some Chinese pirate chiefs, among them Liu Xiang, were not initially seen as serious security risks. However, when the situation deteriorated in the wake of more frequent attacks by pirates along a long stretch of the Guangdong and Fujian coast, the Ming authorities decided to set a thief to catch a thief and called upon Zheng Zhihong, a pirate chief who had surrendered, to suppress them.64

At the outset, the Qing Dynasty faced almost 40 years of intransigent resistance on the southeast coast led by Zheng Chenggong and his descendants. This obdurate problem forced it to realize the importance of building a strong naval force in order to launch an attack across the Taiwan Strait. Its naval capability was greatly strengthened by the surrender of Admiral Shi Lang who deserted from the Zheng camp, a betrayal that eventually led to the defeat of the Zheng regime in 1683. After the pacification of Taiwan, the Qing made an effort to consolidate control of the newly-gained island. The regional command of Taiwan under a brigade-general was garrisoned by the largest force in the country,65 numbering three thousand troops. Over two thousand soldiers, stationed in the northern and southern parts of the island respectively, were under the command of two lieutenant-generals. A naval force of three thousand men was deployed at Anping, and another two thousand were stationed in the Penghu Islands.66 By the early nineteenth century, more than two thousand troops had been added.67

Earlier, the Qing authorities had consolidated their control of the southeast coast by building up land forces to guard the coastline. In Guangdong, a tartar general was appointed to the provincial capital. Brigade-generals were assigned to Chaozhou, Jieshi and Gaozhou, while deputy-brigade-generals were put in charge of the military affairs in Huizhou and Leizhou. A lieutenant-colonel was assigned to Lianzhou. Mobile corps (youbing) under officers holding the rank of colonel were in the process of replacing the former weiso deployments. The coastal defense posts were temporarily abandoned as the Chinese population was ordered to move inland during the war against the Zheng resistance force, but beacon-mounds and garrison posts were established at a

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64. Dong Yingju, CXJXL, in TWWXCK, no. 237, pp. 12, 98.
67. Yao Ying, Dongming zhougao, in TWWXCK, no. 49, p. 36.
distance of five and ten li respectively in 1662. When the situation improved, a decision was made to re-extend the boundaries back to the sea-coast and the coastal defense system based on land forces was gradually reinstated.\textsuperscript{68}

Following the Ming model, coastal defenses along the Guangdong coast were divided into three sectors, namely: Chaozhou and Huizhou on the eastern flank; Gaozhou, Lianzhou and Leizhou on the western flank; and the provincial capital Guangzhou in the center. Patrol posts and forts that were equipped with cannon were dotted everywhere along the coast. A total of 41 fortresses with 312 cannon and 618 military camps were set up following a recommendation by Governor-General Yang Lin in the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{69}

After the pacification of Taiwan, unlike its predecessor, the Qing government maintained regular fleets to patrol the “outer coastal waters”, instead of just the “inner coastal waters” (neiyang). These naval forces were concentrated in Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang. In Guangdong, the strength of the naval force consisted of 167 junks of various sizes. Large war junks patrolled the outer coastal waters, but because of their deeper draughts these vessels found it difficult to come close to shore at low tide, a predicament that enabled small boats owned by the local people along the coast to engage in smuggling activities. To remedy this situation, in 1730 it was decided that, in addition to the large war junks, small patrol boats would be used in the inner coastal waters.\textsuperscript{70}

The two sectors of the sea, covering some 3,000 li of the Guangdong coast from Chaoyang on the eastern flank to Qiong (Hainan) on the western flank, would be patrolled by 38 separate units under the command of an admiral (shuishitidu). Islets, harbors, shoals and half-submerged rocks were meticulously demarcated so that they could be placed under the different jurisdictions of the respective prefectures, sub-prefectures, departments or districts. The duty of patrols in the outer coastal waters was “to defend the frontier” (hanbianchui), whereas the patrols in the inner coastal waters “strengthened the foundation” (cun genben). Other land units, such as those in Chao, Hui, Gao, Lian and Lei that were close to seaports, and units under the Qiong brigade stationed in a vast watery waste, were also responsible for helping to defend the maritime frontier.\textsuperscript{71}

In Fujian, Governor-General Manbao set up a naval force of 20 brigades (ying) consisting 152 officers and 19,312 soldiers in the early

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{68} YMXSJL, 1: 12a–13a.
\bibitem{69} QCHJTS, in TWWXCK, no. 155, pp. 59, 62.
\bibitem{70} GDHFHL, 12: 25a, 27b.
\bibitem{71} Ibid., introduction, 2b, 3b and 5: 38b.
\end{thebibliography}
eighteenth century. Seventy-seven fortresses equipped with 718 cannon, 312 war junks and 26 naval stations, commencing from Shacheng in the north to Nan’ao in the south, with Jinmen, Amoy and others in between, were built. When the wind was favorable, a day’s voyage could cover five to seven stations, an indication of the density of the deployment. By the time of the Opium War, under the defense plan theoretically the strength of the naval force should have reached some 30,000 in Guangdong and Fujian, and another 20,000 each in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, were it not for the fact that the quotas were not actually filled, the stumbling block being the corrupt practices of the naval officials during the long peace of the past century.

Nor was the intensive defense deployment covering the whole stretch of the coast without flaws. As the late Qing commentator Hua Shifang points out, the defense force was stretched too thinly and therefore could not function effectively. Another commentary, written shortly after the Opium War by Zhu Fengjia, criticizes the past maritime defense for being outdated. It had been devised to counter piracy and therefore failed when confronted by more deadly enemies. Clearly, this critic based his wisdom on hindsight. The plan in existence before the Opium War had indeed been shaped by the coastal conditions of the past, when the most serious threat to security came from Chinese or foreign piracy, as the commentator himself admits.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, perspectives on coastal defense among writers on statecraft moved in the direction of some degree of sophistication. Cogently, the use of modern arms was paid more attention, even though firearms and cannon had been employed by the Chinese forces since the early sixteenth century. Among other critics, a Fujianese scholar and maritime expert Lan Dingyuan (1680–1733) strongly recommended the adoption of modern arms by the naval force. He pointed out that bows and arrows were useless at sea as the vessels might be far apart, but guns and cannon were deadly. The patrol boats should be exclusively equipped with fowling-pieces, guns and cannon and other types of firearms, supplemented by swords, long spears, rattan shields and shrapnel. A similar preoccupation with maritime affairs can also be seen in a work compiled in Guangdong during

72. QCHJTS, in TWWXCK, no. 155, p. 37.
73. HGTZ, 1: 30b.
74. HFHZYDCC, 9: 19a, 20b. Zhu mentioned especially a chapter on "Coastal Conditions of the Country" in the work by Chen Lunjiòng 陳倫炯 in the early eighteenth century.
75. Lan Dingyuan 藍鼎元 (1680–1733), Pingtai jilue 平臺記略, in TWWXCK, no. 14, p. 41.
1832–34. It covers a wide range of maritime issues such as personnel, revenue and expenses, strategies (including entries onto sea routes, tides, shipbuilding administration, firearms and arsenals for weaponry), extermination versus pacification, preventing intruders from gaining access to local supply lines, espionage, training exercises, patrolling and seizing, the military administration, an overview of military developments beginning with the 

**The Offshore Islands: Expansion and Evolution of the Haifang Concept**

Closely linked to the concern about coastal defense was the integration of the offshore islands into the defense networks. The imperial governments paid great attention to the role of the strategic islands in security matters. The following discussion highlights the importance of these locations.

**Nan’ao.** No discussion of coastal defenses on the southeast coast during late imperial times could possibly overlook Nan’ao. This strategically important island is situated just off the Fujian-Guangdong border. It had been a notorious bandit refuge since the early Ming. Around 1561, the pirate chiefs Xu Chaoguang, Zeng Yiben, Lin Daoqian and Wu Ping launched their attacks on the Fujian-Guangdong coast from their bases on the island. It required the joint efforts of the two provincial authorities to suppress the pirate gangs. This turbulent background explains the peculiar and rare administrative status of the island that was placed under a joint provincial jurisdiction. In 1576, at the proposal of Governor Liu Yaohui, the Xuanzhong patrol unit (you) was moved to Nan’ao, some 30 li away, putting it under the jurisdiction of a commandant accorded the additional title of inspector (xing duzhilui) to bolster his authority. His immediate superior was the deputy-brigade-general of Zhangzhou.

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76. *GDHFHL*, introduction, la–6a.
(in Fujian) and Chaozhou (in Guangdong) prefectures. The southeastern segment of the island was under the control of the patrol unit; its northwestern segment fell under the charge of the Zhelin marine palisade in Guangdong.\textsuperscript{78} As an island detached from the mainland, Nan’ao’s isolated position caused the authorities concern because the defense force could not move in by land should a military emergency arise.

In earlier times, before coastal defenses were on the agenda, this island did not attract much attention from the authorities. Speaking in retrospect, one late-Ming author describes Nan’ao before the Ming Dynasty as “a land beyond reach”,\textsuperscript{79} although it was inhabited by Chinese. In 1393, Duke Tang He reported that Nan’ao was a Wo sanctuary and, on these grounds, proposed shifting the population inland.\textsuperscript{80} Given its convenient location, Nan’ao continued to be a haven for pirates. In 1576, following a proposal by the maritime defense sub-prefect Luo Gongchen, a lieutenant-colonel was assigned to Nan’ao. Three walled defense installations were also built.\textsuperscript{81} This move signified that this island had been officially included in the imperial domain (bantu), playing a strategic role described as the gate (menhu) to Zhang and Chao prefectures. Four harbors were situated around the island, namely: Shen, Yun, Long and Qing, with two each under the separate jurisdictions of Fujian and Guangdong respectively.\textsuperscript{82} A deputy-brigade-general of Zhang-Chao was assigned to cover the defense of Nan’ao, with 13 war junks and more than 600 soldiers under his command. Zhelin in Guangdong and Xuanzhong in Fujian were also placed under his command.\textsuperscript{83} The high-ranking authorities considered that both Nan’ao and Zhelin occupied a frontline position in the coastal defenses and that the loss of these places would presage the destruction of Chaozhou prefecture.\textsuperscript{84}

Clearly, the late Ming government was determined to develop Nan’ao into a bastion against piracy. Other measures were also taken to integrate the island into the imperial domain. The most important of these was the development of some 50,000 mu of farmlands that was allotted to military and civilian colonists. An additional gesture was to

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 26: 130a.
\textsuperscript{79} GDHFHL, 1: 50b.
\textsuperscript{80} YMXSJL, 3: 27a.
\textsuperscript{81} TXJGLBS, 26: 132b.
\textsuperscript{82} GDHFHL, 1: 50b.
\textsuperscript{83} YMXSJL, 3: 30b.
\textsuperscript{84} GDHFHL, 2: 11b, citing Chouhai tubian 齊海圖編 (Sea strategy illustrated: A work on coastal defense), comp. Hu Zongxian (1510–65), Zheng Ruozeng (1503–70), et al. 胡宗憲、鄭若曾 等撰 (1624 ed.; 1st printing: 1562).
supply the settlers with oxen. These measures did help to strengthen the island’s defenses against piracy and in one swoop made the military installations self-reliant.\(^85\) Thereafter the island developed into an important maritime garrison composed of both soldiers and farmers. It was claimed that piracy was therefore under control and both the Zhang and Chao prefectures enjoyed peace.\(^86\) Later, it was recommended that Nan’ao be made the headquarters of a deputy-brigade-general who would be put in charge of cross-border affairs.\(^87\)

Nan’ao’s strategic position continued to be highly valued in the Qing. A military officer of higher rank, a brigade-general, was assigned there to command the Min-Yue (Fujian-Guangdong) brigade.\(^88\) The cross-border military administration provides a fine example of the preoccupation with coastal defense and the imperial motivation for colonization and territorial expansion.

**Zhoushan.** Because of its location, Zhoushan (Chusan) was perceived to be the key to the security of eastern Zhejiang.\(^89\) In the early Ming, a garrison was established on the island, but in his pacification campaign along the coast Duke Tang He decided to shift the population inland. He was concerned about the island’s isolated location that made surveillance difficult. Tang’s move was criticized by a late Ming scholar named Zhou Hongzu for being shortsighted and ignoring Zhoushan’s strategic importance in coastal defense.\(^90\) However, in his work *Haiguo tuzhi* Wei Yuan comes to Duke Tang’s defense. Wei argues that Zhoushan was only one of the numerous islands off the Zhejiang coast. From the point of view of coastal defense, its location was not strategic, nor was the land particularly fertile; consequently Tang He had not included it within the empire’s domain. Although in the early Shunzhi reign (r. 1644–61) advancing Manchu troops briefly occupied it in 1651, the Qing force decided that it was not worth retaining.\(^91\) At that point in time the overall strategy of the Qing was to evacuate the coastal lands to prevent the Zheng resistance from obtaining supplies on the mainland.\(^92\) It was not until the early Kangxi reign that the court decided to restore Zhoushan and move the Dinghai district seat from the mainland to the island. The

\(^{85}\) *TXJGLBS*, 26: 132a–b.  
^{86}\) Ibid., 26: 29b.  
^{87}\) Ibid., 26: 132b.  
^{88}\) *QCHJTS*, 155: 60.  
^{89}\) Ibid., 155: 10.  
^{90}\) *TXJGLBS*, 26: 4b.  
^{91}\) *HGTZ*, I: 5a–6b.  
^{92}\) Ding Yuejian, *Zhi tai bigao lu*, in *TWWXCK*, no. 17, p. 71.
former area of Dinghai on the Zhejiang coast was then renamed Zhenhai. Considering it from a defensive perspective, Wei Yuan argued that Zhoushan’s strategic position was certainly not comparable to that of Chongmin on the Yangzi estuary. Although Chongmin was small in size, it was surrounded by a sandbank. To gain access to its two harbors, boats had to wind a passage through tens of li of waterways, navigable only by small craft. During the Opium War, this isolated location was heavily and successfully guarded. Zhoushan, on the other hand, was quickly occupied by the British who held it to ransom. Wei Yuan proposed it be abandoned in an effort to defend such mainland coastal positions as Ningbo. Hong Kong in Guangdong was also difficult to defend on account of its isolated position in the sea. In economic terms, it would become useless without its trade with Guangzhou. Implicitly, the abandonment of Hong Kong was therefore justified by Wei Yuan as a tactical retreat. Despite the broad world view shown in his works on maritime countries, as a strategist Wei Yuan followed the traditional realist approach when it came to matters of coastal defenses.

**Penghu.** Penghu consisted of a group of 36 named islands. Chinese records claim that the island group of Penghu was visited by General Chen Leng during the Sui Dynasty (581–618). He found the islands occupied by the Fan (barbarian or foreign) people. Just over six hundred years later, the Yuan government established a patrol post here, but Penghu was abandoned and residents were moved to the mainland about a century later in 1372 because of their defiance of the newly-established Ming regime. In 1597, a patrol post under the charge of a squadron commandant (bazong) was formed in Penghu to counter the imminent recurrence of Wo attacks after Japan invaded Korea. Although patrols were sent to the area in spring and winter, the late Ming government was reluctant to allow settlers to remain there permanently, fearing it might lose control over them. The regular deployment of a garrison was also ruled out because of logistic constraints. Unlike Nan’ao, that was located close to the coast, Penghu was considered to lie a great distance from the mainland. In terms of Ming naval capability, this island group was therefore beyond its defense perimeter.

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93. HGTZ, 1: 5a–6a.  
95. QCHJTS, in TWWXCK, no. 155, p. 118.  
96. YMXSJL, 6: 2a.  
97. Dong Yingju, CXJXL, in TWWXCK, no. 237, pp. 136, 140.
In 1622, the Dutch retreated from Amoy and occupied Penghu but Brigade-General Yu Zigao managed to lure the Dutch away to Taiwan, thereby restoring Penghu to Ming control. After the expulsion of the Dutch from the islands, a writer named Shen Tie observed that, despite their isolated location, these islands were the gateway to the Quan-Zhang prefectures. For this reason, he proposed a permanent military deployment of two thousand troops equipped with large vessels, guns and cannon and under the command of a major. He even argued that Penghu was ten times more important than Nan’ao as a strategic location, and the model of Nan’ao should be the blueprint to be followed to develop Penghu into an important garrison location. Yu and Shen both thought that maritime colonization and expansion should be determined by the factors of strategic requirements and naval capability. Indeed, the defense perimeters were extended to Penghu as a result of the alarming situation in offshore waters. Confronted by Dutch naval prowess, the Chinese found it expedient to keep them as far away as their own naval capability allowed. This point was the farthest to which the late Ming authorities expanded their maritime defense perimeters. They had not cast their sights as far as Taiwan and this vision explains their tolerance of the Dutch presence there, but not in the Penghu Archipelago.

After the pacification of Taiwan, the Qing continued to value Penghu’s strategic position, as the islands would be needed as a stepping-stone should it become necessary to direct offensives against Taiwan.²⁹

Hainan. Dan’er and Zhuyai prefectures were established in Hainan in 110 BC, during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han, but abandoned in 46 BC when the sea routes were severed.³⁰ Around AD 43, when General Ma Yuan reconquered Jiaozhi, Zhuyai prefecture was reinstated. The Sui-Tang eras witnessed expansion and consolidation around the coastal belt of the island.³¹ During the Sui, Yai prefecture consisted of ten districts. By the early seventh century, four prefectures, namely, Qiongzhou, Danzhou, Wan’anzhou and Zhenzhou (later changed to Yaizhou), were formed on the four shores of the island, encircling the central part inhabited by the Li people.³² In the early Qing, Qiongzhou prefecture consisted of 13 departments and districts.

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³⁰ Yu Yonghe, Pihai jiyou, in TWWXCK, no. 44, p. 32.
³¹ LWDD, 1: 18a.
³² YMXSJL, 3: 35a–36a.
³³ LWDD, 1: 18a.
During the Song, while Guangxi was perceived to be a faraway land located “outside the mountain range” (lingwai) by the borders and consequently “beyond the influence of civilization” (huawai), Hainan was considered even farther away. So far distant was it that the Qiong administration was given special powers to command both the military and civil officials of the four prefectures on the island, allowing it to meet any local exigencies before consulting the court.  

The Li people lived in the mountainous region surrounding Mount Limu that was located in the center of the island. Although the “raw” (uncivilized) Li (sheng Li), who resided deep in the interior, were not under the rule of the Chinese authorities, the “civilized” Li (shu Li), who resided on the outskirts of the coastal Han settlements, farmed, paid taxes and performed labor service. They were placed under the rule of a nearby prefectural administration. The shu-Li settlements, dong, were governed by their own chiefs.  

In the Yuan period, General Zhu Bin penetrated deeper into the Li territory and captured 600 Li settlements. During the long period lasting from then until the early Ming, attacks on the coastal Han Chinese settlements by the minority people on the periphery of the coastal districts occurred sporadically. Such disturbances were often recorded as Li disturbances (Li luan).  

During the Ming Hongwu reign, the raw Li frequently attacked and plundered the shu Li and Han settlers. Their actions prompted the early Ming authorities to adopt an active policy to secure the submission of the raw Li. In 1396, the local Ming authorities selected the more capable village chiefs of the civilized Li and appointed them sub-district deputy magistrates (xunjian si). Their task was to pacify the raw Li. This stratagem led to the surrender of numerous Li people. In 1406, for example, more than ten thousand raw Li accepted Ming rule. At that time, the civilized Li were required to pay a tax based on their property, but were exempted from labor service. The newly-submitted Li were exempted from performing labor service for three years. Despite such benevolent measures, the Li disturbances persisted throughout the Ming and the government launched military campaigns to suppress them. In 1544, a war between the Ming forces and the Li people led to heavy casualties on the Ming side, although the Li also suffered a loss of 270 settlements and  

103. Ibid., 1: 2a, 18a–b.  
104. Ibid., 2: 7b.  
105. YMXSJL, 3: 35a–36a.  
106. TXJGLBS, 29: 76a, 77a.
a death toll of 5,500 men. Another clash between the two sides occurred in 1599, and led to 1,800 deaths among the Li.\textsuperscript{107}

It is therefore not surprising that Gu Yanwu claimed guarding against the southern barbarian tribes was more difficult than dealing with the northern barbarians in the desert. The former were right on the doorstep and they could cause trouble any time they liked: “Their sporadic advances and retreats are unpredictable.” He proposed that, “light levies would serve to reward their compliance and show them parental love. Eventually they would enter into the embrace of our cultural practices.”\textsuperscript{108}

By the early Qing, Hainan was considered the most secure island among those along the Guangdong coast, since few people except for the most desperate bandits wanted to visit the island,\textsuperscript{109} but the separation between the Han Chinese and the Li settlements, and conflict between the two sides, still continued. Lan Dingyuan, for instance, derided the absence of integration between the coastal administrative units and the central part of the island where the raw aborigines lived. He did not consider this gulf to be appropriate to the dignity of a state. He was convinced that the state should legitimately claim the whole island and revive a past plan to build roads across the central region of the island and gradually acculturate the aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{110} Lan’s expansionist approach was affected not so much by the need to strengthen the haifang; it was more of a proposal to encroach on an inland region to ensure law and order. However, past difficulties in dealing with the raw Li caused the Qing to move cautiously, and also contributed to the formulation of a similar separation policy in Taiwan.

Taiwan. Taiwan fell into the category of “a land beyond reach” before the Ming era when it was known as Dongfan.\textsuperscript{111} In 1563, Military-Governor Yu Dayou pursued the sea-bandit Lin Daoqian as far as Penghu. Unfamiliar with the Taiwan coast, General Yu only garrisoned Penghu with a detachment and sent occasional patrols to the waters outside Lu’er’men on the west coast of Taiwan to keep an eye on Lin’s movements. At that point in time the island had no Han Chinese settlers. Lin eventually abandoned the island after looting aboriginal villages and moved to Champa. The detachment at Penghu was then withdrawn.\textsuperscript{112}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{107} \textit{YMXSL}, 3: 40b–41a.
\item \textsuperscript{108} For both citations, see \textit{TXJGLBS}, 28: 52a–55b.
\item \textsuperscript{109} \textit{QCHJTS}, in \textit{TWWXCK}, no. 155, p. 59.
\item \textsuperscript{110} \textit{XFHZYDCC}, 9: 337a–b.
\item \textsuperscript{111} \textit{QCHJTS}, in \textit{TWWXCK}, no. 155, p. 118; also \textit{QLHTZXTZ}, 40: 7a.
\item \textsuperscript{112} \textit{QCHJTS}, in \textit{TWWXCK}, no. 155, p. 97.
\end{itemize}
In 1602, the Japanese established a base in Taiwan and began plundering the China coast. Ming China responded by creating an expeditionary force of 21 vessels led by Shen Yourong, squadron commander of Wuyu.\textsuperscript{113} Although the Ming force scored a decisive victory and destroyed a Wo fleet,\textsuperscript{114} the Chinese troops withdrew within a month of the victory. Some quarters in Chinese society were rather critical of Shen’s venture, saying that he should not have ventured this far since Dongfan was not a Chinese domain.\textsuperscript{115} They obviously objected to Yu’s unconventional forward strategy that failed to conform to the prevalent defensive principle. Nevertheless, after Shen’s campaign, the population along the China coast became more familiar with the island. They could now name several harbors on its west coast and had detailed information about these places and their native settlers. Traders and fishermen from Zhangzhou and Quanzhou began to frequent it.

In the wake of earlier clashes, a late Ming observer perceived that, after the successive Japanese invasions of Korea, Liuqiu and Jilong that began in the final decade of the sixteenth century, Taiwan was the next logical target. The island could also be used by an enemy as a stepping-stone from which to invade the Fujian and Zhejiang coast.\textsuperscript{116} These developments stirred up a sense of crisis among officials and scholars; one that differed from their reaction to the devastating Wo incursions in the mid-sixteenth century. The earlier episode was treated as an issue of law and order; even the term \textit{haifang} then meant measures against “sea bandits” on the maritime frontier. Now, the term gained a new meaning that implicitly became a security issue relating to a greater threat to China’s political domain. By the early 1620s, the situation of the island had been complicated even more by the presence of various contending parties, including both Chinese pirates and traders, the Japanese and the Dutch.

After Zheng Chenggong’s defeat in the Yangzi region in 1659, Zheng’s forces evicted the Dutch and made Taiwan the base of their resistance. Under Zheng Chenggong’s son, Zheng Jing, market places were set up, temples were built and vagrants were lured to settle there. By this time, China’s cultural influence was firmly established on the western coast of the island.\textsuperscript{117} Meanwhile, Zheng Jing continued to threaten the coastal

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113} See Shen Yurong 沈有容 (1557–1627), \textit{Minhai zengyan 閩海贈言}, in \textit{TWWXCK}, no. 56, p. 21, for Shen’s title.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Ibid., pp. 21, 31; also \textit{YMXSL}, 6: 6b.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Shen Yourong, \textit{Minhai zengyan}, in \textit{TWWXCK}, no. 56, p. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{116} \textit{CXJXL}, pp. 11, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{117} \textit{QCHJTS}, in \textit{TWWXCK}, no. 155, p. 98.
\end{itemize}
prefectures on the mainland and became involved in attacks on Zhang-Quan during the Three Feudatories Rebellion. These events led to the Kangxi emperor’s decision to resolve the problem once and for all. The emperor decreed that the maritime territories would never achieve a state of peace and tranquility until the rebels in the island had been pacified. While court officials hesitated, uncertain about the feasibility of launching an attack by sea as they were anxious about the island’s distant location and the natural threat posed by winds and storms, the Kangxi Emperor accepted the recommendation for prompt action.  

The military campaign was a success and Taiwan was captured in 1683. The Qing government established its prefecture-district administration in the conquered territory, an arrangement that was facilitated by the presence of Chinese settlements on the west coast that had been there for some time and the earlier activities of the Zheng regime. An official during the later Qianlong Reign (r. 1736–95) viewed the administration of a remote island as unprecedented. In fact, the Kangxi emperor was initially uncertain about the merits of retaining what he perceived as an island “beyond the seas”. He once commented,

Taiwan is located overseas and is unimportant to the country [of China].... It was only because it caused great disruption and hence the coastal people had not been able to enjoy peace that the court decided to send an expeditionary force to suppress it. Even if Taiwan had not submitted itself, it would not have been detrimental to the governance of the country.

The emperor’s hesitant attitude toward the future of Taiwan elicited a lengthy comment from Admiral Shi Lang, who was responsible for the conquest of the island. He submitted a memorial in which he strongly urged retention of the island. He said:

For more than sixty years, the place has aroused enormous imperial attention and concern.... I have personally inspected the place.... It is indeed a fertile and strategic land.... It is Heaven that grants this unexplored land to this country for the protection of Your Majesty’s southeast coast and as a result it will permanently terminate the trouble on the maritime frontier.

118. Qingdai guanshu ji ming taiwan zheng shi wang shi 清代官書記明台灣鄭氏亡事, in TWWXCK, no. 174, pp. 34–5.
119. Zhu Jingying 朱景英, Haidong zhaji 海東札記, in TWWXCK, no. 19, p. 1. Zhu was appointed Taiwan maritime subprefecture in 1769.
120. Qing Shilu: Shengzu/Kangxi chao 清實錄: 聖祖朝 [Veritable records of the Qing Dynasty: Shengzu/Kangxi Reign], juan 112, in TWWXCK, no. 165, p. 130.
Shi Lang went on to explain that, if the land were abandoned, people who earned their living there would lose their livelihood. The court had a moral responsibility to care for these people. Moreover, the Dutch had previously been there and they had long been casting covetous eyes on the island. Their sailing ships were superior. If they occupied this fertile and extensive land, the coastal provinces would not have peace. He argued convincingly that, “the land of Taiwan extends several thousand li and the population numbers a hundred thousand. If abandoned, foreign countries will certainly occupy it. Who knows if evil people might see it as their sanctuary.”

His arguments moved the Kangxi emperor to abandon his earlier non-committal stance. The emperor agreed that, “it is a matter of great consequences whether Taiwan is to be retained or abandoned”. This discourse carried the concept of haifang a step farther. Now territorial expansion was justified not only by a need for law and order, but also as a pre-emptive move to ensure national security. However, the most interesting point to emerge was that, for the first time, the economic potential of an offshore island was made a justification for overseas territorial expansion.

Debates on the wisdom of keeping the island lingered on. Lan Dingyuan also saw Taiwan as a strategic location that should be retained and defended because it was an intrinsic part of coastal security. To govern the extensive northern region of the island more efficiently, he recommended the division of the Zhuluo district into two. He also emphasized the need to implement equalized taxes, resolve litigation, build charity schools, promote culture, reward model sons who were dutiful at home and industrious in the fields, implement a tithing system and form militia, allow the people to explore new lands and construct city walls for defense:

In this way, the people could be pacified within one year, the frontier could be consolidated in two years and a feeling of decorum and courtesy among the people could be cultivated in three years. The still uncivilized aborigines would also be transformed into civilized aborigines and the civilized aborigines into our people.

121. For Shi Lang’s recommendations cited above, see Shi Lang 施琅 (1621–96), “Gongcheng Taiwan qiliu shu” 恭陳台灣棄留疏 [On the retention of Taiwan], in Jinghai jishi 清海紀事 [Matters on maritime pacification] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1983), pp. 120–4; also in “Chen Tai-wan quliu lihai shu” 陳台灣去留利害書, in TWWXCK, no. 105, pp. 609–12.

122. Qing Shengzu shilu, juan 114, in TWWXCK, no. 165, p. 131.

123. Chongxiu Taiwan fuzhi 重修台灣府志 [Revised edition of the gazetteer of Taiwan Prefecture], in TWWXCK, no. 105, p. 643.
He further stressed that, “once the territory is brought into the fold, instead of dwindling it will be enlarged daily”. Taiwan was so fertile that it naturally attracted people to come and explore the land. To abandon it would only invite invasions by the Japanese and the Dutch, he concluded.  

The eastern sector of the island beyond the mountains (hou shan) was settled by the aboriginal tribes. The civilized aborigines were perceived to be Chinese subjects (min) in contrast to the “raw” aborigines beyond the Chinese cultural boundary. During the Qianlong reign Chao Yi wrote: “The eastern part of the island is mountainous [and] settled by the raw Fan. They are deer hunters and not included in the population registers (banji).” In the late Qing, Wang Tao commented that the raw aborigines (ye fan), though residing within Chinese territory, were not considered Chinese people (Zhongguo zhi minren). Fearing possible clashes between the colonists and the aboriginal peoples, the authorities did make some efforts to avoid agitating the raw aborigines. One of their steps was to ensure that farmlands pioneered by the Chinese settlers had well-defined boundaries separating them from the hunting-grounds of the indigenous people. Those who encroached upon aboriginal lands were usually evicted by the authorities before any incidents could occur.

Despite such enlightened ideas, the Qing government was seized by a mounting sense of helplessness because of “Taiwan’s isolated location beyond the seas” (guxuan haiwai) and, beset by bureaucratic idleness in general, it tended to ignore the signs of instability revealed in the incessant outbreak of uprisings. Being a remote frontier land, it was governed by expediency. One example of this bureaucratic shilly-shallying was the century-long debate about whether the government should allow mainland migrants to settle on the island. This was a knotty problem in traditional China, in which maintaining any extant policy was always treated as a sacred cow. The Yongzheng Emperor (r. 1723–35) had set out the time-honored principle that “unless the benefits are ten-fold, no changes in the laws will be necessary; unless the damage is ten-fold,

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124. For Lan’s arguments cited here, see Lan Dingyuan 蓝鼎元, Pintai jilue 平台记略 [A brief account of Taiwan pacification], in TWWXCK, no. 14, pp. 29–32.
125. QCHJTS, in TWWXCK, no. 155, p. 117.
126. HGTC, 1: 30a.
no changes in regulations should be considered”. John Robert Shepherd also points out: “In its frontier administration, the Chinese state had two overwhelming concerns: control and revenue. By preventing Chinese migration and permanent settlement, the state hoped to reduce ... its control costs on strategically important peripheries.” The restriction was also a measure to prevent disturbances on the frontier.

**Beneficial Frontiers: The Economics of the Maritime World**

The anti-opium champion Lin Zexu (1785–1850) once said,

> The reason for allowing foreign trade (hushi) in Guangdong during the past two hundred years was to extend favors to foreign lands and show universally the kind treatment [of this empire] to warm their hearts. It has not been acquiescing in the reliance of this land on trade as a source of its livelihood. It is even less so for the benefit of customs duties.

This claim was mere empty rhetoric. The relations between imperial China and the maritime world beyond its frontiers had always been colored by a strong economic element. Since Han times, references to local products had dotted the passages on the Nanhai states in both official and private writings, underlining that the Nanhai region had always been a source of rare and sought-after commodities.

Discourses about the economics of maritime endeavors can be found, for example, in a well-known mid-sixteenth-century work by a Ming scholar of statecraft, Tang Shu. The author stated explicitly that,

> China and the barbarian countries have their respective unique products; therefore trade between them would be difficult to terminate. Where there is profit, people will certainly pursue it.

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131. Ibid., p. 137.
133. Tang Shu 唐樞 (1497–1574), “Fu Hu Meilin lun chu Wang Zhi” 復胡梅林論處王直 [On how to handle Wang Zhi’s case—a reply to Your Excellency Hu Meilin (Hu Zongxian)], in TWWXCK, no. 289, p. 48; see also MJSWB, 270: 3a–9b.
He made no bones about linking the maritime disturbances to this fundamental economic factor. He said that, although his government permitted tribute not trade, the tribute missions certainly brought along commodities and engaged in trade. The prohibition of overseas ventures was to restrain China’s own people and could have dire consequences. While the sea prohibition was strictly observed in the 1520s, merchants lost their income and resorted to piracy. The more strictly the law was enforced, the more serious did the piracy become. The majority of the participants in the 1552 turmoil were such ruined maritime merchants but people from other professions also joined in the 1553 incident. In 1554, both the dispossessed people and formerly law-abiding households became involved and, in 1555, foreign elements were again present.  

The voices opposing restrictions on maritime trade lingered on. In the early seventeenth century, Governor Xu Fuyuan of Fujian appealed to the court for the lifting of the newly-imposed prohibition. He said that for more than two decades since the lifting of the former prohibition, revenue from the maritime customs had amounted to more than 20 thousand taels. This sum made an enormous contribution to military expenditure for the coastal defense of Zhangzhou that stood at around 58,000 taels. Were this to disappear, more levies would have to be imposed. At that time the people enjoyed a state of peace. However, recently, in the wake of the Japanese invasion of Korea, the sea prohibition had been reinstated. It had affected more than a hundred vessels licensed to trade overseas. Commodities worth millions of taels lay in warehouses, merchants went bankrupt and workers lost their livelihood. Certainly it was wise to be wary of the consequences of giving merchants a vested interest in trade and of allowing people to travel to and from China and the foreign lands as such freedom might make them difficult to control in the future. Nevertheless, if properly managed, there should be no reason to worry about the barbarians, not to mention China’s own people.  

The high-ranking official Xu Guangqi (1562–1633), who was known for his close relations and collaboration with the Jesuits in introducing Western science to Ming China, was aware of the connection between trade and the Wo problem along the coast since the early sixteenth century. He argued, “Japan relies on our country for the supply of merchandise. It is impossible to call at halt to it.” As Japan developed, it required more supplies. The restrictions imposed on the coming of

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134. Ibid., pp. 48–9.
its tribute missions had resulted in shortages. It had no choice but to try to send more missions with more ships and men. When this was forbidden, inevitably this prohibition opened the doors to illegal trade. Whenever official trade was prohibited, private trade and smuggling filled the gap. When this was suppressed, the merchants turned to piracy. Only then could they obtain goods and be once again transformed into merchants. Had they been far-sighted, able officials could allow flexibility, understand the conditions on both sides, enact laws that could be upheld, exterminate bandits but not merchants, ban smuggling but not officially-sanctioned intercourse; the government would not have had to expend even the smallest outlay or suffer a single casualty, and the sea would have been tamed. Xu Guangqi was critical of Zhu Wan, who was known for his law-enforcing approach to the sea prohibition issue in the late 1540s. He agreed that Zhu Wan was an upright and resolute man and thought his impeachment that led to his suicide was unjust. Nevertheless, Xu also believed that Zhu Wan “was certainly out of step with the times”. Xu likened the problem to curing an ulcer. Initially it should be prevented from growing and be reduced gradually. It should not simply be excised. The feudal lords in Japan depended on the revenue and income from international trade. He also saw the Japanese incursions into Korea as being related to the need for trade.136

Another often-cited argument was presented in 1639 by Censor Fu Yuanchu, himself a Fujianese. Fu Yuanchu cited a traditional saying that, “the sea is the paddy-fields of the Fujianese”. Deprived of their livelihood, the poor joined the sea bandits in large numbers. Stricter maritime bans only pushed them to plunder coastal settlements. Censor Fu continued, the overseas barbarians belonged to two categories: those in the Great Western Ocean (Da Xiyang) and those in the Eastern Ocean (Dong Yang). The former region included Siam and states in Cambodia. They produced sappanwood, pepper, rhinoceros horn, ivory and other commodities (huo), all of which were in great demand in China. The latter area was called Luzon and the “barbarians” there were known as Folangji (here it means the Spanish). When the Chinese traded in the Great Western Ocean, they bartered for the produce, but in Luzon the Chinese traders shipped back only silver coins. The best Chinese silk was in great demand among the barbarians in these two regions. Raw silk from Huzhou that was worth a hundred taels could be sold for twice that price. Porcelain from Jiangxi and preserved fruits from Fujian were also popular among them.

136. For Xu Guangqi’s arguments cited here, see Xu Guangqi 徐光啟 (1562–1633), “Haifang yushuo 海防迂說 [A humble opinion about coastal defense], in TWWXCK, no. 289, pp. 211–4; see also MJSWB, 491: 29b–47a.
In Luzon, skilled labor was in great demand, and the place attracted many Chinese migrants who could easily earn a living there with the skills they had acquired at home. As for the “Red-haired barbarians” (Hongmao Fan or the Dutch), they were known as the Jiaoliuba (Ka-la-pa) barbarians. They contested with the Folangji (the Spanish) for commercial profit but without success. In China, they had been decisively defeated by the Fujian authorities, but they did not harbor any resentment and still persisted in their efforts to open up trade with China. Now they had based themselves in Taiwan. Since trade with them was officially prohibited, “evil people” (jianmin) monopolized the profit and the government lost a revenue of more than 20 thousand taels. Moreover, both military and civil officers stationed along the coast likened the situation to “a rare commodity” in their hands. What should be banned were weapons, sulfur, saltpeter and the like but not other trade goods. The Fujianese people should be allowed to trade their produce, and the silk and porcelain merchants from Zhejiang and Jiangxi would follow in great numbers. Such a measure would recover the amount of revenue obtained during the early Wanli reign. Some even estimated a much higher amount of 50 or 60 thousand. Once revenues were restored, military expenditures at present allocated to Fujian could be sent to the treasury for frontier defense in the north. The poor could earn their livelihood and not have to turn to banditry. The officers along the coast would be prevented from engaging in smuggling and corrupt practices that often caused disturbances.\footnote{Fu Yuanchu, “Qing kai yangjin shu” 請開洋禁疏, in TXJGLBS, 26: 33a–34a.}

The sea prohibition imposed during the decade 1717–27 was the last of its sort. It finally led the Fujian governor-general, Gao Qizhuo, clearly under the influence of Lan Dingyuan who had penned an essay raising identical points, to lodge an appeal to the court. In the memorial, the governor-general said,

The arable land in Fu, Xing, Zhang, Quan and Ding (prefectures) of Fukien province is limited, but the population is large. Since the pacification of Taiwan, the population has increased daily. What is produced locally is no longer sufficient to feed the people. The only way to resolve the problem is to open the ocean (kaiyang) so that surpluses from trade can supplement the insufficiency in farming, and both the rich and the poor will benefit from it... The benefit will be even greater by instructing seagoing junks to carry certain amounts of rice on their return journey to Fujian.\footnote{QSL: SZ, 54: 18.}
Lan Dingyuan was the most convincing and far-sighted of the writers who appealed for the lifting of the 1717–27 ban. He said,

The Nanyang barbarians are unlikely to harm China. It is proper to lift the ban and let our people trade with them. This will serve to remedy the shortages in the interior by benefiting from the overseas surpluses.

He was critical of those high-ranking officials who petitioned for the ban, saying they lacked maritime experience and were ignorant of local conditions. He elaborated his thesis by presenting an overview of the maritime situation beginning with Korea in the north, a country he praised for observing the rules of propriety. Japan was considered the strongest power in the east. Farther south was Liuqiu. To the east of these places there were no other barbarian countries. Barbarian countries were most numerous in the Nanyang. Among them Luzon (the Spanish Philippines) and Ka-la-pa (Dutch Batavia) were the strongest. There were many others, including Borneo, Sulu, Malacca, Indragiri, Aceh, Johore, Banjarmasin and Karimon, but these were very tiny and would not dare to nurture any ulterior motives. Annam and Champa bordered Guangdong and Guangxi. Adjacent to them were such countries as Cambodia, Ligor, Chaiya and Pattani. Siam was located in the south-easternmost area. To the west were the Red-haired barbarians and countries in the Western Ocean such as England, Spain, Portugal, France and Holland. The island barbarian countries in the south had never caused trouble along the Chinese borders. All they did was exchange merchandise with China. They were submissive and weak. They benefited China and did no harm. In Fujian and Guangdong, the population was dense and land was scarce. Five or six out of every ten residents sought their livelihood at sea. Products from the interior of China that had not been worth much became valuable once they were shipped to these countries. Small items of handicraft were also sold overseas. All of this earned China more than a million silver dollars annually.139

By this time, the Qing court had learned to value trade with the non-threatening Nanyang states. The Qing emperors were highly appreciative of Siamese exports of several hundred thousand dan (piculs) of low-priced rice to China annually from the Kangxi reign onwards. These shipments greatly relieved the endemic food shortages in Fujian and Guangdong. As a gesture of appreciation, Chinese importers and Siamese

139. Lan Dingyuan’s remarks cited in this paragraph can be found in Lan Dingyuan 蘭鼎元, “Nanyang shiyi lun” 南洋事宜論 [Commenting on the Nanyang affairs], in XFHZYDCC, 10: 502a–b.
tribute missions were not only granted tax exemptions, but were also accorded other privileged treatment. Siam was definitely perceived to be more useful to China than Korea, Liuqiu and the Western barbarians. Korea and Liuqiu were considered merely submissive, but they offered few benefits to China. The Western countries were later thought to be ungrateful because they repaid the benefits from China’s tea, rhubarb, porcelain and silk, with the opium poison, as one commentator summed up.140

Persistent Anxieties about Maritime Crisis and Lost Opportunities

Despite the non-threatening image of the Nanhai states, the Chinese remained sensitive to threats that might come from the sea. The maritime prohibition of the Ming government in the sixteenth century targeted the incursions by the Wo and the Portuguese as well as the perceived threat that might be caused by Chinese seafarers. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, Japan and the Dutch were perceived as the two major threats.

The incursion of the Wo in the sixteenth century is a familiar case and does not require another mention. However, the stereotypical image of late imperial China as being totally ignorant of current international conditions might not always be correct. The high-ranking court official Xu Guangqi is a case in point. His image of a threatening Japan is worth citing at length. Xu gave a detailed description of the events leading to the rise of the three successive military leaders—Oda Nobunaga (1534–82), Hideyoshi (1536–98) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616). He even accurately describes Hideyoshi’s humble origins and Nobunaga’s murder by a treacherous vassal. He saw Nobunaga as ten times more ambitious, cleverer in strategies and more unpredictable than Hideyoshi. Given a longer time, he would have become a cause of calamity, and Xu was certain he had intended to invade China. The events of Hideyoshi’s campaign in Korea (1592), the Ming government coming to the aid of their tributary state, his death (1598) and the withdrawal of the Japanese armies after a second invasion in force in 1597 are described accurately and in detail. Xu also mentioned the rise to power of the Tokugawa family. The founder of the dynasty, leyasu, was seen as equally keen as his predecessors to expand trade. Xu predicted that the Tokugawa leaders would continue to covet Jilong and Danshui in Taiwan in the south and

140. HGTZ, 5: 13b.
Korea in the north. Sandwiched in between two powers, Xu believed Korea would naturally incline toward the stronger power:

Some day in the future, Japan might use Korea as a free passage to ask for trade with China, or simply send an invading force across the borders. This would seem to be inevitable sooner or later.

From Dong Fan (Taiwan) the Japanese “will threaten Penghu. By then there will be Wo all over the sea in front of our courtyard.” He did not favor the termination of trade with Japan. On the contrary, he believed trade could be a means of manipulation. Trade benefited both sides. The government could impose customs duties on merchandise and ban illicit items, and this was one way to achieve and maintain tranquility. It was fortunate for China that Nobunaga and Hideyoshi died prematurely; given more time for them to consolidate their positions, China would have been in trouble. He concluded:

Only through trade can the Wo be pacified. Only through trade can we obtain full knowledge of the Wo. Only through trade can we have designs on the Wo.

He even suggested that, without alarming the Japanese, China could import the superior weapons used by the latter, swords, armor and cannon, by means of trade. Then China would be on par with them in the technology of war. Xu came to this conclusion by observing the defeat of China in Korea during the years 1592 to 1598, when the long swords, spears and guns of the Japanese infantry proved too much for the Chinese soldiers. He said there were occasions when China could have attacked Japan from its rear. At the time of Hideyoshi’s campaign in Korea, a Fujianese named Xu Yihou, who was an aide to the daimyo of Satsuma, hinted to the Fujian governor, Jin Xuezeng, that the Ming government might want to take advantage of the situation in Japan by sending an expeditionary force there. Satsuma could raise some 40 thousand troops and, if reinforced by 20 to 30 thousand soldiers and as many ships as possible from China, they could have Hideyoshi’s head. As Xu said, “the court debated whether it should send a fleet from the southern provinces to attack Japan”. However, the high-ranking officials at court were just too nervous to consider such a scheme. Xu was aware that attacking Japan from the south involved crossing the sea for a distance of thousands of li, but with a base in Satsuma and with Satsuma actually bearing the burden of the attack, there should be little danger or difficulty.141 Xu Guangqi’s

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141. For Xu Guangqi’s comments cited above, see Xu Guangqi, “Haifang yushuo”, in TWWXCK, no. 289, pp. 211–23; also MJSWB, 491: 29b–47a.
grasp of the reliable information and the bold and unconventional remarks he made are truly surprising.

Xu Guangqi was not the only keen observer. After the appearance of the Dutch on the China coast at the beginning of the seventeenth century, they once again raised Chinese awareness of the power of firearms. The Dutch first requested the opening of trade in 1604. An observer named Chen Xueyi, writing in that year, gives a description of the visitors as follows:

I heard the Red-haired barbarians were formerly under the rule of Folangji (here it meant Spain). Their country is known as Holland. When it gained strength and wealth, it became independent.... They are keen on buying our silk from Huzhou for profit. They trade to Pattani by sea.

He also described the Dutch ships as huge. The sides of the ships were thick and shoed with tin plates inside:

There are more than thirty big guns on each side. Each cannon is installed with four or five balls of iron, each weighing thirty to forty catties. If a boat is hit by this cannon ball, it will be crushed to pieces.142

Another observer in 1622 was impressed by the speed of the Dutch sailing ships. He also describes the Dutch ship as larger than a Chinese junk of the Fujian model. Huge iron spikes were fixed to the exterior of the ship, each weighed more than a catty and had a length of two chi (1 chi = 0.3581 meters). This rendered the Chinese technique of crushing opponent’s vessels by their own junks of larger size ineffective. There were three tiers of guns on each side, totaling 40 to 50 in all. The cannon balls could be fired to a distance of ten li: “When our vessels meet with them, we shall either be sunk or crushed to pieces. Their cannon are cast from bronze ... and will not rust.... When they land, each soldier carries a fowling-piece.... They therefore are invincible.”143 No wonder Chen Xueyi remarked:

[Dutch] mechanical skills are incomparable among the barbarians... Had they not been persuaded by General Shen to leave and had they been allowed to trade, they would have become a source of trouble and caused a clash. Had that happened, the sea

142. For the two quotes, see Shen Yourong, Minhai zengyan, TWWXCK, no. 56, pp. 34–5.
143. Dong Yingju, CXJXL, in TWWXCK, no. 237, p. 142.
routes in the southeast would have been obstructed. Then how could Quanzhou have remained at peace?144

After their encounters with the Dutch in Zhongzuosuo (Amoy) and Penghu during the 1620s, the Fujian governor, Nan Juyi, received suggestions that some one thousand troops be sent to garrison Penghu, which was then considered the frontline for the defense of Fujian against the Dutch, and that a dozen or so large-sized war junks be built, each equipped with a dozen or more cannon.145 By that time, the method of casting the “Red-haired barbarian cannon” had become widely known and the firing of the folangji (here referring to cannon) has also become a common skill.146

In the early eighteenth century, the threatening maritime situation continued to loom large in the minds of Chinese observers. Lan Dingyuan again showed his rare insight into the danger. Commenting on Western nations including England, Spain, Portugal, France and Holland, he said their ships were solidly built and feared no great storms at sea, their cannon and weaponry were better than those in China and they were extremely fierce people, violent, treacherous and unpredictable. They all cast covetous eyes at other countries, that was why, among the “island barbarians” in the world, the “Red-haired barbarians”, the “barbarians in the Western Ocean” and Japan would cause China the most trouble. He mentioned Batavia, that had previously belonged to the Malays. It had traded with the Dutch and was later occupied by them. The Spanish had also occupied Luzon, while Japan had been a thorn in the side since Ming times.147 In the wake of these external threats, Lan saw Taiwan as a bastion against foreign intrusions. He said,

Taiwan, located beyond the seas, is a natural defensive barrier (haiwai tianqian) and a place toward which Japan and Holland had cast their covetous eyes. It takes only little more than ten days to reach Guandong (Liaodong). It is in as close proximity [to the mainland], as lips are to teeth. One should not treat it as a faraway deserted island. Even though peace is prevalent, military preparations should not be neglected.148

By and large, the Portuguese in Macao were considered less threatening. By the seventeenth century, as perceived by the President of the Board of War, Dong Hanru, “although [the Portuguese] are barbarian by nature, they have long been submissive [and can be trusted].” This perception changed in the eighteenth century, and the Chinese did begin to show some concern about the Portuguese presence in Macao. The Portuguese were thought to be fierce and cruel and they had the potential to cause trouble for the Chinese authorities. Their presence was tolerated because they provided trade opportunities but, for those who thought about the future, Macao was an unresolved issue and hence a source of anxiety.

Such warnings of looming dangers on the sea horizon were cries in the wilderness. The sense of crisis had subsided by the late eighteenth century because of the confidence accumulated through a long century of peace and prosperity. When Hong Liangji compiled his work *Qianlong fu ting zhou xian tuzhi* (Illustrated gazetteer of the prefectures, sub-prefectures, departments and districts during the Qianlong Reign) in 1788, Holland and England were grouped as trading states along with other Western countries. Neither was considered threatening. When a real challenge suddenly emerged in the events that led to the Opium War, the Chinese did not have the capability to confront the enemy. Wei Yuan could only propose a retreat as he said,

> instead of defending the outer coastal waters, it is better to hold out in the seaports; instead of holding out at the seaports, it is better to defend the inner waters (*neihe*).

Only in this last resort would the barbarians lose the superiority given them by their large, solid warships armed with two tiers of cannon. In the past, according to Wei Yuan, Wang Hong was able to defeat the Portuguese in the early 1520s and Zheng Chenggong to rout the Dutch in the outer seas because both made use of favorable winds and currents and could therefore launch surprise attacks on the enemy. If both sides had held on longer, the Chinese war junk would not have been able to match the Western man-of-war in construction and maneuverability. Retreat, not advance, was the only alternative available to the Qing authorities in the nineteenth century.

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149. “Ming shilu Minhai guanxi shiliao” 明實錄閩海關係史料, in *TWWCX*, no. 296, p. 129.
151. For Wei Yuan’s remarks cited here, see *HGTZ*, 1: 1a–2b.
Conclusions: The Haifang and the Self-imposed Limits of Maritime Expansion

Since antiquity, the Chinese had possessed a meticulous sense of territorial boundaries. The consistent use of territorial maps and registers of population to form tax units reflects an unambiguous concept of territorial jurisdiction derived from actual governance. Waterways, hills or mountains and islands often formed the natural and visible boundaries of geographical units. When there were no natural features to serve this purpose, the authorities planted markers or pillars. On account of this administrative tradition, boundaries were clearly demarcated even in the case of maritime borders, with jurisdiction over offshore islands unmistakably assigned to the respective local authorities to make them fully aware of their responsibility. Although the littoral communities, especially along the southeast coast, began to look upon the sea as their paddy-fields and hence expanded the maritime frontier from the mid-sixteenth century, the imperial governments made no claims to territorial waters or lands beyond those under the administration or supervision of civil or military appointees, or appointed native chiefs (tusi). In other words, although inner coastal waters or harbors (ao) were seen as part and parcel of coastal defense, there was no clear sense of territorial waters extending beyond the coastline in imperial China. Therefore, the sea became a natural defensive barrier rather than a means of easy access to lands elsewhere. Occupations of the offshore islands merely served the purpose of enhancing land-based coastal defenses. Indeed, haifang issues attracted the attention of major authors on statecraft writing during the period in question. While the two late imperial governments sought to defend the seaboard against disruptions of law and order, scholars of statecraft were able to foresee potential threats to the empire that were emerging on the horizon.

Economic benefits per se did not provide an impetus for maritime expansion. Although the economic value of Taiwan was discussed by Shi Lang, the decision to annex the island into the imperial domain was based less on economics than on the need to strengthen the haifang. Strategic concerns alone could justify occupation for the small offshore islands close to the coast. However, the annexation of a distant island such as Taiwan required both a strong strategic justification and sufficient local revenue to cover the cost of its administration.

The case of Taiwan is illuminating. It was commonly perceived as a territory "beyond the seas", a phrase conveying a sense of reluctance and helplessness. Taiwan was the farthest point away from its coastline on which the Qing government was willing to establish an overseas defense
outpost. Under such conditions, the continued heavy reliance on the land
force for coastal defenses underwent no substantial changes.

Nevertheless, there was always a minority school of thought in the
perception of the haifang that subscribed to a more sensitive and forward-
looking approach, and offered views critical of the traditional strategy. Xu
Guangqi, Shi Lang and Lan Dingyuan were among the scholar-strategists
who adopted this position. They had vision and innovative ideas. While
Xu’s expansionist approach was adventurist in nature and its rejection
was to be expected, the latter two skillfully tailored their perception to
fit the traditional haifang concept, hoping that by doing so their views
would stand a chance to be considered.

Despite the self-imposed limits on expansion, the imperial govern-
ments during the late Ming and high Qing pursued an active and
relatively effective policy of coastal defense. Even in decline, the
Ming authorities fared better along the seafronts than they did on the
northern frontiers. During this part of the Ming-Qing period, the imperial
governments did not lose any of their maritime domains. When they
allowed the Portuguese to enjoy a leasehold in Macao, they saw this move
as a way to contain the barbarians. Nevertheless, the net gain during
the period was the prized territory of Taiwan. Given the fact that both
the Ming and the Qing governments were sensitive to fiscal constraints,
their approach was necessarily cost-effective and therefore rational.
It worked reasonably well until the Opium War.

from the Mid-Sixteenth Century to the Opium War Period”, PhD diss., University
of Hawaii, 1978, provides an in-depth discussion of this point.
153. John E. Wills, Jr, has rightly pointed out that such defensive policies “made
excellent realistic sense for late imperial China, with … its impressive but rather
thin and passive bureaucratic control”. See his Embassies and Illusion, p. 188.
However, Wills’ critique that the policies ended in self-destructive clinging to
illusions and forms is a harsh one, as this paper has shown.