

**THE JAPANESE MISSIONS
TO TANG CHINA AND MARITIME EXCHANGE IN EAST
ASIA, 7th-9th CENTURIES**

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ABSTRACT

Scholars offer three reasons why the Japanese dispatched envoys to Tang China: to assimilate the advanced civilization, culture, and systems of Tang; to raise Japan's diplomatic position in the Tang Court while obtaining reports regarding changes in East Asian affairs; and finally, to conduct trade under the control of the state. I explore the third point in this dissertation. In particular, I seek to explain the role of the *kentôshi* with regard to a maritime trade network that developed in East Asia. I examine the voyages the *kentôshi* made, as well as the exchanges the missions conducted while in China.

I begin with a study of the navigational challenges the Japanese faced and the ocean-going vessels they constructed. As a part of this, I survey Japan's maritime history, from evidence of the first water craft in Japan to the development of *kôzôsen* boats, or composite vessels.

I next turn to the question of the trade itself. I categorize the exchange between Japan and the continent as "imperial," "elite," and "private." Imperial trade refers to the tributary exchanges conducted by the envoys dispatched through official government channels in the names of the respective Courts. Elite trade, often concurrent with imperial trade, was conducted by the individual members of official diplomatic missions through government channels or under the jurisdiction of agencies such as the Diankeshu Office in Tang China and the Treasury Ministry and Palace Storehouse Bureau in Japan. Private trade, in contrast, was carried out by merchants. These merchants often traded with representatives of the government or

representatives of the ruling classes; i.e., the wealthy and powerful elites.

In this dissertation I also use archaeology to better understand trade with the continent. The most common vessels imported to Japan were white-glazed ceramics from Hebei Province, celadon from the kilns in Hunan Province, and Yue celadon produced primarily in Zhejiang.

I believe trade was more important to the *kentôshi* than heretofore discussed in the English language literature. In the ninth century, merchant activity began to supercede the trading function of the official embassies, rendering them obsolete. This is true, not only of trade between Japan and Tang, but between Japan and Silla as well. This is not true, however, in the case of Bohai.

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INTRODUCTION

On nineteen occasions, from 630 to 894, the Japanese Court appointed *kentôshi* (envoys to Tang) to serve as political and cultural representatives to China. Fifteen missions completed the arduous journey to the Chinese capital. These missions brought back elements of Tang civilization that profoundly affected Japan's government, economics, culture, and religion. They delivered and retrieved the students and monks who restructured Japan's ancient state. Their efforts led to such watershed events in early Japanese institutional history as the Taika Reform and Taihō Code.

The *kentôshi* were also involved in the exchange of goods between Japan and the continent. They transported raw materials, such as amber, agate, and a variety of silk textiles, and exchanged them for Chinese goods, such as books, musical instruments, religious writings, and Buddhist images.

At about the time that the *kentôshi* missions came to a close, the Tang dynasty was in decline. The last official mission was sent to Japan in 838. There was another mission planned for 894, but the Court cancelled it after protestation from the ambassador, Sugawara no Michizane. It has been supposed that the missions ceased because conditions had become too unstable in Tang, because Japan no longer found it necessary to import aspects of Tang culture, and because Japan no longer needed to conduct diplomacy with her neighbors. These factors are not without merit. I believe, however, that there is another factor that has been largely overlooked by historians—the emergence of an East Asian trade

network. At about the time that the kentôshi missions were being deemed unnecessary, private merchants were coming to Japan in increasingly greater numbers. This was a phenomenon not seen during the seventh century when the official embassies were first sent. The kentôshi themselves were involved in the exchanges of goods—both official tributary items and, most probably, goods traded privately by individual mission members. Is there a connection between the trading activities of the kentôshi and the burgeoning merchant exchange of the late eighth and ninth centuries?

This dissertation seeks an understanding of the kentôshi in light of the substantial maritime trade network that developed in the eighth and ninth centuries in the East China and Yellow Seas. By the end of the ninth century, at the same time that the kentôshi missions were drawing to a close, the seas between Japan and the continent were a hotbed of merchant activity. Did the official missions that were dispatched to Tang play some role vis-à-vis this maritime trade and exchanges between Japan and the continent? Did these missions perchance encourage the maritime trade that eventually prospered? Did private merchant exchange in turn affect the kentôshi missions in some way? I believe they did. The effectiveness of the merchant traders in transporting goods to and from the continent made the kentôshi missions obsolete by rendering one of their functions—the promulgation of trade—unnecessary. The elite in Japan were now obtaining luxury goods from the mainland and so no longer needed to organize and promote the dispatch of groups on long, dangerous voyages to Tang.

There is still another facet of the kentôshi missions I wish to explore. All but one mission traversed the East China Sea and/or the Yellow Sea *en route* to and from China.¹ The kentôshi missions and the maritime traders all faced rather perilous sea crossings. The latter met with far greater success than the former. In fact, the kentôshi are often seen as fumbler when it came to their ocean travels. Scholars assume they sailed in primitive ships and possessed only rudimentary knowledge of winds and weather conditions. The kentôshi often sailed at the wrong times of the year and risked life and limb because of maritime inexperience. The merchants, on the other hand, were very proficient in their ocean crossings. Did these two groups share technological information? Did the kentôshi once again pave the way for what came afterwards? Did the merchant traders learn from the efforts of the kentôshi? In other words, were their successes in any way attributable to the maritime failures of the official embassies?

To tackle these questions I trace maritime development in Japan. The Japanese have one of the longest maritime traditions in the world. Japan owes its cultural development to its people's ability to utilize the sea for transportation. The Yayoi and Kofun periods were times when aspects of agriculture, bronze and iron metallurgy, textile production, art, architecture, and religion—not to mention thousands of immigrants themselves—came to the Japanese islands by sea. The peoples of Japan and the Korean Peninsula conducted exchanges for millennia and not one of these exchanges occurred without utilization of some sort of sea craft. Even within Japan, a country comprising thousands of islands, boats and

¹ The eleventh mission, which departed in 759, traveled north through Bohai on its way to China.

knowledge of the sea were indispensable. One could not travel between the two historically significant centers in Japan—northern Kyushu and central Honshu—without crossing expanses of water. So is it logical to conclude Japanese mariners were inept as they crossed the seas to China?

Granted, the voyages of the *kentôshi* did present something new in Japan's maritime history. Much of the sea travel conducted by the Japanese had been close to shore. The *kentôshi*, by at least the beginning of the eighth century, were crossing great expanses of ocean far from shorelines. How did maritime developments in Japan lead to the construction of these first open sea vessels? Was there technological input from the mainland or did the Japanese rely on their own shipbuilding techniques? Why were the merchant traders more successful?

To best answer these questions, I have separated my thesis into five chapters, each addressing a separate topic. For the most part, I have tried to limit my discussion to the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries. However, in order to best understand the maritime traditions to which the *kentôshi* were exposed, I have extended my examination to include discussion of Japan's earliest attempts at shipbuilding and mastering of the seas.

In Chapter One I discuss the geography and environment through which the *kentôshi* navigated in order to cross the seas, arrive at the Chinese capital, and then return home. I conduct a detailed study of the coastal areas and waters between Japan and the continent. I consider the many islets and bays of this region and then compile data relating to the ocean currents, seasonal winds, and storm patterns of the seas between the Japan and China. I examine the specific

sea routes that were used. To what extent were the waters between Japan and the continent traveled? The Japanese utilized three main routes on their trips to and from China. What merits did each route have?

We know that the journey by ship to Tang China was difficult for the Japanese and presented many challenges. In Chapter One I examine the nature of these maritime challenges.

In Chapter Two I consider the ways in which the Japanese overcame the maritime challenges introduced in Chapter One. I examine the maritime technology available at the time and outline the origins and developments of the Japanese maritime tradition in order to fully appreciate the navigational skills of the mariners who transported the *kentôshi* missions to and from the mainland. I also examine the shipbuilding technology utilized by these mariners. The *kentôshi* vessels represented something new in the Japanese maritime tradition. I will consider the ways in which the *kentôshi* missions influenced Japanese shipbuilding and navigation.

In Chapter Three I tackle the questions regarding the formal trade in which the *kentôshi* were involved and the roles of the mission members. Several levels of officials were appointed by the Court to conduct business affairs and keep records. In addition to these officials, mission members were appointed such as translators specializing in the languages of Tang, Silla, and the Amami Islands; doctors bringing medicines for long journeys; artists hired to record new sights; fortune-tellers; shipwrights; musicians; archers; crew members; and of course, the

students and monks mentioned above. What were the roles, if any, that these individuals played in the official exchange between Japan and Tang China?

There are a number of unknowns regarding the nature of the kentôshi exchanges. As official representatives they conducted exchanges for the Japanese Court. Were their transactions carried out solely for the state? There were, after all, hundreds of people on some of these missions. Not all journeyed as far as the capital, but they did spend a considerable length of time in China—often as long as a year and a half or more. How did these people make do while in China? They must have traded privately to a certain degree. Was this controlled or even forbidden by the Japanese or Chinese governments?

There are also questions regarding the transactions themselves. Tributary countries always offered the specialty goods of their particular lands as tribute to the Chinese Court. What was the nature of those items Japan carried to Tang China? I wish to consider those goods that the Japanese deemed worthy of presenting to the Tang Court. These must have been products of which the Japanese were most proud. By examining these goods, we understand what mainland traders were seeking when they crossed the seas to Northern Kyushu to conduct trade. It is also essential to discover goods that were given in reciprocity to the kentôshi returning home. How were they used in Japan?

Mission members were awarded stipends before and during their journeys—often in the form of textile goods—but at times they were also awarded gold dust. How were these stipends used? Did mission members exchange stipends for their own benefit? If so, to what extent did these personal exchanges affect the

consumer demand in Japan for continental goods? Did the items the *kentôshi* brought back from Tang enhance this demand?

In Chapter Four I address the informal trade that developed in the eighth and ninth centuries, and try to correlate it to the official exchanges previously carried out by the *kentôshi*. Informal or private merchant exchange was first forged by merchants from Silla, but by the beginning of the ninth century, the Chinese were most influential in transporting goods to and from Japan. What, if any, relationship existed between the official trade conducted by the *kentôshi* and the merchant trade that became prominent about the time that the *kentôshi* missions were ending? The Japanese sometimes hired ships manned by people from Silla for their return journeys. To what degree did Koreans and Chinese also travel these waters? I examine the unofficial merchant trade in the East China Sea and Yellow Sea to shed light on the relative economic and cultural significance of the official exchanges of the *kentôshi*. I try to suggest who may have been involved in this trade. The people of Silla were active in this region as traders, but what of other mariners? What role did merchants from Japan or Bohai (Parhae) play?

Finally, in my last chapter, I examine one particular aspect of the exchange with the mainland that is not fully documented in primary sources. This is the ceramic trade with the continent, which became particularly prominent after the beginning of the ninth century—roughly the same time that private merchants began sailing to Kyushu in great numbers. In order to understand this exchange, I turn to archaeological research. An interdisciplinary approach of this nature is

the best way to fill in some of the blanks left in the primary sources. So in Chapter Five I consult archaeological evidence from the Asuka, Nara, and Heian periods to understand the degree of official and unofficial exchange that took place during the kentôshi period.

There is a plethora of Japanese research regarding the kentôshi. The same does not hold true, however, for research conducted in the English language. That is not to say that English language material has been insignificant. Edwin Reischauer's 1955 translation, *Ennin's Diary: the Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* and his book of the same year, *Ennin's Travels in Tang China*, are by far the best known works regarding the subject of the Japanese missions to Tang China. Reischauer's books introduced English language scholars to an exciting chapter in Japanese and Chinese history. Robert Borgen's "The Japanese Mission to China, 801-806," published in *Monumenta Nipponica* in 1982, likewise did much to advance western language scholarship. However, both Reischauer and Borgen dealt specifically with two ninth-century missions. The first comprehensive study of more than one kentôshi mission came in Charlotte von Verschuer's *Les Relations Officielles Du Japon Avec La Chine*, a groundbreaking study that was published in French in 1985. This work focuses primarily on the official diplomatic exchange between Japan and Tang China and includes discussion of those kentôshi missions that were dispatched during the eighth and ninth centuries. Von Verschuer has since followed up her initial work with studies published in both English and French regarding commercial and diplomatic exchange between Japan and its neighbors during the Ancient and Medieval

periods. Another influential work that introduced English readers to certain aspects of the kentôshi official exchange was Wang Zhen-Ping's "Sino-Japanese Relations Before the Eleventh Century: Modes of Diplomatic Communication Reexamined in Terms of the Concept of Reciprocity," which was published in 1989 as a dissertation for Princeton University.

I hope that my work will complement the above and serve to stimulate further study regarding the kentôshi and maritime exchange among western scholars.

NOTE REGARDING DATING

For the purpose of this paper, I have chosen to depict most dates in terms of the lunar calendar. I use numbers denoting year, month and day. Thus the date 777:6:3, should be read as the third day of the sixth month (lunar calendar) of 777 A.D. Solar dates are used only when the name of a month (e.g., "June"), rather than a number, is given.

CHAPTER 1

THE KENTÔSHI VOYAGES: GEOGRAPHY AND NAVIGATION OF THE SEAS, 7TH TO 9TH CENTURIES

In this chapter I shall focus on the maritime environment through which the ships of the *kentôshi* embassies sailed as they journeyed to and from the Chinese mainland. I shall consider the harbors, islets, and bays frequented by these ships. The harbors that they used are described in primary sources such as the *Hizen Fudoki* 肥前風土記, the *Manyôshû* 万葉集, the *Nihon Kôki* 日本後記, the *Shoku Nihon Kôki* 続日本後記, and the *Kagerô Diary* 蜻蛉日記.¹ I shall also introduce data relating to the ocean currents, seasonal winds, and storm patterns of the East China Sea and the Yellow Sea. The journey by ship to Tang China is believed to have been difficult for Japanese mariners and presented many navigational challenges. A detailed study of the coastal areas and waters between central Japan, northern Kyushu, and the continent is warranted to clarify the exact nature of these challenges.

1.1 ANCIENT JAPANESE SEA ROUTES

Let me begin with a brief survey of the navigational history of the peoples who have populated the Japanese islands for many millennia. Evidence suggests that the Japanese of the early historic periods were successors to a long maritime

tradition often overlooked in traditional studies of kentôshi navigational ventures.

The people of the Jômon period—as well as the Paleolithic peoples who preceded them—made use of the seas in and around Japan.² Paleolithic people used at least rudimentary vessels to sail the coastal waters of the Pacific, the waters between Kyushu and the Korean Peninsula, and even the waters of the Sea of Japan. Evidence shows, for example, that as early as 20,000 years ago peoples in Japan transported obsidian at least fifty kilometers over sea from the island of Kôzujima 神津島 in the Pacific to the Izu peninsula on Honshû (Mori Kôichi 1989:29-31; Barnes 1993:62).³ Obsidian transport from Kôzujima apparently

¹ These harbors are discussed below in more detail and include: (1) Aikota-no-ura port 合蚕田浦 (2) Kawahara-no-ura port 川源の浦 (3) the port at Mimiraku promontory 美弥良久の崎 and (4) Tachibana-no-ura port 橘浦.

² The Jomon period is generally divided into six sub-periods (Incipient, Initial, Early, Middle, Late, and Final/Latest), which will be referred to below. Dating is based on pottery types (about 10 types in each period) and more or less correlates with radiocarbon dating (Oikawa and Koyama 1981:189). However, there is no exact agreement among scholars about specific dating. The following examples of dating from Tsuboi Kiyotari, Gina Barnes, and Richard Pearson demonstrate some of the differences among scholars. Both Japanese and Western scholars agree on the classification of any given site into one of the six sub-periods, even though their numerical dating may differ.

Incipient (10,000 – 8,000 B.C)	Incipient (10,500 – 8,000 B.C)
Initial (8,000 – 5,000 B.C)	Initial (8,000 – 5,000 B.C)
Early (approximately 4,000 B.C.)	Early (5,000 - 2,500 B.C.)
Middle (2,500 – 1,500 B.C.)	Middle (2,500 – 1,500 B.C.)
Late (1,500 – 1000 B.C.)	Late (1,500 – 1000 B.C.)
Final (1000 – 400 B.C.) [Tsuboi 1987:2]	Final (1000 – 400 B.C.) [Pearson 1992:17]

Incipient (10,000 – 7,500 B.C)
Initial (7,500 – 5,000 B.C)
Early (5,000 - 3,000 B.C.)
Middle (3,000 – 2,000 B.C.)
Late (2,000 – 1000 B.C.)
Final (1000 – 300 B.C.) [Barnes 1993:24]

³ Obsidian was an important material from which tools were fashioned.

continued until as late as the middle of the Yayoi period (Mori Kôichi 1989:32).⁴ Jômon people also traversed the straits between Japan and Korea, where, once again, obsidian serves as a good indicator that a prehistoric maritime trade network of some sort was in place. Koshidake 腰岳 obsidian from Saga Prefecture, Kyushu, has been recovered from Chulmun sites in Pusan, Korea. These sites lie approximately 200 kilometers distant across the Tsushima straits. Koshidake obsidian has also been recovered from sites 800 km to the south in Okinawa (Kim W.Y. 1983:15; Mori Kôichi 1989:55; Barnes 1993:79; Esaka 1994:125). Finally, Jômon peoples and possibly Paleolithic peoples crossed the Sea of Japan as early as 10,000 years ago. Once again, obsidian—this time from the Oki Islands off the coast of Shimane—has been recovered in the Amur River valley and the Primorskij region (Maritime Province) in Russia (Mori Kôichi 1989:27), locations that lie directly across the Sea of Japan from the Oki Islands and thus suggest that the seas were utilized by people at least as early as the Initial or Incipient Jômon periods.⁵

Even if one were to question navigational prowess on the part of the Paleolithic people of Japan, or even of the Jômon people, the dawn of the Yayoi

⁴ The Yayoi period has traditionally been dated as 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. However, recent scholarship has moved the initial date back at least a century or more (see, for example, Imamura 1996:16). One of the problems is that the dawn of the Yayoi period is hard to pinpoint. It took at least a century or more for the new Yayoi culture to spread across the three main islands of Kyushu, Shikoku, and Honshu.

⁵ There is other evidence that the Japanese were becoming proficient in sea transport as early as the Jômon period. For example, we know that the Jômon people were able to catch deep sea animals in abundance. Deep sea fish species have been found at the Natsushima site 夏島遺跡, dated to 9450 \pm 400 B.P. and 9240 \pm 500 B.P. (Ikawa-Smith 1986:203). At the Early Jômon site of Mawaki 真脇遺跡 in Ishikawa Prefecture, hundreds of dolphin skulls and other fish bones have been found as well (Pearson 1992:82). In addition, seacraft should be considered to explain the existence of the Yamashita-chô cave site 山下町第一洞窟遺跡 skeleton in Okinawa, which has

period proves one undeniable fact: that from at least the 3rd century B.C., large groups of immigrants arrived in Japan aboard some sort of sea crafts. These immigrants all crossed the sea between the mainland and Japan, probably at the Tsushima Straits.

That immigrants came to Japan during and after the Yayoi period is indisputable; only the number is a matter of contention among scholars. Physical anthropology tends to suggest that a rather large migration occurred during the Yayoi period (Turner 1992A:106; 1992B:147; Omoto 1992:140). Some have suggested that as many as one million immigrants may have sailed to Japan from the continent over the millennium covered by the Yayoi and Kofun periods (Hanihara K. 1987; 1992:247; Omoto 1992:143). This figure, if accurate, suggests that a huge maritime transport system must have been in place well before the missions to Sui and Tang were first conceived during the sixth and seventh centuries.

How is one to justify, therefore, the common claim that the Japanese were unsophisticated in maritime matters when they began sending official missions across the ocean to the mainland? Is it reasonable to assume that more than a million people may have sailed between Japan and the mainland in the 1000 year period before the middle of the kentôshi period, yet Japanese mariners were still unfamiliar with currents, winds, and sea storms, as is often suggested in kentôshi literature? And what of the immigrants who arrived from the mainland during and after the Yayoi period? Did they disembark from their sea craft and remain entirely

been dated to 32,100 +/- 1000 B.P. (Ikawa-Smith 1986:204).

bound to the land, never again to return to sea?

This seems unlikely. Roads were incomplete during the ancient period in Japanese history. It stands to reason, therefore, that travel by sea remained the most convenient means of transport among the ancient Japanese—especially those inhabiting the Seto Inland Sea areas (see Mozai 1979:101-3). Passages in the *Kojiki* suggest that the early Japanese were familiar with all the main islands from Honshu south to the Ryûkyû Islands (Mozai 1979:102-3). The earliest discussions of Japanese sea travel, found in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, deal with mythological events that refer to movements from Silla to Izumo. These discussions also suggest knowledge of the Ryûkyû Islands. Additional texts suggest that people were quite proficient in traversing the waters between the mainland and Japan at a very early date, despite possessing only rudimentary sailing vessels. Such texts indicate that, with the exception of Hokkaido, the early Japanese had extensive knowledge of all of the major islands of what is today Japan.

1.2 SETO INLAND SEA

What of the waters in and around Japan? I shall now turn to the maritime heart of ancient Japan, the Seto Inland Sea 瀬戸内海. The mastering of these waters must have preceded, or at least been synchronous with, the formation of the early Yamato state. Here I shall consider what is known of the geography and the history of navigation within these waters.

There are differing figures for the number of islands in the Seto Inland Sea. It has been estimated, though, that the whole of Japan consists of as many as 5000

islands, and that approximately half this number are located in the Seto Inland Sea (Kusaka 1996:128).⁶ One would assume that the presence of so many islands would help promote maritime navigation; but on the contrary, ships sailing the Inland Sea were endangered by numerous submerged reefs and rocks that are easily run upon. In addition, the presence of so many islands created fluctuating currents of varying speeds that made maneuvering the waters among the islands difficult.

Despite these navigational challenges, the people of the Japanese islands managed to utilize the Seto Inland Sea at a very early date and the mastering of these waters became important to the historical development of Japan. Like the ocean waters discussed above, the Seto Inland Sea was used by Jōmon people for travel and transportation. Ocean levels were higher during part of the Jōmon period and so maritime transport of trade items may have been even more essential during this time.

The Seto Inland Sea played an important strategic role during the military conflicts that led to the unification of the early Yamato state. The *Wei Zhi* (*History of the Kingdom of Wei*) chronicles fighting among the Wa around the end of the Yayoi period. Indeed, villages and structures of this time have been found on plateau sites along the coasts. These sites possessed commanding views overlooking the sea, and were chosen, no doubt, because threats approaching from across the water could be seen in time for the inhabitants to take defensive measures. By the beginning of the Kofun period, the lands around the Seto Inland

⁶ Another survey, from 1946, determined that Japan consisted of 461 inhabited islands and 3,178 uninhabited ones, totaling 3,639 islands (*The History of Hiradō City* 1966:23).

Sea were united under the control of the early Yamato state and the Seto Inland Sea once again served primarily as a route for the transfer of goods.

Not only did immigrants flood into Japan by sea during the Yayoi and Kofun periods, all of the cultural artifacts and influences introduced to Japan from the mainland were transported aboard ocean vessels.⁷ The two major regions on the direct receiving end of this cultural importation—at least during the greater part of the first millennium A.D.—were northern Kyushu and Kinai. Even if one were to argue that mainland vessels played a minimal role in the navigational history of the Seto Inland Sea during the Yayoi, Kofun, and early historical periods, one is still forced to recognize that the locations of these two culturally important regions of Japan at opposite ends of the Seto waters necessitated a certain degree of navigational mastering of this sea by Japanese mariners. There is evidence for this. Items of great weight and size were transported across the Seto Inland Sea during the Kofun period. It has been shown, for example, that large materials such as the stone coffins from *kofun* graves⁸ in Osaka were transported by sea from distant sites in Kyushu (Asahi 1988:36).

Smaller, but no less culturally-significant archaeological items such as bronze mirrors were also transported by sea. *Dôhankyô* 同範鏡, or bronze mirrors cast from the same mold, have been recovered from *kofun* as far west as Fukuoka and as far east as modern-day Gumma prefecture (Sugiyama 1981:40). A study of the distribution of *dôhankyô* suggests that the Seto Inland Sea was used extensively as

⁷ Of course, a great many of these were transported by these very same immigrants.

a means of exchange during the Kofun period. These mirrors were cast both in China and in Japan and it has been suggested that those of Chinese origin may have been brought to Japan on Chinese vessels as early as the third century. If so, they may have been brought directly to the Naniwa port 難波津 (discussed below) on Chinese vessels and then distributed by the Yamato Court on Japanese vessels at some later time.

1.2.1 Naniwa port

A number of Seto Inland Sea ports linked Japan to the continent.

Naniwa-no-tsu 難波津, or Naniwa port, was probably the most important of these.⁹

Located in the inlet of Naniwa-no-mitsu-no-ura 難波の三津浦 in Osaka bay, this port was significant from at least the time of the early Yamato state and continued to be used well into the early historical period. Japanese ships and foreign vessels bound to or from the continent began or ended their voyages at Naniwa from at least the Kofun period, and the port later served as the departure point for the kentôshi ships that traveled west through the Seto Inland Sea and arrived at the inlet of Tsukushi-no-ôtsu-no-ura 筑紫の天津の浦 in Hakata Bay (discussed in more detail below) (Gunya 1985:25).

The Naniwa port itself traces its origins to as early as the Kofun period. It is an example of a lagoon port, which meant it required minimal construction for use

⁸ *Kofun* graves are elite burial mounds constructed during the Kofun period (AD 300 – 600).

⁹ In some of the primary sources, Naniwa port was referred to as Miura no ura 三浦の浦, or Miura port (Nakajima 1973:14).

as a wharf or landing place for ships (Kusaka 1996:136). Even though Naniwa port was originally established at a natural lagoon, its location changed over time. Until approximately the middle of the fifth century, the wharf was located at several places on the east side of Tenman sandbar 天満砂洲 (Kusaka 1996:147). Vessels sailed around the north of this sandbar and then docked at a number of sites along the Kusaka waterway 草香江. The Tenman sandbar provided natural protection for docked ships, but over the years the passage around the north of the sandbar became silted up and so, in the later half of the fifth century, an east-west passage was excavated through the sandbar. This made the port even more convenient for sailing vessels. Foreign vessels coming to dock first stopped at a location known as the “outer wharf” 外港 (江口), where they were met by a lavishly decorated welcoming ship.¹⁰ The foreign vessels were then led through the east-west passageway into Naniwa port 難波津 itself. The occupants disembarked at Naniwa port and then set out overland along the Naniwa-no-tsu road to the capital in Yamato Province. Or, in certain instances, the ships’ passengers may have boarded smaller boats after disembarking from their vessels. They then continued on to the capital along the Furukawa 古川 or the Hirano 平野川 Rivers (Kusaka 1996:148).

1.2.2 Navigating the Seto Inland Sea: The Archaeological Record and Primary Sources

How difficult was the journey to and from Naniwa through the Seto Inland

¹⁰ See Wang Zhen-ping for details regarding the ceremony involved when the foreign vessels were met by the welcoming ships (Wang 1989:282-3).

Sea? There are a large number of archaeological sites on Seto Inland Sea islands where ceremonies dedicated to the gods were held. The existence of these sites may be indicative of navigational dangers mariners faced while sailing the sea. Evidence suggests that mariners gathered at these sites and made offerings to pray for safe passage through the sea—without the help of the gods, mariners must have felt doomed. One important Nara period ceremonial site that has been excavated is located on the northeastern part of Ôbishima Island 大飛島, which is located due south of Kasaoka bay 笠岡沖 in Okayama prefecture (Ishino 1996:209; Asahi 1988:37-8). Ôbishima lies roughly at the center of the Seto Inland Sea, where the tide from the west meets the tide coming in from the east. Here goods such as Nara ceramics, money, and mirrors were offered on a sandbar at the foot of an island mountain. Sites such as this one have also been discovered on Hitsuishima Island 櫃石島, a part of Kagawa prefecture, and on Uji Island 宇治島 in Hiroshima prefecture (Ishino 1996:210). The crews of the kentôshi vessels may have stopped at these islands to pray for success during their voyages through the Seto Inland Sea, or perhaps, they offered these prayers to insure success for the very last and most dangerous leg of their journeys—the part of their travels that took them away from Japan and across the ocean to the mainland.

There are entries in the Six National Histories that describe some aspects of navigation of the Seto Inland Sea. We know from a 661 entry in the *Nihon Shoki*, for example, that when Empress Saimei went to Kyushu to aid Paekche in its battle against Tang and Silla forces, her ship sailed from the Sea of Ôku in modern-day

Okayama prefecture¹¹ to Iyo province (modern-day Ehime prefecture in Shikoku) 伊予熱田津, to Na-no-ôtsu, or the Na port 娜大津, which (discussed below) was located in Hakata Bay in Kyushu. During this journey, the empress' ship sailed along the coast of northern Shikoku (Sugiyama 1981:68-9). Regardless of whether the empress sailed along the Shikoku coast or the Honshu coast, the terminal ports on both sides were either Naniwa port 難波津 or Sumiyoshi port 住吉津 in the east and the Na port 那津 in Hakata Bay in the west.

The Seto Inland Sea became safer to navigate during the Nara period (Sugiyama 1981:113), but the journey for vessels traveling from Naniwa to Hakata and back was far from pleasant. In 736:6, for example, a vessel left for Silla and stopped at the ports of Akashi-no-ura 明石浦 and Nagai-no-ura 長井浦. It did not arrive at Na-no-tsu until more than a month later (Kusaka 1996:149) due to the dangers of navigating the many reefs and fluctuating currents discussed above.

1.3 NORTHERN KYUSHU AND DAZAIFU

Thus far, we have considered the Seto Inland Sea—both its main port of Naniwa and its waters. What about the ports of and waters off of the coast of northern Kyushu?

The name “Hakata” refers to an ancient trade port in northern Kyushu long identified as a gateway to Japan from the continent. Hakata is situated on a bay of the same name. The characters for Hakata 博多 first appear in a *Shoku Nihongi*

¹¹ The Ôku Sea 大泊海 is located adjacent to Oku County in Okayama Prefecture 岡山県

entry dated 759:3:24, which refers to Hakata-no-ôtsu 博多大津, or the “great port of Hakata” (Kawazoe 1988:8).

Hakata port was actually the name used for several successive port sites that were located in Hakata Bay. There is a certain degree of confusion when discussing the port because at least four different names were used to refer to a port that perhaps occupied three distinct locations. The Hakata Bay port was, for example, once denoted by the name Sode-no-minato 袖の湊.¹² However, the original site was probably first called Na-no-tsu or Na-ga-tsu 那津; i.e., Na port. The Na port is discussed in historical texts as the window for exchange with the mainland, and it served as Dazaifu’s port to the outside (Kusaka 1996:137).

The port of Na had a history dating back two millennia. A “country” in Japan called Na 奴¹³ is mentioned in the *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書.¹⁴ The *Hou Han Shu* account describes an exchange between this country and the Han Court in which the leader of the Na country 奴国 received a gold seal from the Han Emperor Guangwu 光武 (r. 22-57) in 57 AD (de Bary 1958:7). In return, the Na leader pledged his allegiance to the Han.

A seal inscribed with the characters 「漢委奴国王」 *King of the Nu (Jn. Na) country (which is a part) of Wa of Han* was actually found in 1784 in Shika-no-shima 志賀島, located at the mouth of Hakata Bay in Fukuoka Prefecture (Kawazoe 1988:11; Ôtsuka Hatsushige 1993:67; Takemitsu Makoto 1986:153). The

邑久郡.

¹² This is from the *Kôjien* entry, but it was also written: “袖ヶ浜.”

¹³ Na 奴 is pronounced “Nu” in Chinese.

find of the gold seal, together with evidence from Japanese and Chinese primary sources, indicate that the Na of the *Hou Han Shu* was located on the shores of Hakata Bay. It may have been located in the Nakagawa River 那珂川 basin between the central part of present-day Fukuoka City 福岡市 and Kasuga City 春日 (Kawazoe 1988:11). The Japanese use of the character 那 in Na-no-tsu 那津, thus very likely refers to very same port that served the Na 奴 of the *Hou Han Shu*.

How is the port in Hakata Bay described in the Japanese primary sources? The *Nihon Shoki* refers to the Na port as either “Na-no-tsu” 那津 or “Na-no-ôtsu” 那大津, while the *Shoku Nihongi* calls this same port “Hakata-no-tsu” 博多津 and “Hakata-no-ôtsu” 博多大津. Each of these names refers to the main port of Hakata Bay at any given time, but the location of the port shifted somewhat during the Nara and Heian periods. At the time Kôrokan¹⁵ was built, the port was moved from its original location at Na-no-tsu 那津 to Ara-no-tsu 荒津 (Yamazaki 1996:153), and later in the Heian period the port was shifted once more.¹⁶ All three sites were located in Hakata Bay and for this reason modern scholars denote all three sites with the generic “Hakata port.” Throughout these location shifts Hakata Bay remained the doorway to trade with Sui and Tang China.

The port of Na and its successors served as the main communication and supply link to the mainland throughout the proto-historic, Nara and Heian

¹⁴ The *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書 is a history of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25 – 220 AD).

¹⁵ Kôrokan is also referred to as Tsukushikan 筑紫館. Kôrokan is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

¹⁶ Each of these sites may be considered river-mouth, rather than lagoon ports (Kusaka 1996:139).

periods.¹⁷ But in addition to being an important link to the continent, Hakata port was also an important domestic port. After tax 貢調綿 from the various provinces of Kyushu was gathered and sent to Dazaifu, it was then sent from this port to the capital, most likely arriving at Naniwa port (Sugiyama 1981:142-3). And as early as 536 AD, the Yamato government made repairs to a *miyake* 官家, or government jurisdictional office, near the Na port (Kawazoe 1988:11).¹⁸ The provinces were ordered to bear the burden of these repairs, indicating the site's significance to the central government.

1.4 HIRADÔ

In our geographic survey of Japanese coastal regions, Hiradô Island next warrants consideration as a site frequented by the kentôshi vessels. During the time of the kentôshi, ports on Hiradô Island such as Hira 庇良 in Hiradô Bay and Miya-no-ura 宮の浦 on the southwestern edge of the island served as stopovers for missions sailing to and from China (*The History of Hiradô City* 1966:91). The modern characters for the name of the island are 平戸島, but in the past “Hira” was written either with the single character 平 or with the double characters 庇羅 or 庇良 (*The History of Hiradô City* 1966:79). The first kentôshi embassy known to have stopped at Hiradô Island was the mission of 645 (*The History of Hiradô City* 1966:1),

¹⁷ The proto-historic period encompasses the Yayoi and Kofun periods; i.e., ca. 4th century BC – 600 AD.

¹⁸ Scholars have surmised that this *miyake* of 536 may have been located in present-day Miyake 三宅, a town in Minami Ward, Fukuoka City. Another hypothesis is that it may have been located at what is now referred to as the Hie site 比恵遺跡 in Hakata Ward, Fukuoka City (Kawazoe 1988:12).

but approximately four decades earlier, in 607, a mission to Sui also entered port here. And as late as 805, during the reign of Emperor Kammu, a kentôshi vessel left Hiradô Island on its way to Chikajima 遠値嘉島.

Hiradô Island's location served as an ideal stopping place for ships leaving or about to arrive at Hakata Bay. The island has a land surface of 170.9 square kilometers and is approximately 40 kilometers in length north to south at its greatest distance and six kilometers wide east to west. The northeastern part of Hiradô is only 570 meters away from the Kyushu mainland. It is adjacent to the Genkai Sea 玄海灘, while the southern part of the island juts into the East China Sea.

1.5 GOTÔ ISLANDS

Any discussion of the geography involved in the movement of kentôshi from Japan to China must include an examination of the Gotô archipelago 五島列島. At least four of the kentôshi missions passed through the Gotô Islands on their way to China after departing from Hakata Bay and Hiradô Island (Gunya 1985:25).¹⁹

The Gotô archipelago is a chain of inhabited and uninhabited islands of various sizes stretching about 90 km in a SW to NE direction in a region of the East China Sea approximately 100 kilometers west of Nagasaki City (Miyazaki 1995:95). The total land area covered by the Gotô chain is 636 square kilometers. Except for relatively gentle slopes on Ojika Island 小値賀島 and parts of Fukue Island, the

¹⁹ Gunya lists those four as mission numbers 14, 15, 16, and 17. Number 14 was the 776 AD mission with Saeki no Imaemishi 佐伯今毛人 (1985:27).

Gotô Islands are primarily composed of steep mountains and jagged coastlines. Severe currents run through the straits between the islands and bays. Inlets on the islands characteristically have sand dunes with swampy areas on the inland side. Only a few have flat land opening out to the sea. The Gotô archipelago has a geological history of at least several hundred thousand years, but scholars believe these islands were first populated approximately 20,000 years ago (Gunya 1985:8), so at least some form of rudimentary maritime transport in and around the islands must be dated from that time.

The name “gotô” literally means “five islands.” Despite the name, there are nearly 150 islands in the entire archipelago. During the time of the Tokugawa *bakufu*,²⁰ the five primary islands referred to in the name were Uku, Nakadoori, Nishi (i.e., Wakamatsu), Naru, and Fukue (Gunya 1985:7).²¹ After the abolition of the *han* and subsequent governmental redistricting, Uku Island was made part of another district. Serving as a replacement, another fairly large island in the chain, Hisaka 久賀島, then officially became one of the “five islands” denoted in the name. But Uku, Ojika, which is another large island located in the northern part of the chain, and the numerous other smaller islands are all still considered part of the geographical archipelago referred to as “Gotô.” (Miyazaki 1995:95; Gunya 1985:7).

The Gotô Islands boast Jômon, Yayoi, and Kofun period archeological sites, the very existence of which suggests that the early inhabitants possessed a

²⁰ This was the period when Japan was divided into large districts called *han* 旧藩時代, each headed by a *daimyô*, or feudal lord.

²¹ Uku 宇久島, Nakadoori 中通島, Nishi 西 (ie, Wakamatsu 若松島), Naru 奈留島, and Fukue 福江島 (Gunya 1985:7).

proclivity to build and use sea craft. If the islanders themselves were not adept seafarers, others were, and they frequented the shores of these islands. The Yayoi period Yorigami shell mound 寄神貝塚, for example, has yielded remains of cattle sacrificed during human burial. These are the earliest remains of domesticated cattle recovered in all of Japan (Gunya 1985:12-3). Because cattle are not indigenous to the Japanese islands, they must have been transported from the continent by sea vessels—sea vessels obviously large enough to carry rather imposing cargo. Some of the vessels of the proto-historic period, therefore, were by no means small, simple dugout canoes.

Other important Yayoi and Kofun archaeological sites—most likely graves—have been found on Okashima Island 岬か島²² (Nagadome 1995:267), which is also part of the Gotô chain. The artifacts found at these sites suggest that the people on this island were involved in trade between Kyushu and the Korean Peninsula. There is evidence here of items originating as far away as Kinai and China; the artifacts from Kinai probably arrived via Kyushu and those from China came via the Korean Peninsula. Nagadome Hisae 永留久恵 suggests that those buried in these tombs may have been the Tsushima people discussed in the *Wei Zhi* passage concerning the Wa people of Japan. The people of Tsushima were said to be involved in trade to the north and south (Nagadome 1995:267). He suggests that these people were actually “Wa sea people” 倭の水人, who were part of a maritime ethnic group called the *Azumi-zoku* 安雲族. These people supposedly believed their

²² I am not certain of the reading of the characters for this island. Might it also be read “Kôkashima” or “Misaki-ga-shima?”

ancestors were dragons or alligators, and they tattooed these creatures on their backs. Because alligators were not indigenous to Japan, these people must have been in contact either directly or indirectly with southern continental regions such as Zhejiang, where alligators are known to have existed from ancient times. Finds of Yayoi-period shell bracelets indicate early contact with the Southern Island of Tanegashima 種子島 as well (Gunya 1985:13). These finds attest to the historical significance of the Gotô Islands in Japan's earliest maritime trade network.

The first references to the Gotô Islands in primary sources are in two eighth-century texts, the *Kojiki* and the *Hizen Fudoki* 肥前国風土記²³ (Miyazaki 1995:96; Gunya 1985:15-21). In these early texts, the Gotô archipelago is referred to as the Chika-no-shima islands.²⁴

The Chika-no-shima islands are referred to in the *Kojiki* in the myth of the "birth of the eight islands," which is found in section five of the first volume (Chamberlain 1988:22-23). In this tale, the deities Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to the eight main islands from which an early reference to Japan as the "Great-Eight Island Country" was derived. Afterwards, additional unions between these deities created a second tier of six islands or island groups. The Chika-no-shima islands were one of these six. In the *Fudoki* text, the story is told that, during the time of Emperor Keikô 景行天皇, who was the twelfth emperor of the mythological period, two islands in the archipelago were inhabited: Ochika

²³ Hereafter referred to as *Fudoki*.

²⁴ Chika-no-shima is written with the characters 知訶嶋 in the *Kojiki* and 值嘉島 in the *Fudoki*.

Island 小近島²⁵ and Ôchika Island 大近島 (Gunya 1985:20-1; Toda 1999:320).²⁶ In the *Fudoki*, the Chika-no-shima Islands are described as a part of the Matsuura district of Hizen province 肥前国松浦郡値嘉嶋 (Miyazaki 1995:96; Toda 1999:320).²⁷

Primary texts such as the *Hizen Fudoki* 肥前風土記, the *Nihon Kôki* 日本後記, the *Shoku Nihon Kôki* 続日本後記, and the *Manyôshû* 万葉集 name the Gotô Island ports that were utilized by the kentôshi (Mao 1999:13).²⁸ The *Hizen Fudoki*, for example, lists the Gotô ports used by the kentôshi as Aikota-no-ura port 相子田浦²⁹, Kawahara-no-ura port 川原の浦³⁰ and the port at Mimiraku promontory 美彌良久の崎 (Miyazaki 1995:96).³¹ The *Shoku Nihongi* records another port in the Gotô Islands reportedly used by the kentôshi as Tachibana-no-ura 橘浦. This was the site for the 778 arrival of the third ship of the fourteenth kentôshi mission to Tang (Gunya 1985:27).³²

Positioned in the remote western sea region of Hizen, the Gotô Islands were

²⁵ This is also written with the characters: 小値賀島 or 遠値賀島.

²⁶ These are individual islands and so I render the names into the singular form in English, but the names also denoted island groups. Uku Island 宇久島 and Ochika Island, for example, were sometimes referred to collectively in the name “Ochika,” while all the islands south of and including Nakadôri Island were called “Ôchika” (Nagadome 1995:96).

²⁷ The Gotô archipelago is also described in the *Sandai jitsuroku* 三代実録. However, in the *Sandai jitsuroku* passage, “Chika-no-shima” apparently includes Hiradô Island as well.

²⁸ The *Kagerô Diary* 蜻蛉日記 has also been offered as a text describing kentôshi ports in the Gotô Islands. I have, as of yet, been unable to confirm this.

²⁹ This is also written with the characters 合蚕田浦 in the *Shoku Nihongi* (see below).

³⁰ The second character can alternatively be written as 源.

³¹ Also, Kusaka 日下雅義 writes that the kentôshi vessels often stopped at the port of 相可 (Kusaka 1996:137). (This is also written as 相子.)

³² There are, however, at least two theories regarding the modern-day location of this port. If, indeed, this was found in the Gotô archipelago, the most likely candidate is Tama-no-ura port on Fukue Island 福江島玉之浦. The other possibility is that it was

relatively closer to the Chinese mainland, and so these ports were especially important as the kentôshi adopted the southern routes (discussed below) for their voyages to Tang (Toda 1999:320). The *Fudoki* passage goes on to say that there were over 100 islands in the archipelago and that the fishermen who lived there kept many horses and cattle. It records that, in physical appearance, the people resembled the Hayato people 隼人 of southern Kyushu, enjoyed archery on horseback³³, and spoke a language quite different from that of the other people of Hizen province (Toda 1999:320). The passage also states that:

To the west, there are two places where boats can lay anchor. One is called the Aikota docks 相子田の停, where more than 20 ships are able to lay anchor, and the other is called Kawahara-no-ura port 川原浦, where more than 10 ships can stop. The kentôshi leave from these ports and head for Mimiraku promontory 美弥良久の崎, which lies to the west of Kawahara bay. After stopping at Mimiraku, they set sail to the west. (Gunya 1985:21; Toda 1999:320)³⁴

The port referred to as the Aikota docks in this *Hizen Fudoki* passage is called Aikota-no-ura port 合蚕田浦 in a 776 passage in the *Shoku Nihongi* (Toda

located east of Shika Island at 若松町今里三日浦, and thus not a part of the Gotô Islands (Gunya 1985:27; Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary* 1955:404 (note 1531)).

³³ This is referred to in Japanese as *umayumi* 騎射.

³⁴ Another port named in the primary sources as a stop for the kentôshi missions is 橘浦 (see Mao 1999:13).

1999:320).³⁵ These two names probably refer to present-day Ta-no-ura on the island of Hisaka.³⁶ Kawahara-no-ura, on the other hand, is surmised to be modern-day Kawahara 川原, and Mimiraku is believed to be Miiraku 三井楽 (Toda 1999:320). Both Kawahara and Miiraku are located on the northern coast of the island of Fukue.

The Gotô Islands are also mentioned in a ninth century report to the emperor issued by the Provisional Governor-General of Dazaifu, Ariwara no Yukihiro 在原行平 (818-893). This report is recorded in the 876 entry of the *Nihon Sandai Jitsuroku* 日本三代実録 (Toda 1999:321). The petition requests that the island chain should be administratively separated from Hizen province. The islands were of particular concern to Dazaifu, which recognized their importance to travel between Japan and Silla or Tang. Yukihiro's petition was eventually granted and the Gotô Islands and Hiradô became independent of Hizen province. They were officially named the Chika-no-shima islands 値嘉島 and a new island steward³⁷ was appointed (Miyazaki 1995:96).

As the last stop for travelers entering or leaving the Japan, the Gotô Islands served as an informational link between Japan and the mainland. They provided the first news of the Japanese islands for those sailing to Hakata port. The Gotô Islands were also important in and of themselves for trade with the mainland because of their natural resources (Toda 1999:322). Tang traders treasured herbs

³⁵ In still another variation on the name, this dock/port is also written as *Aiko-no-tomari* 相子之湊.

³⁶ I assume this is the correct reading for this port and island. They are written in Japanese as 久賀島田浦.

and medicines gathered from these islands and rare stones found along their shores.³⁸ Silver could be extracted from some of these stones while others were polished to resemble jade. Because of these natural resources, the islanders themselves may have become quite adept at trading with the Tang and Silla ships that stopped on their way to and from Hakata.

1.6 SEA ROUTE TO CHINA

Now I shall consider that part of the voyage on the open seas that the crews of the kentôshi vessels faced after leaving the Japanese archipelago: how did these embassies proceed to Tang? In which direction did they set sail and what was their final coastal destination?

There were three distinct sea routes utilized by the kentôshi during the more than two centuries that they journeyed to Tang (see Mao 1999:11-13). Use of these three routes shifted over time. Today they serve as a basis for dividing the kentôshi age into three periods: Early 初期, Middle 中期, and Late 後期. During the Early period, which encompasses all the seventh-century missions to Tang from the very first mission of 630 until the sixth mission sent in 667 (the last of the seventh century), embassies used what is referred to by scholars as the “Northern Route” 北路.³⁹

The Middle period dates from the mission that departed Tsukushi in 702 until

³⁷I have rendered the characters 嶋司 as “island steward.”

³⁸I have translated the characters 香藥 as “herbs and medicines” and 奇石 as “rare stones.”

³⁹There was supposedly a seventh mission in 669, which was cancelled, or at the very least, not described in the extant texts. (See Chart 5, Chapter Three.)

the middle of the eighth century. During this period, the kentôshi utilized what is known as the “Southern Island Route” 南島路 to the mainland. The *Xin Tang Shu* chronicle regarding the Eastern barbarians mentions travel along this route.⁴⁰

Finally, during the Late period of the kentôshi missions, embassies utilized what is referred to as the “Southern Route” 南路. This course connected Hakata—via the Gotô Islands—directly to Mingzhou 明州, the Tang name for present-day Ningpo 寧波 in Zhejiang Prefecture, and to Yangzhou Prefecture. The last four embassies to Tang (beginning with the mission that departed in 777) utilized this direct route to the Chinese mainland. Sailing directly across the open sea, crews navigating the Southern Route faced the greatest maritime challenges.

1.7 THE NORTHERN ROUTE: THE EARLY PERIOD

The Northern Route is also known as the “Silla road” 新羅道. Embassies following this route departed from Hakata Bay and sailed past the islands of Iki 壱岐 and Tsushima 對馬 to the Korean Peninsula, where they followed the western coast of the peninsula to the north. At the mouth of the Bohai bay 渤海灣, they turned and crossed the sea, eventually arriving at the Shandong Peninsula. Apparently, most of the embassies choosing this route landed on the northern side of the Shandong Peninsula either in the region of Laizhou or Dengzhou 登州 Prefectures (Reischauer 1940:145). From there they proceeded overland to the Tang capital of Chang'an 長安.

⁴⁰ This chronicle in the *Xin Tang Shu* 新唐書 is called “Dong Yi Zhuan” 東夷傳, or

There is a slightly different version of the Northern Route referred to as the “Ocean and River route” 海道江路, which, like the standard Northern Route, involved departing from Kyushu, sailing north along the western shore of the Korean Peninsula, and then crossing the Bohai Bay to the Shandong Peninsula. This route differed from the standard Northern Route toward the end of the voyages when, upon reaching the Shandong Peninsula, crews headed west along the southern shore of the peninsula rather than disembark at Shandong. The ships then continued south along the shores of Huabei 華北 and Huazhong 華中 to land at Yangzhou Prefecture (Sugiyama 1995:36).

1.8 THE SOUTHERN ISLAND ROUTE: THE MIDDLE PERIOD

Kimiya Yasuhiko may have been the first to describe a Southern Island Route to China, but he did so without using that term *per se*. Rather, Kimiya divided the routes taken by the *kentôshi* into “northern” and “southern” and then subdivided the Southern Route into the “southern route through the islands” and the “southern route that began at Hiradô Island and the Gotô Islands and led directly through the East China Sea.” However, Mori Katsumi does use the term “Southern Island Route” 南島路 in his scholarship. According to Mori, ships following this route set sail from Hakata Bay, proceeded to Hiradô Island, headed south along the shores of Satsuma, and then continued south past numerous islands before crossing the East China Sea and arriving at a port near the mouth of the Yangzi River (Sugiyama 1995:34). The Yangzi served as the probable destination for most if not all of these

“Chronicle of the Eastern Barbarians.”

voyages.⁴¹

Despite following what might be considered an island-hopping course for much of the journey from Hakata, the *kentôshi* vessels of the Middle Period still traversed a considerable distance through open sea. A ship still had approximately 800 kilometers of water to cross after departing the last island and before reaching Suzhou 蘇州, even if this last island were Okinawa Island, a point relatively close to the mainland (Sugiyama 1995:50-51).

The Southern Island Route was more dangerous than the Northern Route but may have been necessitated by Japan's defeat by Silla and Tang in 663 at the Battle of the Paekchong River 白村江⁴² on the Korean Peninsula. Diplomatic relations with Silla were severed (at least temporarily) and, as a result, *kentôshi* ships began to avoid the Korean Peninsula by sailing from the southern coast of Kyushu along the Southern Islands 南島, which during the seventh and eighth centuries referred to the southwestern island archipelago comprising the Okinawa 沖縄諸島, Amami 奄美諸島, Miyako 宮古諸島, Tokara 吐から諸島, and Ôsumi 大隈諸島 island chains.⁴³ The earliest known exchange between the Japanese state and the Southern Islands is found in several entries of the *Nihon Shoki* dated to the year 618 (Suzuki Yasutami 1987:349). Within a century of this contact, the *kentôshi* vessels were sailing to and from Tang by way of these islands.

⁴¹ See discussion by Reischauer (introduced below) who disputes the commonly held belief that the Yangzi River was the primary destination of these ships.

⁴² I believe this to be the present-day Kûm River.

⁴³ Some of the islands at which the *kentôshi* reportedly lay anchor or passed *en route* were Tanega Island 種子島, Yaku Island 屋久島, Takarashichi Island 宝七島, Amami-ô

There is documentary evidence in the Chinese texts supporting poor relations with Silla as the catalyst for adopting a new route to the mainland. The *Xin Tang Shu* chronicles an eighth century embassy from Japan that chose to sail south to Mingzhou and Yuezhou ⁴⁴ because Silla was blocking the Northern Route (Reischauer 1940:146).⁴⁵ This was probably the embassy of 752. If so, the Chinese account must be questioned because, in this same year, a large Korean mission came to Nara to celebrate the completion of the Great Buddha and to conduct trade with the Japanese elite.⁴⁶ It seems doubtful that Silla would block the Northern Route at the same time that it would dispatch several hundred people to Nara to conduct diplomatic exchange.

At any rate, the initial adoption of the Southern Island Route to Tang was earlier than this mission referred to in the *Xin Tang Shu*. The mission that departed in 702:6 was probably the first. Three other missions are believed to have sailed along this course as well. These were the missions that departed in 717:3, 733:4, and 752 as well as their respective return journeys. The Southern Island Route was also followed during the return in 761:8 of the mission that had traveled

Island 奄美大島, Tokuno Island 徳之島, Okinawa Island 沖縄島, Kume Island 久米島, and Ishigaki Island 石垣島.

⁴⁴ This is modern day Shaoxing 紹興, which is located on the south shore of Hangzhou Bay (Reischauer 1940:146).

⁴⁵ Reischauer has translated this passage from chapter 220 of the *Xin Tang Shu* as follows: "Silla blocked the sea route, but (the Japanese) changed and went by Mingzhou 明州 and Yuezhou 越州 to come to Court and pay tribute" (Reischauer 1940:146).

⁴⁶ See discussion of the 752 Silla mission and the *Baishiragi no motsuge* in Chapter 3.

to Tang north through Bohai two and a half years earlier (see Chart One).⁴⁷

There is some doubt concerning whether the Southern Island Route existed as an intentionally planned course, or whether, due to inexperience and lack of sophistication on the part of Japanese mariners, the route was discovered inadvertently as the result of drifting (Sugiyama 1995:39-40). Sugiyama is one scholar who questions whether the Southern Island Route could realistically have been preplanned and plotted because both ocean currents and the seasonal winds were never suitable for such a journey (Sugiyama 1995:33, 61). The Southern Island Route depended more on the drifting of vessels than any carefully thought-out navigational procession (Sugiyama 1995:36).⁴⁸

The first vessel to follow the Southern Island Route may, therefore, have stumbled upon this course accidentally and reached the mainland by mercy of wind and wave alone. Successive vessels reaching the mainland by this way must have relied on luck and prayer rather than the foresight of the crew. In time it became necessary to adopt still another course for the mainland voyages, this time a direct route known as the "Southern Route."

1.9 THE SOUTHERN ROUTE: THE LATE PERIOD

From the second half of the Nara period ships began departing Hakata Bay for the Gotô Islands, where they awaited winds to sail directly across the open sea to shores near the Yangzi River, the Huai River, or Mingzhou. This is commonly called

⁴⁷ The Southern Island Route may have been utilized by the Japanese as early as 653, but evidence is inconclusive. There is no sufficient proof to indicate that any mission before 702 followed this route.

the “Southern Route,” but is also known as the “Open sea route”⁴⁹ (Mao 1999:12). The Southern Route involved sailing from Hakata through Hiradô and the Gotô Islands. A ship would, for instance, sail from Hiradô to Uku Island to Ochika Island to Aikota-no-ura bay, and then finally to Fukue before crossing the East China Sea to arrive near the mouth of the Yangzi. This passage was shorter than the two routes discussed above and more closely connected the ocean-going vessels of the Japanese with the Grand Canal system of the Chinese (Reischauer 1940:145).

It is possible that the Southern Route was utilized as early as 661 when one of the ships on the mission of 659 returned via a direct voyage from Yuezhou Prefecture in China to southwestern Korea, and then to Hakata (Reischauer 1940:146-9).⁵⁰ However, most scholars define the Late Period or period when kentôshi vessels sailed along the Southern Route as beginning with the reign of Empress Kônin 光仁天皇 (r. 770-781) and ending with the reign of Emperor Ninmei 仁明天皇 (r. 833-850) (Sugiyama 1995:34). Thus, this period included the last four kentôshi missions, which departed in 777:6, 779:5, 803:4 and 804:7 (part of same mission), and 836-838 (a single mission but separate departures for different ships).

An important ninth century account of both the Gotô Islands and a journey along the Southern Route to Tang was left by the monk Eun 惠運.⁵¹ Eun traveled to Tang in 842 and, while not a member of kentôshi missions, he did follow the

⁴⁸ In contrast, the Northern and Southern Routes are better documented.

⁴⁹ Written either 大洋路 or 太平路 in Japanese.

⁵⁰ Actually, according to the *Nihon shoki*, this embassy arrived at Tamna Island (Tanra?) (see Aston, 661/5/23).

⁵¹ Eun is my reading for these characters. This account is preserved at the Tôji temple (Toda 1999:323).

Southern Route to Tang on a Mingzhou vessel. In the course of his journey, Eun wrote of entering the port of Naru-no-ura 那留浦, most likely a reference to a port on the island of Naru 奈留島.⁵² According to the monk's account, a Tang ship was under construction at Naru-no-ura port when he arrived there. The person having the ship built was Li Churen 李处人 (see Chapter Four).

Li had arrived with others from Tang. He and his entourage abandoned the ship they arrived on and built a new vessel using camphor trees⁵³ that grew on the island (Toda 1999:324). This ship was completed in three months and it was as a passenger on this vessel that Eun sailed to China. Eun's account is significant for two reasons. First, we see that by the 840s, the Japanese had direct contact with Chinese shipbuilders, their technology, and their shipbuilding practices. Not only could the Japanese see how the Chinese constructed ocean-going vessels, they could do this on Japanese soil. And second, Li's activities demonstrate the "international" nature of maritime exchange in the ninth century. The fact that an individual from Tang was able to arrive in the Gotô Islands, discard the vessel upon which he sailed, and then construct a replacement, indicates that the Gotô Islands were receptive to people arriving from the mainland. It may be mistaken, in fact, to think in terms of "nationality" in the context of maritime travel. Chinese, and perhaps Koreans, constructed vessels on Japanese soil, and, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, their crews most probably included people from other countries.

When Eun set sail for Tang in the autumn on 842:8:24, favorable easterly

⁵² There is a modern-day port on this island that is called "Ura" 浦 (Toda 1999:323).

⁵³ Camphor trees: Japanese *kusunoki* 楠木.

winds enabled the vessel to arrive in a port located in the Lecheng Sub-prefecture, Wenzhou Prefecture after only six days and nights at sea.⁵⁴ This was one of several examples of voyages made along the Southern Route, even after the official missions to Tang stopped.

Below is a chart of kentôshi departures and returns to Japan and the routes adopted to and from the continent.

⁵⁴ The exact point of arrival was Lecheng Sub-prefecture, Wenzhou Prefecture 温州樂城
県玉留鎮守府. Eun stayed in Tang for 5 years, and in the summer of 847, on the 21st
day of the sixth month, he set sail on another Tang vessel that departed from
Mingzhou 明州望海鎮. With fortunate westerly winds, Eun arrived once again in
Naru-no-ura after only three days and nights at sea (Toda 1999:324).

**CHART ONE⁵⁵:
KENTÔSHI MARITIME ROUTES TAKEN TO AND FROM CHINA**

Mission No.*	Departures	Positions of four prominent scholars regarding routes taken ⁵⁶	Returns	Probable routes taken
1	630:8:5	Northern (all four scholars)	632:8	Northern (Kimiya, Mozai, Suzuki)
2	653:5	Northern (all four)	654:7:24	Northern (Kimiya, Mozai, Suzuki)
3	654:2	Northern (all four)	655:8:1	Northern? (all four)
4	659:8 ⁵⁷	Northern (all four)	661:5 (Ship #2)	Northern (all four)
5	665 (to return Tang envoy)	Northern (all four)	667:11:9	Northern (all four)
7 ⁵⁸	702:6:29	Southern Island (Mori, Mozai, Suzuki)	704:7:1 and 707:3:2	Southern Island (Mozai, Suzuki)
8	717:3:9	Southern Island? (all four)	718:10:20	Southern Island (Mozai, others agree most likely course)
9	733:4:3	Southern Island (Mozai)	734:11:20 (Ship #1), 736:5 ⁵⁹ (Ship #2), and 739 (Ship #3)	Southern Island (Mori, Mozai, Suzuki)
10	752	Southern Island (Mori, Mozai, Suzuki)	753:12:7 (Ship #3), 754 (Ship #2), 754:4:18 (Ship #2).	Southern Island (Mori, Mozai, Suzuki)
11	759:2:16	Mission traveled north through Bohai (Mori, Mozai, Suzuki)	761:8:12	Southern Island (Suzuki, others agree most likely course)
14	777:6:24	Southern (all four)	778:10 (Ship)	Southern (all four)

⁵⁵ Information for this chart was based primarily on information provided in a chart by Sugiyama (1995:32). Departure dates, however, are provided by Mozai (1987:13-19)

⁵⁶ These four are: Mori Katsumi, Kimiya Yasuhiko, Mozai Torao, and Suzuki Yasutami.

⁵⁷ Sugiyama believes this departure occurred in the seventh month (Sugiyama 1995:32).

⁵⁸ The sixth mission went only as far as Paekche in order to return the Tang envoy.

⁵⁹ Sugiyama places this arrival on the 23rd day of the eighth month (Sugiyama 1995:32).

			#3), 778:11 (Ship #4), 778:11 (Ship #2), 778:11 (the stern of Ship #1), and 778:11 (the bow of Ship #1)	
15	779:5:27 (to return Tang envoy, Sun Xingjin 孫興進)	Southern (Kimiya, Suzuki)	781:6:24	Southern (Kimiya)
16	803:4:2 and 804:7 ⁶⁰	Southern (all four)	805:6:8 (Ship #1), 805:6:17 (Ship #2), and 806 (Ship #4?) Ship #3 shipwrecks in Hizen, Matsuura.	Southern (Kimiya, Mori, Mozai)
17	836:7, 837:7, and 838:6 ⁶¹	Southern Route (all four)	839:8, 839:10, 840:4, and 840:10.	Southern (Mori), Northern (Mozai), Either of the two (Suzuki)

* *Mission numbers correspond to those provided in Chapter 3, Chart 5.*

From this, we see that scholars tend to agree about the routes the missions followed. A notable exception, however, is the seventeenth mission. Mori believes the returning ships of this mission used the Southern Route, while Mozai argues in favor of the Northern Route. Suzuki is noncommittal. This lack of consensus arises

⁶⁰ Sugiyama 謙治 dates this departure as the 28th day of the third month (Sugiyama 1995:32).

from a paucity of details in the primary sources. We do know from Ennin's account, however, that he was one member of this mission who returned to Japan separately in 847 aboard a Korean vessel which followed the Northern Route (Reischauer *Ennin's Diary* 1955:400-401).

1.10 POINTS OF DEBARKATION AND EMBARKATION IN CHINA AND THE JOURNEY TO CHANG'AN

Primary sources such as the *Nihon Shoki* and the *Shoku Nihongi* often describe difficulties and disasters faced by the kentôshi missions as they crossed the sea, but they generally do not offer great detail regarding the Tang debarkation and embarkation sites used by the kentôshi ships. Even when place names are given, uncertainty often remains regarding the exact locations. We know, for instance, that at noon on 838:7:2, Ennin's ship reached the mouth of a river in Tang and then two hours later arrived at a place called Dongliangfeng Village in Sangtian Canton of "Baichaozhen"⁶², Hailing Sub-prefecture, Yangzhou Prefecture (Nagashima Takeshi 1973:2; Reischauer *Ennin's Diary* 1955:9).⁶³ However, the corresponding modern name for this place remains a mystery.

⁶¹ Sugiyama's dates are: 839:8:14, 839:8, and 840:4:8 (Sugiyama 1995:32).

⁶² The character 鎮 or "zhen" can mean "frontier garrison" and it is also used as the final character in local place names (Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary* 1955:9). In this instance, I am assuming the latter.

⁶³ This place name is written in Chinese as: 揚州海陵縣白潮鎮桑田鄉東梁豐村 (Nagashima Takeshi 1973:2). In this paper I have adopted Edwin O. Reischauer's translation of terms regarding governmental districting. There are as follows: 州 (zhou) – prefecture; 縣 (xian) – Sub-prefecture; 鄉 (xiang) – canton; 村 (cun) – village (Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary* 1955:9).

Japanese ships approached different coastal areas depending on which route was followed. As described above, the *kentôshi* sailing via the Northern Route landed north of the Shandong Peninsula and either continued by land to the capital or, in some instances, sailed along the southern coast of Shandong to the south where they disembarked.⁶⁴ Ports along the Shandong Peninsula from the Laizhou Prefecture 莱州 in the northwest to the Haizhou Prefecture 海州 in the northern Jiangsu region were important to early exchanges between China and Japan (Reischauer 1940:142). However, ships tended to avoid the region south of Jiangsu and the Huai River and north of the mouths of the Yangzi and because it consisted of approximately 500 kilometers of mud flats and dangerous shoals. This may be the reason the Japanese often tried to reach Mingzhou when sailing to the mainland along the Southern and Southern Island Routes. When sailing via the southern routes, three sites were often used by the Japanese embassies for disembarking and embarking. These were Mingzhou (Hangzhou Bay), the mouth of the Yangzi River, and the mouth of the Huai River.

The following chart summarizes the information we possess regarding the names of debarkation and embarkation sites in Tang China. I have omitted those missions for which no sites are named in the historical texts.

⁶⁴ In the ninth century, it is known that ships stopped in the bays along the southern Shandong Peninsula, but they apparently were bound for or coming from central and southern ports and did not disembark there (Reischauer 1940:155).

**CHART TWO:
TANG DEBARKATION AND EMBARKATION SITES FOR *KENTÔSHI*
MISSIONS⁶⁵**

SAILING DATE	DEBARKATION SITE	EMBARKATION SITE	RETURN DATE	REMARKS
654/2	(1)* & (2) Laizhou Prefecture 萊州	Unknown	655/8	
659/7 ⁶⁶ (from Naniwa)	(1) Shipwrecks, but 5 people reached Kuozhou Prefecture 括州 (2) Xu'an Mountain, Huiqi Sub-prefecture, Yuezhou Prefecture 越州会稽 県須岸山. After arriving at Huiqi, continued on to Yuyao Sub-prefecture 余姚 県.	(2) Yuezhou	661/5	Arrived at Hakata
702/6 (from Hakata)	(1) Guannei, Yancheng Sub-prefecture, Chuzhou 楚州塩城 県管内 (2) Unknown	(1) Unknown (2) Unknown	704/7 707/3(?)	(2) There is doubt about the existence of this ship
733/4 (from Naniwa)	(1 – 4) Suzhou 蘇州	(1 – 4) Suzhou	(1) 734/11 (2) 736/7 (3) 739/10	(1) Arrived at Tane Island 多 爾島 (3) Arrived at Dewa 出羽

⁶⁵ The data for this chart are based on (Nagashima Takeshi 1973:2-5).

⁶⁶ Nagashima (1973) and Mozai (1987:14) list this departure month as 7, whereas Tôno (1999:28) writes that departure was in the eighth month of the year.

			(4) Lost	
752/3 (Intercalary) (from Naniwa)	(1 - 4) Mingzhou 明州	(1 - 4) Huangsi Bay, Suzhou 蘇州 黃泗浦	(1) No return to Japan (2) 753/12 (3) 753/12 (4) 754/4	(1) Reached Okinawa, but then drifted to Huanzhou 驩州 (2) Arrived at Akitsuma Bay in Satsuma Province 薩摩国 阿多郡秋妻屋浦 (3) Reached Yaku Island 益 久嶋(屋久島), then drifted to Kii Province 紀 伊国牟漏崎 (4) Arrived at Sekiri Bay in Satsuma 薩摩国 石籬浦
759/2	Mission enters Tang thru Bohai	Suzhou	761/8	Arrived in Hakata
777/6 (from Hakata)	(1)&(3) Hailingxian Sub-prefecture, Yangzhou Prefecture 揚州海 陵県 (2)&(4) Unknown	(1) & (2) Shore of the Yangzi River 揚子江岸, but they crossed to Japan from Changshu Sub-prefecture in Suzhou 蘇州常熟 県 (3) Hailing Sub-prefecture, Yangzhou Prefecture 揚州海 陵県 (4) Yancheng Sub-prefecture, Chuzhou 楚州塩 城県	(1) 778/11 (2) 778/11 (3) 778/10 (4) 778/11	(1) See below for discussion of this vessel (2) Arrived at Satsuma Province 薩摩国 出水郡 (3) Tachibana- no-ura port 肥前 国松浦郡橘浦 (4) Satsuma Province 薩摩国 甌嶋郡
779/5	(1)&(2) Guannei at Yangzhou and Suzhou 揚州・蘇州 管内	(1)&(2) Unknown	781/6	

the five missions that departed Japan in 630:8, 653:5, 665:12, 669, and 717:3.⁶⁷

1.10.1 Tang Sea Ports

During Tang times, the mouth of the Yellow River was located in the Gulf of Zhili. It seems that this waterway was not used for any significant foreign intercourse. But both the Yangzi and Huai rivers were connected to the Grand Canal system, and so they and the port of Mingzhou (the Hangzhou Bay region) served as the three main gateways between the sea and the inland water routes that led to the capital region in the central Yellow River valley (Reischauer 1940:142).⁶⁸ These were, in fact, the only three harbors or bays along the coastline that were connected to the Grand Canal system, and thus they were the most viable destinations for kentôshi ships.

Most of what scholars know regarding debarkation sites for Japanese kentôshi vessels concerns those missions that followed either the Southern Island Route or the Southern Route. Among those missions that utilized the Northern Route, only the landing sites for the embassies that departed in 654 and 659 are known. The two vessels of the 654 embassy landed at Laizhou Prefecture. The first ship of the 659 mission shipwrecked, but survivors reached Kuozhou Prefecture. The second ship arrived at Xu'an Mountain in Yuezhou Prefecture (see CHART 2 above). The debarkation sites of the other embassies that followed the Northern Route to Tang are unknown.

⁶⁷ These dates are based on Nagashima (Nagashima Takeshi 1973:5).

⁶⁸ Reischauer writes that the "Huai River no longer exists as a single large entity" (Reischauer 1940:143).

Japanese scholars often generalize that the kentôshi who sailed to China along the Southern Island and the Southern routes were trying to reach the Yangzi River. This seems to be an oversimplification. As I explain below, more vessels arrived at and utilized the port at Mingzhou and the mouth of the Huai River than the mouth of the Yangzi River.

Reischauer has written that, of the seven embassies known to have sailed to China by means of one of the southern routes, the debarkation sites for two of the missions are entirely unknown (Reischauer 1940:147-8). Of the other five missions, one disembarked in Yanchengxian Sub-prefecture 鹽城縣, which is located in northern Jiangsu just below the mouth of the Huai River.⁶⁹ Another landed in Mingzhou, but along the coast of Fujian.⁷⁰ And still another landed in the Mingzhou and Yuezhou regions on the southern shores of Hangzhou Bay although, according to Reischauer there is some doubt concerning this.⁷¹ Finally, ships from two missions, the 777 and 838 missions, landed at Hailingxian Sub-prefecture 海陵縣, north of the Yangzi River, at Yanchengxian and in Haizhou (Reischauer 1940:148).

Unfortunately, there are problems with Reischauer's conclusions, due most likely to scholarship conducted since he suggested the above. First of all, Reischauer states that the arrival ports of two missions are unknown. However, of those embassies following one of the southern routes to Tang, the arrival of only one mission—the mission departing 717—remains a mystery. Kentôshi scholars now

⁶⁹ The mission of 702.

⁷⁰ The mission of 803.

acknowledge the arrival locations for at least one vessel from each of the other six missions, even though, admittedly, the arrivals of certain ships remain mysteries. The second point to consider is that, since Reischauer wrote his treatise, more detailed information has been found concerning the exact debarkation sites for kentôshi ships. This is apparent from Chart 2 above.

As in the case of the debarkation sites, there are unknowns regarding the embarkation points for embassies returning to Japan along the southern routes. The embarkation sites for two embassies are entirely unknown (the embassies that departed Japan in 702 and 779). From among the other six missions⁷², all of the ships of the embassies of 733 and 752 departed from Suzhou 蘇州. Suzhou also served as the departure site for the ship that carried the members of the 759 embassy home.⁷³ One of the four ships from the embassy of 777 left from Yangzhou, a second ship from Chuzhou, and the two remaining ships first left from the shore of the Yangzi River and stopped at Changshu Sub-prefecture in Suzhou before setting sail for Japan (Reischauer 1940:148). As for the mission of 838, one ship left from the Haizhou region, while the others set sail from Chuzhou 楚州, located inland on the Huai River.⁷⁴ And finally, the ships of the mission of 803 are known to have set

⁷¹ The mission of 752.

⁷² Above I considered seven missions that used one of the southern routes to Tang. For the return journey, however, I include an additional mission. This is because the mission of 759, which entered Tang through Bohai, returned by means of one of the southern routes.

⁷³ This ship had a crew from Yuezhou.

⁷⁴ The ships of this embassy actually returned to Japan via Korea, and so other than their points of departure, cannot be considered as having traversed the "Southern Route."

sail from Mingzhou (Reischauer 1940:148-9).⁷⁵

1.10.2 Yangzi River

The only Japanese embassy that clearly sailed up the Yangzi River was the mission of 777. As seen on the chart above, three of the four ships of that mission landed at Hailingxian, which is located on the Yangzi River. Two of these moored near Yangzhou on the Yangzi River (Reischauer 1940:150). It is unclear whether or not the ships of the embassies of 733 or 752 sailed up the Yangzi to Yangzhou. But it is often assumed that, in the case of the embassy of 838, at least one ship sailed up the Yangzi. Reischauer argues that none of the ships of the 838 mission actually sailed beyond the mouth of the river and he concludes that the Yangzi, while connected to the Grand Canal system, was not as important to trade as Mingzhou or Suzhou (located between the Yangzi River and Hangzhou Bay) to the south and the Huai River to the north (See Reischauer 1940:151-2,163).⁷⁶

The kentôshi missions used the Yangzi River mouth during the eighth century. Japanese sailors shifted their focus to the regions of the lower Huai River and Mingzhou sometime between the eighth and ninth centuries (Reischauer 1940:159).

1.10.3 Huai River

The Huai River had become an important gateway to trade from Korea and

⁷⁵ Reischauer notes another embassy may be added to this list, the embassy of 659. It had one ship that set sail from Yuezhou and used the northern route back to Japan (Reischauer 1940:149).

Japan by the ninth century, surpassing the importance of the lower Yangzi River (Reischauer 1940:163-4). It was located only a few dozen kilometers south of the Shandong Peninsula and therefore was a convenient entry point for vessels arriving from the north. Reischauer writes that, of the two embassies that landed at Yanchengxian Sub-prefecture, on the Huai River – that is, the embassies of 702 and 777 – nothing is written indicating that the members of either mission sailed up the Huai River, either in their own ships or in other vessels, but it is extremely likely that they did sail up to Chuzhou on the first leg of their journey to the capital.

There is one clear example of the Japanese sailing down the Huai River during the return voyage of the mission of 838. Nine small Korean vessels were hired at Chuzhou by the crews from two of the Japanese ships that made the journey to China. These Korean vessels carried their passengers down the Huai river to the sea (see chart above), where they headed northwards and then out across the open sea to Japan (Reischauer 1940:150).

Although the debarkation sites for the ships of the missions of 630, 653, 665, and 717 are unknown, the first three sailed via the Northern Route and so it is possible that some of the ships may have come down the coast as far as the Huai River.

1.10.4 Mingzhou (Hangzhou Bay)

Mingzhou 明州, located in modern-day Zhejiang Province, was a region vital to

⁷⁶ All of these were connected to the Grand Canal system as well. Suzhou by means of the Song River, which was located near the mouth of the Yangzi and Mingzhou through the Hangzhou Bay.

the maritime exchange with Japan.⁷⁷ During the Qin dynasty, Mingzhou was called Maoxian 鄞県, a name given, perhaps, because maritime people such as the Yue reportedly went there to trade (“Maoxian” means “district of trade/barter”)(Mao 1999:13).⁷⁸ During the Southern Song and Yuan periods Mingzhou was called Qingyuan 慶元 (Takakura 1998:193).

The area of jurisdiction for Mingzhou comprised present-day Ningpo City 寧波市 and the Zhoushan Islands 舟山群島. Mount Sheng 嵎山, located at the eastern edge of this archipelago, is the point in Tang nearest to the Gotô Islands and thus suggests Mingzhou’s importance to Japan.⁷⁹ At 650 kilometers, a voyage from Gotô to Mount Sheng was the shortest possible distance by sea between Japan and Tang China (Mao 1999:13). Indeed, from the time of the kentôshi, Mingzhou served as the primary gateway to China’s maritime exchange with Japan (Takakura 1998:194). In the ninth century, when Tang merchants began frequenting Japanese shores, Mingzhou became more vital to the maritime exchange with Japan than Yangzhou 揚州 or Suzhou 蘇州.

Mingzhou had a long history of involvement in maritime exchange and it was known for advanced ship construction and navigational technology from at least the Western Zhou period (Mao 1999:14). As mentioned above, maritime people reportedly came to Mingzhou to trade. In particular, the Yue people 越人 from China’s southern shores are known to have gathered and been active in the

⁷⁷ Mingzhou corresponded to modern Ningpo in Zhejiang Province 浙江省寧波, but its area of jurisdiction was somewhat wider.

⁷⁸ The name of this region was changed to Mingzhou in 738. Discussion of Mingzhou 明州 can be found in the *Dong Yi Zhuan* (Jpn. *Tôiden*) 「東夷伝」.

Mingzhou area.⁸⁰

During the Tang period, Mingzhou developed as an important port for exchange with Japan, the Korean Peninsula, and various southern countries, which included the region of present-day Indo-China and Indonesia.⁸¹ As this trade prospered it stimulated further innovations in shipbuilding and navigation.

As mentioned above, the most easterly point of the Zhoushan archipelago in Mingzhou is Mount Sheng, located 650 kilometers from the Gotô Islands. During the time of the *kentôshi*, a ship following this shortest possible course to Mingzhou, and blessed with the proper winds, could make the trip in six to ten days. There are several examples of short voyages that were made in the ninth century. In 862:9, for example, the Mingzhou merchant Zhang Zhixin 張支信 sailed from the Gotô Islands to Mingzhou in just four days. In 874:6, he bettered his own record by sailing his ship to Japan and landing at Naru port 那留浦 in the Gotô Islands in only three days (Mao 1999:13). Counted among the passengers of this ship were the Japanese monks Eun 惠運, who was introduced above for having left an account of the Gotô Islands and the construction of Li Churen's vessel at the Naru-no-ura port,

⁷⁹ During Tang period Mount Sheng was called Jin Mountain 尽山 (Mao 1999:13).

⁸⁰ The Yue people were famous for their sailing skills. The *Zhou Shu* 周書 records that King Zhou Cheng 周成王 (BC 1024-954?), received a boat from the Yue 于越献舟. And the *Bamboo Books* 竹書記年 state that, during the Warring States period, the Yue king 越王 presented a boat to the state of Wei 魏. Other texts attesting to the maritime proficiency of the Yue people are found in the *Huai Nan Zi* 淮南子 and the *Yue Jue Shu* 越絕書.

⁸¹ During the ninth century, travel from Japan to Hangzhou Bay (Mingzhou) for commerce became even more common and is mentioned in primary sources at least seven times. These sources describe private traders and monks aboard both Japanese and Chinese ships that likely sailed directly between western Japan and Mingzhou (Reischauer 1940:155-6).

Ninkô 仁好, and Egaku 恵尊. Another merchant, Li Yanxiao 李延孝, made at least two relatively quick voyages across the sea from Mingzhou. In 858:6, he sailed to Miraku 美楽⁸² in eleven days, and then in 865:7 he sailed his ship to the Gotô Islands in just three days (Mao 1999:14). In fact, during the ninth century, Mingzhou and ports to the south undoubtedly served as home ports for many of the Chinese traders who sailed to Japan along the Southern Route to Japan (Reischauer 1940:161).⁸³ (The merchants Zhang and both Li's will be considered in more detail in Chapter Four.)

1.11 OCEAN CURRENTS, TYPHOONS, AND SEASONAL WINDS

Japan is well-known for the rough seas that surround it. The seas off Japan's shores can become quite turbulent, especially during the winter months (Mozai, “古代日本の航海術” 1979, p.81). But what were the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea like? What type of seas did the kentôshi have to cross to sail to and from Tang along each of the three routes discussed above?

Most scholars of the kentôshi recognize the significant effect ocean currents had on the vessels that sailed to and from Tang. Mozai Torao, who has extensively researched Japan's maritime history, suggests that two additional factors affecting the navigation of the seas not be overlooked. These were winds (seasonal and trade) and typhoons. All three phenomena must be considered in order that historians may better appreciate the difficulties ancient Japanese mariners faced.

⁸² Present-day Miiraku 三井楽.

1.11.1 Ocean Currents

The Kuroshio Current is the most important ocean current affecting the waters off Japan. This is a warm ocean current that runs north from Taiwan through the Ryûkyû Islands to southern Kyushu near Yaku Island 屋久島, where it splits into a main branch that continues northeast along Japan's southern shores and a smaller branch that proceeds north along Kyushu's western shore and enters the Sea of Japan as the Tsushima Current 対馬海流. Another somewhat weaker branch splits off to the west of Kyushu and flows north along the western shores of the Korean Peninsula. This is known as the Nishi-Chôsen Current 西朝鮮海流 (Mozai 1979:81). The Kuroshio Current narrows to approximately 20 - 30 nautical miles⁸⁴ from around the region of southern Taiwan, thus moving at the comparatively rapid pace of two to three knots.⁸⁵ Northwest of Okinawa Island, however, the width of the current expands to approximately 60 nautical miles and so decreases in speed to 1 - 2 knots (Mozai 1979:89-90).

At least two cold water currents weaker than the Kuroshio also influence the seas traversed by the kentôshi. These are the Liman Current リマン海流 that runs south from Sakhalin Island along the Siberian coast and the Korean eastern and southern coasts; and the East China Sea Current 東シナ海流 that begins in the Bohai Sea, moves out and around the Shandong Peninsula, and then heads south

⁸³ Unlike the Japanese of the early kentôshi period, the Chinese apparently never used the Northern Route to Japan.

⁸⁴ One nautical mile equals 1,852 meters.

along the Chinese shore towards the Straits of Taiwan (Mozai 1979:82-4).⁸⁵

1.11.2 Seasonal and Trade Winds

Typhoons generally approach the seas around Japan in July, August, September, and October, but on rare occasions they may occur before or after this period as well (Mozai 1979:94). The route taken by typhoons often either overlaps or closely follows the movement of the Kuroshio Current.

It is a mistake to assume that winds always blow in the same direction as the ocean currents. It is equally false to assume that currents are fueled by the power of the winds. In fact, depending on the seasons, powerful winds often blow in the opposite direction of the currents. These winds, referred to as seasonal winds 季節風,⁸⁷ were also important to the voyages of the kentôshi.

By the time of the kentôshi voyages, mariners knew enough to make use of the seasonal winds. There are reports in the primary sources of ships awaiting the “proper winds.” Unlike the winds that accompany typhoons, seasonal winds are more predictable and thus more reliable as navigational aids. In the winter months, for example, the region from south of Kyushu to Taiwan experiences north and northeasterly winds that blow at average speeds of 5 to 8 meters per second, sometimes reaching speeds of 20 meters per second. From about April these winds

⁸⁵ A speed of one “knot” is the speed required to traverse a single nautical mile in one hour.

⁸⁶ Mao Shaoxi refers to a 1955 United States’ Navy map of the region to show that: (1) from January through April, the ocean current close to Zhejiang runs from the north to the south. In the fifth month it shifts to the northeast, and from June to August, it runs from the sea east of China north to the Tsushima straits. And finally, from September to December it shifts again to flow from north to south.

weaken to about 5 meters per second. And then from May and June they gradually give way to southerly winds that blow at between 3 and 4 meters per second (Mozai 1979:96). These winds continue until August or September, when they once again give way to northeasterly winds.⁸⁸

The seasonal winds were important to navigation. It was best for the kentôshi vessels to utilize the northeastern winds of the fall in order to proceed to China and then try to return in the spring by using the southwestern winds (*The History of Hiradô City* 1966:91). Many of the shipwrecks that occurred off the coasts of Japan were due to difficulties relating to the wintertime seasonal winds (Mozai 1979:97). There are many examples in history of shipwrecks where survivors were carried to the south. The fact that ships drifted to the south seems odd considering the northerly flow of the Kuroshio Current. But it is logical in light of the winter winds that tend to blow in that direction (Mozai 1979:97). This was true of the shipwreck of 778:11 discussed below.

It seems that by the ninth century merchant ships learned how best to utilize the seasonal winds in order to accomplish expedient passage across the seas to and from Japan. This was especially true during the summer months (sixth thru ninth months) when, as discussed above, a number of voyages were made from the Chinese coast to Japan in less than eleven days (Mao 1999:14).

⁸⁷ These winds are also called *takuetsufû* 卓越風 in Japanese.

⁸⁸ The Japanese mainland experiences different seasonal winds. Unlike the Ryûkyû Island region, Honshu and Kyushu are subjected to harsh northwesterly or westerly winds during the winter months. By June, these winds give way to the summer seasonal winds coming out from the south.

Trade winds 貿易風 may affect navigation as well, but perhaps not to the extent of the seasonal winds. In the northern hemisphere, trade winds always blow from the northeast from a high pressure zone located between 25° and 35° latitude to an area near the equator (Mozai 1979:88-9). These winds are fairly constant throughout the year, but tend to blow farther to the south in the winter months. During the winter, the winds blow continuously from about the region of north latitude 25, but in the summer months they blow from around the 35th parallel to 10 degrees latitude (Mozai 1979:89). It is unclear how exactly these winds may have affected the kentôshi voyages in conjunction with seasonal winds and severe weather changes resulting from storms and typhoons.

1.12 MISSION OF 777

Finally, I would like to look at the embassy of 777 to understand some of the specific difficulties faced by one of the well documented journeys to and from China. Below is part of an account given by the *hangan* 判官, or Councilor to the Envoy, Ôtomo no Sukune 大伴宿禰, and recorded in the *Shoku Nihongi* (*A Study of the Kentôshi and Primary Sources* 1987:40) (*Shoku Nihongi*, Vol 5).⁸⁹ Ôtomo was a survivor of a vessel torn apart in mid-voyage by a violent storm.

Last year (777 AD) on 6:24, our four vessels set sail across

⁸⁹ The following is a report from Ôtomo, recorded in the 11th month entry (宝亀九年十一月) of the *Shoku Nihongi*, Vol 5, but there is also an account by Ono 小野滋野, which appears immediately before in the 10th month entry of the same *Shoku Nihongi* volume. These accounts differ slightly (*Shoku Nihongi*, Vol 5 続日本紀、五: 1998:72-79).

the seas bound for China. On 7:3, we reached Hailingxian Sub-prefecture (Jpn: Kairyôken) 海陵県 in Yangzhou 揚州 and dropped anchor. On 8:29, we arrived at the Yangzhou regional office 大都督府.⁹⁰ We petitioned the regional governor 節度⁹¹, Chen Shaoyou 陳少遊, and were granted permission for 65 of our number to enter the capital. On 10:16, we set out for the capital. [Omitted] We arrived at Chang'an on the thirteenth day of the first month. We had an audience with the Emperor on 3:24.⁹²

[Omitted]

On 778:6:25, we reached Weiyang 惟揚.⁹³ On 9:3, we set sail from the mouth of the Yangzi. We stopped at Changdan Sub-prefecture 常耽県 in Suzhou 蘇州⁹⁴, to await the winds. Ship Number 3 was at Hailingxian Sub-prefecture and Ship Number 4 was at Yanchengxian Sub-prefecture 蘇州塩城県⁹⁵ and neither vessel knew of the departure date.

On 11:5, with favorable winds behind us, Ship Number 1 and Ship Number 2 set sail together on the voyage home.

While in the midst of the sea, on the eighth day (of the

⁹⁰ This was a regional office of the central government that handled military matters in the provinces (Jpn: *daito tokufu*) (*Shoku Nihongi*, Vol 5 続日本紀、五: 1998:78, note 14).

⁹¹ 節度 (Jpn: *sechido*). This is an abbreviation for 節制調度. These individuals were responsible for civilian, military and financial matters in their respective districts. For more information, please see (*Shoku Nihongi*, Vol 3 続日本紀、三: 1998:539, note 26).

⁹² This is literally, “reported to the emperor about “things” 対顔奏奏事.

⁹³ This is another name for Yangzhou 揚州 (*Shoku Nihongi*, vol 5: 1998:79, note 35).

⁹⁴ This is on the shore south of the the mouth of the Yangzi River. It is present-day Changshu Sub-prefecture, Jiangsu Province 江蘇省常熟県 (*Shoku Nihongi*, vol 5: 1998:79, note 37).

⁹⁵ This is present-day Yanchengxian, Jiangsu Province 江蘇省塩城県. This is the same location where the Tang envoy, Awata no Mahito 粟田真人, arrived and came ashore in 702 (See Chart Two) (*Shoku Nihongi*, vol 5: p. 75, see note 33).

month) at approximately 8 PM⁹⁶, the winds began to blow violently and the ocean waves became large. The sides and planks of the ship (No. 1?) were torn and the vessel filled with sea water. The deck came apart and washed away. People and supplies floated about in the sea, and neither food nor drinking water was saved. The Vice-envoy, Ono no Ason no Iwane 小野朝臣石根, together with 38 (Japanese), drowned at the same time as the Zhao Baoying 趙宝英, and 25 (Chinese) (*Shoku Nihongi*, Vol 5: p.81). I alone managed to make my way to the railing at the back corner of the stern where I surveyed my surroundings and awaited the end. At approximately 4 AM⁹⁷ on the 11th day of the month, the mast fell to the bottom of the ship. The vessel then broke into two sections and drifted separately toward parts unknown. More than 40 people piled upon a part of the stern measuring only about three meters on all four sides as they clung for dear life. After a mooring line was cut and the rudder lost, this part of the vessel floated a little higher in the water. The survivors shed their clothing and sat upon the top of the broken vessel in the nude. The survivors experienced six days without food or water, and then on the 13th, at approximately 10 PM, the broken part of the vessel drifted ashore at Nishinonakashima in Amakusa in the province of Hinomichinoshiri (Higo) 肥後国天草郡西仲嶋. By the mercy of Heaven, I was granted a second

⁹⁶ During this time, a single night was divided into five time periods. The time given here is called *shokô* 初更, which was the first of the five periods, and corresponded to 7-9 PM.

⁹⁷ The time here is the hour of *gokô* 五更, which is the fifth of the five time periods for the night. It corresponds to 3-5 AM.

chance at life. I was fortunate indeed!⁹⁸

⁹⁸ I base the last line on the Chinese: 不任歛幸之至.

CHAPTER 2

MARITIME TECHNOLOGY: THE SHIPS AND NAVIGATIONAL SKILLS OF THE KENTÔSHI

2.1 EARLY NAVIGATION

Japanese mariners may never have veered far from shore before the first half of the eighth century. Travel along the coasts was relatively safe as long as land remained in sight. Mishaps at sea were more easily avoided. When night fell or if poor weather conditions prevented visual confirmation of a mariner's location, he only needed to head for shore and drop anchor or land until daylight or until weather conditions improved. Sailors were thus inclined to keep land in sight throughout most, if not all, of their voyages.

Iida Yoshirô, a respected scholar of Japanese maritime history, suggests that Japanese sailors were unable to veer far from coastlines because of the simplicity of their sea crafts and because they lacked sufficient knowledge regarding maritime navigation. It was this lack of technological sophistication that forced the Japanese mariners to come ashore numerous times during long voyages in order to verify their locations, replenish supplies, and minimize the danger of becoming lost at sea (Iida 1980:14). This may have been true even during the great migrations from the Korean peninsula that took place during the Yayoi and Kofun periods.

During these ocean crossings, land was never entirely out of sight. According

to Iida, a boat leaving Kimhae⁹⁹ on the Korean peninsula and sailing south towards Tsushima island first passed Chwi Island 鼠島.¹⁰⁰ Tsushima supposedly came into sight after Chwi, so up until this point in the voyage the destination was always in view (Iida 1980:11). After passing Tsushima, even though the destination could not immediately be seen from Tsushima at sea level¹⁰¹, on a clear day Iki Island came into view in the foreground before the view of Tsushima entirely faded from behind (Nelson 1993:15). Thus, as one sailed across the strait, land was always in sight during the journey, either from the fore or the aft.

But did the ancient Japanese indeed have only rudimentary navigational knowledge? Chinese mariners of an even earlier age were able to navigate far beyond their shores. It is believed that Han-period sailors used astronomical observation for navigation. The *Ling Xian* (118 A.D.) by Zhang Heng contains a passage that refers to 2,500 greater stars, “not including those which the sea people observe” (Needham 1970:43), and there is evidence that ancient mariners determined direction at night based on the location of the polar star (*Institute of the History of Natural Sciences* 1983:494).

In addition, Chinese astronomers of the Eastern or Later Han Dynasty made great advances in astronomical mapping¹⁰², most noticeably by representing the sky as a cross section of 365.25 parts (Iida 1980:11). Early Chinese scientists also adapted their twelve-symbol zodiac to denote directional points on a map (Iida

⁹⁹ Kimhae: 金海

¹⁰⁰ Chwi Island: 鼠島

¹⁰¹ Iki and possibly Kyushu may be visible from the mountaintops of Tsushima.

¹⁰² Astronomical mapping: 天周.

1980:11); for instance, “north” was designated with the symbol corresponding to the zodiac sign for “rat.”¹⁰³ The other eleven directions were represented by zodiac characters as well.¹⁰⁴

It is unclear how much of this astronomical knowledge reached the people traveling the East Asian seas, but it seems that as few as eight points on a directional map are necessary for successful maritime navigation. Chinese sailors may have had such a map.

But what of the Japanese? Chinese technological advances were not always adopted by the Japanese, but regardless of how far from shore Japanese sailors may or may not have ventured, there is strong evidence that they were as adept at traversing the waters around and among their islands as they were the land on which they lived.

Following the coasts in dugout canoes with items for trade was far more economical than crossing mountains without roads (Iida 1980:2). Studies of obsidian distribution offer considerable evidence that travel by sea was the most efficient and easiest means by which the early Japanese moved between coastal villages.¹⁰⁵ Dugout canoes were apparently the means by which the Jōmon¹⁰⁶ traversed the fifty kilometers across the sea from the Izu peninsula to the island of Kōzushima to obtain obsidian. Canoes were also used to transport Koshidake

¹⁰³ The zodiac symbol for “rat” is 子.

¹⁰⁴ It has been suggested that the 12-part astrological zodiac was based on astronomical observations. The celestial orbit of Jupiter, for instance, takes approximately 12 years (Iida 1980:11).

¹⁰⁵ Obsidian was the most important raw material used by the Paleolithic and Neolithic peoples of Japan to construct tools.

obsidian in Kyushu 210 km to Pusan, Korea and 800 km south to Okinawa.¹⁰⁷ Obsidian from Nagano has been found widely distributed along both the Sea of Japan coast and the Pacific coast, in the latter case from as far as the Shima peninsula in the north to Fukushima in the south. This distribution evidences an expansive Jômon sea trade.

2.2. EARLIEST JAPANESE SHIPS

Many historians maintain that, despite many millennia of human history, mankind only recently overcame water “barriers” by constructing and utilizing watercraft.¹⁰⁸ This applies to Japan as well, where scholars such as Sudô Toshiichi remain unconvinced that water vessels could have been constructed during the Paleolithic period, despite considerable evidence that watercraft were used as early as 20-35,000 years B.P. in and around the waters of Japan and the Ryûkyû islands (Shimizu 1981:31). Boats, he asserts, were not constructed before the Jômon period (ca. 11,700 – 400 B.P.) and even the first Jômon watercraft were more akin to

¹⁰⁶ And contrary to Sudô's assertion, quite possibly the Paleolithic peoples before them were also sailing to and from Kôzujima Island.

¹⁰⁷ They may have been employed to carry the Oki obsidian to the Maritime Province as well. We do at least know that they enabled the Jômon people to catch deep sea animals in abundance. Deep sea fish species have been found at the Natsushima site 夏島遺跡, dated to 9450 +/- 400 B.P. and 9240 +/- 500 B.P. (Ikawa-Smith 1986:203).

At the Early Jômon site of Mawaki 真脇遺跡 in Ishikawa Prefecture, hundreds of dolphin skulls and other fish bones have been found (Pearson 1992:82) (Fuqua 1996:87). In addition, sea craft should be considered to explain the existence of the skeleton at the Yamashita-chô Cave site 山下町第1洞窟遺跡 in Okinawa, which has been dated to 32,100 +/- 1000 B.P. (Ikawa-Smith 1986:204).

¹⁰⁸ The fact that the ancestors of the Aborigines in Australia have lived on that continent for at least 50,000 years should, by all right, lay this debate to rest. Even during the last ice age, Australia was never attached to surrounding land masses. This was one water barrier that was somehow overcome by man.

floatation devices than to actual boats.

Sudô hypothesizes that the peoples of the Japanese islands and the southern part of the Korean peninsula first attempted to cross bodies of water by using gourds or even pots as floatation devices (Shimizu 1981:32). Some of the materials used to construct the earliest boats throughout the world have included reeds, animal skins, and bark. And indeed, there is a case in the *Kojiki* of a basket being used for water transport (Shimizu 1981:32).¹⁰⁹ But what were the characteristics of the first practical Japanese boats? Can we determine the origins and subsequent development of Japan's shipbuilding traditions?

Setting the question of "when" aside, there seems to be little debate among scholars regarding the "what" regarding the first boats in Japan – they were dugout canoes.

Before boats were constructed with planks, ropes, and nails, dugout canoes were the most common sea craft used by early peoples around the globe. The dugout is indeed the ancestor to the Japanese shipbuilding tradition. In Japanese, "dugout canoes" are variously referred to as *marukibune* 丸木舟 / 独木舟, and *kuribune* 刳舟 (Shimizu 1981:32).¹¹⁰ Dugout canoes were used throughout the Jōmon period and continued to be used in the Yayoi and Kofun periods that followed.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ In the *Kojiki*, "basket" is written and read as *menashikago* 無目籠.

¹¹⁰ *Marukibune* seems to be the most commonly used denotation.

2.2.1 Jōmon Boats

The subsistence activities of the Jōmon required utilization of oceangoing vessels. Despite what was likely the small scale of these crafts, evidence is overwhelming that the Jōmon possessed sufficient means for crossing expanses of ocean and harvesting its resources. Rafts may have been constructed by the Jōmon, but no remains have been recovered, probably due to rapid decomposition of the wood (Sudō 1981:1).

Dugout canoes, however, perhaps because of their thicker structure and larger size, have been recovered and examined. They have been found at a number of Jōmon-period sites (Sudō 1981:1) (Barnes 1993:76). Of the canoes that have been recovered, most were constructed from single logs and are between five and seven meters long and approximately fifty centimeters wide, (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:9-10). Kaya, a species of yew, was the primary type of wood used for dugouts.¹¹² Stone tools and possibly fire were used to hollow out the logs used for Jōmon dugouts. The fire was burned on one side of the log to make hollowing out with stone tools easier. This process is employed even today by peoples in the developing world (Sudō 1981:2).

One of the earliest dugout canoes recovered in Japan was from the Early Jōmon 前期 site of Kamo 加茂遺跡 in Chiba Prefecture (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:9; Shimizu 1981:41). This canoe was apparently more than five

¹¹¹ Dugout canoes differed characteristically depending on the period in which they were constructed (Shimizu 1977:1) and Nishimura Shinji 西村真次 was the first scholar to categorize dugout canoes into three types (Shimizu 1981:37).

¹¹² Kaya (possibly *Torreya* in English?) is written with the character: 榧.

meters long and has been carbon dated to 3150 B.C. (Aikens and Higuchi 1982:124-5).¹¹³ Only parts of this vessel remain; but it has been determined that the craft probably had low sides and was most suitable for use in calm waters (Shimizu 1981:43). Discoveries of dugout canoes from the Middle Jômon period are lacking, but there have been finds dated to the late Jômon period (Shimizu 1981:43) from sites such as Takatanigawa and Hatakemachi, both of which are also located in Chiba.¹¹⁴ One large dugout canoe has been recovered from a site in Osaka as well. It is approximately two meters wide and fifteen meters long (Iida 1980:4).

A number of dugout canoes have been recovered from Japanese archaeological sites together with oars. For example, a dugout canoe and paddle were found at the Torihama shell mound 鳥浜貝塚 in Fukui prefecture. Oars were likely the primary means for propelling dugout canoes. It is estimated that this particular canoe was able to carry up to 1,100 pounds (Pearson 1992:67). However, there is not a great deal known about early Jômon navigation and shipbuilding skills.¹¹⁵

2.2.2 Yayoi Ships

As stated above, dugout canoes were not just Jômon-period craft. They

¹¹³ In *Nihon no Fune*, radiocarbon dates for this canoe are given as 5100 BP +/- 400 (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:9).

¹¹⁴ These are my supposed readings for these place names. One of the great difficulties in transliterating Japanese into English involves personal and place names. Any number of possible readings may exist. For example, the characters for Takatanigawa 高谷川 may alternately be read Takatanikawa, Kôyagawa, Kôyakawa, or even Kôkokugawa or Kôkogukawa. Likewise, an alternative reading for Hatakemachi 畑町 could be Hatakechô.

¹¹⁵ Apparently, a boat nail has been found on Kumejima Island off the west coast of Okinawa in the same provenance with Han Dynasty *goshusen* coins and Final Jômon pottery; however, it seems that this find has never been verified or accurately dated.

continued to be used throughout the Yayoi and Kofun periods, and even well into historic times. But the dugout canoes of the Yayoi period were different from those of the Jōmon period in shape and craftsmanship, probably due to metallurgy and the metal tools that were introduced into Japan. The time of this introduction roughly corresponds to the beginnings of the Yayoi period; that is, circa 400 BC.

Advances in shipbuilding techniques thus correspond to the introduction of bronze and iron from the mainland. It was probably from this time that *fukuzai kuribune* canoes 複材剝舟 were constructed from multiple pieces of wood. *Fukuzai kuribune* canoes were created when two or more hollowed out logs were attached at the front and rear in order to enlarge the vessels (Sudō 1981:3).

It has been speculated that it was also during the Yayoi period that boats constructed from separate planks of wood were first used. The figure of a boat on a bronze *dōtaku* 銅鐸 seems to possess raised portions at the bow and stern, indicating that the vessel could not have been constructed from a single log (Kokubu 1979:27). Separate pieces of wood must have been attached to create the vessel. A number of what appear to be paddles or oars are seen on the sides of this craft as well (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:11). We also see depictions of boats from pottery like that from the Karako site 唐古 in Nara, as well as from *dōtaku* (Sudō 1981:3). Unfortunately, few Yayoi-period ships have been excavated and therefore little is known about the nature of ocean-going craft from this period.

The Yayoi period marked the beginning of Japan's proto-historic period. Chinese writings tell us that small kingdoms in Japan sent tribute to the Han Court

(Mori Kōichi 1993:33).

as well as the Court of Wei during the Three Kingdom's Period. This suggests a certain degree of maritime prowess on the part of the Wa people, but the type of vessels they used for trips to China remains a mystery.

We do, however, have references in both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* to a figure from the proto-historic period, Emperor Ôjin, who is recorded as having ordered the province of Izu to construct a ship that was 10 *jô* 丈 or approximately 30 meters in length (Sudô 1981:3).¹¹⁶

There is also a short, seven-character sentence found on a brick in a ca. 170 A.D. Han tomb in Kuaiji 会稽, a port town located between southern Jiangsu Province and Zhejiang Province, China that may serve as a written record of maritime travel by the Yayoi Japanese to a point further than the Korean peninsula. The passage reads "there were Wa people who came to pledge allegiance"¹¹⁷ (Kimura 1992). The brevity of the sentence lends itself to a number of interpretations, but it has been suggested that the passage referred to a group of Wa people who traveled to and settled in the vicinity of Kuaiji around 170 A.D. or, at the very least, to a group of people who temporarily resided in the town (see Fuqua 1996:88).

2.2.3 Kofun Ships

Japan's shipbuilding skills became somewhat more complex during the Kofun period. There were at least two types of dugout canoes that were constructed from

¹¹⁶ One *jô* 丈 is 3.03 meters.

¹¹⁷ The Chinese characters for this passage are: 有倭人以時盟不.

single tree trunks (Shimizu 1981:54).¹¹⁸ But the Kofun period also marked the appearance of more advanced sea vessels. It was during this time that Japan sent a large sea force to the Korean peninsula. It was also at the end of the Kofun period that the first vessels were constructed and sent to Sui and Tang. Shallow bottom crafts were not suitable for such excursions.

In addition to the simple dugout crafts, larger vessels of three types were constructed during the Kofun period. These were the *fukuzai kuribune* canoes 複材剝船, which were briefly introduced above as Yayoi-period innovations, the *junkôzô sen* boats 準構造船 (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:12; Shimizu 1981:49), and the *kôzô sen* boats 構造船 (Asahi 1988:36-7).

2.2.3.1. *Fukuzai kuribune* canoes 複材剝船

Some of the *fukuzai kuribune* canoes that have been recovered from archaeological sites are quite long, such as one from the Naniwa Itachi River site and one from the Imabuku-namazu River¹¹⁹ site. These finds are over 11 and 13 meters, respectively. Both boats are more than a meter and a half wide and were

¹¹⁸ The first was the giant Osaka-type dugout 大阪の巨大な形式 and the second was the Kanto-type dugout 関東の折衷形・断面角形 (Shimizu 1981:54). The former is thought to have been used on the open seas and the latter, because of its more shallow bottom, only on rivers. As late as the medieval period, most Japanese boats were probably one of these two dugout varieties. Characteristically, the bottoms of these boats were flat so that in times of emergency the vessels could be pulled up onto sandy shores without suffering great damage (Sugiyama 1981:198-9).

¹¹⁹ As with most place names in Japanese (and discussed above), there are several possible ways to read any one set of characters. This is my rendering of the Chinese characters for this place name: 今福鯰江川.

formed when two logs cut from camphor trees were attached (Shimizu 1981:49).¹²⁰

Several examples of *fukuzai kuribune* canoes recovered from sites in Osaka date to the Kofun and Nara periods. Scholars have determined that two different methods were employed to connect the separate parts of the vessels. One method was to attach the front and rear parts with nails. In at least one of the finds, iron and wood nails were alternately used (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:12).

The other method for attaching the parts of the vessel involved the use of crossbeams and bars.¹²¹ Two crossbeams and a thick bar were attached and placed over the position inside the vessel where the two halves of the boat were joined. A soft fibrous substance called *maihada* was used for waterproofing.¹²² *Maihada* was obtained by tearing the under bark of the Japanese cypress or podocarpus¹²³ tree (*Kôjien*, p.2235; Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:13).¹²⁴

There is an additional example of a *fukuzai kuribune* canoe that was constructed in this way, albeit from four separate parts rather than two. This boat was discovered in 1838 in what is currently Aichi prefecture. An extant woodblock print depicts the discovery of this vessel and the scene from the print clearly shows

¹²⁰ Sudô notes that these finds have been dated according to the *hajiki* and *sueki* potteries that were found within the same provenance. However, since these potteries were used into the Nara and Heian periods as well, there may be some reason to doubt the accuracy of the dating (Shimizu 1981:49).

¹²¹ Crossbeam: *hari* 梁; bar: *kannuki* 門.

¹²² *Maihada* 槓肌 is alternately read as *makihada*.

¹²³ Jpn. “maki” 槓. In the *Nihon shoki*, podocarpus was one of the riches begat by Sosa no wo Mikoto to the land ruled by his son. It was to be used by man as a receptacle for burial (Aston, *Nihongi* 1988:58 (I)).

¹²⁴ Bark: 内皮; podocarpus: *maki* 槓. In the *Nihon shoki*, podocarpus was one of the riches begat by Sosa no o Mikoto to the land ruled by his son. It was to be used by man as a receptacle for burial (Aston, *Nihongi*, p. 58 (I)).

two holes on the side of the boat, presumably for crossbeams.¹²⁵ The accompanying text notes that the vessel was composed of separate pieces of camphor joined in three places with bars (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:14). The date of this vessel is unknown, and the find was not preserved for posterity. The artifact may in fact have been of post-Heian period origin, but its existence serves as an indication of how large some *fukuzai kuribune* canoes were. According to at least one observer of the 1838 find, the vessel measured 20.6 meters long, 1.88 meters wide, and 30 centimeters deep (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:14).

Most of the large dugout canoes and *fukuzai kuribune* canoes from Japan's Kofun period were constructed from camphor wood. Camphor trees have wide trunks but are somewhat short in height. This may explain the practice of connecting separate pieces in order to make a longer vessel. It is also interesting to note the shape of these boats. Many, if not most, had a length that was ten or more times longer than the width.¹²⁶ Long, slender vessels of this nature were fast in the water and able to seat many rowers (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:16).

2.2.3.2 *Junkôzô sen boats* 準構造船

The term *junkôzô* can be translated as “semi-composite.” In most cases the bottom of each *junkôzô sen boat* 準構造船 incorporated either a simple dugout canoe or a *fukuzai kuribune* canoe. Shipbuilders then added planks of wood to the low sides of the canoes in order to deepen the vessels and make them more seaworthy

¹²⁵ The woodblock print is from *Owari-meisho-zue* 「尾張名所図会」 (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:14-5).

and capable of carrying more cargo (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:12, 16; Matsumoto 2000:1).¹²⁷ The deeper *junkôzô sen* vessels may theoretically serve as evolutionary links between the dugout canoes (simple and *fukuzai kuribune*) and the more advanced *kôzô sen* boats, which are discussed below.

A fifth century *haniwa* depiction of a ship recovered from the Saitobaru *kofun* 西都原古墳 is an example of one of these vessels. This *haniwa* vessel is a “gondola-type” vessel, so named because its sideboards rise sharply upwards at the bow and stern (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:17). The *haniwa* vessel also has six projections at the top of each side. These are believed to have served as fulcra for oars, and were probably added only to the larger vessels. A steering paddle was most likely used, even though it is not evident in this *haniwa* depiction.¹²⁸

With a gondola-type *junkôzô sen* vessel, the sideboards were set on the edges of the vessel’s base, and the point of contact was covered by longitudinal members.¹²⁹ Apparently nails were not commonly used; instead, organic material, such as wisteria, was used to suture the contact between the separate pieces (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:17). The *junkôzô* gondola-type vessel is often depicted on *kofun* wall murals. Details of its development remain unclear, but it

¹²⁶ This ratio of length to width is referred to as *sunpôbi* 寸法比.

¹²⁷ There is some evidence indicating some of the *fukuzai kuribune* vessels from Osaka discussed above had side planks attached. If so, they should be more accurately classified as *junkôzô sen* (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:16).

¹²⁸ The positioning of a rudder at the central part of the stern of a ship is first found in China around the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., but does not come to Japan until the 7th century (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:18).

¹²⁹ Longitudinal members: *jûtsûzai* 縦通材.

apparently predates the beginning of the Kofun period because images of this type of boat have been found on the sides of Late Yayoi-period pots and *dôtaku* bells.

There are Kofun-period remains of *junkôzô sen* boats. At the Kyûhōji site¹³⁰ in Osaka, for example, the remains of a late 3rd or early 4th century ship's bow and a long plank attached to the bow to function as a breakwater were recovered (Asahi 1988:36; *Dictionary of Ancient Japanese Archaeological Sites* 日本古代遺跡事典, p.494).¹³¹ The section of the bow that was recovered seems to have a mortise, suggesting at least a quasi-composite construction. One scholar has suggested that this vessel was twelve meters long and was able to carry up to twelve people (Asahi 1988:36).

Other finds that hint at the form of the vessels used by early sea navigators include a late Kofun-period rudder¹³² found in Osaka and a ceramic shard from the Shimizukaze site¹³³ in Nara that has the depiction of a *junkôzô sen* boat 準構造船. This *junkôzô* vessel has been estimated at 25 meters long and 3 meters wide. A vessel of this size could have accommodated as many as 27 people (Asahi 1988:36-7).

Finally, a prominent example of a *junkôzô sen* boat was recovered from a site in Osaka city in 1937.¹³⁴ It most likely dates to the end of the Nara period and has two rows of iron nails and the remnants of side boards on both sides (Japan Maritime

¹³⁰ Kyûhōji site: 久宝寺遺跡.

¹³¹ Ship's bow: 船首; plank 豎板・縦板; plank attached to the bow to function as a breakwater: 波よけ用の豎板.

¹³² Rudder: 舵.

¹³³ Shimizukaze site: 清水風遺跡.

¹³⁴ The exact location of the find was 大阪市東淀川区豊原町.

Science Foundation 1977:19).

Large-scale *junkôzô* vessels of the Kofun period were capable of carrying envoys along the Northern Route¹³⁵ toward China. Almost always in close proximity to land, *junkôzô* boats making this voyage could land whenever the weather took a turn for the worse or if provisions needed replenishing (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:19). I believe these vessels may have been used for some, if not all, of the missions sailing the Northern Route to China. At the very least, the *junkôzô* vessels must have been used for missions sent to China during the Kofun period. I also suggest that Himiko's mission to Wei, which occurred in the first half of the third century, utilized such a vessel or vessels.¹³⁶

2.2.3.3. *Kôzôsen ships* 構造船

By the 1980s, it became apparent that a third type of vessel, the *kôzôsen* ship, had been built during the Kofun period as well, and, as mentioned above, may in fact date back as far as the Yayoi period (Asahi 1988:36-7).¹³⁷ A *kôzôsen* vessel was one assembled from various parts or pieces without use of either a dugout log or

¹³⁵ The Northern Route, discussed above in Chapter 1, followed a route beginning in Kyushu and passing by Iki and Tsushima islands to the Korean Peninsula. From here, vessels sailed north along the western shore of the peninsula and then crossed the Yellow Sea to arrive at the Shandong Peninsula.

¹³⁶ Himiko was the ruler of the country of Yamatai, which was supposedly located either in northern Kyushu or the Kinki area in central Honshû. Yamatai's exchanges with both the Han Court and the Wei kingdom are recorded in the *Hou Han Shu* (*History of the Latter Han Dynasty*) and the *Wei Zhi* (*History of the Kingdom of Wei*). (See *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol 1 (Revised Edition) by Tsunoda, de Bary, and Keene for English translations of these texts.)

¹³⁷ As late as 1977, scholars such as Shimizu Junzô 清水潤三 were stating that the origins of Japanese *kôzôsen* and the first use of sails by Japanese sailors were two great unknowns among maritime historians (Shimizu 1977:1).

canoe in its base structure. The term *kôzô* 構造 refers to the constructed assembly of separate pieces.

Considering their sheer size in terms of passengers and cargo, the *kentôshi* vessels of at least the later half of the seventh century and after must have been larger and more advanced than the *junkôzô sen* boats. *Kôzôsen* ships appeared in Japan as early as the end of the Kofun period and the beginning of the Nara period (Shimizu 1981:50, 54). Dugout canoes continued to be used until modern times in Japan, but the appearance of *kôzôsen* ships reflect a need for more sophisticated means of maritime transport. These must have been the vessels used for all of the later official missions to and from the mainland. The *kôzôsen* ships should thus be equated with the *kentôshi* vessels of at least the Middle and Late periods, if not before. They will be discussed in further detail below in the section regarding *kentôshi* ships.

2.3 DEPICTIONS OF EARLY SHIPS

2.3.1 Haniwa and Senkokuga Depictions of Ships

There are several *haniwa* depictions of vessels from the Kofun period and one of these, the *haniwa* boat from the Saitobaru *kofun* 西都原古墳 in Miyazaki prefecture, was introduced above. This *haniwa* closely resembles a large-scale *kôzôsen* 構造船 (Sudô 1981:3; Iida 1980:1).

There are several other depictions of ships from the Yayoi, Kofun, and Nara periods. A Yayoi ceramic vessel from the Karako site 唐古遺跡 in Nara prefecture,

for instance, has a *senkokuga* depiction 線刻画 or “depiction drawn with finely engraved lines” (Mozai 1984:25). This particular depiction appears to be a gondola-type vessel with a long oar. The Karako site is dated to between the beginning of the Yayoi and the beginning of the Kofun periods (*Dictionary of Ancient Japanese Archaeological Sites* 日本古代遺跡事典 1995:563-4). A drawing of another gondola-type vessel is found on the inside wall of one of the horizontal tombs at the Takaida ôketsu grave site 高井田横穴墓群 in Osaka (Mozai 1984:25; *Dictionary of Japanese Kofun (Burial Mounds)* 日本古墳大辞典 1989:330). It depicts one large individual wearing clothing associated with the Yamato aristocracy, who is standing in the middle of the vessel with a pike in hand. Two smaller individuals are seen at the front and back of the vessel, one holding an oar and the other apparently lowering an anchor (*Dictionary of Japanese Kofun (Burial Mounds)* 日本古墳大辞典 1989:330). This tomb dates from the middle of the sixth to the beginning of the seventh centuries.

A *senkokuga* depiction of a boat with a sail was found in one of the tombs at the Daiman-yokoana graves 大満横穴群 in Chiba (Mozai 1984:26-8; *Dictionary of Ancient Japanese Archaeological Sites* 日本古代遺跡事典 1995:244). The Daiman-yokoana depiction is somewhat controversial because, despite the fact that *hajiki* 土師器 and *sueki* 須恵器 ceramic ware recovered from the site suggests a seventh or eight century date, the vessel depicted resembles a *sengokubune* 千石船, or a large Edo-period craft with sails that could transport up to 1000 *koku* of rice.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ One *koku* is equivalent to 5.12 U.S. bushels.

Mozai Torao, a leading scholar of maritime history, concludes that this is indeed an eighth century depiction and any resemblance to the Edo period craft is purely coincidental (Mozai 1984:27). If Mozai is correct, this could well be the most authentic image of a kentôshi period vessel to come down to us. It differs from our twenty-first century conception of the kentôshi ships in one important way: it depicts a single mast with a horizontal sail as opposed to the two masts shown in the *emakimono* images (discussed below).

There are other carved images of sea vessels in *kofun* burial chambers as well, such as in the late sixth century Kazuwara *kofun* 桂原古墳 in Kumamoto prefecture, where depictions suggest that ships of the kentôshi age had one mast with a horizontal sail as opposed to the two masts seen in the *emakimono* images produced in later ages (Mozai 1984:28; *Dictionary of Japanese Kofun (Burial Mounds)* 日本古墳大辞典 1989:152).

2.3.2 Emakimono Depictions of Kentôshi Period Ships

Emakimono 絵巻物, or picture scrolls, which were created during and after the eleventh century, depict several images of kentôshi ships. These include the *Shôtoku taishi eden* 聖徳太子絵伝 (11th century), the *Kibi daijin nittô ekotoba* 吉備大臣入唐絵詞 (12th century), and the *Kegon engi* 華嚴縁起 (13th century) (Mozai 1984:27). The first of these, the *Shôtoku taishi eden*, is meant to represent one of the vessels sent to Sui rather than to Tang. It is the earliest pictorial representation of a vessel that carried envoys to China (Ishii Kenji 1995:239).

All of the above vessels are depicted as Chinese traditional junks. They are shown with two masts upon which bamboo grass sails were raised (Tôno 1994:2).¹³⁹ They are also depicted with pulleys located at the bows that were used for raising anchors, as well as with tall structures located at the sterns. Drums are seen on the tops of these structures. At least one glaring anachronistic feature exists; namely, some of the late Kamakura-period depictions show double masts that are positioned side by side across the width of the vessel rather than front to back (Ishii Kenji 1995:56).

With questions concerning vessel length, width, and depth aside, and despite the lack of certain features mentioned in the primary sources (discussed below), many scholars of the *kentôshi* recognize the eleventh to thirteenth century *emakimono* depictions to be useful reproductions of the eighth and ninth century ships constructed for the voyages to Tang (Tôno 1994:2).

Ishii Kenji has suggested that those scrolls depicting the *kentôshi* ships, which were created before the first half of the 13th century, have considerable historical accuracy, while those scrolls produced after that time have less credence for use as historical sources (Ishii Kenji 1995:56-7). Sudô Toshiichi also believes in the usefulness of the *emakimono* depictions for *kentôshi* research. But at least some of his conclusions seem flawed. He notes, for instance, that the Kamakura depictions of *kentôshi* period vessels such as the one seen in *Kibi daijin nittô ekotoba* 吉備大臣入唐絵詞, are similar to Song-period merchant vessels. He cites this as evidence that the vessels of the Tang period must have been little different

¹³⁹ Bamboo grass sails: 笹帆.

from those of Song. But this conclusion is based on the assumption that the depictions are authentically drawn. Isn't it more likely that the Kamakura artists used the vessels of their own time (i.e., Song vessels) as models for the *kentôshi* ships? The *kentôshi* ships were constructed several centuries before these drawings were made (See Mori Katsumi 1981:67). It seems more logical to conclude, therefore, that the images on the *emakimono* are not *similar* to Song vessels, but rather, are *based on* them. The Song ships served as artistic inspiration for recreating the vessels of the past.

Some scholars are thus too eager to offer *emakimono* depictions of *kentôshi* vessels as evidence of Nara/Heian period shipbuilding skills. They seem oblivious to the obvious; namely, that the *emakimono* depictions are anachronistic interpretations of ships constructed several centuries earlier. The *emakimono* are of course historically significant in and of themselves, but that does not make their imagery historically accurate. Unless scholarship can demonstrate that there was a continuous, uninterrupted shipbuilding tradition that remained essentially unchanged for two centuries or more, I suggest that the *emakimono* depictions be studied with reservation. The best way to reconstruct the *kentôshi* vessels is to examine the primary source material relating to the ships and voyages, and to consult any relevant archaeological data.

2.3.3 Evidence of Masts and Sails

Sails may not have come into common use in East Asia until some time after the first century AD. The character eventually adopted for the Japanese *yagura* or

“oar” 櫓 is seen in the Chinese language as early as the Warring States period, but the character for the Japanese word *ho* or “sail” 帆 may date back only as far as the Later Han dynasty (Iida 1980:10). It is believed that sails became common in China during the Tang dynasty (Matsumoto 2000:3).

It is unclear if sails were commonly used during the Kofun period, but there are several early representations of vessels with what appear to be either sails or masts. For instance, there is a depiction of a boat in a mural on the back wall of the burial chamber at the Mezurashizuka *kofun* 珍敷塚古墳 in Fukuoka prefecture (Iida 1980:9; *Dictionary of Ancient Japanese Archaeological Sites* 日本古代遺跡事典 1995:721; *Dictionary of Japanese Kofun (Burial Mounds)* 日本古墳大辞典 1989:573). The Mezurashizuka boat has what appear to be two vertical masts on its deck. It is also carrying a man with an oar in hand and a bird situated above the bow. Lines etched between these masts represent something suspended.¹⁴⁰ This may be a rough drawing of a sail.¹⁴¹

The Torifunezuka *kofun* 鳥船塚古墳 also has a wall mural that depicts a boat with two pairs of parallel poles placed upright on the decks in the front and back of the craft (See diagram on *Dictionary of Japanese Kofun (Burial Mounds)* 日本古墳大辞典 1989:415). Sails may have been attached to these poles; but even if this were the case, sails on this type of craft could only have made use of winds blowing from

¹⁴⁰ This painting is reproduced in both Iida (1980:9) and *Dictionary of Japanese Kofun (Burial Mounds)* (1989:573), but it looks different in both reproductions. The vertical lines can be seen in the first reproduction but not in the second. However the outline of a man is not seen in the Bi reproduction.

¹⁴¹ There is also a wall depiction of a boat with a sail in the 阿古山古墳 in Tottori prefecture (Iida 1980:9).

behind. The crew had to supplement propulsion by oar (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:18).

In addition, a boat was recovered in Niigata prefecture in the village of Koaimura 小合村¹⁴² with holes on both sides of the bow of the vessel that may have been used for hoisting a sail (Iida 1980:9).

2.4 JAPANESE SHIPS IN HISTORICAL SOURCES – NARA / HEIAN SHIPS

The first clearly non-mythological, historical record of a Japanese voyage across the ocean concerns the embassy to Sui in the year 600.¹⁴³ The record of this voyage is found, not in Japanese primary sources, but rather in the Eastern Barbarian entry of the *Sui Shu* (*History of the Sui Dynasty*) 隋書, which was compiled in the seventh century.

Boats and nautical maritime vocabulary are found in the earliest Japanese writings. Aspects of nautical history also surface in Japan's mythological tales. Iida Yoshirô, for instance, suspects that the birthing order for the offspring in the tale concerning the gods Izanagi and Izanami—who gave birth to the Japanese islands—reflects ancient maritime transportation routes (Iida 1980:2).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Koaimura is a possible reading I have selected for the characters: 小合村.

¹⁴³ There were embassies sent to the Chinese Court by so-called “countries” in Japan as early as the first century AD (such as the Yamatai country mentioned above). However, there is no record of how these missions traveled to China. Mission members may have boarded Korean or Chinese vessels or, as I have suggested, crossed the straits to the Korean peninsula aboard their own *junkôzô* boats. The 600 embassy was the first one that clearly used Japanese vessels.

¹⁴⁴ For example, one *Kojiki* entry lists this order as Awajima, Shikoku, Okinoshima, Kyushu, Iki, Tsushima, Sado, and finally Honshu. A *Nihon Shoki* entry lists this order as Awajima, Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu, Okinoshima, Sado, Koshi 越州 (possibly

Many different words in early Japanese proto-historical texts refer to boats, but some of the subtle distinctions among these terms have been lost over time. Vessel types mentioned in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* include *ashibune* 葦船, or reed boats, a type of vessel referred to as *kumano-no-morotabune* 熊野諸手船, and others (Sudô 1981:1).¹⁴⁵ The *kumano-no-morotabune* vessel is mentioned in the *Nihon Shoki* in a passage concerning a myth involving Izumo and a place called Miho-no-saki 三穂の崎 (Mozai 1984:68-9).¹⁴⁶ The *Kôjien* dictionary entry on the *morotabune* vessel offers two definitions. First, *moratabune* is defined as “a boat with many oars,” and second, as “the name for the boat used in a boat festival held every year on December 3 at the Miho shrine in Shimane prefecture” (*Kôjien* 1990:2390). As part of this festival, two vessels race as they circle the bay six times.

The two Miho shrine boats are rebuilt every forty years. We can thus assume that they are constructed as they were in the first millennium A.D. The boats used are canoes dug out from single trees. They are 6.3 meters long and the bottoms of the boats have a round shape that expands outward. They have no rudders, but are propelled by single large oars and eight smaller ones (Mozai 1984:69). Mozai Torao agrees that these modern-day crafts are viable replicas of ancient ancestors; this suggests they are examples of the *kumano-no-morota bune* mentioned in the *Nihon*

Hokkaido?), and lastly, Ôshima (this last one is unclear for there are many islands with this name) (Iida 1980:2).

¹⁴⁵ Examples of other vessels mentioned include: *ukitakara* (浮宝), *manashikatama-no-bune* (無目堅間小船), *ama-no-iwakusu-bune* (天盤? 樟船), *ama-no-tori bune* (天鳥船), and *kagami-no-fune* (かみ船) (Sudô 1981:1).

¹⁴⁶ See *Kojiki*, p. 103 and p. 62 of *Nihon Shoki*.

Shoki (Mozai 1984:68-70).¹⁴⁷

Mozai Torao notes that one of the characters commonly used in the early texts to refer to “boat” was 舶, which was pronounced *tsumu*. Sudô Toshiichi writes that, during the Nara and Heian periods, the character 舶 was used to designate boats that navigated the open seas and that the character was read *tsumu no fune* (Mori Katsumi 1981:65). This word may in fact have had its origin in either the Chinese or Polynesian languages. Mozai writes that the Chinese word that may be the antecedent of the Japanese *tsumu* means “single wood”; i.e., “dugout canoe” 独木舟¹⁴⁸ (Mozai 1984:4-5). If *tsumu* did refer to dugout canoes, they were likely large in size. Names were given to some of these vessels. The earliest of them, which was cut from a great tree, was called Karanu (Mozai 1984:1). This vessel is mentioned in both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* (Mozai 1984:1).¹⁴⁹

The exact physical nature of the vessels referred to by various names in early Japanese texts is unclear, but Sudô Toshiichi suggests that some of the different vessel types named in the *Nihon Shoki* and the *Kojiki* may have been of south China or southeast Asian origin and thus possibly reflect styles introduced to Japan by immigrants from these regions (Sudô 1981:2). I believe that the great number of terms regarding boats attests to the rich maritime past of the Japanese and the importance of boats and the sea in their culture.

¹⁴⁷ A similar boat festival is held in Wakayama prefecture at the Hayatama shrine in Kumano, a shrine that seems to have Izumo connections. Morai suggests that this may account for the name “Kumano” in the original *Nihon Shoki* passage. At this festival nine vessels, each holding ten people, race on the Kumano River.

¹⁴⁸ Chn. “du-mu-zhou”

A number of primary sources also draws a distinction between private vessels 私船 and public vessels 公船. Some of the sources that discuss the former are the *Manyôshû*, the *Nihon Ryôiki* 日本霊異記, the *Hitachi-no-kuni Fudoki* 常陸国風土記, the *Izumo-no-kuni Fudoki* 出雲国風土記, and the *Dainihon Komonjo* (Matsubara 1985:156).¹⁵⁰ Public vessels are most prominently mentioned in the *Shoku Nihongi*. Matsubara has examined the treatment of the public vessels in the *Nihon Shoki* and suggests that, for the most part, public boats fall into one of five categories. The first of these categories are the kentôshi ships (Matsubara 1985:157).¹⁵¹

During the Late period of the kentôshi, the characters 四舶, read as *yotsu no fune*, came to refer to the vessels of the kentôshi. The first character, meaning “four,” referred to the tendency during the Late kentôshi period for the Japanese to send four vessels at a time to Tang (Mori Katsumi 1981:65-6). The second character, as mentioned above, refers to a vessel that navigates the open seas. A *waka* by Emperor Shômu, included in the *Manyôshû*, is an example of an extant passage from this period that refers to the kentôshi ships as *yotsu no fune*.

There is also mention of both Silla and Paekche ships in the proto-historical sources. The shapes, sizes, and constructions of these vessels are unclear, but their mention suggests that both must have differed in some way from Japanese vessels.

¹⁴⁹ The *Kojiki* writes the name, Karanu, as 枯野 and the *Nihon Shoki* uses the characters 輕野 (Mozai 1984:1-2).

¹⁵⁰ Some of these passages include: *Nihon Ryôiki* 日本霊異記, vol. 1, 第七話; vol. 2, 第四、第二十七話; vol 3, 第二十七話; and the *Dainihon komonjo*, vol. 5, p. 230; vol. 6, p. 119 (see Ishii Kenji 1995:165).

¹⁵¹ The other four categories of public vessels mentioned in the *Shoku Nihongi* are (1) 御船, (2) 軍船, or vessels used for campaigns against the Emishi 蝦夷 and Silla, (3) Dazaifu vessels 大宰府船, and finally (4) Other (Matsubara 1985:157).

There is a record of the supposed introduction of Silla shipbuilding techniques to Japan, albeit from the proto-historical period. An envoy's vessel was sent to Japan from Silla during the time of the Emperor Ôjin. This vessel caught fire in Muko Bay 武庫湾 in present day Hyôgo prefecture. The ensuing blaze then spread to a number of nearby Japanese vessels. In way of apology, the Silla king sent shipbuilders to live and work in Sesshû 摂州猪名部 (Sudô 1981:4). Some time after this incident, Paekche shipbuilding techniques were introduced to Japan (This will be dealt with in more detail below).

Although I am not aware of Japanese exposure to shipbuilding techniques from the kingdom of Koguryô, we should note that as early as the third century AD the people of Koguryô were building impressively large vessels. It is recorded, for example, that during the Three Kingdom's period of Chinese history, Koguryô sent horses to the kingdom of Wu in southern China. Because the envoy's vessel was small, *only* 80 horses were loaded (Iida 1980:9). One cannot help but ponder how large this "small" vessel must have been.

As discussed in Chapter 1, there are cases in historical texts of vessels breaking apart and survivors reaching shore by clinging to the floating pieces. Even though seagoing vessels from ancient times were not as seaworthy as vessels of more recent eras, they were built totally from materials that float. If they broke apart during the course of a voyage, the detached parts would not sink (Mozai, 古代日本の航海術 1979:67).

2.5 THE INFLUENCE OF CONTINENTAL SHIPS

2.5.1 Chinese junks¹⁵²

Japanese vessels followed the Southern Island Route or the Southern Route to Tang from 702 until the last kentôshi mission in 838.¹⁵³ It has been surmised that these vessels were heavily influenced by oceangoing vessels from the continent (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:19).¹⁵⁴

The Japanese needed to develop a new type of ship before they could venture into open seas and forsake the relatively safe coastal approach to China along the Korean Peninsula. Evidence indicates that the kentôshi vessels of at least the Middle and Late periods were constructed using Chinese junk technology (Ishii Kenji 1995:52). Junks were traditional Chinese vessels that usually had two or more masts equipped with lugsails.¹⁵⁵ They were somewhat short, but considerably wide. They were characteristically constructed with firewalls, ribs, and planks that were attached to the ribs (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:115).¹⁵⁶ The

¹⁵² I realize that use of the term “junk” for this period in time could arguably be considered anachronistic. The term itself, of possible Malay origin, came into western language usage only after Portuguese contact with Southeast Asian and Chinese mariners. However, the Japanese language has adopted the term junk (ジャンク式船) to describe the type of vessels that sailed the East Asian seas during the Tang dynasty. Because of this, and because the junk style of vessel predates western adoption of the word, I—like the Japanese—have also adopted the term “junk” in my own discussion.

¹⁵³ The exception is the mission of 759, which traveled to Tang through Bohai. In addition, at least one vessel may have used the Southern Island Route for a voyage to Tang in 653.

¹⁵⁴ It is unknown if this mainland technology affected the *fukuzai kuribune* canoe and the *junkôzô sen boats*, but depictions on picture scrolls 絵巻物 suggest that both traditions survived throughout this period and continued to be used domestically without a great deal of alteration.

¹⁵⁵ Lugsail: Jpn. *raguseiru* ラグセイル. Lugsails are four-sided sails that have their upper edges supported by a yard that is fastened obliquely to the mast.

¹⁵⁶ Firewall: Jpn. *kakuheki* 隔壁; Rib: Jpn. *rokuzai* 肋材; Plank: Jpn. *gaihan* 外板

kentôshi vessels of the Middle and Late periods may have been the first in Japan to adapt aspects of the junk tradition into their construction (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:115).

However, the influence of the Chinese junks on the kentôshi vessels was indirect. It was perhaps not before the ninth century that Chinese mariners were sailing directly to Japan in great numbers and exposing the Japanese firsthand to Tang ships and maritime technology.¹⁵⁷ Evidence suggests, instead, that Tang junk technology was introduced to the Japanese by the Koreans. Scholars now surmise that kentôshi ship construction was based on Paekche models. The Paekche ships, or *kudarabune* 百濟船, were themselves constructed along the lines of the Chinese junks.

The Paekche influence may date to 650 AD. In this year, two Paekche vessels were ordered constructed in the province of Aki 安芸国 (the western half of Hiroshima prefecture) (Ishii Kenji 1995:51, 54; Mori Katsumi 1981:66; Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:116). How these ships were used is not specifically recorded, but they may have been used by the kentôshi envoys themselves. They may, perhaps, be the vessels used by the second kentôshi mission, which was dispatched to Tang in 653. At least one scholar believes this was the first mission to follow a Southern Island Route to China, but many others, including myself, believe this mission sailed along the Northern Route (Japan Maritime

¹⁵⁷ Chinese merchant ships are believed to have become active on the open seas from the ninth century (Mori Katsumi 1981:57) and the first recorded visit to Japan by a Tang merchant vessel was in 819. This vessel came ashore at Dewa Province 出羽国 but most vessels thereafter came to Hakata port (Mori Katsumi 1981:58). See Chapter Four.

Science Foundation 1977:116-7).¹⁵⁸ Even if these Paekche vessels were not used by a kentôshi mission sailing via the Southern Island Route, they may have been utilized for a Northern Route journey; or at the very least, they served as models for structural upgrades in Japanese kentôshi ships.

Chinese junk technology was certainly important to the Japanese during the second half of the seventh century when the kentôshi missions tried to avoid sailing close to the Korean peninsula. The *junkôzô* boats that the Japanese sailed before were no longer useful. They were not large enough to carry all the supplies needed for a voyage venturing far from land (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:116). Only *kôzôsen* ships could be used for mid-ocean voyages and Chinese-style junks became the models upon which the Japanese constructed their *kôzôsen* ships. Junks were technologically capable of sailing the open seas and able to carry a greater volume of cargo and greater numbers of passengers. The kentôshi shipbuilders thus used the cousins of the Chinese junks—the Paekche vessels—to create their own variety of Chinese-style junk.¹⁵⁹ These ships served as the models for all subsequent kentôshi ships.

After the first two Paekche ships were ordered constructed at Aki, a shipbuilding tradition seems to have developed in this province. Most of the kentôshi ships used from 650 to 746 were constructed at Aki (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:117). Ishii has suggested that a group of Paekche shipwrights, adept at constructing the Chinese-style junks, may have settled in Aki (Mori

¹⁵⁸ See Mozai Torao discussion in 「遣唐使研究と史料」 1987, p.13).

Katsumi 1981:66; Ishii Kenji 1995:54). The establishment in Japan of a Korean community of shipbuilders is not hard to explain. Members of the Paekche aristocracy and those with technical skill came to Japan *en masse* after the defeat of Paekche and Japan by Tang and Silla forces in 663. Paekche technology was thereafter adopted to construct the defenses surrounding Dazaifu. It is thus not difficult to imagine shipwrights from Paekche settling in Aki and devoting their talents to the construction of ships for Japan (Mori Katsumi 1981:66-7).

Beyond concluding that the kentôshi ships were modeled after Chinese junks (by means of Paekche models), there is little detailed information regarding the size, shape, or construction of kentôshi vessels (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:117). There is even doubt regarding the long-term influence that Chinese junk construction may have had on Japanese maritime development. It has been suggested, for instance, that the technology for constructing the oceangoing kentôshi vessels may have been abandoned by Japanese craftsmen after the last mission was cancelled in 894 (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:19). I find it hard to believe that the technological advances adopted in the seventh and eighth centuries by Japanese shipwrights could have been so easily discarded.

2.5.2 Song period ships

Sudô Toshiichi writes that, because there are still many questions remaining regarding the structure and size of ninth century ships, scholars must turn to

¹⁵⁹ Paekche vessels carried anywhere from 122 to 160 passengers (Iida 1980:21; Ishii Kenji 1995:50-1). This was also true of the kentôshi vessels of the Middle period.

records describing the ocean-going vessels of the Northern Song dynasty (Mori Katsumi 1981:59). He and others assume that, despite the fact that these vessels were from a later period, they may have been of similar construction to those vessels that sailed across the seas to and from Japan during the Tang dynasty (see p. 61).

Records describe Song ships that sailed from China to the Korean peninsula. The largest of these vessels carried as many as five to six hundred passengers and had sharp hulls able to cut more easily through the water. The bodies of these vessels were divided into three parts, each serving a different function. The front sections were constructed without roofs and housed both ovens for cooking and containers that held stores of water. Weapons were kept below on shelves. The center sections were divided into four separate rooms while the back sections of these vessels had raised platforms designed for observation. These ships were also equipped with large and small anchors made of stone, which were lowered and raised with pulleys (Mori Katsumi 1981:60).

The Song vessels were also equipped with rudders. According to the *Xuan He Feng Shi Gaoli Tu Jing* 宣和奉使高麗図経, Song ocean-going vessels were equipped with three-part rudders.¹⁶⁰ There was a main rudder located in the center part of the stern as well as two other rudders, one on each side of the stern (Ishii Kenji 1995:57, 240).¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ These three-part rudders are called *sanfuduo* 三副舵 in Chinese (Jpn: *sanpukuda*).

¹⁶¹ One primary source concerning the shipwreck of a kentôshi ship states that there were at least two rudders. In addition, the *Kibi daijin nittô ekotoba* 吉備大臣入唐絵詞, a twelfth-century scroll, also depicts at least two rudders (Ishii Kenji 1995:57).

Song vessels also utilized sails made of both cloth and bamboo. The cloth sails were used when suitable winds blew. And at least ten oars were used when favorable winds were not blowing (Mori Katsumi 1981:60-1). The most common material used to construct these Song vessels was camphor wood (Mori Katsumi 1981:59).¹⁶²

Study of Song ocean-going vessels offers the same pitfalls as the *emakimono* depictions discussed above; namely, they are anachronistic examples. Comparisons should thus be made with caution.

2.6 KENTÔSHI SHIPS

2.6.1 The *Shoku Nihongi*

Japanese vessels that hugged the shoreline as they sailed, such as those of the Early Period of the kentôshi, could have been built anywhere in Japan. The *Shoku Nihongi* describes the preparation for an aborted invasion of Silla in 759 by the Japanese Court. Many provinces in the regions of Hokuriku, San'in, Sanyô, and Nankai were ordered within three years to construct a total of 500 large vessels for this invasion (Ishii Kenji 1995:54). Provinces in the Hokuriku region were ordered to provide 89 ships, San'in provinces were to build 145 ships, and the provinces of San'yô and Nankai were asked to provide 161 and 105 ships respectively (Arano et

¹⁶² Further information can be culled from the *Chûkaizuhon* text 籌海図編 mentioned above, which compares Japanese vessels with Chinese vessels of the Ming dynasty (Mori Katsumi 1981:56-7), a number of differences between the two traditions is discussed suggesting that even at this later date the Chinese were more advanced in their knowledge of maritime craft (Mori Katsumi 1981:57). It's likely that the technology

al, 2000:58-9). These regions responded to the order two years later with a total 394 completed vessels, attesting to Japan's ability to construct relatively large ships suitable for the journey across the straits at numerous sites throughout the country (Ishii Kenji 1995:54).

The kentôshi vessels, on the other hand, were built specially to journey to China across wider expanses of open sea. As discussed above, these ships were mostly constructed in the province of Aki, even though other regions were seemingly involved one way or another. These regions included the island of Kyushu; Nagato, which was located in the northwestern part of Yamaguchi prefecture; and the four provinces of Ômi (Gifu prefecture), Tamba (Kyoto prefecture and part of Hyôgô prefecture), Bitchû (western part of Okayama prefecture), and Harima (southwestern part of Hyôgo prefecture) (Sudô 1981:6).¹⁶³

The four provinces of Ômi, Tamba, Harima, and Bitchû are mentioned in a passage in the *Shoku Nihongi* that discusses an order that went out in 732 to construct four ships for the ninth mission to Tang (Ishii Kenji 1995:50).¹⁶⁴ The one line passage very simply reads:

甲辰、遣使于近江、丹波、播磨、備中等遣唐使造船四艘。

(*Shoku-Nihongi*, Vol 2, 2000:262-3).

On the fourth day (of the ninth month of 732), envoys were

used in the construction of the kentôshi vessels was behind that of the Chinese as well.

¹⁶³ The characters in the primary sources that denote these places are: Kyûshû 筑紫, Nagato 長門, Ômi 近江, Tamba 丹波, Bichû 備中, and Harima 播磨.

¹⁶⁴ Book 11 of the *Shoku-Nihongi* notes that these ships departed Naniwa on 733:4:3 (*Shoku-Nihongi*, Vol 2, 2000:269).

sent to the provinces of Ômi, Tamba, Harima, and Bitchû (among other places), and they were made to construct four ships for use by the kentôshi.

Simple though it may appear, interpretation of this passage has been controversial. It has been suggested in popular literature that each province was responsible for constructing one of the four ships sent on the mission (see Inoue Yasushi's *Tenpyô no Iraka* 天平の豊). It seems doubtful, however, that this could have been accomplished in Ômi and Tamba, because these provinces did not front on the sea (Ishii Kenji 1995:50).¹⁶⁵ Ishii Kenji asserts that the *Shoku Nihongi* reference implies that only the construction costs of the vessels were borne by the four provinces. He believes that Aki was the only province that could lay claim as a site of construction (Ishii Kenji 1995:51).

Matsubara Hironobu concurs with Ishii that it is unlikely, even though not impossible, that ships were constructed in Ômi or Tamba. But he suggests that rather than bearing the costs of construction, these provinces may have been ordered to supply the raw materials, such as cedar and camphor wood, for ship construction (Matsubara 1985:157).

There is also a one-line passage in the *Shoku Nihongi*, dated 700:10:26, that states that construction of a vessel took place in Suô 周防国, a province located in the southeastern part of present-day Yamaguchi prefecture (Matsubara 1985:157, 165).

The line reads:

十月庚午、遣使于周防国艘造舶。

(*Shoku-Nihongi*, Vol 1, 2000:30-1).

On the 26th day (of the tenth month of 700) an envoy was sent to the province of Suô and it (Suô) was made to construct a ship (for the kentôshi).

We thus find that as late as the first half of the eighth century, kentôshi ships were sometimes constructed in places outside of Aki, such as Suô Province, and received materials (if not actually the ships themselves) from the areas mentioned above, such as Ômi, Tamba, Harima, and Bichû provinces (Mori Katsumi 1981:66). During the later kentôshi period, however, evidence points to construction taking place solely in Aki Province (Mori Katsumi 1981:66). On five different occasions from 746 to 778, a total of 16 kentôshi ships were constructed in Aki (Ishii Kenji 1995:51, 53).¹⁶⁵ This was from a total of at least 17 kentôshi vessels that were constructed during this period (refer to Chart 5, Chapter Three). And from 761, it seems probable that all of the kentôshi vessels were constructed at Aki (Matsubara 1985:157; Kishi Toshio “紀氏に関する一試考” in 日本古代政治史研究).

¹⁶⁵ Considering that a single vessel carried more than 100 individuals, it seems unlikely that the ships could have been constructed inland and then transported to sea, even by river (Ishii Kenji 1995:50).

¹⁶⁶ Not all of the ships built sailed to China. The missions of 761 and 762 were cancelled.

2.6.2 The Construction of the Kentôshi Vessels

For the construction of the kentôshi ships, both a Minister and Vice-Minister of Ship Construction were appointed (Mori Katsumi 1981:67).¹⁶⁷ There are no primary sources that deal directly with the design of kentôshi ships (Iida 1980:21), but there are passages from which certain assumptions can be made regarding the structure and navigation of these vessels.

Accounts of events at sea, such as shipwrecks, suggest several aspects of the ships' construction or rigging. By piecing together bits and pieces of primary source information regarding kentôshi ships, Iida Yoshirô has proposed that the larger vessels of the Late kentôshi period that carried as many as 150 individuals, possessed the following characteristics (Iida 1980:21-2). First, they were probably 25 to 30 meters long and up to 6 to 7 meters wide. The depth of the vessels was approximately half their width, i.e. 3 to 3.5 meters. The overall shape of the vessels was probably boxlike, and even though the bow and stern narrowed out away from the center of the ships, the very front and back of the vessels probably were not sharply angled. The bow and stern of each ship must have been higher than the midsections, making the deck arc-shaped rather than flat. A higher bow and stern probably made mid-ocean travel easier.

Tôno Haruyuki points to six relevant passages from the primary sources from which important information can be culled -- four passages from Ennin's *Nittô Guhō Junrei Gyōki* and one each from the *Shoku Nihon Shoki* and the *Shoku Nihon Kōki*

¹⁶⁷ I have chosen to render these positions in English as: Minister of Ship Construction 造船使長官 and Vice-minister 次官.

(Tôno 1994:1).¹⁶⁸ Descriptions in these passages confirm what I have already suggested; namely, that the kentôshi vessels (at least those of the later eighth and ninth centuries) were complex *kôzôsen* craft constructed from multiple parts.¹⁶⁹

Like Iida, Tôno examined the primary source passages that describe aspects of ship construction and made several observations. First, he asserts, the kentôshi vessels had v-shaped hulls (Tôno 1994:1-2). (This is a topic of debate that is discussed in more detail below.) Next, he points to a passage in Ennin's diary revealing that Ennin's vessel had some sort of outer coverings on its sides. These coverings are referred to as "flat irons" 平鉄. In an incident on the 27th day of the sixth month of 838, the flat irons were struck by a wave and fell off.¹⁷⁰

The diary passage records that on the next day, this same vessel ran aground upon a shoal. Ennin's entry for that day, the 28th day of the sixth month, records that the ship alternately rolled back and forth and to the left and right as it was hit by waves. Reischauer has translated this passage in his 1955 work: *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in search of the Law*.

¹⁶⁸ These passages are as follows:

- (1) *Shoku Nihongi* 「続日本紀」 宝龜 9 年 (778) 11 月丙午条.
- (2) *Shoku Nihon Kôki* 「続日本後紀」 承和 3 年 (836) 8 月丁巳条.
- (3) *Nittô Guhô Junrei Gyôki* 円仁「入唐求法巡礼行記」 承和 5 年 6 月 27 日条.
- (4) *Nittô Guhô Junrei Gyôki* 同上 28 日条.
- (5) *Nittô Guhô Junrei Gyôki* 同上 29 日条.
- (6) *Nittô Guhô Junrei Gyôki* 同上 7 月 2 日条.

¹⁶⁹ As discussed above, even though the actual design of these vessels is unknown, it is believed that they were not *junkôzô sen* boats, but rather *kôzôsen* ships that were closely related to the junks of Paekche and China (Mori Katsumi 1981:67).

¹⁷⁰ See Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China*, 1955:4.

... The ship was suddenly dashed up onto a shoal. In trepidation we immediately lowered *sail*, but the corners of the *rudder* snapped in two places, while the waves from both east and west battered the ship and rolled it [back and forth]. Since the blade of the *rudder* was stuck in the ocean floor, and the ship was about to break up, we cut down the *mast* and cast away the *rudder*. The ship straightway floated with the waves. When the waves came from the east, the ship leaned over to the west, and when they came from the west, it inclined to the east. They washed over the ship [to a number] beyond count. [(832): 6th Moon, 28th day]¹⁷¹

(Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in search of the Law*, 1955:6)

From this passage, we find mention of a rudder, mast, and sail. The rudder was large enough to snag this ship onto the ocean floor, but the crew was able to detach it so as to free the vessel from its predicament.

Further into this same entry (for the 28th day), Reischauer uses the phrase “structural joints.”¹⁷² He translates the relevant lines as: “Because of the shock of the waves the structural joints [of the ship] were all pulling apart, so they fastened ropes to the right and left railings and pulled them together, striving to find a way to survive.” Ennin’s entry for the 29th day refers to a part of the hull (its exact meaning or function is unclear), and his entry for the 2nd day of the 7th month

¹⁷¹ The italics are my own.

¹⁷² The phrase Reischauer translates as “structural joints” is 結構之会 in the original Classical Chinese.

mentions the 第二布材, which Reischauer has translated as meaning “second covering on the ship’s bottom” (Reischauer, *Ennin’s Diary* 1955:8).

Tôno points to the above as evidence for the complicated *kôzôsen*, or composite construction, of the kentôshi ships. He cites as further evidence a passage in the *Shoku Nihon Kôki* entry for 836 that describes how passengers trying to flee a sinking vessel removed planks to use as rafts or flotation devices. References such as these describing rudders, structural joints, secondary coverings, and planks, indicate that the hull of the ship was most definitely of a sophisticated composite construction (Tôno 1994:2). This vessel was a far cry from the *junkôzô sen* boats that were most likely used during the Early Kentôshi Period.

Other details can be learned about these vessels from the passages introduced above. For example, reference is made in one passage to *tomo-no-tana* 艫棚. Reischauer translates this term as “right and left bow planking” (Reischauer, *Ennin’s Diary* 1955:7), suggesting a reference to some sort of superstructure. Tôno, however, describes this as a structure enabling the sailors of the vessel to stand and row at times when wind power was unavailable (Tôno 1994:2). If Tôno’s description is accurate, I believe this Chinese could best be rendered into English as “side mountings for oarsmen.”

We also know from the six primary source passages that the ships had railings on each side, as well as decks, masts, mooring lines, sails, rudders, and some sort of lifeboats.¹⁷³ References in other primary source passages tend to substantiate this

¹⁷³ Lifeboats 舢舨. Chinese descriptions of later Japanese vessels also suggest that they were fitted with small boats for use when the need arrived (Sugiyama 1981:15).

description. For instance, a passage from Saichō's *Kenkairon* 顯戒論 mentions a mooring line that was likely made from wisteria vine, called 藤纜 (literally, "wisteria mooring line") (Tôno 1994:3).¹⁷⁴

Iida Yoshirō continues his description of the kentōshi ships by writing that the sides for the ships were most likely constructed on top of the deck. The bottoms of the vessels were flat and probably did not have keels 竜骨.¹⁷⁵ (This conflicts with Tôno's assertion, mentioned above, that the bottoms of the vessels were v-shaped.) There was a rudder at the stern and, to be most effective, must have extended below the bottom of the craft. This indeed seems indicated in the passage above, which records the rudder being "stuck in the ocean floor." Places for resting oars were constructed on the vessel's sides. Propulsion was by oars and by sails, most likely held by two masts. The inside of the vessel was partitioned into cross sections, but did not have ribs. There was probably a room or tower on the front of the deck. The anchor was most likely made of stone (Iida 1980:21-23).

Iida's description of the probable design of kentōshi ships is not universally accepted. As mentioned above, Tôno Haruyuki believes that the bottoms of the kentōshi vessels were v-shaped rather than flat (Tôno 1994:1-2). And Ishii concurs with Tôno's assertion. He believes that kentōshi crafts of the latter period had v-shaped bottoms not unlike that of the Song boat recovered in China (Ishii Kenji

¹⁷⁴ Tôno notes that there is written evidence that wisteria was also used for rope by Chinese sailors in the 12th century (Tôno 1994:3).

¹⁷⁵ The *Chou Hai Tu Bian* (Jp. *Chûkaizuhon*) 籌海図編 states that Japanese ships constructed before the time of the Wakō had flat bottoms, but if the *emakimono* depictions of kentōshi vessels are to be believed, the bottoms of these vessels were rounded at the very least (Mori Katsumi 1981:67-8).

1995:54-5). Ishii cites the same passage above involving Ennin's vessel running aground upon a shoal near the coast of China. He postulates that the vessel swayed back and forth as the waves came in from opposite directions because the tip of the boat was probably resting on the sandy bottom upon its keel. Ishii believes the swaying back and forth suggests a v-shaped bottom (Ishii Kenji 1995:55).

Tôno and Ishii's descriptions are challenged by later Chinese descriptions of Japanese vessels, which suggest that kentôshi vessels had flat bottoms 扁平, and were reportedly not very suitable for cutting through waves (Sugiyama 1981:15). These vessels relied more on the power of oars than sails and so probably required as many as fifty to sixty boatmen 水手 (Sugiyama 1981:15). Unless an actual vessel is recovered, there may be no end to the debate regarding hull construction of the kentôshi ships.

2.6.3. Kentôshi Ship Dimensions and Size

There are no primary sources that accurately record the length, width or depth of a kentôshi vessel. There are, however, several passages in the *Six National Histories* and the *Nittô Guhō Junrei Gyōki* that record the number of ships and the number of people who sailed on them (Shimizu 1977:5; Ishii Kenji 1995:53).¹⁷⁶ For example, the mission of the fourth month of 733, led by Envoy Tajihi no Hironari 大使多治比広成, comprised four vessels that carried a total of 594 people, while the

¹⁷⁶ There seems to be some question as to whether these numbers include the members of the crew, or if they include only the members of the mission itself (Shimizu 1977:5). If crew members are not figured into these numbers, then the capacity of the ships would have to have been even greater than estimated.

mission of the seventh month of 838, under Fujiwara no Tsunetsugu 藤原常嗣, had more than 600 people divided, once again, among four ships (Shimizu 1977:5). Because ships of the later kentôshi period are reported to have accommodated up to 150 people, they must have been comparable in size to the *sengokubune* 千石船 ships of the Early Modern era, which had a capacity of approximately 150 tons.¹⁷⁷

Dimensions were recorded for a vessel constructed in Tang China and used by the Tang envoy Gao Yuandu 高元度, who accompanied the 11th kentôshi mission on its journey home (Sugiyama 1995:55-6). These figures are found in a 761 passage in the *Shoku Nihongi*, which describes the vessel as being twenty-one to twenty-seven meters long and approximately six meters wide¹⁷⁸ (Ishii Kenji 1995:238). This would make the ship as much as half the length but double the width of the vessel (discussed next) that Kimiya Yasuhiko offered as a typical model for kentôshi ships. The recorded dimensions of Gao's ship can serve as a guide for estimating the dimensions of the vessels used by the kentôshi (Ishii Kenji 1995:55). Ishii Kenji has postulated that Gao's vessel displaced as much as one hundred forty tons and had a loading capacity of approximately eighty tons (Sugiyama 1995:55-6).¹⁷⁹

The *Hitachi-kuni no Fudoki* 常陸国風土記 has been cited as possessing a passage that describes the dimensions of a kentôshi vessel. This is not the case,

¹⁷⁷ It is thus not be surprising that the Daiman-yokoana *Kofun* grave depiction discussed above has been compared to the *sengokubune*.

¹⁷⁸ The length is listed as 7-9 jô 丈 and the width as 2 jô 丈.

¹⁷⁹ This information contradicts the following: "Gao's ship held as few as 50 people, and so the Japanese vessels were probably larger. Sugiyama writes that a standard kentôshi ship probably displaced 30 tons and, with 40 rowers on board, could travel at 3 knots (Sugiyama 1995:50-1). But in order to carry 120 people, it is necessary for ships to have approximately a 100 ton loading capacity (Sugiyama 1995:41). By the late kentôshi

however. This assumption likely originated with a misreading of Kimiya Yasuhiko's discussion in his *Nisshi kôtsû shi* 日支交通史 and *Nikka bunka kôtsû shi* 日華文化交通史. Kimiya wrote that a kentôshi vessel may have had dimensions *similar* to those of a vessel described in the *Hitachi-kuni no Fudoki*. This vessel is described as being more than 15 jô long and more than 1 jô wide (Ishii Kenji 1995:51).¹⁸⁰

Kimiya's suggestion of dimension similarity was accepted by many in the academic community without discussion or debate. Many accept that kentôshi vessels had dimensions similar to the vessel described in this passage. But scholars such as Ishii Kenji believe that the dimensions of the vessel in the *Hitachi-kuni no Fudoki* passage are more suitable for what must have been a vessel that navigated close to or along the shore; i.e., a *fukuzai kuribune canoe* or a *junkôzô sen boat*, and not a composite *kôzôsen* ship, such as the type constructed for the Middle and Late period kentôshi missions (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:117). It seems unlikely that the *Hitachi no Fudoki* ship could have made the journey across the deep sea.

Scholars believe that a Song seagoing junk recovered in 1973 from an archaeological site in Quanzhou Prefecture, Fujian Province¹⁸¹ in China may more closely represent both the style and size of the Japanese vessels (Ishii Kenji 1995:53; Sugiyama 1995:56). The archaeological report concerning this find records that the section of the ship recovered measured 24.8 meters in length and 9.15 meters at its

period, these ships may have displaced as much as 300 tons and so were even larger in size."

¹⁸⁰ 15 jô 丈 is equivalent to approximately 45 meters and 1 jô 丈 is approximately 3 meters.

widest point (Ishii Kenji 1995:53).¹⁸² Chinese scholars reconstructing this vessel have suggested that it may have been 34.6 meters long and 9.9 meters wide, and it may have had a three meter draft, water displacement of 374 tons, and the capacity to transport up to 200 tons of goods (Ishii Kenji 1995:53).¹⁸³ The vessel had a v-shaped bottom and thus a deep draft.¹⁸⁴ This means the craft was more suitable for direct ocean travel; there was no need for it to island hop as it sailed.

The kentôshi vessels of the Late kentôshi period must have resembled this junk (Sugiyama 1995:56). The Japanese of the Late kentôshi period were probably exposed to vessels that were precursors to this Song craft. The *Sandai Jitsuroku*, for instance, records the dimensions of two foreign ships that shipwrecked in Japan. Both had dimensions similar to this Song period archaeological find (Ishii Kenji 1995:55).

2.7 MARITIME TECHNOLOGY

There is no single primary source that provides a clear picture of the maritime technology involved in the voyages of the kentôshi vessels (Ishii Kenji 1995:53). We are, for instance, unfamiliar with the types of maps these mariners may have used. Only the Gyôki map is extant¹⁸⁵ (Iida 1980:29). Purportedly made by the Nara period monk, Gyôki (668-749), this is the earliest known map of Japan. But even this did not include the waters between Japan and the continent. However, the fact

¹⁸¹ Qianzhou, Fujian Province 福建省泉州.

¹⁸² This report is from the Chinese archeological publication, *Wenwu* 文物 1975, No.10.

¹⁸³ Water displacement 排水量.

¹⁸⁴ Deep draft 喫水が深い.

¹⁸⁵ Gyôki map 行基図.

that many of the kentôshi missions crossed the Yellow Sea means that the mariners had at least a rough idea where the mouth of the Yangzi River was located (Iida 1980:29).

The Japanese did not possess a compass during the time of the kentôshi, but a mechanism known as a *shinansha* 指南車 was introduced to Japan at least as early as 658 (Iida 1980:31). Some have called this a compass, but apparently it was a device that indicated the direction or course that a vehicle (or possibly a vessel) was to travel. It was used to avoid straying off course. Routes were set along the eight directions of north, south, east, west, northeast, southwest, northwest, and southeast as well as the twelve directions that corresponded to the Chinese zodiac.

The means by which the sailors set course was based on a reading of the heavens (Iida 1980:31). This included the sun, moon, and stars. Around 700 AD the North Star was approximately eight degrees from the North Pole and the star Kochab¹⁸⁶ was about 10.5 degrees off (Iida 1980:31).¹⁸⁷ Either star may have been used at this time to indicate the northern direction. Because the 360 degree circumference of the sky was divided both into rather large and less-than precise units of eight and twelve, either star could have been used to indicate north.

The *rôkoku* 漏刻 system was adopted by Japan in the sixth year of the reign of

¹⁸⁶ "Kochab" is the Arabic name of the top front bowl star of the Little Dipper. It is now 15 degrees from the north celestial pole. The sun and moon act on the Earth's rotational bulge to cause the planet's axis to wobble over a 26 millenia period. The result is that the North Star (Polaris) is only a temporary pole star and in the past (and future) Kochab was (will be) closer to the pole. There are, in fact, references in the past to Kochab as being the North Star.

¹⁸⁷ Iida writes that in the 1,300 years that have passed since, the North Star has moved seven degrees in the direction of the North Pole (Bi, p.32). It is thus a more accurate indicator of position today than it would have been at the time of the kentôshi voyages.

Empress Saimei 齐明天皇 (660 A.D.) (Iida 1980:31). The *rôkoku* was a tool that used flowing water to measure time. After the adoption of this tool the Japanese are believed to have kept accurate time. The *rôkoku* was not adopted aboard ships, however (Iida 1980:31). The Japanese used the sun during the day, and after it set, the night was divided into five periods, each given the name 更, which is read *kô* in Japanese compound words. Thus, the night comprised *shokô* 初更, *nikô* 二更, *sankô* 三更, *yonkô* 四更, and *gokô* 五更 (Iida 1980:31).¹⁸⁸ Fires were also lit at night aboard ships and the burning of incense may have been used to measure the passage of time, although no written evidence exists to definitively support this practice (Iida 1980:31).

What may have been an anchor to a *kentôshi* vessel has been recovered from Miya-no-ura port on the southern tip of Hiradô island. This anchor is constructed of stone, measures 2 meters in length, and weighs half a ton (Toda 1999:320). It is currently on exhibit in the city of Hiradô.

2.7.1 The Masts and Sails of the *Kentôshi* Ships

There is not much information about the rigging of the *kentôshi* vessels, but bits and pieces can be culled from primary sources that give us some idea of the nature of the masts and sails. As discussed above, there are also a number of depictions dating from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries of *kentôshi* ships that can be consulted for analysis and speculation.

¹⁸⁸ These roughly corresponded to 8 PM: *shokô* 初更, 10 PM: *nikô* 二更, 12 AM: *sankô* 三更, 2 AM *yonkô* 四更, and 4 AM: *gokô* 五更.

Most evidence from the primary sources seems to indicate that the *kentôshi* ships had at least two masts. As discussed above, most of the *emakimono* depictions of these vessels, the description of the vessel in the Chinese work, *Xuan He Feng Shi Gaoli Tu Jing* 宣和奉使高麗図経, and the Song vessel recovered from an archaeological site in Quanzhou Prefecture, all tend to support this assumption (Ishii Kenji 1995:56).

Tôno Haruyuki writes that scholars have overlooked an important passage from Saichô's *Kenkairon* 顕戒論 that uses the term "cloth sails" 布帆 (Tôno 1994:2-3). This reference refers to the vessel that Saichô boarded in Mingzhou (Ningpo) for his return to Japan in 805. The passage states that:

上布帆於西風 (Tôno 1994:3-4).

We raised the cloth sail into the west wind.

Tôno offers this as evidence that the *kentôshi* vessels had sails made of cloth, even though this passage has been virtually ignored by scholars of the Tang missions (Tôno 1994:4). Tôno writes that, considering ancient examples of "cloth," or 布, the sailcloth 布帆 of this passage must have been made of hemp 麻布製 (Tôno 1994:4). He believes, however, that it is unlikely that the sails of these vessels were made entirely of hemp. He suggests they may have been made of a combination of hemp and wickerwork 網代 (あじろ). Ishii Kenji agrees that the ships made use of Chinese-style wickerwork sails 網代帆 (Ishii Kenji 1995:57).

As discussed above, however, the *emakimono* images of *kentôshi* ships show

sails made of bamboo. Bamboo was probably weaved together to form sails 笹帆. It would have been convenient to use these because they could be folded when not in use (Tôno 1994:2). However, the *emakimono* images are anachronistic. I am not aware of any concrete evidence that bamboo was used upon the vessels sent to and from Tang.

Finally, there is a passage in the *Chou Hai Tu Bian* (Jp. *Chûkaizuhon*) 籌海図編 that compares Japanese vessels with Chinese vessels of the Ming dynasty (Mori Katsumi 1981:56-7). It notes that the sails of Chinese vessels were placed off center of the masts, whereas the sails of the Japanese vessels were fixed to the center of the mast. The passage also states that the masts of the Japanese ships were taken down whenever opposing winds blew. The sailors on the vessels then relied on oars for propulsion.¹⁸⁹

2.7.2 Maritime Knowledge of the Seasonal Winds

Most scholars do not think highly of the maritime prowess of the Japanese. Sugiyama (Sugiyama 1995:45) asserts that the navigational skills of the *kentôshi* navigators were not good; they possessed limited knowledge of the currents and seasonal winds (Sugiyama 1995:49-50). Both Mozai Torao and Sudô Toshiichi concur that the Japanese sailors who manned the *kentôshi* vessels lacked sufficient knowledge regarding how to utilize the seasonal winds and how best to avoid typhoons (Mozai 1984:89; Mori Katsumi 1981:71).

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, scholars describe the Japanese of the time as a people who traversed coastlines and were not accustomed to sailing the open seas. Because of the proximity between the southern shores of the Korean peninsula and the northwestern part of Kyushu, travel across the straits was not limited to any particular time of the year (Iida 1980:14). Navigation across the straits occurred throughout the year, even though mariners may have been more likely to cross the Korean strait from the spring through the fall (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:19).

Some speculate that the kentôshi sailors had difficulty learning from their first few trips because their journeys were so infrequent (Iida 1980:37). Iida states that only the voyage of 702 utilized the seasonal winds for a southern-route journey. The winds, in general, could be difficult to predict because they seldom remained constant. When vessels departed the Gotô islands for the Chinese coast, they needed high pressure systems lying to the north to create favorable northeasterly winds. However, even when vessels left under these conditions, they often discovered two to three days later that the winds had shifted (Iida 1980:36). High pressure systems providing favorable winds invariably moved to the east, and as low pressure systems moved into the region, winds changed.

The best winds for sailing east from the continent toward Japan were created when high pressure systems existed to the south (Iida 1980:36). These systems moved in the same general direction as vessels sailing east, but their speed was

¹⁸⁹ There is also a record in the *Tosa nikki* 土佐日記 of a 12-day voyage on the Setonai Inland Sea by Ki no Tsurayuki in 934 where the sail was used for only one day and oars

much greater and so, once again, at mid-voyage, ships could find themselves at the mercy of rapidly approaching low pressure systems.

Seasonal pressure systems also affected sailing. Generally speaking, a high pressure system lies to the south over the Pacific Ocean in the summer, but in the winter a high pressure system will be situated over Siberia. The former tends to create southerly winds and the latter creates constant northerly winds. These high pressure systems are what create the “seasonal winds” discussed in Chapter 1.¹⁹⁰

With this in mind, a kentôshi vessel heading for the Liaodong peninsula along the Northern Route should ideally have left Japan in the summer. After arriving, it would need to await the northerly winds of the winter months before sailing south to the mouth of the Yangzi River.

On the return journey, the kentôshi vessel should once again await the southerly winds of the following summer in order to depart for the Liaodong peninsula. When winter came, the vessel ideally would use the northerly winds for a second time — this time for the return to Japan. This two year journey, while relatively safe, was less desirable than the Southern Route that was eventually adopted because, despite the dangers that the mariners faced along the Southern Route, the possibility of a journey eight days or less seemed far more attractive (Iida 1980:37).¹⁹¹

for the rest of the time (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:25).

¹⁹⁰ Of course, even seasonal winds are affected by the high and low pressure systems that move across the globe year round.

¹⁹¹ The best times for departures and returns for vessels following the Southern Route are different from those that followed the Northern Route. This is discussed below.

Tôno Haruyuki notes that scholars (especially Ishii Kenji) often cite the many ocean mishaps suffered by the kentôshi ships as evidence that the construction of the vessels and the navigational prowess of the crew never developed beyond elementary stages (Tôno 1994:7). They maintain that the kentôshi crews knew little or nothing about the seasonal winds and how these winds affected navigation of the seas between Japan and the continent. One of the passages they cite to show that the kentôshi lacked the necessary knowledge is a 776 entry from the *Shoku Nihongi*.¹⁹² The lines italicized and in bold print are of particular importance. This passage reads:

閏八月庚寅、先是、遣唐使船到肥前国松浦郡合蚕田浦、積月
餘日、不得信風。既入秋節、弥違水候。乃引還於博多大津、
奏上曰、*今既入於秋節、逆風日扇*。臣等望、待来年夏月、庶
得渡海。 (*Shoku-Nihongi*, Vol 5, 2000:16-19, see also Tôno
1994:7).

Entry date: Sixth day of the intercalary eighth month (of 776). The kentôshi vessels arrived at Aikota-no-ura port in Matsuura County, Hizen Province. Months and days passed with few days remaining but the proper (seasonal) winds (信風) did not blow.¹⁹³ Autumn arrived and the opportunity to sail had already passed. Thereupon, the mission (withdrew from Aikota-no-ura port and) returned

¹⁹²宝亀 7 年(776)閏 8 月

¹⁹³ These vessels were awaiting the northeasterly winds that usually blew during this time of the year.

to the Hakata port. Memorializing the emperor, (the Ambassador) said: "***We have entered the autumn season and [so] there are days of contrary winds.***"¹⁹⁴ Our wish is to wait until the summer months of next year and hope to attain an ocean crossing."

Scholars usually cite this passage as evidence that the *kentôshi* mistakenly believed that the intercalary eighth month was the worst time of the year to set sail. This month roughly corresponds to September on the solar calendar. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the autumn was a time of northeasterly winds and therefore a relatively safe time for the Japanese to set sail for the continent via the Southern Route. The passage, as translated above, indicates that the navigators of the time had little understanding of the seasons and the winds. Lacking knowledge of the seasonal winds, they sailed against them rather than with them—and in this case, were unable to forecast and await the autumn shift in wind direction (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:117). The Japanese mariners' unawareness of shifting winds and the resulting shipwrecks that occurred are made all the more striking when one considers how easily and safely the Southern Route was sailed by Song ships and other mainland vessels. Chinese crews—this argument runs—were familiar with the seasonal shifts in winds. The Japanese, however, were not (Japan Maritime Science Foundation 1977:117).

Tôno argues against the assumption that the Japanese were unaware that the

¹⁹⁴ This line in bold print is controversial. I translate it differently below and explain why.

fall winds were the best for a Southern Route voyage. He suggests, first of all, that the line above (in bold) be read differently. Tōno asserts that the two parts of the line in question should be read as independent and parallel facts. The passages 今既入於秋節 and 逆風日扇 have traditionally been read to mean that the former accounts for the latter; that is: “we have entered the autumn, *so* there are days of contrary winds.” However, Tōno suggests that these passages be understood as two exclusive reasons why the mission was being postponed. The ambassador requested postponement because “the autumn season had begun” *and* because “there were days of contrary winds.” If this reading is correct, it puts in doubt the assertion that the kentōshi were unaware of the impending autumn shift in the winds.¹⁹⁵

But if Japanese mariners did, in fact, know of the seasonal winds and that autumn was a favorable time for ships to sail for Tang, why did this mission ask for a postponement until the following year using the oncoming fall as an excuse? And more importantly, why were the kentōshi trying to sail along the Southern Route in the summer before the autumn winds began to blow? In fact, why did they often try to travel to China at inopportune times?

Tōno asserts that the missions had a very specific time of the year when they

¹⁹⁵ Another reason Tōno offers as proof that the kentōshi knew of the seasonal winds involves the envoys that crossed the Sea of Japan to and from Bohai. He asserts that the mariners leading these crossings through the Sea of Japan made use of the seasonal winds. The official envoys coming from Bohai to Japan generally made the sea crossing from the autumn to the winter and seemingly returned (usually together with Japanese delegations) between the spring and summer seasons (Tōno 1994:7). Tōno asserts that if the Japanese of the early part of the Nara period were aware of the weather patterns when they journeyed to and from Bohai, they must have been aware of their importance when they journeyed to and from Tang.

needed to arrive in China, and this took precedence over the safety of the voyages. He suggests the primary characteristic of the missions was to deliver tribute (Tôno 1994:9), which was particularly true from the 8th century and after when missions were sent on average once every 20 years (See also Tôno 1992:15). If so, the time to deliver this tribute to the Tang Court was the first day of the New Year. The kentôshi needed to offer their tribute during the New Year's celebrations. Of the nine cases when the arrival dates of the Japanese envoys at the Tang capital (either Chang'an or Loyang) are known, at least six were right at or before the New Year between the 10th and 12th months (Tôno 1994:8-9).

Realizing it could take approximately six months to reach the Tang capital even after making a landing on the continental shore, the kentôshi had no choice but to depart during the summer months (Tôno 1995:115). This means that, in this example from 776, the kentôshi ambassador used autumn as an excuse to postpone the mission, not because it was a time of bad winds, but instead because it was already too late in the year to sail and arrive at the Tang capital in time for the New Year celebrations. The kentôshi were awaiting favorable, albeit temporary, summer winds that never materialized. Eventually it became too late in the year to sail.

Why did the kentôshi not leave earlier and simply await the coming of the New Year in China? Spring would have been a relatively good time for the departure from Japan, but Tôno hypothesizes that expenses would have been too great for the Japanese envoys to sustain themselves in Tang for all the extra months while awaiting the New Year celebrations (Tôno 1994:10).

2.7.3 Navigation

Once kentôshi mariners left port for the continent, they were at the mercy of wind and wave. There were no tools for predicting changes in weather conditions; all the crew could do was head west and be on constant lookout for land. The job of lookout was one of the most important on the vessel.

There were, however, a number of maritime skills that a crew probably possessed. For example, crews recognized that land was near at hand. These signs included changes in the color of the seawater, the presence of driftwood and seaweed, and sightings of birds (Iida 1980:34). Depth was also measured, first through the use of stones, but later (at least by the time of Ennin's 838 voyage) with iron (Iida 1980:34).

The maritime skills of Japanese sailors must have improved over the course of the nearly three centuries of diplomatic exchange with the continent. Reischauer, for instance, writes that a shift from use of the lower Yangzi to the Mingzhou and southern coastal regions of China between the eighth and ninth centuries was due to increasing skills of those mariners navigating the East China Sea (Reischauer 1940:159-60).

2.7.4 Speed of Japanese Vessels

What was the speed of some of the Nara/Heian period vessels? In 749, the monk Gyôki 行基 is said to have sailed from Naniwa to Muro 室, a distance of 55 *li*,

in four days.¹⁹⁶ This averages to 14 *li* per day (Iida 1980:5). The *Engishiki* (*Institutes of the Engi Era*), completed in 927, also records some of the times traveled by sea. A journey from Dazaifu to Iki, for instance, took three days, and from there it took one more day to reach Tsushima (Iida 1980:6). This last leg of the journey was approximately 28 *li*. There is also discussion recorded in *Tosa Nikki* of the voyage of Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之, who in 934 boarded a vessel in Urado Bay 浦戸湾 and then sailed to Naniwa. The entire voyage took 45 days (Iida 1980:7).¹⁹⁷

It is impossible to accurately determine the speed at which the kentôshi sailed. However, Iida Yoshirô has estimated the time and distance for nine kentôshi voyages that lasted less than 10 days:

¹⁹⁶ It is said that the distance of a "li" 里 during the time of the Tang dynasty is equivalent to approximately 438 meters (Bi, p.30).

¹⁹⁷ There is more information on voyages and distances, etc in the last paragraph of section on p. 7.

**CHART THREE:
AVERAGE SPEED FOR NINE KENTOSHI VOYAGES**

Mission No.	Year	Departure	Arrival	Wind Direction	Distance (Nautical miles)	Time (hrs)	Speed (nautical mph)
4	659	SW tip of Korean peninsula	East of Ningpo 寧波		350	44	8.0
4	661	East of Ningpo	Cheju Island 濟州島	SW	310	39	8.0
10	754	Mouth of Yangzi R.	Okinawa		460	120	3.8
10	754	Okinawa	Yaku Island 屋久島	S	250	24	10.4
13	777	Fukue Island (?)	Mouth of Yangzi		390	192	2.0
13	778	Mouth of Yangzi R.	Nagashima 長島		460	204	2.3
13	778	Mouth of Yangzi R.	Satsuma Province 出水郡		460	192	2.4
13	778	Mouth of Yangzi R.	Karatsu 唐津		480	168	2.9
18	838	宇久島	Mouth of Yangzi	NE, SE	390	116	3.3

(Iida 1980:33)

The average speed of each voyage ranged from 2 to 10.4 nautical miles per hour (Iida 1980:33). This averages out to approximately 4.88 nautical miles per hour for all nine voyages. When all went well and weather conditions were favorable, a journey along the Southern Route took less than eight days (Iida 1980:36). In order to make the journey (by the Southern Route) in a full 5 days, a ship had to maintain a continuous average speed of 3.6 knots (Sugiyama 1995:50-1).

2.7.5 Tang Influence on Late Period Kentôshi Vessels

One can assume that the navigational skills of the Chinese merchants who came to Japan from the ninth century were quite advanced considering that they made the journey across the open seas apparently with fewer mishaps than the Japanese. Sudô points out that the Chinese seemed to know enough about the monsoon winds to arrive at Hakata during the seventh lunar month and return to the continent during the third, fourth, or eighth months, when the winds were most favorable for voyages in that direction (Mori Katsumi 1981:62).

Chinese merchants lowered hooks off the sides of their boats and gathered mud from the bottom in order to determine their locations. Records of the time indicate that the sea bottom close to Japan was gravelly, whereas the area in close proximity to the Chinese mainland was of a muddier texture (see Mori Katsumi 1981:62-3). Knowledgeable seamen also used the color of the water to determine location. The color of the ocean could be used to determine latitude. Deep waters to the north were olive green, those between the northern part of Korea and Hangzhou were indigo, while those to the south of Hangzhou were ultramarine (Schafer 1985:389). Of course the Chinese, like Japanese sailors, also periodically took measurements of depth in order to determine whether or not they were approaching shallow waters.¹⁹⁸

Sudô adheres to the standard belief that the kentôshi were oblivious to the seasonal winds — even during the later period when they were crossing the open

¹⁹⁸ Sailors of the Northern Song dynasty navigated using the sun and stars and they apparently used a device (指南針), which functioned like present-day compasses (羅針盤) during periods of cloudy skies (Mori Katsumi 1981:62).

sea. He assumes this changed, however, in the ninth century when Tang merchant vessels began coming to Japan and Tang people began constructing vessels in Japan. Above, I discussed the 842 example of a Chinese vessel constructed in three months by Li Churen 李处人 on Chikajima in Hizen (Mori Katsumi 1981:71).¹⁹⁹ Having the luck of favorable eastern winds, this ship arrived in China in only six days and nights (Toda 1999:324). And then the ship's passenger, Eun, returned to Japan (on Zhang Youxin's 張友信 vessel) in only three days and nights from Mingzhou to the Gotô islands.

These voyages have been cited as examples of the superior navigational skills of the Tang (and Silla) sailors (Toda 1999:324). But, the very fact that the Tang merchants were capable of constructing a quality ship at Naru-no-ura in just three months – a ship able to journey swiftly cross the East China sea – suggests that the Naru-no-ura port had available all the craftsmen, laborers, sailors, raw materials, and capital required by mariners to construct the most sophisticated crafts of the time (Toda 1999:324). The craftsmen, laborers, and sailors residing on the island were likely from Japan, Tang, and Silla.²⁰⁰ Skilled Tang and Silla individuals may, in fact, have come to several ports in the Gotô islands, Naru-no-ura serving as just one important example (Toda 1999:324-5).²⁰¹

We also know that in Matsuura County 松浦郡柏島 in Hizen Province in 861, Prince Shinnyô requested a Chinese interpreter, Zhang Zhixin 張支信, to construct

¹⁹⁹ Eun observed this ship being built in Naru-no-ura 那留浦 by Li (see chapter one) before boarding it and sailing for China.

²⁰⁰ I have translated these terms as follows: craftsmen *kôjin* 工人、laborers *ninpu* 人夫、and sailors *suifu* 水夫.

a ship (Shimizu 1957:15; Mori Katsumi 1981:71).²⁰² The ship was brought to Kôrokan the following year in 862. Shinnyô sailed to Tang in this vessel the same year (Mori Katsumi 1981:71). He boarded the vessel with at least 10 other priests and a total of 60 people, both secular and ecclesiastic. It is interesting to note the “international” makeup of the crew for the captain was Japanese and the helmsman 舵師, Zhang, Chinese. There were also at least two Chinese and two Japanese who served as crew members (Mori Katsumi 1981:71).

This vessel first sailed towards Ochika-jima after leaving Kôrokan (Shimizu 1957:15). This is the itinerary:

**CHART FOUR:
PRINCE SHINNYÔ'S VOYAGE TO TANG**

862:8:19 (Sept 16, 862): Arrived at Ochika Island
862:9:3 (Sept 30, 862): Set sail in NE wind
862:9:6 (Oct 3, 862): Favorable wind ceased; mountain-high waves; ship dropped anchor 500 feet right before daybreak; got favorable winds again and sun shone; anchor raised
862:9:7 (Oct 4, 862): At noon saw mountains in the distance by 2 PM; arrived at Yangshan mountain 楊扇山 in Mingzhou (Ningpo). At 4 PM, anchored at Shidan'ao 石丹奥 in Mingzhou (Shimizu 1957:16).
865 For return, had five day journey from Fuzhou 福州 to Chikajima (Shimizu 1957:20). ²⁰³

This voyage took place nearly 25 years after Ennin's voyage to Tang. The ship made good time to China (only four days), was able to wait out dangerous waves and unfavorable winds, and most importantly, was able to avoid mishaps such as those

²⁰¹ Some may, in fact, have settled on these islands (Toda 1999:324-5)

²⁰² Shimizu, Isamu. “Takaoka, Priest Imperial Prince Shinnyô - with a translation of the Zuda Shinnyô Nittô Ryakki” in *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Dec. 1957).

that struck the 777 voyage.

2.8 MISSION OF 777: THE SHIPS AND TECHNOLOGY

In this chapter I examined the structure of the kentôshi ships and the technological know-how and maritime skills of its crews. I shall close this discussion by again considering the mission of 777—the *Shoku Nihongi* account of which I translated at the end of Chapter One—in light of the mission's ships and the technological skill of its crews. This mission is well documented and thus appropriate for examination.

Departure for this mission was on 777:6:24 from the Gotô islands. As was the common practice during the Late Kentôshi Period, the Japanese sent four vessels to China.²⁰⁴ The mission arrived at Yangzhou on 7.3 in just under ten days, having traversed a distance of approximately 925 kilometers: 675 kilometers on the open sea and 250 kilometers up river (Mozai 1984:80, 89). As seen on Chart 3 above, the average speed of this journey across the open sea was 2 nautical miles per hour, the slowest of the nine kentôshi voyages documented in the chart.

For its return to Japan, the mission's ships left Changzhen Sub-Prefecture of Suzhou 蘇州常耽県 in the eleventh and twelfth months of the following year, sailing via the Southern Route toward Japan (Iida 1980:26; Shimizu 1977:2).²⁰⁵ In light of the seasonal winds, a departure during this time of the year seems odd. Winds were

²⁰³ Prince Shinnyô was not a part of the return journey. In fact, he was lost after attempting to reach India from China.

²⁰⁴ The Official Envoy boarded the first ship and the Vice-envoy boarded the second, while the third and fourth vessels carried the *hangan* 判官 (Mori Katsumi 1981:66).

still blowing from the north and northeast. But considering that the mission had already been in China for approximately a year and a half, the embassy may have found waiting until the following year unacceptable. At any rate, it was during this return as winter approached that ships number 1 and 2 of the mission met with disaster.

On the fourth day of the voyage, the mission ran into a heavy rainstorm. At 1800 hours 初更時 on that day, the side planks of Ship Number One, which carried Iwane, began to break open and seawater filled the vessel. The deck washed away and all of the passengers on board became drenched while the cargo on the ship became waterlogged (Iida 1980:26). We learn from these events that the ship was of composite (*kôzôsen*) construction. It must have been of impressive size, for despite losing its deck and taking on water, it remained afloat.

Three days later, at 0500 hours 五更 on the eighth day of the twelfth month, the mast fell and the ship broke into two (three?) parts.²⁰⁶ As described above, it was at this time that thirty-eight Japanese, including Ono no Iwane 小野岩根, and twenty-five Chinese (another source says 35), including the envoy from Tang, Zhao Baoying 趙宝英, were lost at sea (Shimizu 1977:2; Iida 1980:26).

Forty-one people clung to the stern. Nude and chilled, these forty-one apparently gathered and huddled together at the spot where the rudder had been torn loose. They had neither food nor water for six days. Once again we find that

²⁰⁵ Iida Yoshirô writes that ship numbers 1 and 2 left the port of Changshu 常熟 on the second day of the twelfth month (Iida 1980:26).

the ship was equipped with at least one rudder, but even after it had fallen away and after the deck had come off, the remnants of the vessel was sturdy and solid enough to keep more than forty people from drowning. At approximately 2200 hours on the tenth day of the twelfth month, this part of the vessel washed ashore at Nagashima 長嶋 in Kagoshima Prefecture (Iida 1980:26). A *junkôzo* vessel, with its parts secured with *maihada* or other organic materials, such as wisteria, would never have survived several days of pounding by the seas after initial damage in a storm.

The bow of this same vessel served as a life saver as well, this time for 56 people. This section of the ship washed ashore at Koshiki Island 甌島. Coincidentally, this bow and Ship Number Two, which arrived at Satsuma, made landfall on the very same day that the stern did, that is, the tenth day of the twelfth month (Iida 1980:26).²⁰⁷

The fact the bow and the stern remained afloat and eventually washed ashore with a considerable number of survivors attests to both the great size of the vessel and the effectiveness of its bulkheads (Shimizu 1977:2-4). Ishii Kenji believes that the way in which the ship broke apart suggests that it consisted of at least three separate parts or blocks, with each part separated by a bulkhead. This structure is reminiscent of the Chinese junks built with bulkheads, which divided the vessels

²⁰⁶ In Chapter One I translated this to mean “two parts,” indeed that appears to be the wording of the *Shoku Nihongi* account. However, at least one source says that the first vessel carrying Iwane broke into at least three parts.

²⁰⁷ These sources contradict one another. This other source says that “the bow (へきき) of this ship washed ashore at Hizen with 41 survivors clinging to it while part of the stern (船尾) washed ashore at Satsuma” (Mozai 1984:90).

into three parts (discussed above).

Ship Number Three first left from Hailing Sub-prefecture 海陵県 (the northern shore of the mouth of the Yangzi River) on the seventh day of the 11th month²⁰⁸ but 3 days later ran into opposing winds. Repairs were carried out at Zuozhou Prefecture 坐州 (Iida 1980:26-7) and then, after remaining afloat in one place for a while, the vessel began to sail once again on the 13th day of the 11th month. On the 20th day of the eleventh month, it landed at Karatsu 唐津, a coastal town and bay in Kyushu between Dazaifu and Hiradô Island (Iida 1980:27).

Ship Number Four departed from Yancheng 塩城, and landed at Cheju Island 濟州島, where the crew were captured by the islanders. Eventually more than 40 escaped and sailed away, landing at Koshiki Island 甌島 (where the bow of Ship Number One washed ashore) on the seventh day of the 12th month.

As noted above, Ship Number Two and the two parts of Ship Number One arrived on the same day, while Ship Number Four arrived just three days prior to this.²⁰⁹ After the initial destruction of Ship Number One by the storm, the winds must have calmed somewhat because the parts of the ship that had broken apart moved to the northeast along the Kuroshio Current. This explains both parts of the vessel arriving on the shores of Kyushu on the same day.

²⁰⁸ One text says “10th” month, but I believe this to be a typo in the Japanese text.

²⁰⁹ This is only one of a number of ships that met with disaster, including the vessel that was capsized by the winds offshore of Satsuma’s Takejima (竹島) (Mozai 1984:90). This Takejima shipwreck occurred in 654.7 during the return voyage for the mission that left on 653.5 (see Chart 1 above). The ship that capsized was carrying more than 120 people including the envoy, Takada no Nemaro (高田根麻呂). There were only five survivors (Mozai 1984:90).

CHAPTER 3

THE KENTÔSHI AND OFFICIAL TRADE WITH THE CONTINENT

Three reasons are commonly given to explain why the Japanese dispatched envoys to Tang China: (1) to assimilate the advanced civilization, culture, and systems of Tang; (2) to raise Japan's diplomatic position in the Tang Court while simultaneously obtaining reports regarding changes in East Asian affairs; and finally, (3) to carry out trade under the control of the state (see Tajima 2000:316). I address the third point here; for while it is commonly acknowledged that the kentôshi imported scholarship, technology, and skills to Japan, their role in the East Asian maritime trade network has received considerably less attention from Western scholars.

Japanese historians define the exchanges that took place between Japan and China during the time of Tang with different terminology, suggesting varied understandings of the exact nature of the maritime exchanges of the seventh through the ninth centuries. Historians such as Mori Katsumi, for example, refer to the trade between the Courts as "tributary" 朝貢貿易 (Mori 1955:107). Kimiya Yasuhiko, on the other hand, describes this trade and all trade involving the members of the missions as "government trade" 官業的貿易, suggesting, I assume, a more equitable status among trading partners (Kimiya 1955:118). Like Kimiya, most historians tend to consider all the trading activities of the kentôshi to be

government related – both the public exchange of those goods brought to the Tang Court as gifts for the Tang emperor, and the more private exchanges of personal items brought by the many individual members of the missions.

In contrast to the official and individual exchanges in which the *kentôshi* members were involved, the ninth century saw ever-increasing activity by private merchants. Historians categorize merchants according to national origin (e.g., “Chinese traders” 支那貿易商人 (see Akiyama 1939:208-9)) or in general terms such as *minkan shônin* 民間商人 or “private traders” (see Ishii Masatoshi 1994:341)). These merchants did not receive official recognition to trade on behalf of their governments.

As a result of my own examination of the East Asian trade network, I conclude that overall trade between Japan and the continent during the time of the Tang Dynasty (a period that, in Japan, comprised the late Asuka, Nara, and early Heian periods) should be classified as three varieties: (1) “imperial trade,” which was primarily tributary in nature and conducted through envoys dispatched through official government channels; (2) “elite trade,” which was often concurrent with imperial trade and conducted by the individual members of official diplomatic missions through official channels or agencies such as the Diankeshu Office 典客署²¹⁰ in Tang China and the Treasury Ministry and the Palace Storehouse Bureau in Japan; and finally, (3) what I would describe as “private trade,” or trade carried out

²¹⁰ This office was a government agency under the Honglu Office 鴻臚寺, which was in charge of foreign visitors entering the capital. Honglu was also in charge of determining the value of the goods that foreigners brought into Tang (Sakayori 2001).

by merchants with representatives of the ruling classes; i.e., the wealthy and powerful elites, or at times the representatives of the government. This last type of trade was not conducted under the auspices of diplomatic missions.

There was considerable overlap among these three categories of exchange. For example, when a *kentôshi* mission arrived in the Tang capital bearing imperial gifts for the Tang emperor from the Japanese emperor, the very same members of this mission conducted elite exchange for personal benefit. In China, this exchange was supervised by the Diankeshu Office, and in Japan it was supervised by the Treasury Ministry and the Palace Storehouse Bureau. And during the ninth century, Tang and Silla merchants rather than diplomats came to Japan seeking the exchange of goods. The Japanese government became involved, however, as it and wealthy families and institutions, such as *shôen* and temple complexes, sent representatives to meet with these traders to, in the case of the former, exert control (over the exchange), and in the case of the latter, seek a profitable exchange.

We thus find that by the ninth century, wealthy Japanese families and institutions were trading directly with continental merchants. No longer was exchange conducted on behalf of the state. The elite became involved in this trade by at least the beginning of the Heian period, when the *ritsuryô* system became relaxed. It has been suggested that, as local governments fell into decline, official residences like those at Dazaifu degenerated, forcing local officials to turn to

“Honglu,” read as “Kôro” in Japanese, is the origin for the name of the “Kôrokan” 鴻臚館 facilities discussed.

commerce.²¹¹ The Fujiwara, accustomed to rich lives as *shôen* proprietors, needed to obtain goods from China, such as silk fabrics, spices, and medicinal items, in order to sustain their lifestyles (Akiyama 1934:1230).²¹²

Despite overlaps among imperial, elite, and private trade during the ninth century, historians have assumed that private trade developed only after the *kentôshi* missions initiated exchange between Japan and the continent. They assert that the imperial exchange between governments, as well as the elite exchange conducted by the Japanese mission members who went to China, fueled a desire for continental goods among the Asuka and Nara elites of Japan. By the beginning of the Heian period, however, the official *kentôshi* missions failed to satisfy an ever-increasing desire for mainland goods. In response, private merchant trade developed. This scenario implies that the Japanese emperor's missions to Tang and the Tang emperor's reciprocation of gifts to the Japanese Court paved the way for and stimulated the East Asian trade network of the ninth century.

But is this a fair assumption? This hypothesis ignores the fact that private exchanges with the continent, on some level at least, dates back to the beginning of the Yayoi period. Was trade between Japan and the continent truly minimal or non-existent before the *kentôshi* missions began? How essential were these missions for spawning material exchange between the peoples of Japan and Tang?

Documents do evidence a burgeoning private trade from the ninth century onwards and the primary sources do not indicate that there was an extensive

²¹¹ Akiyama 秋山謙蔵“日唐貿易の発展と大宰府の変遷（一）”in *Shigaku Zasshi* 史学雑誌, 第45編, No. 9 & 10 (Akiyama 1934:1230, see also 1063-1076).

exchange between the peoples of the continent and the Japanese archipelago before this time. But historians rely mainly on historical texts for their understandings of the past, and these texts record major government endeavors, such as the *kentôshi* missions and exchanges between the Japanese and Tang Courts. Archaeological data, on the other hand, depicts an impressive exchange between Japan and the mainland that became more extensive as the first millennium AD progressed. Addressed in Chapter 5, this data indicate that extensive maritime trade did occur independent of the *kentôshi* missions; it preceded and coincided with the missions. Indeed, by the Asuka period, Japan had adopted Chinese writing and various mainland technologies, and cultural goods from the mainland had become ubiquitous, even before the first missions to Sui/Tang were sent. As evidence of this, *kofun* tombs have yielded such mainland artifacts as weapons, armor, ceramics, and bronze decorative items. Strict reliance on written sources alone has led scholars to interpret the activity of the *kentôshi* as the primary catalyst that initiated large-scale maritime exchange from the ninth century. With this study, I wish to reexamine this interpretation.

In this chapter, I focus primarily on the first two types of *kentôshi* exchange, the “imperial” and “elite” trade. In the next chapter I will focus more on “private” exchange and its relationship to the former two.

3.1 THE KENTÔSHI MISSIONS: BACKGROUND

There is disagreement among scholars concerning the factors that constituted

²¹² Silk fabrics: 絹織物, spices: 香料, medicinal items: 藥品.

a kentôshi mission, so the actual number of embassies sent to serve as political and cultural representatives to Tang China has been a subject of contention. Ishii Masatoshi, in “*Kentôshi* Questions and Answers” in *Kentôshi Period Japan and China*,²¹³ states that at least eighteen Tang missions were indisputably authorized during the approximately 260 year period from 630 to 894 (Ishii Masatoshi 1981:260), but he adds that historical records suggest at least one additional kentôshi appointment was made in ca 746, bringing the total to nineteen.²¹⁴ Of these nineteen, four were cancelled before departure and so only fifteen actually completed the journey to Tang. But even among these fifteen, there is disagreement concerning whether all were “true” kentôshi missions. Two of the fifteen involved Japanese accompanying Tang envoys on their journeys back to Tang from Japan, and another mission comprised Japanese traveling to Tang in order to retrieve members of a previous kentôshi mission who had been stranded and were unable to return. Terminology in the primary sources leads to confusion as well. In addition to the term kentôshi 遣唐使, one finds references to *nishi no michi no tsukai* 西海使, *nittôshi* 入唐使, *heitôshi* へい唐使, and *chôkôshi* 朝貢使. All of these terms referred to envoys sent to Tang China, but were they somehow differentiated by writers of the time?²¹⁵

Because of differing terminology and questions regarding whether some

²¹³ Ishii Masatoshi, “Kentôshi: Questions and Answers” “遣唐使 Q&A” in *Japan and China of the Kentôshi Period* 遣唐使時代の日本と中国 (1981).

²¹⁴ In *Kentôshi and Shôsô-in* 遣唐使と正倉院, Ishii uses the numbering system discussed below; i.e., he writes that there were twenty missions that were commissioned and sixteen that actually crossed the sea (Ishii 1986A:35).

²¹⁵ At least one of the terms, *nittôshi*, was also used to refer to merchants sent to Tang in the late ninth century to trade on behalf of Fujiwara aristocrats (see Chapter 4).

missions met official criteria as kentôshi – including most importantly, the authorization to travel to the Tang Court to serve as tributary representatives of Japan – some scholars accordingly number the kentôshi missions at twelve or thirteen. Some scholars and the totals they acknowledge include Fujiie Reinosuke 藤家禮之助 at twelve, Wu Anliao 武安隆 at thirteen, Mori Katsumi at eighteen, and Kimiya Yasuhiko at nineteen (Wang 1998:25-6).

In addition, within the last two decades, an increasing number of scholars have begun to assert that a minimum of twenty kentôshi missions, rather than nineteen, should receive consideration (Tôno1995:84). This adjusted figure includes a mission sent in 667, which was omitted from the nineteen identified above because it was sent to accompany the Tang envoy, Sima Fating 司馬法聰, and because it traveled only as far as Paekche.²¹⁶ *Chinese Culture Seen by the Kentôshi*²¹⁷ (Tôno 1995:141), lists all twenty journeys, initiated or simply planned, by number and date of authorization and/or departure. They are:

²¹⁶ The nineteen above are recognized by all but Kimiya, who chooses not to recognize the mission of 746.

²¹⁷ 「遣唐使が見た中国文化」、奈良県立？原考古学研究所附属博物館、1995.

CHART FIVE:
KENTÔSHI MISSIONS²¹⁸

Mission number	Date of Departure	Number of Ships	Notes
1	630 AD	Unknown	
2	653	One, and one more later in 7 th month of same year.	
3	654	Two ships	
4	659	Two ships	Entered Tang capital in 659, intercalary 10 th month.
5	665	Unknown	Mission accompanied the Tang envoy, Liu Degao 劉德高, back to China.
6	667	Unknown	Mission (not counted by Ishii?) sent to accompany the Tang envoy as far as Paekche.
(7)	669	---	Cancelled or, at very least, details unknown.
----- <i>Period when Silla and Japan mutually send many envoys</i> -----			
8	702	Unknown	Entered Chang'an in the 10th month of 702 – first confirmed (some of above are questioned) trip by the Southern Route (南路)...this is first mission sent after Silla unified the Korean peninsula in 676.
9	717	Four ships	Entered the capital in 717, 10th month.

²¹⁸ Most of this chart is based on: 「遣唐使が見た中国文化」、奈良県立? 原考古学研究所付属博物館、(Tôno 1995:141).

10	733	Four ships	Entered capital in 734, maybe on New Year's? ²¹⁹
(11)	746 (Date of appointment, but mission cancelled and never sailed)	---	This one disputed by some historians; not counted by Kimiya, Mori, Bu, or Fujiie.
12	752	Four ships	Entered capital in 752, 12th month or earlier. During return, Ship No.1 with Ambassador Fujiwara Kiyokawa ²²⁰ aboard, shipwrecked in Annan. Kiyokawa returned to Tang, but not to Japan. Ganjin came back to Japan with this mission on different ship.
13	759	One ship	Used the Bohai route. Gao Yuandu 高元度 led mission to retrieve Fujiwara Kiyokawa.
(14)	761	Four ships planned	Cancelled due to ship damage.
(15)	762	Two ships planned	Cancelled in the 7 th month due to lack of favorable winds and waves.
16	777	Four ships	Entered capital in 778 on New Year's day.
17	779	Two ships	Entered capital in 2nd month of 780.
18	803/804 (7 th month)	Four ships	Entered capital in 804, 12th month. Saikyô and Kûkai were part of this mission.
19	836 (7 th month)/ second try 837 (7 th month)/ third try on 838 (6 th month)	Four ships	Entered capital in 838, 12th month. Mission used 9 Silla ships to return home, Ship No.2 lost in the south seas.

²¹⁹ However, the *Cefu Yuan'gui* 冊府元龜, which records two of the tribute items offered to the Tang Court by this mission (see below), gives the date of the Imperial audience as the fourth month of that year (see Tôno 1985:153).

²²⁰ Fujiwara no Kiyokawa 藤原清河

(20)	894	---	Cancelled after letter from Sugawara Michizane.
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Not all of these twenty missions are relevant to this study. Missions 7, 11, 14, 15, and 20 (in parentheses and bold font above) were either cancelled outright or never set sail. Unlike most Japanese scholars, I prefer not to include these five missions in the list, but rather to footnote them as planned missions. However, because they are added to the list of total missions by most Japanese scholars, I have included them here as well. The remaining fifteen are addressed in this treatise.

The scale of the missions changed over the centuries. Some scholars, such as Wang Yong, divide the time of the *kentôshi* into two periods: an Early Period during the seventh century (until the mission of 669), when generally two ships at a time were sent to Tang, and a Late Period dating from the beginning of the eighth century (702) when four ships per mission became commonplace (Wang 1998, p.27). Ishii Masatoshi accepts a similar periodization for the *kentôshi* in “Kentôshi: Questions and Answers” (Ishii Masatoshi 1981).²²¹ His Early Period, however, can be distinguished from a Later Period because of differences in the primary objectives of the missions, rather than in the number of ships. The Early Period coincided with a time when the Korean peninsula was embroiled in disorder and upheavals and so the primary purpose of the embassies was probably political. The

²²¹ “Kentôshi: Questions and Answers” “遣唐使 Q&A” is in 「遣唐使時代の日本と中国」(Ishii Masatoshi 1981).

Japanese were concerned about the turmoil on the peninsula and so were desirous of peaceful relations with the most powerful and influential force on the continent, i.e., Tang China. The Later Period, on the other hand, marked a time when East Asian international affairs had stabilized and the importation of culture became a more prominent goal (Ishii Masatoshi 1981:260-1).

Other scholars divide the *kentôshi* missions according to scale or route taken, resulting in three distinct periods rather than two. This method of periodization, was introduced in Chapter 1, and comprised an Early period, 630-669; a Middle period, 702-759; and then a Late period, 777-838. In Chapter One I discussed that the three periods are usually differentiated by the route the *kentôshi* chose to China. This is not the only way in which they differed, however. Mozai Torao, for example, adopts this three-part periodization and notes that the Early period saw use of either one or two vessels while the missions of both the Middle and Late periods generally employed four. His periodization also highlights the numbers of people sent on missions. Those of the Middle period involved as many as 500 individuals, while those of the Late period were even larger in scale, including as many as 650 people (Mozai 1987:28). But generally, Mozai, Mori Katsumi, and other scholars differentiate among *kentôshi* missions by referring to the various maritime routes taken. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Early period (of the 3-part periodization) involved vessels sailing along the Northern Route or “Silla Route” to the Chinese coast, the Middle period was the time vessels made use of the Southern Island Route, and the Late period encompassed missions following the Southern Route (see, for example, Mozai 1987:29-31 and Mori 1955:39-52).

Now I would like to consider those fifteen missions that actually reached Tang China. According to the data provided in *Kyushu Cultural Symposium: Resurrecting Kôrokan Today*²²² (Yanagida et al, 1988:71-73), the fifteen missions that dispatched ships to Tang did so on at least eighteen different dates. As discussed above, departures involved anywhere from one to four ships. Ships did not always depart at the same time and thus single missions sometimes had multiple departures and returns. These departures and subsequent returns occurred in the following years:

**CHART SIX:
DATES OF DEPARTURES AND RETURNS²²³**

Mission No.*	Departures	Returns
1	630	632:8
2	653	654:7
3	654	655
4	659:8	661:5 (Ship #2)
5	665 (to return Tang envoy)	667:11
6	667 (to return Tang envoy, 法聰, as far as Paekche)	668
8	702:6	704:7 and 707:3
9	717	718:10 (Dazaifu)
10	733	734:11 (Ship #1), 736:5 (Ship #2), and 739 (Ship #3)
12	752	753:12 (Ship #3 landed at 益久島), 754 (Ship #2 lands at Satsuma, possibly in the 1 st month), and 754:4 (Ship #2 also landed at Satsuma) [Ship #1 with Fujiwara Kiyokawa, shipwrecked in Annan, Kiyokawa returned to Tang capital, but not Japan].
13	759 (journey to pick up previous envoy, Fujiwara Kiyokawa)	761:8 (Dazaifu)
16	777:6	Four ships returned, but with at least five separate

²²² 「九州文化シンポジウム： いま、鴻ろ館がよみがえる」.

²²³ This chart is based on information provided in Yanagida et al, (1988:71-73) and Tôno (1999:28-29).

		arrival sites because one vessel broke apart in mid-voyage and the two parts arrived separately. These dates were: 778:10 (Ship #3), 778:11 (Ship #4), 778:11 (Ship #2), 778:11 (the stern of Ship #1), and 778:11 (the bow of Ship #1)
17	779 (to return Tang envoy, 孫興進)	781
18	803 and 804:7 (After the 803 departure, the ships were damaged by a typhoon and forced to return for repairs. Second departure was in 804 (see Mozai in 遣唐使研究と史料, p.18))	805:6:8 (Ship #1), 805:6:17 (Ship #2), and 806 (Dazaifu) (Ship #4?, there is some doubt as to the fate of this vessel) [Before reaching Tang, Ship #3 shipwrecked in Hizen, Matsuura-gun].
19	836:7, 837:7, and 838:6 (It took three attempts before this mission was able to proceed to Tang (see Mozai in 遣唐使研究と史料, p.18))	839:8, 839:10, 840:4, and 840:10 (At least two ships to Dazaifu; nine Silla vessels were hired for the return as well).

* Mission numbers correspond to those provided in Chart 5.

The exact number of kentôshi ships sent out from Japan is unknown. Primary sources do not record the number of ships that sailed on the missions of 630, 665, 667, or 702, although it seems safe to assume that at least two vessels set sail on each of these occasions. A total of thirty-three ships departed as part of the other eleven missions not cancelled (see Chart 5 for number of vessels per mission). This means that as many as forty kentôshi ships departed from Japan between 630, the date of the first Tang mission, and 838, when the last mission departed.

Many of these forty vessels never made the return voyage. It is evident that many of the ships constructed in Japan never remained seaworthy long enough for the journey home. Mission members often had to secure replacement vessels for

originals damaged during the initial voyages and as many as half never returned. There were approximately thirty-five vessels used by the kentôshi for their returns from the continent, but this included at least nine Silla vessels hired for the return of the 838 mission.²²⁴ Shipwrecks were an unnerving aspect of the kentôshi experience. Not only were the members of the missions asked to invest a great deal of time (the entire roundtrip to China and back often took two or more years), the danger of mishaps at sea undoubtedly weighed heavily on their minds.

3.2 THE KENTÔSHI AND IMPERIAL TRADE

Tributary trade in China is well documented in historical texts. Official envoys from countries surrounding Tang brought special goods from their lands and offered them to the Tang Court in the names of their rulers. The Tang Court, in turn, reciprocated with gifts. The kentôshi were of course involved in this exchange as well. How do historians evaluate this exchange of goods? Were the items carried to Tang by the representatives of the Japanese government meant as tributary offerings or simply as gifts presented to the Tang emperor from the ruler of a neighboring country?

Tôno Haruyuki writes that, in their studies of Tang-Japan historical relations, such noted scholars as Kimiya Yasuhiko, Mori Katsumi, and Nishijima Sadao have suggested that Japan always asserted its equality in its dealings with Tang and that the Tang tacitly accepted this assertion (Tôno 1995:115). In light of recent studies, however, Tôno embraces a new concept concerning the nature of the

²²⁴ See Chart 5 above. This mission originally set sail in 836 but had to return after two

kentôshi missions. He suggests that, from at least the beginning of the eighth century, the missions to Tang were clearly tributary. They were even scheduled systematically, with one mission being sent approximately every twenty years. And as discussed in Chapter 1, the kentôshi wanted to present their tribute during the New Year's celebrations, the traditional time for paying homage to the Tang emperor. The tributary nature of the kentôshi is evidenced by the summer departures during less-than-favorable weather conditions that resulted in many maritime disasters. The envoys had no choice but to depart during the summer months if they were to arrive at the Tang capital in time for the celebrations of the New Year (Tôno 1995:115). These departures lend credence to the assertion that the kentôshi missions' primary function was to deliver tribute to the Tang Court.

Regardless of whether the items carried by the kentôshi were considered by their bearers as tribute or gifts, they must have represented the finest that Japan had to offer. What were the contents of these tributary presentations? Amber (*kohaku* 琥珀) and agate (*menô* 瑪瑙) are mentioned in several primary sources as having been carried to Tang by the kentôshi. Not much else is recorded, however, except for the items included in a single valuable list in the thirtieth book of the *Engishiki* 延喜式.²²⁵ The list describes in detail both the type and quantity of gifts that were presented to a Tang envoy in Japan to take back to Tang and bestow upon the Chinese emperor.²²⁶

failed attempts before finally departing for Tang in 838.

²²⁵ *Engishiki*, Vol 30 「延喜大藏省式」 // 「延喜式」 卷 30 大藏省の部.

²²⁶ This list is reproduced in Ishii's "遣唐使 Q&A" in [「遣唐使時代の日本と中国」 (Ishii Masatoshi 1981:267) and in 「九州文化シンポジウム: いま、鴻ろ館がよみがえる」]

The *Engishiki* was a collection of Court regulations compiled in the tenth century. Some of these regulations regard palace ceremonies and audiences with officials. The *Engishiki* also provides the names and quantity of items given to the sovereigns of Tang, Silla, and Bohai. The *Engishiki* does not specifically note that these were the goods carried by the kentôshi to the Tang Court, but because the Tang emperor would never have journeyed to Japan, it is logical to conclude that this does indeed represent the products the kentôshi transported.

This record of gifts included:

**CHART SEVEN:
TRIBUTARY ITEMS OFFERED TO TANG EMPEROR²²⁷**

GIFTS / QUANTITY	EXPLANATION AND NOTES ²²⁸
Primary list (国信) ²²⁹	Primary list
Silver: 500 taels (Chinese ounces ²³⁰) 銀大500兩	Most probably mined in Tsushima.
" <i>Suishoku</i> " <i>ashiginu</i> silk fabric: 200	Not clear what <i>suishoku</i> refers to, but

(Yanagida et al, 1988:86-7).

²²⁷ The original *Engishiki* text (「延喜式」巻3 0 大藏省の部) can be found in *Kokushi Taikēi* 「国史大系」延喜式 後編 10, (1953:738).

²²⁸ Notes are based on commentaries by Tôno Haruyuki in *Kentôshi Ships* (1999:119-22) and "Bunka no Yôsô" in *Considering Ancient Nara* (1985:121-65).

²²⁹ The terms 国信 and 別貢 are debated by some, but Tôno believes that they refer to two distinct groups of tributary goods that were to be offered. The former was always present to the Tang Court while the latter was offered subject to occasion. In the case of the mission of 777, the goods of both the 国信 and 別貢 were offered to the Tang emperor (see Tôno 1999:117-9).

²³⁰ I have calculated that, at the time in question, one Chinese ounce was approximately 37.3 grams.

²³¹ During the Tang dynasty, one *hiki* (疋 or 匹) (*pi* in Chinese), which I call "short bolt," was approximately 12.44 meters (40.45 feet) long (today a *hiki* is measured at 20 meters), while one *tan* (端 or 反) (*duan* in Chinese), which I have transcribed as "long bolt," was approximately 15.55 meters (51 feet).

I have calculated these numbers using a conversion table provided in *Meikai Chinese-Japanese Dictionary* 明解漢和辞典 and based on the fact that, during the Tang dynasty, one *shaku* 尺 was equivalent to 31.1 centimeters. (There are 10 *shaku* in 1

short bolts ²³¹ 水織絶200疋	<i>ashiginu</i> 絶 was a coarse silk fabric.
<i>Mino-no-ashiginu</i> silk: 200 short bolts 美濃絶200疋	Produced in Mino province 美濃国 (Gifu Prefecture), hence the name.
<i>Hoso</i> silk: 300 short bolts 細絶300疋	Closely woven high quality silk.
<i>Ki-no-ashiginu</i> silk: 300 short bolts 黄絶300疋	Coarse gold silk.
<i>Ki-no-ito</i> silk thread: 500 bundles 黄糸500絢	Gold silk thread.
<i>Hosotsumi-no-wata</i> silk: 1000 parcels ²³² 細屯綿1000屯	A higher quality of the <i>tsumi-no-wata</i> silk floss below.
Secondary list (別貢) ²³³	Secondary list
<i>Saihaku</i> silk: 200 short bolts 綵帛200疋	Probably refers to dyed <i>hiraori</i> , or plain-weave silk.
<i>Tatami-wata</i> silk: 200 leaves 畳綿200帖	A plain thick silk floss, which was produced in Etchû province 越中国 (Toyama Prefecture)
<i>Tsumi-no-wata</i> silk: 200 parcels 屯綿200屯	A thick silk floss.
<i>Chofu-no-nuno</i> hemp cloth: 30 long bolts (one <i>tan</i> roll is half the length of a <i>hiki</i> roll (see Note 21)) 紵布30端	A relatively commonplace, coarse hemp, obtained from a plant in the nettle family. ²³⁴
<i>Maguda-no-nuno</i> ²³⁵ hemp cloth: 100	A high quality hemp, obtained from a

sun 寸, and 4 *sun* in 1 *hiki*, giving us the figure of 12.44 meters per one *hiki*. Likewise, with 5 *sun* in one *tan*, a single *tan* works out to be 15.55 meters.) I confirmed my figures after consulting Edwin Reischauer. Reischauer, in turn, had consulted work by Robert Des Rotours (Des Rotours, 1947-48, p.471), who determined that one *hiki* was almost 40 feet and *tan* was almost 50 feet, thus only inches off my own calculations. Charlotte von Verschuer provides similar figures, but with the lengths for *hiki* and *tan* almost reversed. She writes that a *hiki* was 15 meters long and a *tan* was 13 meters. I assume this may be a misprint. Or it may be due to the fact that in modern Japanese, one *hiki* is longer than one *tan* (20 m for the former and 10.6 m for the latter). Verschuer, however, provides useful information regarding the widths of these bolts. She writes that both the *hiki* and *tan* bolts were between 63 and 70 centimeter wide (von Verschuer, 1985, p.529).

²³² I have calculated that one parcel weighed approximately 223.8 grams.

²³³ Ibid. (Note #228 above.)

²³⁴ See #1366 of *Matthew's Chinese English Dictionary* and p. 639 of *Meikai Kanwa* (*Meikai Chinese Japanese Dictionary*). It means "coarse hemp."

²³⁵ This is rendered as *môda-no-nuno* in "Bunka no Yôsô," *Kodai o kangaeru Nara* (Tôno 1985:121-165).

long bolts 望陔布100端	plant in the nettle family, which was named after Maguda district in Kazusa Province (Chiba Prefecture), where it was produced.
<i>Yû</i> textile: 100 leaves 木絹 ²³⁶ 100帖 ²³⁷	A textile with a long history in Japan. Fiber material was obtained by finely shredding the bark of trees (e.g., the paper mulberry). This textile was produced in Japan from as far north as present-day Chiba Prefecture to as far south as Kumamoto Prefecture.
<i>Shukka-suishô</i> crystal lens: 10 lenses ²³⁸ 出火水精10顆 ²³⁹	A lens, made from clear crystal that was used to start fire.
Agate: 10 stones 瑪瑙10顆	Probably was obtained in the Hokuriku and San'in regions of Japan.
<i>Shukka-tetsu</i> metal plates: 10 plates 出火鉄10具	This was a triangular steel (<i>hagane</i>) plate upon which a flint was struck in order to start a fire.
<i>Tsubaki abura</i> (camellia oil): 6 Chinese pecks 海右榴油6斗 ²⁴⁰	<i>Tsubaki abura</i> , or camellia oil, was obtained from the seeds of the camellia tree. It was sent to the Japanese capital from regions such as Tottori and Iki island. It was also exported to Bohai. ²⁴¹
<i>Amazura-no-shiru</i> sap: 6 Chinese pecks 甘葛汁6斗	Sap obtained from the stalks and leaves of gourds or ivy. It was used as a sweetener for food.
<i>Koshiabura</i> resin: 4 Chinese pecks 金漆4斗	This resin was derived from the aralia tree. It was used to protect metal from rust and was essential when producing metal weapons. Documents indicate that it was produced in regions such as present-day Gifu and Kagawa Prefectures and on Tsushima island.
Etc.	

²³⁶ This is different from *momen*, which is written with the same Chinese characters (Tôno 1999:120).

²³⁷ Refer to the 5th and 8th definitions for the entry on p. 314 of *Meikai kanwa*.

²³⁸ A *tsubu* 顆 is a counter for things that are round, such as pearls, and in this case, lenses, and in the following case, stones (See Matthew's, entry #3396).

²³⁹ This figure is mistakenly given as 100 lenses in 九州文化シンポジウム: いま、鴻ろ館がよみがえる (Yanagida et al, 1988:86).

²⁴⁰ I estimate one Chinese peck 斗 of the Tang period to be equivalent to 5.9 liters (see conversion chart, 歴史手帳).

²⁴¹ Tôno 1999:121.

Except for the *chofu-no-nuno* and *maguda-no-nuno* hemp cloths and the *yû* textile, all of the fabrics listed above were plain-weave silk products. The character 絶, or *ashiginu*, refers to a coarse silk especially common at the time (Tôno 1985:154). Three of these fabrics were apparently dyed. The *saihaku* silk 綵帛, for example, is believed to have been a dyed plain-weave silk of undetermined color, while the *ki* silk and *ki-no-ito* were dyed gold, perhaps to represent one of the imperial colors (Tôno 1999:119-20).

The silver given to the Tang emperor was most likely from Tsushima island. Silver was first discovered on Tsushima in 674 and continued to be mined there throughout the Heian period.²⁴² Most of the silver carried to China from Japan was probably in the form of ingots, but at least two archaeological discoveries have been made in China of silver *wadôkaichin* 和銅開珎 coins, which were Japanese coins minted in the early eighth century. Five of these coins were recovered from a site outside Xian. This site may have been the residence of a cousin of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (Tôno 1999:124). The coins were part of a cache that included coins from Persia and the Eastern Roman empire.²⁴³ Five other *wadôkaichin* coins have been recovered as well from a second site near Loyang.

All but three of the goods described above—the *shukka suishô* crystal lens 出火水精, the *shukka tetsu* metal plates 出火鉄, and the agate 瑪瑙, are mentioned in

²⁴² According to Tôno, the 500 *ryô* that was presented would have weighed approximately 21 kilograms. If converted into coinage, this would create more than 1400 present-day five-thousand yen silver coins (Tôno 1999:120).

the *Engishiki* and other Japanese primary sources as goods offered by the provinces of Japan as taxes to the Japanese Court.²⁴⁴ It is not certain why the first two items were offered to the Tang Court, but Saichô also gave these items to a Tang official as a gift, and a document from the beginning of the Ming dynasty mentions the superior quality of Japanese crystal.

The *Engishiki* was not compiled until the tenth-century after the official missions to Tang ceased. It is thus difficult to determine the period to which this tributary list applies (Tôno 1985:121-65; 1999:119). When did the Japanese Court decide which goods and what quantity were to be carried to China as tribute? Is this record applicable to only the latter missions?

Evidence from Chinese sources substantiate parts of the *Engishiki* list and indicate that the kentôshi brought certain of these goods to Tang in the early eighth century, if not earlier. One Tang record, for example, mentions that a great quantity of agate was brought by the kentôshi mission of 754 and the *Cefu Yuan'gui* 冊府元龜, Volume 971, records that the kentôshi mission that departed Japan in 733 and entered the Chinese capital in the fourth month of the following year offered 200 short bolts of *suiori-ashiginu* coarse silk fabric and 200 short bolts of *Mino-no-ashiginu* silk to the Tang Court (Tôno 1985:153, 155; 1999:119).²⁴⁵ Both of

²⁴³ They may have been buried at the time of the Anlushan Rebellion in 755 when many aristocrats fled the capital.

²⁴⁴ As a part of the tax system laid out by the *ritsuryô* system, each region was required to make payment, not in a uniform currency, but rather with whatever special product that region produced (Tôno 1999:121-2).

²⁴⁵ 200 short bolts of *suiori-ashiginu* coarse silk fabric: 水織純 200 疋

these silks listed in the *Cefu Yuan'gui* and the quantities given are identical to the *Engishiki* record above, thus evidencing the veracity of the Japanese records and suggesting that the tributary list described in the *Engishiki* was determined at least two centuries prior to its notation in this primary source.²⁴⁶ In all probability, the *Engishiki* list is representative of the type of goods carried as tribute throughout the kentôshi period.

Tribute brought to the Tang Court from surrounding countries generally consisted of special products from the tributary countries. From the chart above, one would thus conclude that Japan specialized in the production of raw materials, such as silver and agate, and the manufacture of simple textiles (Ishii Masatoshi 1981:267; Tôno 1985:153). In fact, some of these very same textiles were traded to Silla merchants as well in 752 (see discussion of the *Baishiragi no motsuge* below) (Tôno 1985:155).

What is particularly amazing about the tribute brought by the Japanese is the sheer volume of silk that was carried to Tang. Silla and Bohai may have made similar tributary presentations, but they did not necessarily need to load their goods on board ships. Even on occasions when only the goods of the primary list were presented to the Chinese emperor, 1000 short bolts of *ashiginu* and *hoso* silk were produced, loaded on boats, and carried to the continent. If each role were spread out end-to-end, the total length of silk from these 1000 rolls would stretch for

200 short bolts of *Mino-no-ashiginu* silk: 美濃絶 200 疋 (“Mino” is a place name and thus the capitalization.)

²⁴⁶ Tôno Haruyuki believes that the other tributary items from the tenth century list were presented in 733 as well, but that the writer of the *Cefu Yuan'gui* 冊府元龜 simply chose to omit them (Tôno 1999:119).

12.44 *kilometers*!²⁴⁷ And added to this great volume of silk were 500 taels of silver, 500 bundles of silk thread, and 1000 parcels of silk floss. With this great quantity of goods it is no wonder that as many as twenty years or more fell between some of the tributary missions to China.

There are no extant records concerning what the Tang Court gave the *kentôshi* in return for their gifts.²⁴⁸ Records do exist, however, of the Tang Court presenting high quality silk products and silver vessels to Silla and Bohai envoys who had come to China (Tôno 1985:132). The *kentôshi* must have received the same. In fact, silk goods and silver utensils believed to have been of Tang origin are found in the Shôsô-in collection.

3.3 THE KENTÔSHI AND ELITE TRADE

Documentary evidence of private merchant activity during the Nara period is minimal. Officially recognized merchants, known as *ichibito* 市人, sold goods such as textiles, grains, or foods from stalls set up at the Eastern and Western Markets 東西市 of the capital (Farris 1998:304-5). There were also *shônin* 商人 or non-official merchants referred to as “wandering peddlers” by William Wayne Farris.²⁴⁹ But there is little detailed information concerning private commercial activity. This may indicate that the merchant class was insignificant during the Nara period, or more likely, I feel, it may reflect a lack of interest on the part of the record keepers

²⁴⁷ See note above for my calculations for this figure.

²⁴⁸ These return gifts are referred to as 回賜品 in Japanese.

²⁴⁹ Farris refers to the *ichibito* as “officially recognized merchants,” but also as “non-official merchants” (1998:305, 321).

regarding the merchant class.

Historical evidence, however, suggests that Japan's bureaucrats regularly engaged in domestic trade. The *ritsuryô* system, as it was adopted in Japan, operated on the premise that the private economic resources of lower-ranking bureaucrats and others would be used to fund state enterprises, and so only the top 120 individuals of the fifth rank and above were prohibited from engaging directly in trade. Lower-level bureaucrats were allowed to profit personally when participating in state transactions (see Farris 1998:328). This makes it difficult to clearly distinguish between "state" and "private" exchange within Japan (see Farris 1998:327-9).²⁵⁰

This situation was in contrast to Tang China, where all officials were banned by law from engaging in trade. The Japanese Court revoked the Tang codes that placed constraints on the official profit-making of lower-ranking bureaucrats, and as a result, these bureaucrats became active participants in the commerce of eighth-century Japan. They dealt in the exchange of goods with the trust and backing of the upper-level aristocracy (Farris 1998:327). The entrepreneurial skills of these trader-bureaucrats were no doubt vital to the success of the Nara Court.

Here I would like to suggest that the *kentôshi*, in effect, functioned as trader-bureaucrats in China. While the *kentôshi* members presented tribute on behalf of the state, there was an additional aspect of *kentôshi* exchange as well, because members of the Japanese missions came to Tang with goods that they exchanged on their own. This is what I describe as elite trade.

Kimiya notes that the quantity of goods purchased by the members of the kentôshi while in Tang and carried back to Japan was undoubtedly significant. He points out that, in the case of the Bohai envoys that came to Japan, the envoys traded goods not only with the Palace Storehouse Bureau, but apparently with merchants as well (Kimiya 1955:118-9). The same must hold true for the envoys who traveled to China. The members of the kentôshi seem to have brought back a great deal of Tang goods with them when they returned from the continent (Kimiya 1955:120-1). They likely traded with the *Diankeshu* 典客署, the government office under the Honglu Office 鴻臚寺 (Kôro Office) that regulated trade. There is evidence to back up this assumption. The *Tang Shu* and the *Jiu Tang Shu* both record that the ambassador of the mission of 702, Awata no Mahito 阿部使栗田直人, purchased numerous written works while in the Tang capital (Kimiya 1955:119).²⁵¹

The kentôshi were awarded travel stipends 官給旅費 from the Japanese Court to pay for the long trips to Tang. These stipends were meant to cover travel and/or room and board expenses. As a rule, however, the Tang Court took care of a Japanese mission's expenses while it remained in the country (Yanagida et al, 1988:87). In all likelihood, the members of the missions used some, if not most, of the Japanese stipends for personal profit upon arrival on the continent. They could now be used for purposes other than sustenance while the mission members were in Tang. In fact, they may have funded a great deal of the elite exchange in which the kentôshi were involved.

²⁵⁰ William Wayne Farris even cautions that such a distinction means little for understanding Japan's early economy and society (Farris 1998:328).

The *Engishiki* records the stipends the Japanese Court granted to the various positions within the kentôshi group. I list the top eleven here:

**CHART EIGHT:
TRAVEL GRANTS AWARDED TO MEMBERS OF *KENTÔSHI* MISSIONS²⁵²**

Position	Stipend
Envoy (Ambassador) 大使	<i>Ashiginu</i> : 60 short bolts 絶60疋 Floss silk: 150 parcels 綿150屯 Hemp: 150 long bolts 布150端
Vice-envoy 副使	<i>Ashiginu</i> : 40 short bolts 絶 40疋 Floss silk: 100 parcels 綿100屯 Hemp: 100 long bolts 布100端
Councilor to the Ambassador 判官 ²⁵³	<i>Ashiginu</i> : 10 short bolts 絶 10疋 Floss silk: 60 parcels 綿60屯 Hemp: 40 long bolts 布40端
Secretary 録事	<i>Ashiginu</i> : 6 short bolts 絶 6疋 Floss silk: 40 parcels 綿40屯 Hemp: 20 long bolts 布20端
Ship Captain 知乗船事 Translator (of Chinese) 訳語 Student Accompanying the Ambassador 請益生 ²⁵⁴ Shinto Ritualist 主神 Doctor 医師 Yin-Yang Master 陰陽 Artist 画師	<i>Ashiginu</i> : 5 short bolts 絶 5疋 Floss silk: 30 parcels 綿30屯 Hemp: 16 long bolts 布16端
Etc.	

*Source: *Engishiki*, Vol. 30 (延喜式, 卷 30、大蔵省入諸番使の記). Also see Yanagida et al, 1988:86-7.

²⁵¹ Written works: 文籍.

²⁵² Travel grants 官給旅費.

²⁵³ I based this on von Verschuer's French translation of the term, *Conseiller d'ambassade*. See note below.

²⁵⁴ Von Verschuer's term: *Etudiant accompagnant l'ambassade*. Japanese reading: *shôyakushô*.

This represents the top positions within a mission and the travel grants they received. As many as twenty other positions, including students, boatmen, translators of languages—such as those of Silla and the Amami Islands—and even tortoise-shell diviners were also awarded various quantities of *ashiginu*, other silk products, and hemp.

It is unclear if this allotment was strictly adhered to. There is evidence that some of the envoys may have received somewhat different grants. There is, for example, the case of Saeki no Imaemishi 佐伯今毛人, envoy of the 777 mission, who was entrusted in 776 with 100 short bolts of *ashiginu*, 100 long bolts of closely woven hemp 細布, and 100 *ryô* of gold dust²⁵⁵ (Tôno 1999:124). This may have been an entirely different grant, or perhaps one made in addition to the goods listed above in the *Engishiki* account. Saeki may have been presented additional funds in acknowledgement of the Court's request that he retrieve Fujiwara no Kiyokawa 藤原清河, the envoy of the mission of 752 who shipwrecked in Annan in 753. Kiyokawa had returned to Tang after his shipwreck, but had been unable to return to Japan. Part of Saeki's mission was to bring him home.

The Tang Court bore the in-country expenses of the *kentôshi* members after they arrived on the continent. It also granted funds to them in the same manner that the Japanese Court did (Kimiya 1955:120). Kimiya suggests that, while we do not know exactly what the Tang Court gave them, it may have included ceremonial

articles, colored silk, and medicinal herbs.²⁵⁶ Some of these articles were donated to temples by kentôshi upon their return from Tang (Kimiya 1955:121).²⁵⁷

Finally, kentôshi members received one additional gift before departing China. The Tang Court presented the Japanese envoys with gold dust on the occasion of their farewell banquets.²⁵⁸ All in all, it seems safe to assume that the Japanese, while certainly embarking upon life-risking adventure, stood to gain lucrative rewards from both Courts during the course of their travels.

3.4 GOLD AS A TRADE ITEM

Silver was not the only precious metal involved in the exchange with China. It has long been known that the Tang Court granted gold to kentôshi and to those Japanese residing in China, but there is now evidence that, from the second half of the eighth century, gold dust became part of the tribute offered by the kentôshi to the Tang Court (Tôno 1999:119, 129), despite the fact that gold is not on the *Engishiki* list of goods described above.

As discussed above, gold dust was entrusted to the Envoy Saeki no Imaemishi in 776 before his planned departure the following year. But gold was not available until shortly before this time. And even though gilt bronze 金銅製品 has been recovered from *kofun* graves dating back to the fifth century, most of the gold that

²⁵⁵ 100 *ryô* of gold was equivalent to 4.2 kilograms (Tôno 1999:124).

²⁵⁶ Ceremonial articles: 調度品, colored silk, and medicinal herbs 香藥 (Kimiya 1955:121).

²⁵⁷ See (1)「後紀」延暦24年7月辛卯、(2)「日本紀略」大同2年正月辛丑、(3)「続後紀」承和6年12月辛酉 & 庚午の條。

²⁵⁸ Gold dust: 砂金.

was used was probably brought from the continent (Maekawa 1983:1-2).²⁵⁹ In fact, lack of Japanese gold may have been one of the reasons the mission of 746 was planned (Tôno 1999:125).²⁶⁰ Emperor Shômu needed gold in order to complete the gold-plating of the Great Buddha in Nara, and so he planned the 746 mission, it is thought, in order to procure mainland gold.

However, gold was discovered in Mutsu province (Aomori and part of Iwate prefectures) in the late 740s, and even though it was a relatively small yield, the discovery was cause for celebration at the emperor's Court (Maekawa 1983:1-2).²⁶¹ Approximately 146 kilograms of the Mutsu gold was used to gild the Great Buddha. Afterward, about 8 kilograms a year was sent to the central government (Tôno 1999:127).

Before this find, gold was never given to the members of the kentôshi to fund their journeys to the continent. Afterward, however, it was given to many members of the kentôshi missions. As discussed above, upon receipt of the first presentation of Mutsu gold to the Court²⁶², part was donated to the Great Buddha in Nara and part helped fund the tenth mission to Tang, which was to report the completion of the Great Buddha to the Tang Court (Maekawa 1983:13). This gold was presented directly to mission leaders. The Japanese Court awarded the kentôshi ambassador 200 *ryô* of gold and the two vice-ambassadors with between 100 and 150 *ryô* each.

²⁵⁹ See Maekawa 1983:1-2.

²⁶⁰ This mission never took place.

²⁶¹ The *Nihon Shoki* records the announcement of the gold find as 749, but Tôno believes that word of this find may have spread somewhat earlier (Tôno 1999:126).

²⁶² The presentation was apparently made by Prince Keifuku 百濟王敬福, royalty from the old kingdom of Paekche (Maekawa 1983:13).

Members of later missions received gold as well. The *Nihon Kiryaku*,²⁶³ for instance, notes that several members of the mission of 804 received gold dust. The ambassador received 200 *ryō* of gold and the vice-ambassador was granted 150 *ryō*. The Japanese Court awarded essentially the same amounts to members of the 838 mission.

Japanese gold found its way to the continent by other means as well. It was carried out of Japan by monks and merchants, given to envoys from Bohai, used to pay foreign merchants for the goods that they brought to Japan, and, quite possibly, it became one of the tributary items presented to the Tang Court, although evidence for this is inconclusive. At any rate, gold became an important part of Japan's exchange with the continent during the ninth century.

3.5 IMPERIAL TRADE WITH SILLA AND BOHAI

To fully understand the relationship of the *kentōshi* in the maritime exchange between Japan and Tang China, it is essential to also consider the roles of Silla and Bohai. Envoys were exchanged between Japan and these countries for much of the eighth and ninth centuries. Silla and Bohai took part in diplomatic exchange with Japan and the tributary trade that was an intricate part of imperial exchange. Missions from Silla and Bohai brought products produced in their countries, and they also probably carried products obtained through prior exchange transactions in Tang, thus serving as conduits for some of the Chinese goods entering Japan.

The exchanges between Silla/Bohai and Japan had been overlooked by

²⁶³ *Nihon Kiryaku* 日本紀略, 延暦2年3月.

scholars until recent times. Korean scholar Lee Sung Shi suggests that the twentieth century image of the kentôshi was conceived during the Meiji period, when scholars were comparing events of their own time (i.e., the Meiji - Showa periods) to events and situations that occurred during the Nara period ((Lee 1997:12-3). Scholars such as Kurita Mototsugu²⁶⁴ sought similarities between the two periods and asserted that the adoption of Tang culture during the Nara period was comparable to Japan's nineteenth and twentieth century adoption of western culture. Kurita suggested that a perceived threat of Western imperialism prior to and during the Meiji period was not unlike the perceived menace of Tang China during the seventh century after the joint Japan and Paekche forces were defeated by Tang and Silla.

Kurita and others offered the kentôshi missions as examples of how Japan had handled a similar threatening situation many centuries earlier. They thus needed to present the kentôshi missions in a positive, highly successful light. The missions were used to give historical precedence to and justify contemporary decisions regarding relations with the West (Lee 1997:13). Scholars of the Meiji Period used the kentôshi to demonstrate ample justification for Japan's borrowing of western science, technology, and government during their own period. Japan had been successful in its borrowing of Tang culture more than 1000 years earlier. It borrowed without being overwhelmed, and this, these scholars seemed to say, could be the case once again.

The major problem with this analysis was that it essentially ignored the

²⁶⁴ Kurita Mototsugu 栗田元次 「奈良時代の特性」(1940)

importance of the exchanges with Silla and Bohai. These peninsular countries received only secondary consideration from Japanese scholars. Their scholarly research instead focused primarily on a bilateral trade between Japan and Tang (Lee 1997:14). But the role of imperial, elite, and private merchant exchange between Japan and Silla, and Japan and Bohai, must not be overlooked.

From 668 (shortly after the fall of Paekche) until 882 AD as many as 33 missions were sent to Silla from Japan, and until 803, 48 missions arrived in Japan from Silla (Tajima 2001:14-5; Yanagida et al, 1988:74-5; Ishii 1987B:162-5). Ishii Masatoshi writes that even though relations between Silla and Japan hit an all time low with the battle of Paekchonkang 白村江 in 663, the two states soon reinstated imperial exchange because of Japan's fear of an invasion from Tang and because of souring relations between Silla and Tang. In 668:9, Silla sent an envoy, Kim Dong Kei 金東嚴, to Japan to pay tribute²⁶⁵, and in the eleventh month of the same year, Michi no Sanemaro 道守麻呂 was dispatched to Silla from Japan (Ishii 1987:276).²⁶⁶ Relations grew quite close for a while (refer below to discussion of 709 and 731 missions), but in 734 the two countries once again experienced a falling out because of a statement made by the Silla envoy, Kim Sang Chông 金相貞, that angered the Japanese Court. Kim was forced to return to Silla. Shortly thereafter, the Japanese envoy dispatched to Silla, Abe no Tsugumaro 阿倍継麻呂, was also not received and forced to return in 736.

²⁶⁵ To pay tribute: 調を進め.

The first mission from Bohai came to Japan in 727 and the first mission to Bohai from Japan was sent in the following year (Yanagida et al, 1988:79-81). Diplomatic exchange between the two countries may have grown out of tension between Bohai and Tang China. The Bohai leader, Wu-yi, sent a mission to Japan in 727, shortly after initiating hostilities against Chinese territories (Okladnikov 1965:180).²⁶⁷ Members of this mission had an audience with the Japanese emperor in the first month of 728. A.P. Okladnikov has provided an English translation of the exchange that took place on this occasion. The exchange is recorded in "The History of the House of Chin" (r. 1114-1233 in northern part of China).²⁶⁸ The passage reads:

Pu-kei (Wu-yi) says to you: "Although our rivers and mountains are different and we live far away, [and although] our lands are dissimilar and we have only heard talk of you from afar, still we bow more and more before you, and prostrating ourselves before you, we think of how your emperor received the divine injunction and people follow him by ancestral behest; our Pu-kei (Wu-yi) made many attacks and subdued and united different states, again rebuilt the ruins of Koguryô (Gao-li), but since the distance is great, he did not ask the (Japanese) emperor whether this was good or bad. In future, bringing apologies, he humbly asks to begin

²⁶⁶ "Japan/Silla Relations in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries" "八・九世紀の日羅関係" in 「日本前近代の国家と対外関係」 (Ishii 1987).

²⁶⁷ This embassy was headed by Gao Renyi (Kao Jen-yi). Tragedy at sea resulted in the envoy's death and the deaths of most members of the embassy, but one Gao Qide (Kao Ch'i-te) survived. After arriving in Honshu, Gao was able to proceed to Kyoto.

relations with him and for the sake of this he now sends ambassadors with news." (Okladnikov 1965:180)

This account continues to tell us that Gao then presented the Japanese Court with 300 skins of either sable or leopard (Okladnikov 1965:180).²⁶⁹

But what type of goods were sent from Japan to Bohai? The month after receiving the Bohai mission, the Japanese emperor sent Hikato no Mushimaro as ambassador to Bohai. He was entrusted with a scroll that supposedly expressed the following:

"I express my respect to the prince of Bohai. I am exceedingly glad that the agreement to the proposal [sic] is mutual. I wish a good administration of the country. Although we are divided by the sea, that does not hinder relations. Using the return embassy, I send presents."
(Okladnikov 1965:180)

The gifts sent to Bohai were said to be 114 bolts of patterned white silk, 114 bolts of cloth made from silk and wild hemp, 24 reels of silk thread, and 100 silk cords (Okladnikov 1965:180). Presents were once again given to the Japanese on the occasion of the Japanese ambassador's return to Japan later the same year. The Japanese are said to have forwarded these gifts to various temples.

²⁶⁸ His translation, in turn, was from a Russian passage translated from Manchu by Grigoriy Rozov.

²⁶⁹ Bohai furs were highly prized in China and in the other neighboring countries. In addition to sable and/or leopard, Bohai traders were also known to have dealt in the skins of ermines, deer, tigers, and bears (Okladnikov 1965:189).

All of the reciprocal Japanese missions that went to Bohai carried gifts. In another example, a Japanese official who accompanied the Bohai mission in 761 presented the Bohai sovereign with “twenty-four lengths of taffeta, thirty-five lengths of half-silk cloth, two hundred silk cords, and three hundred plain ones.” Afterwards, the ambassador made an additional presentation of “four lengths of brocade, two lengths of special fabric, four lengths of patterned silk, four lengths of white muslin, fourteen lengths of plain white silk cloth, and three hundred lengths of silk thread” (Okladnikov 1965:191).

Formal exchanges between Japan and Bohai took place until 919. During this period, approximately 35 missions came to Japan (Kokubu 1978:60). The scale of the Bohai missions grew, and imperial trade increased after official exchange with Silla was broken off in 779 (Lee 1997:14). By the ninth century, missions from Bohai numbered as many as several hundred people.

The missions that the Japanese sent to Bohai generally accompanied the envoys from Bohai on their return journeys, and the last mission to Bohai from Japan was made in 810 (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:339). After 810, contact between the two countries was generally initiated by Bohai rather than Japan, thus suggesting that Bohai had more incentive to maintain the relationship.

One may conclude that Bohai’s poor relations with Tang fueled its desire to maintain diplomatic exchange with Japan. But relations between Bohai and China improved after 738 when Wu-yi died and his son Da Qinmao (Ta Chin-mao)

ascended to his father's throne (he ruled till 785).²⁷⁰ If one were to argue that Bohai sought out Japan's support in light of its hostilities with China, then the Bohai missions to Japan should have ceased. However, they did not. They continued to come to Japan bringing gifts and letters. In 739, for example, right after Da Qinmao's ascension to the throne, the Japanese emperor was presented with seven bear skins, six sable skins, thirty axes, and thirty measures of honey (Okladnikov 1965:190).

From the end of the eighth century, trade with Bohai replaced much of the trade with Silla. Lee Sung Shi notes that Japanese scholars have traditionally explained this shift in terms of Tang-Japan relations—Japan used Silla as middleman to Tang—but when Silla did not behave as Japan wished, Bohai came to replace Silla as a cultural, diplomatic, and physical link to Tang.

But this naively credits Japan as the determining player in peninsular relations and ignores Silla's and Bohai's roles in the maritime intercourse (Lee 1997:14). Silla's and Bohai's incentives for carrying out exchange with Japan must not be overlooked. In the case of Silla, for example, Silla and Tang fought a war in 674-676, and so some of the incentive for intercourse with Japan may have come from the hostility Silla felt toward Tang. And by the time Silla and Tang mended relations at the end of the seventh century, Silla and Japan had already sent many missions back and forth between themselves, while Japan sent no missions to Tang

²⁷⁰ Da normalized relations with Tang China and sent a total of 28 embassies to the Tang Court (Okladnikov 1965:181). It is interesting to note that at least one of these embassies to Tang involved Japanese. During the reign of Da-li (Ta li) (776-779), a Bohai embassy offered eleven Japanese female dancers to the Tang Court. These

between 669 and 702 (Lee 1997:15). In this instance, it seems that Japan's relations with Tang had little bearing on its diplomatic exchange with Silla.

The last envoy from Silla to Japan was Kim Nanson 金蘭蓀, who accompanied the Councilor to the Ambassador²⁷¹ to Tang, Unakami no Mikari 判官海上三狩, and others on their return from the continent in 779.7 (Ishii 1987:275; see also Tôno, 1999:56, 74-5, 78).²⁷²

This marked the end of official negotiations and exchange between Japan and Silla. It was after this that private merchants became active between the two countries as well as among both countries and Tang. Ishii suggests that private merchant trade between the two countries predates the year 814, the date generally accepted as the beginning of trade activity (Ishii 1987:275). He questions the commonly accepted assertion that merchant trade began in the ninth century. Instead, he believes that the transition from imperial or elite to private-merchant trade activity occurred during the period from the end of the eighth to the beginning of the ninth centuries. This hypothesis will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Private merchant exchange between the Korean peninsula and Japan will also be discussed in more detail in the next chapter (see Ishii 2001:27-41). But here I would like to discuss aspects of the imperial exchange that took place. What were

women were presumably slaves (Okladnikov 1965:189). Bohai apparently carried out predatory campaigns against northern tribes, Silla, Liaodong, and even Japan.

²⁷¹ I base the English on the French translation, *Conseiller d'ambassade*, by Charlotte von Verschuer (See General Index, *Les Relations Officielles Du Japon Avec La Chine Aux VIII(e) Et IX(e) Siecles*).

²⁷² They shipwrecked on Tanra (耽羅). See "八・九世紀の日羅関係" in 「日本前近代の国家と対外関係」 (Ishii 1987:275).

some of the items presented to the kings of Bohai and Silla on behalf of the Japanese emperor? The *Engishiki* 延喜式 once again offers a list of the goods that were given (Ishii Masatoshi 1981:267; Tōno 1985:153). This list is quite short compared to the above, which detailed the goods presented to the Tang emperor.

CHART NINE: TRIBUTE SENT TO SILLA AND BOHAI

Offerings to the Silla king

<i>Ashiginu</i> : 25 short bolts 絁 2 5 疋
Silk thread: 100 bundles 糸 1 0 0 絢
Floss silk: 150 parcels 綿 1 5 0 屯

Offerings to the Bohai king

Soft, thin silk fabric: 30 short bolts 絹 3 0 疋
<i>Ashiginu</i> : 30 short bolts 絁 3 0 疋
Silk thread: 200 bundles 糸 2 0 0 絢
Floss silk: 300 parcels 綿 3 0 0 屯

This list presents a clear picture of the nature of the imperial exchange that took place. Most apparent is the paucity of goods offered to the sovereigns of Silla and Bohai in light of the tributary items presented to the Tang emperor. No doubt the Japanese Court found less incentive to impress the Courts of Silla and Bohai. However, this does not mean that the Japanese elite were any less desirous of trade

with the peninsula. For while the imperial exchange was far from grandiose, the elite exchange that occurred among mission members coming to Japan was quite impressive. This is known through an extant purchase request referred to as the *Baishiragi no motsuge*.

3.6 ELITE TRADE WITH SILLA AND THE *BAISHIRAGI NO MOTSUGE* 買新羅物解

The *Shoku Nihongi* records that in 752 seven ships carrying more than 700 people arrived at the capital after passing through Dazaifu (Minagawa p.148). This was the first visit to the capital in nine years by envoys from Silla.²⁷³ The occasion for this visit was the consecration or “eye opening” ceremony 大仏開眼会 for the Great Vairocana Buddha of the Tōdai-ji temple in Nara in 752:4. The Silla mission was made greater in size than any before, partly to improve Silla relations, but also, undoubtedly, to promote trade activity as well.

The *Baishiragi no motsuge* 買新羅物解 refers to purchase requests submitted to the Treasury Ministry 大藏省 and/or the Palace Storehouse Bureau 内蔵寮²⁷⁴ in 752:6 by Japanese elites seeking to purchase goods brought by the Silla envoys attending the consecration ceremony.²⁷⁵ The *Baishiragi no motsuge* provides

²⁷³ The previous visit was in the fifteen year of Tempyō (743 AD).

²⁷⁴ We know from the *Engishiki* 延喜式, 大藏省の規定 that the *Baishiragi no motsuge* was submitted to either the Treasury Ministry 大藏省 and/or the Palace Storehouse Bureau 内蔵寮. All trade with foreigners 蕃客 was conducted through these agencies.

²⁷⁵ This was fourth month of Tempyō shōhō 天平勝宝 (752 AD). The *Baishiragi no motsuge* has been thoroughly researched by Tōno Haruyuki. For detail, see 「史林」 Vol. 57, No. 6, 1964 and 「正倉院文書と木簡の研究」 (Tōno 1977:311). Also see work by Takeda (朝鮮

excellent documentation of the elite trade that took place between the Japanese elite and an official mission coming to Japan from the mainland.²⁷⁶ After submission, the paper upon which these purchase requests were written was recycled and used in the backing of what is known as the “Court Lady Screen” 鳥毛立女屏風.²⁷⁷ There the papers remained forgotten until they were discovered behind the screen during the Tokugawa period.²⁷⁸

With these requests in hand scholars have an accurate picture of the type of goods that the ruling class in Nara sought from Silla in the eighth century. Some of the items that the Japanese aristocrats purchased from the 752 Silla mission are also found listed in such documents as the *Record of the Nation's Rare Treasures* 国家珍宝帳, and the *Record of Various Medicines* 種種薬帳.²⁷⁹ The materials'

社会の史的展開と東アジア」武田幸男編, p.205) and Minagawa (皆川完一 “買新羅物解拾遺,” in 「正倉院文書研究」 2、正倉院文書研究会編.

²⁷⁶ It is evident that the Japanese elite became aware of what goods the Silla mission had brought quite some time before making their requests because the written request was presented two months after the consecration ceremony.

²⁷⁷ For details on the condition and restoration of this screen, see 「正倉院年報」第12号 1990.

²⁷⁸ The text of the *Baishiragi no motsuge* is now stored in *Shôsô-in* and at the Sonkeikaku Repository 尊経閣文庫 (「朝鮮社会の史的展開と東アジア」武田幸男編, p.205).

²⁷⁹ The *Record of the Nation's Rare Treasures* or “Kokka chimpô chô” 国家珍宝帳 in Japanese, is a list of imperial objects Empress Kômyô donated to the Great Buddha of Tôdai-ji on 756:6:21, forty-nine days after the death of her husband, Emperor Shômu. Many of these treasures are stored in the North Section of the *Shôsô-in* (“The 53rd Annual” *Exhibition of Shôsô-in Treasures*, 2001:37). The *Record of Various Medicines*, or “Shuju yaku chô” 種種薬帳, is a list of sixty types of medicines the Empress donated on the same day. Both documents are part of the *Dedicatory Records of Tôdai-ji Temple* (“Tôdai-ji kenmotsu chô” 東大寺献物帳 in Japanese), which is a complete compilation of the offerings Empress Kômyô made to the Tôdai-ji temple between 756 and 758. There are seven hundred items listed in the *Dedicatory Records of Tôdai-ji Temple*; over one hundred of these are extant in the *Shôsô-in* today (日本史文献解題辞典 2000:746; “The 53rd Annual” *Exhibition of Shôsô-in Treasures*, p.39).

registries from various temples²⁸⁰ also have corresponding records of these goods, providing further proof of the strong demand the Japanese elite must have had for the goods mentioned in the *Baishiragi no motsuge*. In addition, some of the actual items themselves were preserved and passed down through the centuries (Takeda 205).²⁸¹

Not only does the *Baishiragi no motsuge* list the products requested by the Nara elite, it also records the Japanese goods that they were exchanged for. These goods differed little from the list above of the goods that were presented to the Tang Court, i.e. simple silk textiles (Tôno 1985:155). Japan thus must have been known in East Asia as a producer of simple processed goods. Japan exchanged these for more refined continental products.²⁸²

3.7 ELITE TRADE AND GOLD FROM THE PENINSULA

As mentioned above, the Japanese Court awarded the kentôshi ambassador of 752 with 200 *ryô* of gold and the two vice-ambassadors with 100-150 *ryô* each. However, Maekawa Akihisa notes that only 900 *ryô* were said to have been extracted from Mutsu at that time. If the kentôshi stipends are subtracted from this total, only 400-500 *ryô* remain. Maekawa believes this amount would have been insufficient for the gilding of the Great Buddha (Maekawa 1983:12).²⁸³ If so,

²⁸⁰ Materials' registries from various temples: 諸寺の資材帳.

²⁸¹ *The Historical Development of Korean Society and East Asian 朝鮮社会の史的展開と東アジア*, Takeda Yukio 武田幸男編, p.205)

²⁸² Silla, on the other hand, presented high quality silk and sophisticated goods made of precious metals to the Tang Court (Tôno 1985:156).

²⁸³ Others disagree, Tôno Haruyuki, for example, writes that 146 kilograms of gold was used for the Great Buddha (Tôno 1985:127).

the Japanese must have had another source of gold.

Maekawa suggests this gold came from Silla. The *Baishiragi no motsuge* records that the Nara aristocracy requested both gold dust and a number of gold objects from members of the Silla mission. In addition, the Silla mission donated gold during visits to Taian-ji and Tōdai-ji temples. The 700-member mission from Silla came to Japan earlier the same year that the twelfth mission set sail. The Silla mission likely brought gold as a tributary item. Maekawa believes this gold may have been factored into the quantity used for the gilding of the Great Buddha (Maekawa 1983:12).

Before the Mutsu yield was discovered, Maekawa believes that at least three missions to Tang²⁸⁴ were funded by stockpiling gold brought as tribute from Silla (Maekawa 1983:13). When relations cooled between Japan and Silla after 734, the tribute from Silla stopped, and as a result, so did the Japanese missions to Tang (Maekawa 1983:13-4). Maekawa's hypothesis has yet to be accepted by most Japanese scholars; however, if even partially true, it indicates how closely intertwined trade with Tang may have been with trade and intercourse with the Korean peninsula.

3.8 THE EXCHANGE OF CONTINENTAL GOODS AS EVIDENCED BY THE SHÔSÔ-IN TREASURES

In addition to written records, there are extant objects of mainland origin from the Nara period that underscore the extent of maritime exchange during that time.

²⁸⁴ These were missions 8, 9 and 10 from chart above.

Most of these objects are extant because they were stored in the *Shôsô-in* repository of Tôdai-ji temple.²⁸⁵ The *Shôsô-in* repository is located north of Tôdai-ji temple in Zôshi-chô, Nara (Figess 1961:141). It is renowned for its rare collections of treasures brought from China and lands as far off as India and Persia during the seventh and eighth centuries.²⁸⁶

The treasures of the *Shôsô-in* can be divided into two groups: those recorded in the five volumes of the *Dedicatory Records of Tôdai-ji Temple*²⁸⁷, which is a complete compilation of the offerings Empress Kômyô made to the Tôdai-ji temple between 756 and 758, and those items not recorded in these volumes. The former were kept in the North storeroom and the latter, for the most part, were kept in the South storeroom (Sekine 1991:6-7). There is no text recording the contribution and placement of other items into *Shôsô-in*, but many of the objects are identified by ink

²⁸⁵ "Shôsô" originally referred to storehouses for keeping tax rice or other valuable assets (*Exhibition of Shôsô-in Treasures*, 2001:6). Quite common at large temples during the Nara and Heian periods, the *Shôsô-in* at Tôdai-ji is the only one that has survived to the present (Sekine Shinryû 関根真隆, *Shôsô-in e no michi – tempyô bijitsu e no shôtai* 「正倉院への道—天平美術への招待」 吉川弘文館 (Sekine 1991).

²⁸⁶ The *Shôsô-in* was constructed in the "azekura" style; that is, as a wooden structure in which the sides are made by placing triangularly cut logs across one another. The structure itself is divided into three parts -- South, Central and North storerooms. The North storeroom 北倉 of the *Shôsô-in* originally held objects that Empress Kômyô donated to Tôdai-ji (Sekine 1991:3). The Central storeroom 中倉 contained such objects as weapons, documents, writing materials, and gifts donated upon the occasion of the Consecration Ceremony of the Great Buddha. The South storeroom 南倉 included objects such as Gigaku masks, attire for musical performances 楽装束, and various Buddhist altar fittings and worship utensils 各種仏具 (Sekine 1991:3-4). Over the centuries, reroofing and other repairs were occasionally carried out on the *Shôsô-in*, but in 1913, for the first time, the entire structure was dismantled and reconstructed in order to repair damage (Sekine 1991:1). During these repairs a temporary storage facility was constructed to hold the *Shôsô-in* treasures. Most were returned after the repairs, but a few were left in this temporary facility. In 1962, a new humidity-controlled, earthquake and fire proof ferroconcrete structure was completed. The last of the *Shôsô-in* treasures were moved into this structure in 1963.

markings or by dates and other information carved into or cast into the objects themselves (e.g., bronze mirrors).²⁸⁸

Relevant to this discussion is the great number of items of foreign origin in the *Shôsô-in*. Goods made of animal parts such as rhinoceros horn, ivory, water buffalo horn, and hawksbill turtle can all be found among the *Shôsô-in* treasures. Each of these products originated either in India or South East Asia (Sekine 1991:10). There is also a great deal of lumber and plant products of foreign origin that were used in the crafting of the *Shôsô-in* treasures. These include rosewood (*shitan* 紫檀), red sandalwood (*kôkishitan* 紅木紫檀), quince (*karin* 花りん), ironwood (*tagayasan* 鉄刀木), ebony (*kokutan* 黒檀), sandalwood (*byakudan* 白檀), aloe (*jinkô* 沈香), betel palm (*binrô*) and rattan (*tô* 籐) (Sekine 1991:10-11). Many of these materials were used to construct decorative boxes, and in some cases only small quantities of these materials were used to decorate the exteriors of these boxes. Rosewood was most commonly used.²⁸⁹ Regardless of how these foreign plant materials were used

²⁸⁷ *Dedicatory Records of Tôdai-ji Temple* (“*Tôdai-ji kenmotsu chô*” 東大寺献物帳 in Japanese).

²⁸⁸ The *Shôsô-in* objects are not in nearly as good a condition as often claimed. By the beginnings of the Meiji period, many objects had suffered damage, some unrecognizable from their original state or, and in certain cases, only pieces of the original remained. A number of the weapons recorded in the *Tôdai-ji Kenmotsuchô* were removed from the *Shôsô-in* during the time of the Rebellion of Emi no Oshikatsu (Fujiwara Nakamaro) in 764 (Sekine 1991:7), and there was at least one robbery known to have occurred in 1230, when objects were stolen and damaged before being returned to the Azekura. In response to all of the damage suffered over the centuries, a restoration project was carried out from Meiji 25 to Meiji 37 (1892-1904) (Sekine 1991:2).

²⁸⁹ There is a great deal of confusion among scholars of the Japanese language as to the English translation of *shitan* 紫檀. Various scholars render it alternately as “rosewood” and “red sandalwood,” and some even assume that the two woods are one and the same. They, however, are not. I have chosen rosewood as the correct translation for *shitan*. I believe that *kôkishitan* 紅木紫檀 is the term that refers to red sandalwood.

though, their presence in the *Shôsô-in* attests to a great quantity of foreign materials that were imported into Japan for wood crafting for the Nara Court (Sekine 1991:11).

A mid-eighth century source indicates that writing materials from the mainland were prized as well. In addition to brushes made within Japan, those from Tang and Silla were used for sutra copying as well (Takeda p.203).²⁹⁰ No writing implements from the continent remain in the *Shôsô-in* collection, but there are two extant boat-shape ink sticks from Silla.²⁹¹ This ink was undoubtedly used at Tôdai-ji for the hand copying of sutras.

Shôsô-in evidences a particularly close trade relationship between Japan and Silla, as many of the *Shôsô-in* treasures originated in Silla.²⁹² Kotos and rugs manufactured with compressed sheep wool are just some of the objects of Silla origin listed in the *Record of the Nation's Rare Treasures* (Takeda pp.204-6).²⁹³ There are also at least eight *sahari* plates and bowls, also of Silla origin, from the South Repository of *Shôsô-in*.²⁹⁴ These dishes were probably brought to Japan by the large 752 Silla mission to which the *Baishiragi no motsuge* was directed. These and other *sahari* goods are located at temples such as Hôryû-ji as well as at

²⁹⁰ This is attested to in 「華嚴經論帙」, which was also found in the *Shôsô-in* (Takeda p.203). The entry is from Tempyô 19 (747). Buddhist scriptures were also brought from Silla.

²⁹¹ These sticks are inscribed (陽刻?) with the characters 「新羅楊家上墨」 and 「新羅武家上墨」.

²⁹² In Suzuki Yasutami's 「朝鮮社会の史的展開と東アジア」 武田幸男編 (Takeda).

²⁹³ The desirability of the Silla rugs is substantiated by the *Baishiragi no motsuge*, which records the importation of these rugs into Japan. There was a high demand for these rugs in Tang as well, as Silla rugs were known for high quality (Takeda p.206).

²⁹⁴ *Sahari* goods 佐波理製 were made from an alloy of copper, tin, and lead. According to Suzuki, "sahari" derives from the Korean word "sabarû," which refers to bowl-shaped

Shôsô-in.²⁹⁵ A number of non-*sahari* plates stored at the *Shôsô-in* repository may also be of Silla origin (Takeda pp.206-7).

containers (Takeda p.206). While some of these objects were likely brought over from Paekche in the 7th century, most are believed to have been produced in Silla.

²⁹⁵ Suzuki Yasutami asserts that the exchange of material goods and culture with Silla was particularly prominent at government offices and at the temples such as Tôdaiji. He points to the frequent formal exchange between Japan and Silla in the years after the Paekchonkang 白村江 battle that lasted until the end of official relations in 779. During this time, there were 47 missions sent to Japan from Silla and 27 missions sent to Silla from Japan, averaging out to about one mission every 1.5 years during the period from 668 to 779 (Takeda p.207).

CHAPTER 4

THE END OF THE KENTÔSHI MISSIONS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF MERCHANT TRADE

4.1 GENERAL EXCHANGE

Maritime trade has a long history in Asia. As early as the sixth and seventh centuries, Arab traders were departing from the Persian Gulf and sailing around India and the Malay Peninsula up to present-day Guangdong and Fujian.²⁹⁶ During the first half of the eighth century, trade between Tang and other lands began to flourish in the southern seas. Eventually, some of the rare goods imported into Tang from these lands made their way into Silla, Bohai (Parhae), and Japan, together of course with Chinese-produced products. By at least the ninth century, relatively large maritime vessels from the continent were navigating the seas to Kyushu.

We find that private traders bearing products from the mainland were coming to Japan in increasingly greater numbers at about the same time that the official kentôshi missions to Tang stopped.²⁹⁷ Mainland vessels carrying private merchants are estimated to have made as many as 100 trips to Hakata's Kôrokan from the

²⁹⁶ Guangdong 広州 (広東) and Fujian 泉州 (福建省).

²⁹⁷ The last mission from Japan was sent to Tang in 838. The last documented arrival of an envoy from Silla to Japan was in 779 (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:339).

ninth century until the late Heian period (Yanagida 1988:120). Most of the ninth-century vessels were from Silla and had crews of anywhere between 36 and 63 people (Yanagida 1988:121).

In this chapter I shall examine the relationship between government-sponsored kentôshi exchange and the development of private merchant exchange. There were direct interactions between the kentôshi missions and the private merchants. On a few occasions, for example, the kentôshi hired ships manned by Korean merchants for their return journeys from China. In addition, the existence of the *Baishiragi-no-motsuge* demonstrates that the line between envoy and merchant was sometimes vague. Could trade in its elite manifestation have served as a precursor to private exchange between merchants?

It has been suggested that formal exchange with China and the Korean peninsula ended during the first part of the ninth century because Japan no longer needed nor sought direct diplomacy with its neighbors (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:339, 345). This seems plausible. After all, tensions between Japan and the peninsula had long dissipated and official diplomacy becomes less critical when neighbors are at peace. Trade was now the primary form of intercourse between Japan and her East Asian neighbors.²⁹⁸

But was peace the primary factor responsible for the cessation of the kentôshi missions? Trade may have been more important to the diplomatic missions than heretofore believed. Could the arrival of the merchant ships perchance have made

²⁹⁸ Cultural borrowing is another aspect of the missions to keep in mind. Particularly during the Early period of the kentôshi, the Japanese were inspired to learn about the institutions and society of their powerful continental neighbor.

the kentôshi missions obsolete by superceding what had essentially become their last remaining major function: the promulgation of trade? If so, how are the kentôshi to be viewed in light of the merchant trade that developed at about the same time the missions to Tang were ending? Did the former have an impact on the latter or, as I have just suggested, was the reverse true and the success of the private merchants helped end the missions?

Many scholars assert that ninth-century merchant exchange between Japan and Tang China was spurred by the trade—both imperial and elite—that was permitted through official channels. They argue that official tributary exchange between governments fueled a desire for continental goods among the Asuka and Nara elites. Private trade then developed in response to an ever-growing demand for mainland goods. This was especially true by the beginning of the Heian period, when the official kentôshi missions seemingly failed to keep supply equal to demand.

Despite this ever-increasing demand for mainland goods, we see an apparent decline in the number of kentôshi missions being sent because the time between the dispatching of official kentôshi missions slowly increased. Until the mission which departed in 752, missions were sent roughly every fifteen years; but nearly twenty years passed between the sending of missions thirteen and sixteen (the fourteenth and fifteenth were cancelled) and then thirty-four years passed between the last two missions, numbers eighteen (departed 803) and nineteen (departed 836) (Yanagida et al, 1988).

The decrease of mission frequency despite increases in overall trade was not

limited to the official exchange between Tang and Japan. During the 137-year period between 619 and 756 A.D., one hundred and twenty-five tributary missions were dispatched to Tang from kingdoms in Southeast Asia. However, over the next 150 years of the Tang dynasty, only 20 missions were sent from the same region—despite the fact that trade with Southeast Asia steadily increased during this time (Kamei 1986:25). The cause for the decline in missions, I believe, was the emergence of a thriving private merchant trade. This trade eliminated one of the main reasons the missions had been dispatched in the first place; i.e., to trade goods with the continent.

If this is true, the diplomatic missions sent to Sui and Tang and the reciprocal missions that came to Japan initiated what became full-blown merchant trade with the continent.²⁹⁹ But as this merchant trade prospered, it in turn made the *kentôshi* missions obsolete because it (merchant exchange) more effectively met Japanese demand for mainland goods.

Below I analyze unofficial merchant trade in the East China and Yellow Seas and its relative economic and cultural significance in light of the official *kentôshi* exchange. By the ninth century, merchants from Silla were quite active in the East China and Yellow Seas. Ennin recorded that the vast majority of the ships involved in the early ninth-century trade between Japan and the continent were manned by Korean sailors, and he identifies only one vessel as being clearly Chinese (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:286). Somewhat later, by the end of the ninth century, the Chinese themselves were traversing these waters in great numbers.

²⁹⁹ About four missions were sent to Sui (581-618) from Japan.

But the ownership of many of the ships and the nationality of the crews are often hard to determine. Historians tend to denote the nationality of a vessel based on the origin of the merchant in charge of the ship; however, this can be misleading. Tang, Silla, Bohai, and Japanese merchants often traveled together on the same ship regardless of vessel affiliation. At least one scholar has chosen to refer to the merchants of the ninth century collectively as an “East Asian merchant group” 東アジア商人群 (Wu 1999:96-100).³⁰⁰ I shall try to identify the merchants who came to Japan and seek evidence of private exchange between Japan and the mainland during the time of the kentôshi missions.

I begin by considering the way in which trade with foreign merchants was carried out after the arrival of merchants in Japan.

4.2 ELITE EXCHANGE AT KÔROKAN

Japanese elites became directly involved in continental trade around the beginning of the Heian period. Fujiwara bureaucrats wanted the best continental goods without delay and at reasonable prices. When the elite classes remained in the capital and awaited the arrival of goods from Dazaifu, they risked increased costs if Dazaifu officials or the merchants themselves sought greater profits (Akiyama 1934: 1230). To avoid this, potential elite buyers sent envoys to Dazaifu

³⁰⁰ See also the following for more detailed information regarding merchants and the exchange with the mainland: (1) 秋山謙蔵, “日唐貿易と竹取物語” 「日支交渉史話」所収、内外書籍 (Akiyama 1935); 秋山謙蔵 「日支交渉史研究」岩波書店, (Akiyama 1939); and 秋山謙蔵 “日唐貿易の発展と大宰府の変遷”(上、下) 「史学雑誌」45-9, 10 (Akiyama 1934); (2) 木宮泰彦, 「日華文化交流史」富山房 (Kimiya 1955:123-7); and

to await the arrival of mainland merchants (Akiyama 1934:1230). Eventually, temples, government officials, and princely households³⁰¹—all of which were large *shôen* proprietors³⁰²—sent envoys to Dazaifu.

4.2.1 Government Restrictions on Merchant Trade

As *ritsuryô* rule began to crumble, Japan turned inward. From the middle of the ninth century, diplomatic exchange was deemed less essential and Japan began to view foreign diplomacy with apathetic, if not negative, feelings (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:343). Trade, however, was not only allowed, but sought with Tang and Silla merchants, as well as with the Bohai envoys that came to Japan.

Not all of the Dazaifu officials and merchants who met with the *shôen* trade envoys were willing to engage in open and fair exchange (Akiyama 1934:1230-1). Because of fierce competition in the bidding for goods brought from China, prices were sometimes rigged and goods sold in secret. The central government eventually tried to control these activities. The Taihō Ritsuryō code contained no provisions dealing with private merchants from foreign countries.³⁰³ However, the Tang Court sought to administer its own maritime trade, which had begun to flourish in the Guangzhou district during the first half of the eighth century, by

(3) 森克巳 “日唐貿易の形態——日宋貿易の基礎問題” 「史学雑誌」 46 (Mori Katsumi 1935).

³⁰¹ Princely households: 王臣家

³⁰² *Shôen* 莊園: private estates.

³⁰³ This is in sharp contrast to Ishii Masatoshi, who writes that private trade with foreigners was strictly forbidden under the Ritsuryō code (Ishii Masatoshi 1988:20). The *Ryō no Gige* describes some of the duties of a government officer as supervising markets and preventing cheating and deception (see de Bary, et al. 1958:79-85). This passage does not, however, make any specific mention of trade with foreign merchants.

sending a customs official to the region (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:344).³⁰⁴ The Japanese must have been aware of this because they too attempted to administer their own trade with foreign merchants. Measures were taken, for example, in the fall of 885 when Chinese merchants arrived in Dazaifu (Akiyama 1934:1231). On this occasion the Court strictly forbade envoys of the elite from the capital and officials within the jurisdiction of Dazaifu to compete privately for the purchase of goods brought by the merchants (Tajima 2001:67).

Mori Katsumi has suggested that, because there were no provisions in the Taihō Ritsuryō code regarding foreign private merchants, the first merchants who came to Dazaifu were allowed to lodge at Kōrokan, a facility originally established to welcome diplomatic envoys from the continent, and to return home without restriction (Mori Katsumi 1935:709-10). Restrictions were not imposed by Kyoto until a later date.

4.2.2 The Kōrokan Facility

The term Kōrokan 鴻臚館 refers to three official sites in Japan used for diplomatic exchange during the Nara and Heian periods.³⁰⁵ These sites served as reception centers for greeting and entertaining foreign officials. Located at Dazaifu, Naniwa, and Heian, the centers were important contact points for envoys coming to and leaving Japan. The Kōrokan at Dazaifu eventually became the official entry

³⁰⁴ This customs official was called *shiboshi* in Chinese (Jpn. *shihakushi*) 市舶使.

³⁰⁵ The Japanese name Kōrokan is based on the Chinese “Bureau of Ceremonies for Foreigners” known as *Hong lu si* 鴻臚寺 (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:75 (note 318)).

point for the vast majority of material goods reaching Japan from the continent (see Yamazaki 1996:150-53).

The Dazaifu Kôrokan is first mentioned in a primary source in 688 (Kamei 1988:15). The Naniwa 難波 (摂津) Kôrokan was the first one built, however, and was in use for 236 years. The last Kôrokan, which was constructed at Heian-kyô, was in use for a shorter time—163 years (Kamei 1988:14-15).³⁰⁶

The Dazaifu Kôrokan had the longest recorded history of the three centers and was used for 403 years, from 688 to 1091.³⁰⁷ It served as Japan's gateway to the Asian mainland during this time.³⁰⁸ The Dazaifu Kôrokan, when first mentioned, is referred to as *tsukushi-kan* 筑紫館.³⁰⁹ It served as a facility for receiving and providing lodging for envoys arriving from Tang and Silla, as well as for Japanese envoys on their way to or from these countries. In the ninth century, after the missions to Tang became less frequent, and especially after formal relations with

³⁰⁶ The *Ryô no gige* 令義解 of 833 is the primary source that first mentions the Kôrokan at Heian. This Kôrokan was used mainly to receive missions arriving from Bohai and other small countries, and the last envoy to Tang set out for Dazaifu from the Heian-kyô facility in 837. This facility ceased to exist some time after the fall of Bohai in the middle of the 10th century.

³⁰⁷ Edward Kidder gives the dates as 701 to 1091 AD (Kidder 1999:81-2). This is neither 403 years nor does it explain the fact that Dazaifu facility was mentioned in a document from 688.

³⁰⁸ Dazaifu the city/town may have been founded as early as 644, but most scholars seem to identify the time of its beginning as vaguely falling in the second half or end of the seventh century. It was an important urban center by the beginning of the eighth century with the establishment of the Taihō Ritsuryō codes (Kurazumi Yasuhiko (倉住靖彦), 「古代の大宰府」, 1985:125). In terms of size as an urban center, Dazaifu was second only to Heijō-kyō during the Nara Period (Kamei 1988:14-16), and in terms of cross-cultural contact in East Asia, Dazaifu served as a site of activity unrivaled even by Heijō.

³⁰⁹ Because its exact location was discovered after WWII, and because of extensive archaeological study of both its buildings and the surrounding areas, the term “Kôrokan” has come to refer specifically to the Dazaifu facility. Less is known regarding the centers built at Naniwa and Heian.

Silla ended, Dazaifu Kôrokan became a residence for the lodging of Tang, Silla, and Bohai private merchants coming to Japan to trade. It also served as a place for these merchants to market their wares and a place for the government to supervise their transactions (Ishii 1988:20; Kamei 1988:15).³¹⁰ The facility was thus central to the development of both official and private trade in Japan (Ishii Masatoshi 1988:20).

Not a great deal is recorded regarding the layout and type of buildings located at the Dazaifu Kôrokan. There is mention, however, of one structure in an 861 entry of the *Tôda Shinnô Nittô Ryakuki* 頭陀親王入唐略記: the North structure of the Kôrokan” 鴻臚館北館 (Kamei 1988:15). Apparently this structure was used for the lodging of private merchants from the mainland.³¹¹ In the middle of the eleventh century, a fire was started at a dormitory for Song merchants. It has been surmised that this dormitory was the North structure referred to in the 861 entry.

Another building described in documents is the *Kôro-nakajima* structure 鴻臚中嶋館, a place where soldiers stayed and weaponry was kept. There was also a kitchen facility known as the *tsu-no-mi-kuriya* 津厨 and a stable that accommodated at least ten horses (Kamei 1988:16).

³¹⁰ Interpreters were employed at Kôrokan to accommodate visitors. We know for example, that Zhang Youxin 張友信 was a Tang interpreter (he was also a prominent trader, see Chart 2 below) who sailed to Japan in the middle of the ninth century. He is the first individual known to have interpreted at Dazaifu (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:139). Zhang arrived together with Ensai's younger brother, Ninkô 仁好 in 847 (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:141).

³¹¹ The *Tôda shinnô nittô ryakuki* entry states that when Prince Shinnyô arrived at Kôrokan, a Tang merchant was already lodging at this "North structure."

4.2.3 Treatment of Foreign Merchants

It became the policy of the Japanese government to dispatch a trade representative, or trade envoy 交易唐物使, to Dazaifu upon receiving a report that a trade vessel had arrived in Kyushu. Together with a Dazaifu official, the trade envoy carried out on-the-spot inspections at Kôrokan of the goods brought for barter. This envoy exercised the right to conduct public trade 公的貿易—i.e., trade on behalf of the central government—before any private exchange 民間取引 was allowed (Mori Katsumi 1935:710; Kamei 1975:41).³¹²

The *Ruijû Sandai Kaku* 類聚三代格十八³¹³ refers to the way in which transactions were administered when Silla merchants arrived to trade. A passage in this source describes how the central government first prepared a list of the items it wished to obtain. After these items were purchased, private individuals bartered for the remaining goods under the supervision of the Dazaifu official (Mori Katsumi 1935:710).³¹⁴ This private exchange was completed by envoys dispatched by various government officials and princely households³¹⁵ (Kamei 1975:41). But even during private exchange, the government attempted to exert a strong hand. It set the prices that private individuals paid for their goods. Ignoring these pricing regulations was considered a grave offense.

By the end of the ninth century this system was falling apart. Private

³¹² In Japanese this is called 政府先買權 (Mori Katsumi 1935:710).

³¹³ This is found in Volume 18.

³¹⁴ Private individuals: 一般人民; Dazaifu officials: 府官.

³¹⁵ This is my rendering for the Chinese: 諸院諸宮諸王臣家使.

exchange began to occur even before government or official trade was conducted.³¹⁶ Also, distinctions developed regarding the way different merchants were treated. In general, Silla merchants were dealt with more strictly than Tang merchants, perhaps because of several sour encounters with certain Koreans who had come to Japan.³¹⁷ Eventually, Korean merchants were not allowed to stay at Kôrokan, exchange was often hastily concluded, and the merchants themselves were sent back to Silla as soon as their transactions were completed (Mori Katsumi 1935:710-11).

Nevertheless, there is some evidence indicating that restrictions on private trade with Korean merchants loosened somewhat over time (Mori Katsumi 1935:711). On three different occasions, the treatment of Silla merchants was gradually relaxed – or, I should say, the attempts to control their trade transactions were eased. In 831, private trade transactions were carried out with Korean merchants as described above; that is, in line with price regulations that were set and supervised by the government and allowed only after the government had completed its own purchases. However, ten years later in 841, the primary sources describe another set of trade transactions with Korean merchants, but on this occasion there is no mention whatsoever of government purchases. The primary sources merely state that private exchange was allowed under the pricing supervision of the government. Then, on the third occasion, which was in the following year of 842, the Council of State spelled out a new policy in which Koreans

³¹⁶ Government / official trade: 官貿易.

arriving on Japanese shores were allowed to carry out private transactions before being sent back to Korea.³¹⁸ On this last occasion there is no mention of government control of market prices or even of government trade preceding the private transactions (See Chart 10 below). One might, therefore, assume that the central government gradually loosened its grip on trade with Silla between 831 and 842 (Mori Katsumi 1935:711; Tajima 2001:50-51).

Mori Katsumi is suspicious of this conclusion, believing that the central government would never allow valuable mainland goods to enter the country without maintaining its right to make initial purchases. He suggests that full details of the transactions were simply abbreviated in the official accounts. I agree. More evidence is warranted before concluding that treatment of Korean merchants became more relaxed in the first part of the ninth century. There are examples of government supervision of trade on occasions after 842, but these involved Tang merchants (Mori Katsumi 1935:712). It is, of course, possible that controls were retained for Tang traders, while restrictions involving Korean traders were loosened. This seems unlikely, however.

At the very least, the tendency of the Court was to deny Silla missions diplomatic acknowledgment but to allow private trade. Nowhere is this more telling than in the case of the famous adventurer and merchant-prince, Chang Pogo 張宝高 from 840-841.³¹⁹ Chang Pogo was an influential merchant from Silla who

³¹⁷ One example is the case of Chang Pogo 張宝高, which is recorded in the *Shoku Nihon Kōki* 続日本後紀 10. See Chart 2 below.

³¹⁸ Council of State: 太政官.

³¹⁹ Zhang Baogao in Chinese and Chōhōkō in Japanese.

most likely came to Japan seeking direct tributary exchange with the government.³²⁰ He was denied diplomatic intercourse, but was allowed to trade his goods privately (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:343).

4.3 SILLA MERCHANTS

The role of the Koreans in the promotion of maritime commerce must not be overlooked. Silla merchants were the first to arrive in Kyushu in significant numbers. The activities of Korean natives such as Chang Pogo helped establish a three-way trade between Japan, Tang, and Silla that flourished from around the first half of the ninth century (Wu 1999:96-7; Kamei 1992:140).

Edwin Reischauer has suggested that the Koreans were active players in the early stages of what he describes as a long period of world maritime commerce—a period we are still experiencing (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:274).³²¹ While there were perhaps large communities of Persian and Arab traders residing in Canton and Yangzhou, it was the Koreans who were responsible for transporting the goods brought by the west Asians further north and east, i.e. to the northeastern shores of China, Korea, and Japan (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:276).

Silla merchant activity correlates to events following the 764 death of a Silla

³²⁰ Entries in the *Shoku Nihon Kōki* from both 840:9:20 and 841:2:27 discuss Chang trading with the Japanese, but the first mentions that he dispatches an envoy to Dazaifu to offer tribute to the Japanese Court (Both entries discuss the Court's subsequent refusal of this tribute). It thus seems likely that Chang traded with the Japanese through proxy and that he himself did not sail to Japan (see Tajima 2001:48-9).

³²¹ See footnote No. 336 Below.

king. A large rebellion broke out during the reign of King Hyegong (765-780).³²² For several decades, revolts, overthrows, and natural disasters became commonplace, and there was even an assassination of a sovereign. Many of these disturbances occurred on the southwestern shore of the Korean peninsula where the people were involved in a maritime lifestyle. Some in this region turned to piracy, but other residents immigrated to the eastern shores of China; still others came to Japan (Wu 1999:102-3).³²³ The Korean people who immigrated to China—especially to the Shandong Peninsula—were the group primarily responsible for establishing the trade network that crisscrossed the East China and Yellow Seas. They were the most prominent players in the Tang/Japan trade until at least the middle of the ninth century, when they were replaced by Tang merchants (Kamei 1992:140).

The *Shoku Nihongi* refers to what may have been the first trip to Japan by Silla merchants. It records an exchange that took place in 768 (Wu 1999:96-7).³²⁴ Before this date, primary sources indicate that all trade with Silla was through diplomatic representatives sent either to or from the peninsula. The 768 encounter, however, likely involved a merchant vessel because, even though an exchange of goods was recorded, there is no extant record of a Silla mission coming to Japan during this year. The Japanese high officials³²⁵ involved in the 768 trade transactions, were thus trading—not with Silla diplomats—but rather with Silla

³²² Silla civilization seems to have peaked during the reign of King Kyôngdôk who reigned from 742 to 765 (Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, 1984:92).

³²³ Also see 李炳曾 article in *Shigaku Nenpô* [史学年報] 8、1993.

³²⁴ *Shoku Nihongi* [続日本紀] 第二十九卷、神護景雲2年（768）冬10月の条。

³²⁵ High officials: 高官.

merchants (Wu 1999:97; Lee 1997:174-5).

The 768 example from the *Shoku Nihongi* is still disputed by some. The first clear example of trade with Silla merchants comes from a reference in the *Nihon Kôki* to an event in 814.³²⁶ This is just one of the several sources that describe Silla merchants coming to Japan during the early to mid-ninth century (see Wu 1999:98).

The dates of these merchant arrivals are as follows:

**CHART TEN:
THE 9TH CENTURY ARRIVAL OF SILLA MERCHANTS IN JAPAN³²⁷**

MERCHANT NAME	TEXTS	DATE OF ARRIVAL IN JAPAN
Thirty-one Korean merchants drifted ashore at Nagato province 長門国.	<i>Nihon Kôki</i> 「日本後紀」	814:10:13
Chang Ch'un 張春 and thirteen other Koreans arrived at Dazaifu and presented four donkeys to the authorities.	<i>Nihon Kiryaku</i> 「日本紀略」	818:1:13
Wang Ch'ông 王請 and other merchants apparently arrived with Zhang Jueji 張覺濟 and his brother from Tang; their vessel drifted ashore at Dewa province ³²⁸	<i>Nittô Guhō Junrei Kôki</i> 「入唐求法巡礼行記」 839:1:8 <i>Nihon Kiryaku</i> 「日本紀略」 819:6:16 (This text may, in fact, describe a separate voyage involving Zhou Guanghan 周光翰, a Tang merchant described below.)	819
Lee Changhaeng 李長行 and others; they also brought goats, sheep and geese as gifts.	<i>Nihon Kiryaku</i> 「日本紀略」	820:5:4

³²⁶ There is still a great deal of conjecture concerning the 768 date. The discussion of the 814 date is found in the *Nihon Kôki*.

³²⁷ Information for this chart is taken primarily from two sources: Wu (1999:98) and C1(2).

³²⁸ Dewa province 出羽国.

Chang Pogo 張宝高. After departing Japan, Chang returned to Tang rather than Korea. He most likely traveled to Japan from Tang.	<i>Nittô Guhō Junrei Kōki</i> 「入唐求法巡礼行記」 845:9:22	824
Names unknown. Upon arrival, a Dazaifu official first purchased applicable items 適用之物 and forwarded them to the capital. Private trade was then permitted under the watchful eye of this official.	<i>Ruijū Sandai Kaku</i> 「類聚三代格」 Vol. 18	831:9:7
Names unknown. The Kannon temple at Dazaifu requested that the monk Eun 惠運 purchase copper bowls and other items from Korean merchants. (I assume this purchase was made at Dazaifu.)	<i>Anjōji Garan Engi Shizaichō</i> 「安祥寺伽藍縁起資財帳」, <i>Heian Ibun</i> 「平安遺文」 1-164.	833?
Names unknown. A single trade mission from Silla is not recorded for this year, rather the primary sources record that 330 people were ordered to secure shoreline defenses at 14 spots on Iki island in response to Silla merchants who had been continuously arriving at Iki over the previous several years.	<i>Shoku Nihon Kōki</i> 「続日本後紀」	835 and earlier
Chang Pogo 張宝高. At least the first of two entries from the <i>Shoku Nihon Kōki</i> (840:9:20 and 841:2:27) describes Chang dispatching an envoy to Dazaifu; it is thus probable that he himself did not sail to Japan during these years. Chang's trade was carried	<i>Shoku Nihon Kōki</i> 「続日本後紀」	840-841

out through proxy by his subordinate, Lee Ch'ung 李忠. Chang did, however, come to Japan in 824 (see above).		
It is unclear if any merchant arrived to trade in this year, but on 842:8:15 the Council of State ³²⁹ decreed that any Korean coming ashore would be given supplies and allowed to trade the goods that he brought before being sent back to Korea. He would not, however, be allowed to stay at Kôrokan Tajima 2001:50-51).	<i>Ruijû Sandai Kaku</i> 「類聚三代格」 Vol. 18	842
Chang Kongch'ông 張公靖 with 26 others. Vessel departed from the Chuzhou district ³³⁰ in China and landed at Nagato province. ³³¹ This ship was not merely on a mission of trade—it was in fact carrying several Japanese monks of the Tendai sect who had been studying in China. Among these was Ensai's younger brother, Ninkô 仁好.	<i>Shoku Nihon Kôki</i> 「続日本後紀」 <i>Nittô Guhō Junrei Kôki</i> 「入唐求法巡礼行記」 843:12 & 844:2	843:12:9
Kim Chin 金珍 along with 44 others and Jiang Chang 江長 from Tang. This is also the vessel on which Ennin returned to Japan. Vessel departed from the Suzhou district ³³² and landed at Shikajima, Hizen.	<i>Nittô Guhō Junrei Kôki</i>	847

³²⁹ Council of State 太政官.

³³⁰ Chuzhou district 楚州.

³³¹ Nagato province 長門国.

The chart shows that, even at this early stage of trade, Tang merchants sailed onboard some of the Korean vessels, and in each of the three cases where some details of the voyages are known, i.e. the 819, 843 and 847 arrivals, the ships departed from China rather than the Korean peninsula. This supports the assumption that the Koreans were expatriates residing on Chinese shores.

Ennin's diary suggests that there were a large number of Koreans in the Tang capital, many of whom had worked their way up through society and even served at the Imperial Court.³³³ Some of these people may have been descendants of the Paekche and Koguryô aristocracy, transplanted at the end of the seventh century when Silla unified the peninsula. No doubt a great number of these were scholars, courtiers, and monks who came to China as part of the many embassies sent to the Tang capital. Korea dispatched embassies to Tang far more often than Japan. For example, forty-five Korean missions visited Tang during the 36-year period between 703 and 738 (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:277).

There were Koreans living outside the Chinese capital as well. Merchant communities had settled along the southern shore of the Shandong Peninsula and the mouth of the Huai River (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:281). Evidence suggests that these communities were permanent settlements. Some of the Koreans had become farmers, and in certain cases had, over the generations, lost the ability to understand the Korean language. A particularly large community

³³² Suzhou district 蘇州.

³³³ Gao Xianzhi (Kao Hsien-chih) may have been the most renowned Korean to serve in the Tang Imperial Court. In 747 he led a Chinese army of 10,000 to defeat Tibetan and Arab armies to the west. This is the same general who led his army to defeat by the Arabs in 751 at the famous battle of Talas (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:277).

resided in the city of Chuzhou, perhaps the most important port for the maritime trade conducted with Korea and Japan. Ennin reported that sixty Koreans residing in Chuzhou were asked to man the nine vessels that members of the Japanese mission hired for their return voyage to Japan in 839. Chuzhou city was positioned at the point where the Grand Canal met the Huai River. It was far enough downriver to be reached by ocean vessels. These vessels exchanged or transferred goods with smaller vessels coming along the canal from Yangzhou and the Yangzi river system as well as with those arriving from the capital along the upper Huai and Bian 汴河 Rivers.

A number of the Korean communities were allowed to conduct their own affairs autonomously (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:284). Despite some losing their language, the immigrants kept many of their customs and celebrated traditional Korean holidays. This may help explain why Korean ships were so active off the Chinese coast. In fact, Ennin discovered that the vast majority of the ships trading among Japan, Korea, and China were manned by Koreans (p.286).

By the middle of the ninth century, Tang merchants crossing the seas to Japan outnumbered those from Silla. From 842 until 900, there were twenty-two or more voyages to Japan by Tang merchants (Yanagida 1988:88-9). Why did Tang merchants replace those from Silla? Wu notes that the Japanese government cracked down on Silla merchants, possibly as a result of upheavals occurring in Korea and because of what they believed was the unsavory nature of some who came to Japan in order to flee these upheavals. For example, in 820, seven hundred Koreans who had been settled far to the east in Tôtômi and Suruga provinces,

rebelled against authorities there.³³⁴ They took grain from the province of Izu 伊豆国 and fled to the sea. Forces from seven different provinces were sent in pursuit (Tajima 2001:40; Wu 1999:104).³³⁵ After this event, the Japanese adopted the policy of returning Silla people to Korea. We see an example of this policy being enforced when the entire crew of an 834 Silla shipwreck was repatriated.

Pirate activity may be another reason accounting for the supplanting of Korean merchants by merchants from Tang. Pirates from Silla began to raid Kyushu from the latter half of the ninth century (Saeki 1992:37). Perhaps the banning of Silla merchants from entry to Kôrokan was a result of these raids. At any rate, a stricter policy regarding the Koreans must have discouraged potential maritime merchants. Afterwards, Tang merchants gradually came to replace their Korean counterparts (Wu 1999:105).³³⁶

4.4 TANG MERCHANTS

The wealth of the Tang Empire inspired Arab and Persian traders to navigate around India and the Malay Peninsula to reach the shores of China. But the Chinese themselves were not particularly active in the initial few centuries of maritime navigation (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:274).³³⁷ The first Tang merchants to come to Japan arrived on Silla ships and/or they accompanied

³³⁴ Tôôtomi 遠江; Suruga 駿河, which together comprise present-day Shizuoka prefecture.

³³⁵ See this in *Nihon Isshi* 「日本逸史」 Vol. 28、820:2 (Wu 1999:104) and *Nihon Kiryaku* entry for 820:2:13 (Tajima 2001:40).

³³⁶ Top of page 105 about replacement of Silla by Tang merchants.

³³⁷ Reischauer suggests the beginning of the modern period of world history in a broad sense may be dated to the growth of world trade during the Tang period. He sees the

Japanese individuals returning to Japan from Tang.³³⁸ The first such known cases of Tang merchants coming to Japan were in 819. There is a record in an 819 entry of the *Nihon Kiryaku* 日本記略 that refers to Zhou Guanghan 周光翰. Zhou sailed to Japan on a Silla vessel (see chart above) but accompanied a Bohai envoy when he returned to the continent (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:142).

And in an 839 entry in Ennin's *The Record of a Pilgrimage to Tang in Search of the Law* (*Nittô Guhō Junrei Gyōki*) 入唐求法巡礼行記, a voyage to Japan twenty years prior (i.e., 819) is described by a Tang merchant by the name of Zhang Jueji 張覺濟. Zhang and others sailed with a Korean by the name of Wang Ch'ông 王請. This voyage may, perhaps, be the same one referred to in the *Nihon Kiryaku* entry of 819; in either case, however, it seems safe to conclude that this journey was onboard a Silla vessel as well.

The entry by Ennin has been rendered into English by Edwin Reischauer:

[839: 1st moon; 9th day] A Korean, Wang Ch'ông 王請, came, and we met. He was a man who had been on the same boat with the Chinese Zhang Jueji (Chang Chüeh-chi [sic]) 張覺濟 and others who drifted to the Province of Dewa [sic] (Province of Deshû 出州国) in the tenth year of the Japanese [year of] Kônin 弘仁 (819).³³⁹ When we asked him the

mastering of the seas by Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as the start of a significant sub-period of world trade (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:275).

³³⁸ Many of these Japanese sailed on Silla vessels (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:143).

³³⁹ This may or may not be Dewa in the northwestern province of Honshû. If so, then it seems odd that the ship drifted southward. The *Nihon Kiryaku* informs us that about this same time twenty Chinese did drift to Dewa. However, it also records that there were some Chinese who came to Japan (to Kyûshû?) on a ship in 819 (Reschauer

circumstances of his having drifted there, he said that in order to trade various goods, they left here (China) and crossed the seas, but that suddenly they encountered evil winds and drifted southward for three moons, drifting ashore in the Province of Dewa [sic]. When they were about to leave, Zhang Jueji and his brother together deserted and stayed in Dewa [sic]. [The others] set out from northern Dewa [sic] on the "north sea," and with favorable winds drifted to the province of Nagato in fifteen days. [Wang Ch'ông] understands the Japanese language very well. (Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary* 1955:70)

From this we find Tang merchants dependant upon Silla mariners for their voyages to Japan. In fact, Wang Ch'ông is the very same Korean described above in Chart 10 as being one of the first known Korean merchants to come to Japan in the ninth century. Thus, from the initial period of private maritime exchange in the Eastern seas, the Chinese and Koreans accompanied each other and, as we shall see below, Tang merchants sailed in the company of Japanese and Bohai travelers as well.

When did the first Tang vessels come to Japan? Mori Katsumi believes that, even though the trade was not officially sanctioned by the Japanese government, Tang merchant ships began coming to Japan during the reign of Emperor Nimmyô (834-848) (Mori Katsumi 1935:709). Some scholars have pinpointed the initial arrival date as the ninth year of Shôwa or 842 (Kamei 1992:140; Mori Kimiyuki

1955:70). It is unclear which, if either, of these events is the one described here by Wang Ch'ông.

1998:142). While the ship captain's name is unknown, this Tang vessel was the same ship upon which a merchant by the name of Li Churen 李処人 sailed (see Chart 11).³⁴⁰ After Li's ship made the crossing to Kyushu, Tang ships came to Japan frequently. Zhang Youxin 張友信, for instance, sailed to Japan five years later in 847 ((Mori Kimiyuki 1998:142).³⁴¹ And from 853, Li Yanxiao 李延孝 made several voyages to and from Japan. In fact, from 819 to 903, as many as forty merchant vessels came to Japan with Chinese onboard (Wu 1999:101). These voyages became particularly common after the return of the last official kentôshi mission to Tang (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:142).

These are the known Tang merchants who sailed to Japan in the ninth century:

**CHART ELEVEN:
THE 9TH CENTURY ARRIVAL OF TANG MERCHANTS IN JAPAN**

MERCHANT NAME	TEXT	DATE OF ARRIVAL IN JAPAN ³⁴²
Zhou Guanghan 周光翰 and Yan Shengze 言升則. (Arrived on a Silla ship, see chart above) (Departed from the Yuezhou district ³⁴³)	<i>Nihon Kiryaku</i> 日本紀略	819:6:16
Zhang Jueji 張覺濟.	<i>Nittô Guhō Junrei Kōki</i> 入唐求	819

³⁴⁰ Information about this voyage is recorded in *Heian Ibun* 平安遺文 164.

³⁴¹ Wu says this first voyage took place in 841 (Wu 1999:104).

³⁴² Go to Mori Kimiyuki (1998:144-5).

³⁴³ Yuezhou district 越州.

Shipwrecked at Dewa province with people from Silla; this may have been the same voyage as the one above. (Departed from the Yangzhou district. ³⁴⁴)	法巡礼行記 (Entry from 839:1:8) ³⁴⁵	
Zhou Guanghan 周光翰 and Yan Shengze 言升則. Accompanied a Bohai envoy home. (Departed from the Yangzhou district.)	<i>Nihon Kiryaku</i> 日本紀略	820:1:22
Li Shaozhen 李少貞 and 19 others drifted ashore at Dewa province.	<i>Nihon Kiryaku</i> 日本紀略	820:4:27
Zhang Jiming 張繼明.	<i>Shoku Nihon Kôki</i> 続日本後紀	834:3:16 (承和元年)
Zhen Gudao 沈古道	<i>Montoku Jitsuroku</i> 文德実録 (852:12:22)	838
No names are given, but the <i>Montoku Jitsuroku</i> records that goods brought by Chinese were inspected by an official at Dazaifu.	<i>Montoku Jitsuroku</i> 文德実録 (851:9:26)	838-844
Li Churen 李処人 (Kamei (1986:25) says this was Li Linde 李隣徳) ³⁴⁶	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 164 平安遺文	842:5:5
Zhang Youxin 張友信 and 46 others. (Departed from	<i>Shoku Nihon Kôki</i> 続日本後紀	847:7:8

³⁴⁴ Yangzhou district 揚州.

³⁴⁵ See Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary*, 1955:70 for an English translation of this entry.

³⁴⁶ This may, in fact, be the first Tang merchant vessel to come to Japan (see the discussion above). It seems likely that the individuals coming to Japan before this date traveled on either Korean or Bohai ships (Kamei 1992:140; (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:142).

Mingzhou district.)		
53 Tang merchants came to Dazaifu.	<i>Shoku Nihon Kôki</i> 続日本後紀	849:8:4 (嘉祥2年)
Xu Gongyou 徐公祐. (Departed from the Suzhou district. ³⁴⁷)	<i>Kôya Zatsu Hisshû</i> 高野雜筆集 付収	849:12(intercalary):24
Cui Sheng 崔勝, who became a naturalized Japanese (帰化).	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i> 三代実録 (877:6:9)	849
Zhang Youxin 張友信.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4492	852:2 (仁寿2年)
Wang Zhao 王超、Li Yanxiao 李延孝. ³⁴⁸	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 102-110	853:7:15
Li Yanxiao 李延孝.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 103-109	853:12
Zhan Jingquan 詹景全, Liu Shixian 劉仕猷、Li Yanxiao 李延孝、Li Yingjue 李英覺.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 124-127	856:3:9 (齊衡3年)
Li Yanxiao 李延孝, Zhan Jingquan 詹景全, Gao Feng 高奉、Cai Fu 蔡輔、Li Da 李達.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4492	858:6:8 (天安2年)
Li Yanzun 李延存.	<i>Nittô Gokaden</i> 入唐五家伝	861:8:9 (貞觀3年)
Zhang Youxin 張友信, Jin Wenxi 金文習, Ren Zhongyuan 任仲元.	<i>Nittô Gokaden</i> 入唐五家伝	862:7
Li Yanxiao 李延孝 and 42 others.	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i> 三代実録	862:7:23
Chen Daixin 陳泰信.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4539	863:1:4
Zhan Jingquan 詹景全, Xu Gongzhi 徐公直、Li Da 李達.	<i>Nittô Gokaden</i> 入唐五家伝	863:4
This may be the	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4541, 4542, 4588-90	863:8:4

³⁴⁷ Suzhou district 蘇州.

³⁴⁸ Wu believes he was from Bohai rather than Tang.

same voyage as above, but the date for the month is different.		
Zhan Jingquan 詹景全.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4541,4542	864
Li Yanxiao 李延孝 and 62 others, Ren Zhongyuan 任仲元.	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i> 三代実録, 入唐五家伝	865:7:27
Zhan Jingquan 詹景全.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4541,4542	865
Ren Zhongyuan 任仲元.	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i>	866:5:21
Zhang Yan 張言 and 40 others.	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i>	866:10:3
Zhan Jingquan 詹景全.	<i>Jimon Denki Horoku</i> 寺門伝記補録	867
Cui Ji 崔岌.	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i>	874:7:18
Yang Jing 楊清.	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i>	876:8:3
Cui Yi 崔鐸.	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i>	877:8:22 (元慶元年)
Luo Hanzhong 駱漢中.	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i>	877:12:21
Li Yanxiao 李延孝, Zhan Jingquan 詹景全.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4541,4542	877
Li Da 李達、Zhang Meng 張蒙.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4541,4542	881
Li Da 李達	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4541,4542	882:7:5
Names not specified, only noted that merchants were from Tang	<i>Sandai Jitsuroku</i>	885:10:20 (仁和元年)
Merchant names are not given, but they delivered 50 sutras to Enchin. In gratitude, the merchants were given gold dust.	<i>Heian Ibun</i> 4548	886:6:7
Wang Na 王訥	菅家文草卷9, 10	893:3 (寛平5年)
Li Huai 梨懷	<i>Nihon Kiryaku</i> 日本紀略	896:3:4

As time passed, Tang and Song maritime merchants began to pass their trading knowledge and skills to sons who set out on their own journeys to Japan. For example, Lin Yang 林養 later taught the trade to his son, Lin Gao 林皐 (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:143). This relationship is described in the 1072:3:22 entry of Jōjin's *San Tendai Godai Sanki* 参天台五台山記, which records the son as having sailed in this year (i.e., 1072).

This was also the case with the Chinese merchants Zhou Wende 周文德 and Zhang Chengfu 章承輔. These two married Japanese women while in Japan, and their respective spouses gave birth to sons (Zhou Liangshi 周良史 and Zhang Renchang 章仁昶 respectively) (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:143). These sons carried on their fathers' occupation; i.e., trade between Japan and China. One might suspect, however, that sailing to and from Kyushu from the mainland held greater significance for offspring who were tied to Japan as the land of their maternal relatives.³⁴⁹

Tang sailors often waited six months or more for favorable winds for their return journeys. During these times, Kōrokan became an essential facility for the Tang merchants because it provided free room and board (Kamei 1992:140).³⁵⁰ This was offered to these merchants even though they were private traders not affiliated

³⁴⁹ Mori Kimiyuki has suggested that there may have been a familial relationship between the merchants Li Churen 李处人 and Li Yanxiao 李延孝 and the merchants Cui Ji 崔岌 and Cui Yi 崔鐸 (Mori Kimiyuki 1998:143). The voyages of the latter pair were only three years apart (874 and 877).

³⁵⁰ 「安置供給」 (Kamei 1992:140).

in any official capacity with the Tang government.³⁵¹ Unfortunately, there are no primary sources that clearly outline the origins of this policy at Kôrokan.³⁵²

4.5 BOHAI EXCHANGE

I have discussed the fact that Silla and Tang merchants were the most common merchants sailing the East China and Yellow Seas to and from Kyushu during the ninth century. Some of them made the crossing to Japan numerous times, and eventually, in at least three cases, the sons of Chinese traders followed in their father's footsteps and adopted maritime trade as a family occupation.

The overall number of Bohai (Parhae) and Japanese merchants, however, was limited (Wu 1999:101). There are very few Bohai merchants named in the extant literature who came to Dazaifu and there is disagreement regarding whether or not these few merchants were even from Bohai.³⁵³ Most of the Bohai exchange took place further north across the Sea of Japan.³⁵⁴ There is one mention by Ennin of a "Bohai merchant vessel" anchored near the tip of the Shandong Peninsula in the fall of 839 (Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels* 1955:280-81).

As noted above, the official tributary trade between Japan and Silla gave way to trade conducted by private merchants who incorporated northern Kyushu into

³⁵¹ In the sixth month of 858, for example, the monk Enchin 円珍 returned from Tang and encountered guests from Tang staying at Kôrokan (Kamei 1988:15).

³⁵² But they may have been treated as naturalized citizens 帰化人. For more on this, see (Kamei 1992:140).

³⁵³ Wu, for example, suggests that Li Yanxiao 李延孝 and Li Ying 李英 were from Bohai. Others believe the two are from Tang, including Mori Kimiyuki (see Mori Kimiyuki 1998:143).

³⁵⁴ Bohai envoys usually landed on the Japan Sea side of Honshu and never entered Dazaifu.

their economic trade sphere. Bohai, however, had no private merchants who could effectively conduct the level of exchange carried out by the official envoys. And because trade with Bohai took place primarily in the Japanese capital rather than Kyushu, the continued involvement of official envoys was necessitated. Only official envoys were granted access to the capital (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:346). The government of Bohai thus relied upon their official embassies to fulfill their trading needs and these missions remained an intricate part of the exchange between their country and Japan.³⁵⁵

Perhaps the low numbers of Bohai merchants may also be explained by the attitude of the Japanese government towards Bohai people coming to Japan. On New Year's Day in 772, a Bohai embassy of 320 people arrived to present gifts to the Japanese emperor. But the Japanese took offense when they noticed that the letter from the Bohai sovereign was signed with *tenson* 天孫, rather than the name and title of the sovereign (Okladnikov 1965:191).³⁵⁶ The ambassador, I Wan-fu, had to rewrite the letter before the Japanese Court was placated.³⁵⁷ And in 828, the Bohai embassy was not allowed into the capital and was told that thereafter, missions should not come more than once every ten years.³⁵⁸ But even after this, ten additional official missions from Bohai were sent to Japan before the last one, which departed Bohai in 919 AD (Yanagida 1988:81-2).

³⁵⁵ (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:346)

³⁵⁶ *Tenson* 天孫, literally means "descendant of heaven" and was used in Japan to refer to Ninigi-no-mikoto, the grandson of the Japanese sun goddess, Amaterasu-ô-mikami.

³⁵⁷ Another version of this story is that some of the characters belonging to the Japanese emperor's ancestors were placed near the end of a list of rank designations (Okladnikov 1965:191).

4.6. JAPANESE MERCHANTS

In Chapter Two I addressed early Japanese maritime activity, vessel construction, and navigational skills. Significant maritime travel undoubtedly began during the Yayoi period. The Yayoi people had a partially agricultural, partially fishing life-style (Kômoto Masayuki 1979:1; Fuqua 1996:88). Traveling far in pursuit of migratory fish, they came into proximity with fishermen from other regions. These encounters facilitated the spread of knowledge and the exchange of resources (Fuqua 1996:88). They also accounted for a great deal of the intercommunication across water.

Because Japan comprises many islands, one would suppose that by the Nara and Heian periods, the Japanese would have been the most adept mariners sailing the seas between Japan and the continent. They, after all, had to use the sea to travel throughout their domain – something the Koreans and Chinese could avoid. However, Japanese maritime prowess was seemingly not as highly developed as that of Japan's neighbors, and by the ninth century even the Koreans proved themselves more adept at maritime travel.

There are a number of places in the *Nihon Shoki* with entries describing fishers or people who harvested the resources of the sea. The term *kaijin* 海人 is most often used, but there is also an entry with different characters, which is read

³⁵⁸ See Wu (1999:101) for more regarding the low numbers of Bohai (and Japanese) merchants.

as *ama* 白水郎 (Sugiyama book 1981, p.41).³⁵⁹ *Kaijin* can be rendered in English literally as “ocean people.” The exact origin and meaning of the second set of characters is unclear. I assume the characters were originally read differently—the absence of at least one additional syllable is odd—but I suggest that this second name can be rendered in English to mean “common (or ordinary) water people.” Perhaps this is a commentary on the relative status of these people vis-à-vis the elite.

There are only three significant references regarding private Japanese merchants in the extant literature of the ninth century (Wu 1999:101). Two of these references are in *The Record of a Pilgrimage to Tang in Search of the Law* (*Nittô Guhô Junrei Gyôki*). The first is the entry for the 10th day of the third intercalary month of 847, which refers to an individual named Kamioi 神御井 (Wu 1999:101).³⁶⁰ The passage has been rendered into English by Reischauer as follows: “We conferred about going to Mingzhou to catch the ship of the Japanese Kamioi and the others in order to return home” (Reischauer, *Ennin’s Diary* 1955:395). The second reference is from the entry for the ninth day of the sixth month of the same year. Here three individuals are mentioned by name: Shuntarô 春太郎, his son Munetake 宗健, and Shin’ichirô 神一郎.³⁶¹ Reischauer translated this entry as follows:

³⁵⁹ Despite the fact that these two sets of characters differ (海人、白水郎), they are sometimes read the same way. The characters 海人 are alternately read *kaijin* and *ama* in Japanese.

³⁶⁰ Reischauer suggests that the name Kamioi is either a corruption or an abbreviation of the full name (Reischauer, *Ennin’s Diary* 1955:395). Tôno Haruyuki writes the name as 大神御井 and reads it as Ômiwa no Mii (Tôno 1999:139).

³⁶¹ Here again, Reischauer suggests that the names are either abbreviations or they are the given names minus surnames (Reischauer, *Ennin’s Diary* 1955:398).

...Shuntarô 春太郎 and Shin'ichirô 神一郎 and the others were returning to their homeland on board the ship of Zhang Zhixin [sic: Chang Chih-hsin] 張支信 of Mingzhou [sic: Ming-chou], and when [the messenger] was coming here, word was received that they had started. Shuntarô originally had intended to hire this ship to return home on, but after he had gone to Guangzhou [sic: Kuang-chou], Shin'ichirô gave money to Zhang Zhixin, so Shuntarô left on the Mingzhou ship. Shuntarô's son Munetake 宗健 moreover had the [characters unclear here] thing and was now on this ship.

(*Ennin's Diary* 1955:398).

It is assumed that the Japanese mentioned in these two passages were merchants. The latter three hired a Tang vessel for transportation, while Kamioi possessed his own ship. There is some doubt, however, regarding the occupations of the three individuals referred to in the second entry. Wu believes they were Japanese traders, but Reischauer suggests they may simply have been Japanese laymen who accompanied the Buddhist priest Shôkai to China (Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary* 1955:n398).

There is one more significant reference to a Japanese merchant in extant ninth century texts, which may also refer to Kamioi. The *Sandai Jitsuroku* 三代実録 describes an individual by the name of Ômi no Mii 大神已井 (Wu 1999:101). It is likely that this person is actually Kamioi. Ômi no Mii was sent in 874 as part of a *nittôshi* 入唐使, or mission to Tang that was purely economic in nature. This

mission was dispatched by Japanese elites rather than the Court itself and was not diplomatically tied to either the Japanese or Tang Courts. Indeed, this is a case where the term *nittôshi* refers to an unofficial mission having no diplomatic duties, rather than to an official mission.

This *nittôshi* comprised a few men sent aboard a Chinese vessel in order to travel to the continent and buy items such as spice and medicines. Ômi no Mii was a member of this entourage.³⁶² He was sent by Fujiwara no Yamakage 藤原山陰, a *sangi* 参議 or Court Consultant who wanted to obtain sandalwood 白檀 in order to construct a statue of the god Kannon (Tôno 1999:139). Kamioi returned to Japan with the requested raw materials in 877. This mission to China demonstrates how strong the demand for continental goods remained, despite an apparent lack of desire to pursue official diplomatic exchange between the Courts.

Why were Japanese merchants not more prominently involved in the eighth to ninth century trade with the continent? Wu has suggested that the growth of a Japanese merchant class was thwarted by the Japanese government, but she does not explain how or why (Wu 1999:106). I believe that the Japanese were either unable or unwilling to construct large private vessels. Perhaps the success of the Korean and Tang merchants made it difficult for the Japanese to enter into and compete in this maritime trade network. Whatever the reason, most of the continental goods brought to Japan through private merchants were carried by residents of the continent.

³⁶² If this Ômi no Mii was indeed Kamioi, then he had his own vessel. It is thus unclear why he boarded a Chinese ship.

4.7 OTHER POSSIBLE MARINERS OF THE EAST ASIAN SEAS: *KAIFU* AND *EBUNE/SHA*

People who live and move about on boats have historically populated a huge area in Asia extending from Japan to the southern Chinese coast, from the Indo-Chinese peninsula to the Malay peninsula, and from Indonesian islands such as Sumatra and Java to the Philippines (Noguchi 1992:389).

In Japan there is a long history of people living on boats, but few Western historians are familiar with the history of Japanese “boat people.” As discussed above, texts from the ancient period of Japanese history comment on people known as the *ama*.³⁶³ The *ama* fished and gained their livelihood from the sea and probably resided on Japanese shores. Historical texts also describe people who lived on boats³⁶⁴ and dove into the sea for their livelihood. *Kaifu* 海夫 is another primary source term that denotes a person or persons who lived on boats on the lakes and seas and participated in fishing and/or the transportation of goods (*Kokushi Daijiten* 2000:93). This term is found in both ancient and medieval texts. The first historical reference to *kaifu* is from an entry for 997:10:1 in the text *Shôyûki* 小右記. In this text they are referred to specifically as “*kaifu* of the country’s islands” 国嶋海夫 and so I assume they were ubiquitous in Japanese waters.³⁶⁵ In the middle ages, the *kaifu* were claimed as the property of the feudal

³⁶³ In addition to the characters introduced above, *ama* is also written alternately as 海女, 海人, and 海士.

³⁶⁴ Funazumai 船住い.

³⁶⁵ This passage is located in Vol 2 of *Shôyûki* 小右記.

lords and were transferred, bought, and sold (*Kokushi Daijiten* 2000:93).

Primary sources of the medieval period also use the term *hyôkaimin* 漂海民 or “ocean-wandering people” in addition to *kaifu* to refer to boat people (Noguchi 1992: 389).³⁶⁶ The *hyôkaimin* are described as possessing no land or buildings. They lived as family units on small boats and moved about constantly in pursuit of maritime resources, which they bartered for agricultural goods and other necessities. It is unclear if or how they differed from the *kaifu*. I believe there is a probable connection between these different references in the ancient and medieval documents to people living on boats.³⁶⁷ However, none of these documents offers a great deal of detail about any of these various “boat people.”

In order to understand how these ancient and medieval people may have lived, it is best to consider an additional “boat people” from the Early Modern era who occupied the waters around Kyushu, Shikoku, and parts of the Seto Inland Sea from at least the end of the 17th century. These people, who lived their entire lives on water, are referred to as *ebune* 家船 in the primary sources, which provide a considerable amount of information about them. The first reference to the *ebune* is in the 1699 text *Nihon Shakumei* 日本釈名 (*Kokushi Daijiten* 2000:362). It reads:

Habitually living in boats as houses and not on the land,
they are commonly referred to as “*ebune*.” After they grow
old, they pass on the center of their boats to their children,

³⁶⁶ *Hyôkaimin* 漂海民 is also written 漂海漁民.

³⁶⁷ Some would place the Ama women of Notô and the Itôman of Okinawa into this group, but they possessed land and/or dwellings on land. The funazumai of the Seto Inland Sea and the *Ebune* of Kyushu, however, historically did not (Noguchi 1992:390).

and then retire to live towards the bow (*Kokushi Daijiten* 2000:362).

There are those who speculate that the *ebune* were remnants of the ancient *kaifu*. This remains unclear, but I find it probable.

The *ebune* were born and spent their entire lives on their boats. They continued this lifestyle well into the twentieth century, when ethnological studies by modern scholars such as Yanagita Kunio were carried out.³⁶⁸ Yanagita, the father of Japanese folklore studies, made observations of interest concerning this group of people. This research offers clues to understanding an additional type of maritime activity that historically took place in Japanese waters (see Solheim n.d.b: 3-4).

Even as late as the 1920's, boat people were still living in Japanese waters around the islands of the Seto Inland Sea and Nagasaki Prefecture. Most were located either in the Amabe-gun district of Ōita Prefecture or in Nagasaki Prefecture on the opposite side of Kyûshû (Yanagita 1976:94). Those in Nagasaki still called themselves *ebune*, which, perhaps because of its use in historical texts, has become the generic term for all "boat people" living in Japan (see 1990 edition of *Kôjien* 広辞苑). Nevertheless, those in Ōita called themselves *shaa* シャア rather than *ebune*.

³⁶⁸ These studies tell us that, from at least the Meiji period, the locations of the *ebune* children's births were listed on the government's family registers 戸籍 according to the particular bases at which the boats of birth were generally docked *funadamari* and by boat names 「〇〇番船にて誕生」(Noguchi 1992:391). The *ebune* deceased were interred at the *efunebaka* 家船墓, located near the bases where the boats generally docked.

In his study, Yanagita describes how entire family units of the *ebune* lived on boats, including parents, children, domestic animals, and domestic fowl (Yanagita 1976:94). Both genders were involved in the fishing activities and the mothers bore children on the boats.³⁶⁹ Those interviewed in the 1920s believed themselves to be the descendants of fugitive Heike who had been defeated in the famous sea battle of Dannoura in the late 12th century. Yanagita believed this to be a dubious claim (as do I), but thought that these people may have had a history of 2000 years or more (Yanagita 1976:96). As mentioned above, the first historical reference to *ebune* of which I am aware is in the 1699 *Nihon Shakumei* 日本釈名. However, some scholars believe there is evidence for the *ebune* from at least the 14th century (see Fukugata 1976:97-98), and, as suggested above, these people may have been a remnant of the *kaifu* people referred to in the 997 text, the *Shôyûki* 小右記.

The 20th-century people Yanagita studied were occupied in fishing and sold or bartered fish for food and clothing (Yanagita 1976:94). But one activity is particularly worthy of mention—those living near the coast of Ôita Prefecture were reportedly involved in trade between Ôita and Ehime Prefecture in Shikoku.

Boat people have managed to remain obscure in most discussions of Japanese history, despite the fact that they are mentioned in Heian and medieval texts.

³⁶⁹ Other examples of a culture uniquely different from the mainstream Japanese culture exist as well. One of these was the fact that *shaa* coming to Ôita villages were distinguished from land dwellers by the habit of carrying fish door to door for sale on their heads rather than in their arms or on their shoulders as land-based Japanese did. Another example concerns a fishing village that was set up by *shaa* who came onto the land to live. This became the village of Tsuru 津留, which was located in the northern part of Amabe-gun. These people remained culturally distinct from others in their region. They are described as being fierce and combative, and never married outside their own group.

Could they have been active in the waters between the Japanese islands during the time that culture was being imported from the mainland to Japan? Is it anachronistic to suggest that they were involved in transporting goods to and from Japan and the continent during the ninth century?

Wilhelm G. Solheim II has hypothesized the existence of a Nusantara Maritime Trading Network to explain the phenomenon of maritime cultural diffusion. He has proposed that a maritime network existed from Southeast Asia and South China to Korea and even Japan (Solheim 1984-5). He has described the people who were a part of this network as being of Southeast Asian origin, but they may have reached Kyûshû as early as 3000 B.C. (Solheim n.d.b:13). It seems at least possible that the *kaifu* and *ebune* of the ancient, medieval, and early-modern periods of Japanese history were the descendants (culturally, if not genetically) of these prehistoric maritime traders; and while I have, as yet, found no hard evidence that maritime “boat people” were directly involved in the importation of continental culture to the Japanese islands, they should be considered as possible promoters of cultural diffusion from Tang to Japan.³⁷⁰ But even though I deem it possible that the ancestors of the *ebune* or the *kaifu* may have had a hand in the transportation of goods to and from the continent, it must be remembered that Yanagita’s studies

³⁷⁰ One may argue that, even if boat people were living in the waters off Kyûshû during the time of the *kentôshi*, they would have been unable to sail their vessels very far. However, Yanagita studied an additional maritime people living in the 1920’s in a fishing village in Okinawa known as *Itomanchô* 糸満町. These people reportedly took small boats known as *henshû* as far south as Taiwan, west to China, and north to Ôshima of Kagoshima Prefecture (Yanagita 1976:95). These vessels were only wide enough for a single person and long enough for three, yet they traversed long distances. It was even reported that the Itôman people reached the shores of Chiba prefecture, near present-day Tokyo.

describe a culture from the early 20th century.³⁷¹

³⁷¹ Western historians and anthropologists have apparently not yet taken up the study of

CHAPTER 5

THE CERAMIC EXCHANGE WITH THE CONTINENT

Japan was brought into the East Asian maritime exchange network sometime during the later half of the eighth century (Ishii Masatoshi 1994:344). But what did the Japanese gain from becoming a part of this network? What types of goods were exchanged? The *Baishiragi no motsuge*, described in Chapter Three, is the most notable written record of the goods brought to Japan from the continent. These included incense and medicines from as far away as Arabia and Southeast Asia, crafts from China, and special products from Korea itself. The records left by the *Baishiragi no motsuge* and other primary sources are substantiated by the many Shôsô-in treasures, which were also discussed in Chapter 3. Together they give us a fairly accurate understanding of the sophisticated tastes of the Nara aristocracy.

In this section I shall consider certain aspects of the archaeological record. Archaeology corroborates a great deal of what we know from primary sources about the development of maritime trade between the continent and Kyushu, and the artifacts unearthed during excavations add to the wealth of knowledge already culled from primary sources and from examinations of the goods that were part of the Shôsô-in collection. I incorporate archaeology into this discussion to better elaborate on the tastes of the Japanese aristocracy, the scale of the trade that was taking place, and the extent to which this trade may have reached the lower levels

the *ebune/shaa* people.

of Japanese society.

A vast number of mainland goods have been recovered from Nara and Heian period sites. I would, however, like to focus on Tang ceramics, which was probably the most voluminous trade item of the time to be imported into Japan from the continent. Ceramic ware may serve to link the imperial trade conducted by the *kentôshi* and the private merchant trade that eventually came to replace it. The Tang Court likely presented ceramics to the diplomatic missions that brought tribute from their respective countries (Kamei 1986:26). This may, in fact, help explain the wide archaeological distribution of Tang ceramics throughout Asia—this and the fact that it became one of the major trade items brought by maritime merchants.

Evidence indicates that Chinese ceramics were first brought to Japan as private trade objects (as opposed to gift items obtained through imperial exchange) sometime around the end of the eighth century (Ikezaki and Morimoto, 1988:138). From this time until the first half of the ninth century, most of this trade was conducted by merchants from Silla. Then, as discussed above, from the second half of the ninth century Tang merchants played the more important role (Kamei 1992:131).

During the Nara period, Tang *sancai* 唐三彩 was the ceramics type that was in the greatest demand. The Chinese word *sancai* refers to the trichrome or three-color glaze applied to most—but not all—of these vessels. Sometimes only one

or two colors were applied.³⁷² Examples of these are preserved in the Shôshô-in.³⁷³

During the Heian period, Japanese tastes turned primarily to Tang celadon (Yabe 1982B:33). Those ceramics most commonly imported from Tang during the early and middle Heian periods were of three varieties.³⁷⁴ These three celadon types—each with different geographic origins—were Yue ceramics, a name that refers generally to a type of celadon fired throughout the Yue district in Zhejiang

³⁷² This is referred to as bichrome pottery or *ercai* 二彩 in Chinese.

³⁷³ Shôshô-in ceramics have been treated in English in an article by J.G. Figgess from 1961: "The Glazed Pottery in the Shôshô-in and its Place in Japanese Ceramic History" in *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Third series, Vol. 8, 1961). Figgess writes that there were 68 complete pieces of pottery in the Shôshô-in repository, as well as a small number of ceramic shards, including 6 shards from a green and white *tetsubachi*/teppatsu (iron bowl) and 5 shards from a two-color shallow utensil (Figgess 1961:142-3). Among the 68 complete pieces, 10 were covered Sueki jars in the North Warehouse and one was a Sueki inkstone in the Central Warehouse (Figgess 1961:143). The other 57 pieces of ceramics were found stored in the South Warehouse. These pieces were fired at a lower temperature than the Sueki ware (less than 1000 degrees centigrade as opposed to 1200 - 1300 degrees centigrade), as was the case with the Tang *sancai*. Of these 57 pieces, 54 were used for food, one was a large vase, another was a model of a pagoda, and the last was a hand-drum or *tsuzumi* body (Figgess 1961:143-4). Figgess writes that the 57 wares are often referred to as the Shôshô-in "three-color wares (*sancai*)," but in fact, the vast majority were glazed with either one or two colors. Of the 54 food utensils, 25 were *tetsubachi*, which are deep bowls with inverted lips, 15 were shallow bowls, and 14 were large flat dishes (Figgess 1961:144).

Most of these ceramic wares likely date to the Nara period, but may have been transferred to the South storehouse after 950 when the Kensaku-in repository of Tôdai-ji was damaged in a typhoon ((Figgess 1961:148). This is supposed because these wares are not mentioned in the *bakuryô* or "airings" of 787, 793, 811, and 856. They are, in fact, first recorded in the 1117 *Nansô Gyobutsu Mokuroku* or "Catalogue of Imperial Properties in the South Storehouse" (Figgess 1961:148).

The gist of Figgess' article is that he believes that the Shôshô-in ceramic pieces were produced in Japan. To support this, he refers to a 764 entry in the *Zôbutsusho Sakumotsu chô* (Catalogue of Things made at the *Zôbutsusho*), which he says lists the materials required for green, white and brown glazing. He also suggests that the sizes of the utensils mentioned in this entry are comparable to those found in Shôshô-in (Figgess 1961:151-54). However, Figgess's article is somewhat dated. I believe recent scholarship indicates that most of the Shôshô-in ceramics are of mainland origin. Even in this article, Figgess admits that, at his time of writing, a kiln had not been discovered in Japan that could produce the two or three-colored pottery (Figgess 1961:156).

³⁷⁴ There were some rarer ceramics that came to Japan as well.

Province³⁷⁵; Changsha celadon from Changsha, which is located in Hunan Province³⁷⁶; and finally, white-glazed ceramics, which were fired both in Jingzhou—a district in present-day Hebei Province³⁷⁷—and in other places of uncertain origin (Kamei 1982:11; (Kamei 1992:120; Yabe 1982B:27; Ikezaki and Morimoto 1988:138).³⁷⁸ These three ceramics were exported from China from the eighth until the eleventh centuries to places as far away as Borneo, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and western Persia to Egypt (Kamei 1982:11).

They were also exported to Japan. But how and by whom were they transported? Were the ceramics uncovered today in Japan brought by the *kentôshi* missions returning from the mainland, by the private traders who came to Kyushu, by others involved in maritime transport, such as the *kaifu* discussed in the last chapter who may have crossed the seas between Kyushu and the continent, or by a combination of these groups?

Of the three varieties just introduced, the Yue celadon was the most commonly imported ceramics during the first part of the Heian period. It became the foundation of the ceramic trade that flourished from the ninth century (Yabe 1982B:27).³⁷⁹ The white-glazed ceramics and the celadon from the Changsha kilns

³⁷⁵ Yue ceramics 越磁 from Yuezhou district, Zhejiang Province: 浙江省の越州窯青磁.

³⁷⁶ Changsha celadon 長沙窯系青磁, fired in Changsha, Hunan Province: 湖南省の長沙.

³⁷⁷ White-glazed ceramics 白磁, fired in Jingzhou, Hebei Province 河北省の邢州窯様式の白磁.

³⁷⁸ Other Chinese ceramics, such as a crude celadon 粗製青磁 from the Guangdong area 広東地方, have been recovered in Japan as well, but in far more limited numbers than the three types listed here (Kamei 1992:120).

³⁷⁹ The culture of Southern China, including ceramic manufacture, began to flourish after the Rebellion of An Lu-shan 安史の乱 (755-63) (Yabe 1982B:26). Yue kilns have been dated to at least the end of the eighth century, but by the ninth and tenth centuries, the

were imported to Japan during this time as well, but in lesser quantity. The Yue ceramic pieces imported into Japan included bowls, cups, plates, trays, jars, ceramic boxes, spittoons, and water pitchers (Morita 1982:15).³⁸⁰ Bowls have been the most commonly recovered ceramic artifacts, followed by cups and plates. The other items are relatively rare.

Celadon from the Yue district is the most commonly recovered ceramic type, not only in Japan, but throughout the western part of Asia as well during this period (Kamei 1992:125). It was in great demand due to its high quality and aesthetic appeal, but also, perhaps, because of the proximity of the Yue kiln sites to trading ports. Trade ceramics were loaded onto merchant ships in ports at or near the Mingzhou district of Zhejiang 浙江省明州. These ships then sailed to Ara-no-tsu port 荒津 (see chapter one) in Hakata (Kamei 1975:41, 45).

Celadon kilns were established near the coast of the northern part of Zhejiang as early as the Later Han Dynasty (Yabe 1982A:2). Japan's cultural ties with southern China were close and this was particularly true in terms of the ceramic exchange. The southern region of China was always central to the trade with Japan, and from the Tang dynasty until the Northern Song dynasty, the vast majority of those merchants who sailed to Japan were from the harbors of Mingzhou (Kamei 1992:119).

Evidence of this ceramic exchange is found among the treasures of the

Yue techniques spread and new Yue kilns were constructed throughout China (Yabe 1982B:26).

Shôsô-in as well as among artifacts unearthed during excavations. The Shôsô-in offers examples of the *sancai* that were especially prevalent during the Nara period (Figgess 1961:144).³⁸¹ Archaeological excavations, on the other hand, offer the clearest picture of the overall scope and scale of ceramic import from the continent from the Nara until the mid-Heian periods.

5.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THE IMPORTATION OF CHINESE CERAMICS

Most of the archaeological evidence for the ceramic trade of the initial, or First Period, is found in northern Kyushu and at the Heijôkyô, Heiankyô, and other sites around Kyoto.³⁸² Ceramic ware is commonly unearthed from government-office and temple sites.³⁸³ The vast majority of the Yue ceramics found in Japan have been recovered from the Kôrokan site and other sites in Fukuoka that were connected in

³⁸⁰ Bowls: *wan* 碗, Cups: *tsuki* 坏, Plates: *sara* 皿, Trays: *taku* 托, Jars: *tsubo* 壺, Ceramic boxes: *gôshi* 合子, Spittoons: *dako* 唾壺 (from the Chinese *tuo hu*), Water pitchers: *suichû* 水注.

³⁸¹ Suzuki suggests a particularly close relationship between some of the Shôsô-in treasures and artifacts recovered from archaeological sites such as the Anapchi 雁鴨池 site in the Kyôngju 慶州 region of the Korean Peninsula. The handicrafts and artifacts have similar patterns and motifs. Spoons and scissors in the Shôsô-in repository that are most likely of Silla origin, are seemingly tied to the Kyôngju region as well. A set of spoons 佐波理匙, like those recorded in the *Baishiragi no motsuge* (discussed above), closely resemble spoons recovered from the Anapchi site (Takeda p.206).³⁸¹ Also, in recent years, the remnants of white bronze scissors were discovered in the South Repository. These may also be of Silla origin because they resemble scissors uncovered in the Kyôngju region (Takeda p.207).

Finally, a great number of Silla ceramics such as *chôkei-bin* jars 長頸瓶 and round-faced ink stones 円面硯, have been recovered from Heijô and temple sites in Kansai, and at the Kôrokan archaeological site in Kyushu (Takeda pp.207-208).

³⁸² Kamei divides the importation of continental ceramics during the Heian period into two periods, the First Period comprises the beginning of the ninth century until the end of the eleventh. The Second Period encompasses all of the twelfth century (Kamei 1975:40).

some way to Dazaifu. The Dazai Kôrokan³⁸⁴ served as the primary venue through which Chinese goods entered Japan until the eleventh century, even though some have suggested that Tang merchants also conducted a significant volume of trade at Kamisakisô in Hizen province (Kamei 1992:130).³⁸⁵

The earliest Chinese ceramic finds at Dazaifu are a green glaze or *luyou* bowl³⁸⁶ and a Yue celadon cup³⁸⁷, both of which have been dated to the later half of the eighth century (Kamei 1992:133). In addition, Japan's earliest example of a white-glazed ceramic bowl was unearthed at a nearby dig.³⁸⁸ This bowl was recovered from the same provenance as *sueki* 須恵器 and *hajiki* 土師器 ware, both of which were domestically produced. The find of these two potteries aided scholars in dating the site to between the late-eighth century and the first half of the ninth century (Kamei 1992:133).

There are a great number of other eighth-century green-glazed ceramic vessels³⁸⁹ recovered from the Dazaifu sites (Kagamiyama 1979:103). Eighth-century vessels of the trichrome pottery or Tang *sancai* 唐三彩 and

³⁸³ Government offices: *kanga* 官衙, and temples: 寺院.

³⁸⁴ The Dazaifu Kôrokan is first mentioned in the primary sources as the site of a 688 reception for an embassy from Silla (Kamei 1992:131). It is only referred to once in the Nara period. This reference is found in the Volume 15 of the *Manyôshû* (Kamei 1992:131). See the previous chapter for more information on Kôrokan.

³⁸⁵ Kamisakisô, Hizen province: 肥前国神埼荘. The assertion that the Kamisakisô area served as a major link to the Chinese mainland during Tang and Song times is based primarily on archaeological evidence of ninth-century Tang ceramics and textual evidence that Song ships docked here (Kamei 1992:130-1). However, the amount of ceramics recovered does not seem to warrant a description of this site as a major point of merchant activity.

³⁸⁶ *Luyou* (Jp: ryokuyû) bowl: 録釉碗.

³⁸⁷ Yue celadon cup: 越州窯系青磁杯.

³⁸⁸ White-glazed ceramic bowl: 邢州窯様式の白磁碗.

bichrome pottery (*ercai* 二彩) have been recovered from these sites as well.³⁹⁰ Some of these were imported, but at least a few were produced in Japan (Kagamiyama 1979:104).

These and other finds supplement our understanding of the nature of trade with Tang. Without them, historians have only those vessels stored in Shôshô-in for analysis. But the Shôshô-in collection represents only the elite trade, which involved the upper strata of the Japanese aristocracy. The ceramic finds at Dazaifu and other sites discussed below, however, suggest that the mainland trade did indeed extend to a lower class of individuals; namely local bureaucrats and wealthy villagers (Kamei 1992:134; 136-7).

5.2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THE TRANSFER OF CERAMIC TECHNOLOGY

Not only were ceramic vessels brought to Japan from the continent, but ceramic technology was introduced into Japan as well. This began with sueki pottery during the Kofun period.³⁹¹ Glaze was another ceramic innovation that came to Japan from the continent. Glazing was a practice begun in China, and the

³⁸⁹ Some of these may have been domestically produced because they had surfaces like those on *sue* ware and *hajiki* ware.

³⁹⁰ *Tang sancai* 唐三彩 was a type of pottery that was usually decorated with white, green, and yellow-brown glazes. It was produced during the Song and Ming dynasties as well, but during the middle to end of the Tang dynasty, *sancai* production took a sudden downturn. When it was produced, it was generally the more simple, double-colored *ercai*. *Sancai* was also produced in Bohai and Japan, but both the clay and the glaze were of different quality (*Dictionary of Archaeology* 「考古学辞典」 1959:389-390).

³⁹¹ Sue ware 須恵器 was a ceramic fired at high temperature, and the technology of its manufacture came to Japan by way of the Korean peninsula during the Kofun period.

technique of glazing was apparently introduced to Japan during the latter half of the seventh century (Yabe 1982B:27).³⁹²

5.2.1 Nara Period

In 729, the process for making Tang *sancai* was introduced to Japan (Yabe 1982B:27).³⁹³ The Japanese imitated the Tang *sancai* by developing their own ceramic ware, which in English is called “Nara *sancai*”³⁹⁴. The Tang and Japanese wares are distinguishable from one another in at least one of three ways: in the way the glaze was applied, the method by which the vessel was fired, or in the overall design of the vessel.³⁹⁵ In fact, the use of lead glaze 鉛釉 may have been the only element that the Tang and its Nara *sancai* cousin shared (Yoshida Eiji 1982:35-6).

5.2.2 Heian Period

The Japanese imitated the celadon from the Yue kilns in the same way that they produced their own version of the Tang *sancai* during the Nara period (Yoshida 1982:35). By applying the celadon color, the Japanese created a ceramic type

It was also produced during the Nara period and became important to everyday life in Dazaifu.

³⁹² The earliest glazed pottery to come to Japan was a *luyou* or green glaze ceramic 緑釉 (Kagamiyama 1979:103). A low-fired *luyou* vessel with a lead glaze is also the earliest example of any glazed vessel produced in Japan.

³⁹³ *Sancai* was produced by applying three colored glazes: dark brown 褐釉, green 緑釉, and clear or white 透明釉 (Yabe 1982B:27).

³⁹⁴ The Japanese pronunciation of *sancai* is *sansai*.

³⁹⁵ It is unlikely that Figgess was aware of these differences regarding the *sancai* vessels when he examined the Shôsô-in vessels in order to determine whether they were imported or domestically-produced (see note above).

referred to as Heian “green-glaze ceramic ware”³⁹⁶ (henceforth referred to simply as *luyou*) (Yoshida 1982:35). Japanese production of the *luyou* became widespread at about the time that production of the Nara *sancai* ceased.

This *luyou* pottery actually predated the beginning of the Heian period and was first produced during the Nara period. Green was one of the three glazes used to produce the Tang/Nara *sancai*, and it became the most important glaze as it gradually came to be used by itself without the other two glaze colors. It may seem odd that the Japanese moved from using three glazes during the Nara period to only one during the Heian, but the explanation seems to lie with the influence of the monotone Yue celadon and the subsequent Japanese attempt to reproduce it.

The *luyou* vessels of the Nara and Heian periods differed in terms of the quality of their clays. In order for the white glaze of the *sancai* to be seen, Nara potters were forced to use a softer, whiter clay, which resulted in the production of a more fragile vessel.³⁹⁷ Japanese potters at first continued to use this whiter clay for the *luyou* vessels, despite the fact that a white glaze was no longer applied. But this clay did not produce very sturdy vessels; the quality of the clay did not even equal that of the clay used for centuries to manufacture Japanese *sueki* vessels. However, by the beginning of the Heian period, potters once again returned to a higher quality clay such as that used for the *sueki* ware. One of the most significant differences, therefore, between the ceramics of the Nara and Heian periods, was the greater hardness and general quality of the latter (Yoshida 1982:35)

³⁹⁶ Heian green-glaze ceramic ware: *ryokuyû* (Chn: *luyou*) 緑釉陶.

5.3 CLASS OF CONSUMERS OF THE FIRST IMPORTED TANG CERAMICS³⁹⁸

Until the 1970s, Yue ceramics 越州窯陶磁 were not recovered at many sites in Japan except for the finds at Kôrokan, (Kamei 1982:10). These vessels were recovered primarily from sites such as local offices of the central government 官衙 and temples 寺院. This suggested that only a particular class of individuals was privy to the goods brought to Japan by the merchant trade of the eighth and ninth centuries (Kamei 1982:10). By the 1980s more than 200 sites had yielded celadon from Yue kilns (Kamei 1992:136). But, most of these sites were also connected to: (1) government facilities such as Heijôkyô, Heiankyô, the Dazaifu government office, Kôrokan, the Tanzawa garrison 胆沢城, and the defensive facilities built around local administrative centers³⁹⁹; (2) temple complexes such as those at Yakushi-ji, Satsuma Kokubun-ji, and the Endô Hall at Ninna-ji⁴⁰⁰; or (3) the residences of the aristocracy at Heiankyô (Kyôto) (Kamei 1992:136-7). These finds thus reinforced the theory that one particular class of individuals was obtaining the goods of the maritime traders during the Nara and Heian periods. This meant that only government bureaucrats and the wealthy and influential participated in the earliest exchange of Tang ceramics.

However, by the 1990s, excavations were casting doubts upon the assumption

³⁹⁷ While referred to as “white glaze” it was actually transparent. It was necessary to apply and fire this glaze on a white clay in order to obtain the desired white color (Yoshida 1982:35).

³⁹⁸ This corresponds to Kamei’s First Period 初期 of ceramic importation, referred to above.

³⁹⁹ Local administrative centers: 周防国府.

that only the elite were obtaining the goods of the merchants. In northern Kyushu, Yue pottery was increasingly recovered at village and other sites where artifacts inclusive of differing classes were buried (Kamei 1982:10). As early as 1982, at least ten sites in Higo had yielded early ceramics⁴⁰¹; i.e., Nara thru Middle-Heian period Tang ceramics (Kamei 1982:13). These artifacts were used and discarded by at least a few individuals living in pit-dwellings.⁴⁰² Needless to say, the class of individuals living in pit-dwellings was by no means of the highest stratum of society (Kamei 1982:13). Neither were these individuals part of the general peasant population. Rather, they were members of what could be considered a middle class that included the provincial or local bureaucratic class (Kamei 1982:13-4).⁴⁰³ Today Tang ceramics are now recovered from sites in northern Kyushu that include local offices of the central government⁴⁰⁴, temples, villages, and graves⁴⁰⁵ (Morita 1982:19).

The village sites in northern Kyushu that yield Tang ceramics often do so in provenance with *hajiki* and *sueki* ceramic ware that dates these sites to the middle of the eighth to the first half of the ninth centuries (Morita 1982:20). At the Shimonakajô site 下中杖遺跡 site⁴⁰⁶ in Saga prefecture, three wells dating to the

⁴⁰⁰ Endô Hall at Ninna-ji: 仁和寺円堂.

⁴⁰¹ Early ceramics: 初期輸入陶磁.

⁴⁰² Pit-dwellings: 竪穴住居.

⁴⁰³ Provincial/local bureaucratic class: 郡司クラス.

⁴⁰⁴ Discussed above, the local office, or *kanga* 官衛, sites of the central government at which Tang ceramics were recovered include the Dazaifu site, the Kôrokan site, and the Chikugo local administrative center site 筑後国府跡 (Morita 1982:19).

⁴⁰⁵ A number of graves believed to belong to wealthy individuals have also been found to possess Tang-period ceramics. Some of these vessels were used to hold the ashes of individuals who had been cremated (Morita 1982:20-21).

⁴⁰⁶ This is my rendering in English for this site name.

ninth century have yielded both Yue ceramics and white-glazed ceramics.⁴⁰⁷ The excavators of this site believe that the villagers had some connection to a local office of the central government, or they may instead have been associated with a local *shôen*. In either case, these finds suggest that a lower class of people living in this region was able to obtain luxury goods. Some speculate that they may have received these items by means of a trade route that did not pass through the Kôrokan (see Morita 1982:20). Were some of these goods brought to Japan by people other than the merchants? Were the boat people mentioned in the previous chapter involved?

At the very least, the Tang goods recovered from the Shimonakajô site were obtained through private merchant exchange as opposed to formal government-sponsored trade between governmental elites (Morita 1982:21). All indication is that trade with the mainland was now reaching more diverse socio-economic strata of society.

Another village site of interest is the Hakuhara M site⁴⁰⁸, which is located to the west of Fukuoka City. This site has yielded far more early-period Tang ceramics than any other site in Japan with the exception of Kôrokan (Kamei 1992:137).⁴⁰⁹ The Hakuhara M site includes at least 34 buildings constructed with pillars set directly into the ground.⁴¹⁰ It is dated from the second half of the eighth to the first

⁴⁰⁷ The Yue ceramics included bowls, plates, and cups, while the white-glazed ceramics comprised twelve bowls (Morita 1982:20).

⁴⁰⁸ Hakuhara M: 柏原 M.

⁴⁰⁹ As introduced above, Kamei divides ceramic importation of the Heian period into a First Period and Second Period (Kamei 1975:40). The former, encompassing the beginning of the ninth century until the end of the eleventh, is relevant to this topic.

⁴¹⁰ Buildings with pillars set directly into the ground: 掘立柱建物.

half of the ninth centuries. Ceramic ware was recovered near the larger structures and, in addition to the large find of Yue ceramics 越磁, the cache included Tang *sancai*, Jingzhou white-glazed ceramics, and Changsha celadon ⁴¹¹ (Kamei 1992:137). Domestically-produced green-glazed ceramics has also been recovered at the site, meaning that the people inhabiting these structures possessed ceramics during both the Nara and the early Heian periods. These ceramics were probably used by the household of the head of the village.⁴¹² So once again we find evidence that Tang ceramics were obtained by individuals of a level at least as low as the class of village leaders.

Now let's consider finds at the capital and other sites to the northeast of Kyushu. Most of the vessels recovered from the Heijō and early Heian sites were possessed by a very specific class of individuals. The ceramics imported during this period ended up in the hands of a select few (Kamei 1982:11). In particular, archaeological evidence indicates that these early-period imported ceramics were obtained by powerful temple complexes, such as those at Tōdai-ji and Yakushi-ji, and aristocrats of the fifth rank and above (Kamei 1982:12). However, other archaeological evidence, including a Yue vessel and *mokkan*, or wooden tablet, suggests that Tang vessels were exchanged at a market in the northeastern region of the eastern part of Kyoto.⁴¹³ In fact, it seems that the provincial/local bureaucratic class⁴¹⁴, despite government restrictions, managed to transport Tang

⁴¹¹ Jingzhou white-glazed ceramics: 邢州窯白磁, and Changsha celadon: 長沙窯系青磁.

⁴¹² Village head: 郷長.

⁴¹³ Market in the northeastern region of the eastern city: 左京八条三坊東市周辺.

⁴¹⁴ Provincial/local bureaucratic class: 郡司クラス.

goods to the markets of the capital and engage in exchange (Kamei 1982:12). Or, perhaps Japanese merchants played a role in the movement of mainland goods within Japan. After obtaining ceramic ware in northern Kyushu, they may have transported it to this market.

Since 1975, many more sites with Yue ceramic ware have been found distributed to the eastern part of Japan (Kamei 1982:10). For example, shards of Yue ceramics and Jingzhou white-glazed ceramic ware have been unearthed at the Rakugawa site 落川遺跡 site in Hino City. These artifacts have been found near large pillared structures. It is surmised that these Rakugawa inhabitants either had close contact with the Korean Peninsula or, in fact, may have been immigrants from the peninsula (Kamei 1992:138). Tang ceramic ware has even been recovered from Tōhoku sites, where imported vessels have been found together with domestically produced ceramics. Even the ancient province of Mutsu 陸奥 has yielded Jingzhou white-glazed ceramic ware and Yue celadon that may date to as early as 850 AD. In general, most of the finds from Eastern Japan are from sites associated with the local offices of the central government or, in the case of the Mutsu site, the residence of a provincial official⁴¹⁵, and many date from the first half of the ninth century (Kamei 1992: 138).

The fact that finds at temples and other sites in this part of the country are rare suggests that Tang ceramics may have been brought directly to the eastern part of Japan by powerful government officials or by their own trade representatives. Unlike the Tang ceramics in Kyushu and the capital, the ceramics

in the Eastern Japan region were probably not brought by traveling merchants.

In general, the consumer classes throughout Japan that obtained the Tang ceramics were the various levels of government officials; the clergy of the Buddhist temples; aristocratic families within the capital; Dazaifu bureaucrats; wealthy, but somewhat lower classes in Kyushu, including some of the village leaders; and finally, *toraijin* 渡来系人 families that traced their origins to the Korean peninsula (Kamei 1992:139).

5.3.1 Archaeological Evidence of Trade

Taken together, the archaeological evidence backs up the historical evidence that trade with the continent increased during the ninth century. When one categorizes archaeological sites that yield Chinese ceramics, it becomes apparent that both the number of vessels and number of regions to which these vessels spread increased significantly during the late eighth and ninth centuries (Dobashi 1996:73-4). Remains before this time are rare. As of 1995, only fifteen sites yielding important ceramic ware were discovered that dated to the seventh century. And twelve of these were located in either Nara or Fukuoka. Eighty sites have been dated to the eighth century, but most of these are also located in or around the urban areas of Nara and Fukuoka. However, a whopping 359 sites have been found that have yielded imported ninth-century ceramic ware from the mainland. And many of these sites are located quite far from Nara and Fukuoka. These include Kagoshima and Kumamoto to the south, Fukui, Ishikawa, and Niigata on the

⁴¹⁵ Provincial official: 国司.

Japan Sea coast, and Akita, Iwate, and even Hokkaido in the north (Dobashi 1996:73).

There was also a difference in the speed during the Heian period in which urban areas and more rural areas obtained their ceramics. It appears that urban areas in Japan were using ceramics not long after their production in China. However, it seems to have taken more time for vessels to reach those areas further removed from the urban centers of northern Kyushu and Kyoto/Nara (Dobashi 1996:72).

CONCLUSION

Scholars commonly offer three reasons to explain why the Japanese dispatched envoys to Tang China. These were: to assimilate the advanced civilization, culture, and systems of Tang; to raise Japan's diplomatic position in the Tang Court while obtaining reports regarding changes in East Asian affairs; and finally, to conduct trade under the control of the state.

I explored the third point in this dissertation. In particular, I sought to explain the role of the *kentôshi* with regard to a maritime trade network that developed in East Asia. I examined the voyages the *kentôshi* made to and from Tang China, as well as the exchanges the missions conducted while there. For more than two centuries the *kentôshi* missions crossed the seas and brought back items that whet an appetite for mainland goods among the Japanese elite. As the *kentôshi* age drew to a close, trade did not cease. Private traders were actively crossing the seas between Japan and the mainland. I sought to understand the relationship between the official embassies and this network of private traders—both with regard to the shipbuilding practices and maritime skills of each, and with regard to the trade itself.

To better understand the maritime endeavors of the *kentôshi*, I began with a study of the navigational challenges the Japanese faced during their voyages to and from the Chinese mainland. In Chapter One, I introduced aspects of the geography and environment through which Japanese ships passed *en route* to China and back. A successful voyage had to take into account factors such as ocean currents,

seasonal winds, storms, and ports of convenience. Three distinct sea routes were followed during the course of the *kentôshi* period. Political and technological factors led the Japanese to adopt different courses at different times. In the end, the Japanese chose to bypass the Korean peninsula and sail south across open seas to reach the Chinese mainland. These voyages necessitated the development of a new type of sea craft, one more suitable to open sea travel.

In Chapter Two, I examined the construction of vessels for these ocean voyages, and I began with a survey of Japan's maritime history, from evidence of the first water craft in Japan to the development of *kôzôsen* boats, or composite crafts. By the time of the Middle and Late *kentôshi* periods, the Japanese were building vessels in the style of the Chinese junks. But even with this new craft, mishaps at sea were not uncommon. This has made scholars critical of the maritime skills of the Japanese sailors. The traditional view still stands that the *kentôshi* sailed in primitive ships and had limited knowledge of winds and weather conditions.

As I have explained, however, the *kentôshi* mariners are being sold short. It makes little sense that a culture steeped in several millennia of ocean-going experience would be oblivious to the ocean currents and seasonal winds. Why is it taken for granted, then, that the Japanese were inept sailors?

Scholars often conceptualize history in terms of a linear progression reflecting a series of technological, scientific, social, and even cultural advances. Each successive historical stage represents improvements in prior ways of thinking or in cultural or technological practices. History in effect becomes synonymous with progress. When these scholars observe the historical time line, they believe that

man's technological and cognitive skills accrue exponentially as one approaches the present date. Without a doubt, technological discoveries have been made at an explosive rate as we near our end of the historical time line, and indeed, our era is the most scientifically and technologically advanced. I would caution, however, against tracing the time line in the reverse direction and assuming that each earlier era was, by degree, more simplistic with regard to human culture and knowledge than more recent eras.⁴¹⁶ This is what I believe some scholars have done with Japan. They expect little from a culture 1200 years past, especially from one that existed on the periphery of China. It is easy to fall victim to what I call "linear regression." By this, I mean viewing successively older cultures as necessarily more primitive. This happens in the case of Japan—the further back in time we go, the more simple the people must have been.

Maritime history is no exception. It has been easy for historians to assume that the Japanese were poor navigators. After all, who would expect seventh, eighth, and ninth century Japanese to possess great technological know-how? The Japanese were never known as great ocean mariners at any time after the *kentôshi* age and before the modern era. It is thus assumed that during the time of the *kentôshi*, Japanese mariners could have been nothing but inept. This conclusion is odd considering that Japanese culture was built on the ability of the Japanese and their ancestors to master the seas from many millennia prior to the *kentôshi* age.

Granted, the Japanese were adopting new shipbuilding techniques and

⁴¹⁶ A strictly linear paradigm is applicable only to the modern era (especially post-Industrial/Scientific Revolution). Indeed, the societies that accomplished some of

following new routes to the mainland that must have presented immense challenges. But it is difficult to believe that the kentôshi mariners continued to make the same navigational mistakes for more than a century and a half without learning from these mistakes. It was never a question of maritime prowess and technological skill, but rather, the tributary nature of the kentôshi missions that doomed their vessels to summer or early autumn departures during unfavorable weather conditions. The kentôshi needed to present their tribute during the New Year's celebrations. Even after reaching the continental shores, mission members might take up to six months to reach the Tang capital. They had no choice but to depart during the summer months. It is unfair to criticize the Japanese mariners harshly for the many disastrous voyages that occurred.

In Chapter Three I turned to the question of the trade itself. To better understand trade between Japan and the mainland, I proposed categorizing the exchanges as one of three types. Trade between Japan and the continent during the time of the Tang Dynasty (a period that, in Japan, comprised the late Asuka, Nara, and early Heian periods) should be classified as either "imperial," "elite," or "private." Imperial trade refers to the tributary exchanges conducted by the envoys dispatched through official government channels and in the names of their respective Courts. Elite trade, often concurrent with imperial trade, was conducted by the individual members of official diplomatic missions through government channels or under the jurisdiction of agencies such as the Diankeshu Office in Tang China and the Treasury Ministry and the Palace Storehouse Bureau in Japan.

the great engineering feats and scientific discoveries of the past, such as the building of

Private trade, in contrast, was carried out by merchants. These merchants often traded with representatives of the government or representatives of the ruling classes; i.e., the wealthy and powerful elites. This last type of trade was most apparent in northern Kyushu as mainland merchants began sailing to Japan. It was not conducted under the auspices of diplomatic missions, but, as we saw at Kôrokan, it was often carried out under the watchful eye of Dazaifu officials.

In Chapter Three I examined both the imperial exchanges of the kentôshi in Tang and the elite trade with which mission members became involved. Japan sent an incredible volume of silk textiles to China; in turn they received mainland luxury goods, many of which probably found their way into the Shôsô-in collection. Members of the kentôshi missions also purchased goods in China using stipends received from both the Japanese and Tang Courts. They carried these goods back to Japan as personal items.

Members of mainland missions that came to Japan brought goods to Japanese shores as well. There is not a great deal in the records regarding the items that the Japanese received from the Tang Court, but scholars have examples of products brought to Japan by Korean missions, such as the 752 mission from Silla, to which the *Baishiragi no motsuge* pertains.

In Chapter Four I directed my attention to the private trade conducted by merchants, the third type of exchange discussed above. First Korean and then Chinese merchants came to Japan in great numbers. There was a correlation between the decline in interest on the part of the Japanese leaders to send missions

the pyramids, were followed by eras when these skills were, for the most part, lost.

to the continent and the increased merchant trade. The Japanese had found another means by which to obtain goods—goods were now being brought to Japanese shores by private merchants. And eventually, as discussed in Chapter Four, Japanese such as Ômi-no-Mii were sent on *nittôshi* missions to Tang that were purely economic in nature. These missions were dispatched by Japanese elites rather than the Court itself, and they were not diplomatically tied to either the Japanese or Tang Courts.

In Chapter Five, I addressed a Tang product in particularly high demand: ceramic ware. The primary sources are barren regarding the Tang gifts given to the *kentôshi* missions before their returns, even though the *Baishiragi no motsuge* does give us a good idea of the type of continental goods the Japanese desired. In Chapter Five, I turned to archaeology to supplement the deficiency of the records regarding Tang products that found their way to Japan. We know from excavations at sites at Kôrokan and throughout the country that Chinese ceramic ware was in great demand in Japan. The most common vessels imported were white glazed ceramics from Hebei Province, celadon from the kilns in Hunan Province, and Yue celadon produced primarily in Zhejiang. Yue products, in particular, made an appearance in Japan at about the time that Sugawara-no-Michizane petitioned the Court to halt the last planned mission to Tang. The missions were no longer needed to introduce mainland goods to the Japanese islands. Private traders from Tang were now transporting products that were previously brought by officials or individuals who accompanied the diplomatic missions. The trade role of the missions was supplanted and the *kentôshi* missions expendable.

The archaeological record supports this paradigm. During the time of the kentôshi missions, we saw that ceramic ware was used primarily at government sites, such as Kôrokan. However, by the ninth century, at the same time that mainland merchants sailed to Japan, Tang ceramics were used by more diverse strata of society. Not only did the elite profit from this exchange, but the lower classes profited as well.

Scholars have suggested that one of the main reasons for the end of formal exchange with China (and the Korean peninsula) during the ninth century was that Japan no longer sought direct diplomacy with its neighbors. This may, in part, be true. But if diplomacy was the primary function of the kentôshi, then the missions should have been halted much sooner. Tensions with Silla stabilized long before the beginning of the ninth century.

I believe trade was more important to the Japanese diplomatic missions than heretofore discussed in some of the English language literature.⁴¹⁷ That is why the missions continued as long as they did. But in the ninth century, merchant activity began to supercede the trading function of the official embassies, rendering them obsolete. The trade network that developed in the seas between Japan and the continent has been overlooked as one of the factors leading to the end of the kentôshi missions. Official embassies were risky and costly. So when merchant vessels began arriving at Hakata, the need for the missions evaporated.

This is true, not only of trade between Japan and Tang, but between Japan and Korea as well. In the case of Silla, the dawn of a new trading era was

⁴¹⁷ The same does not hold true for the Japanese literature. See, for example, work by Suzuki Yasutami.

inaugurated as huge trade missions began coming to Japan with their official envoys. Trade became the most important objective of the Silla envoys coming to Japan, and then, as private traders began coming to Japan on their own and trade began to flourish in northern Kyushu, the official Korean embassies became unnecessary. Like the missions to Tang, the last official exchange with Silla was also in the ninth century.

Exchange with Bohai continued for a longer period of time. Official embassies were dispatched well into the tenth century. This can be explained by the fact that a great trade network never developed between Japan and Bohai, and so continuation of the embassies remained necessary. This was especially true on the part of Bohai, which sent embassies to Japan long after the Japan halted theirs. One supposes that Bohai had little of interest to offer the Japanese elite.

The phenomenon of private trade supplanting the official missions is not exclusive to Japan. The Tang Court sought to administer the maritime trade that had begun to flourish in the Guangzhou district during the first half of the eighth century by sending a customs official to the region. But as trade facilitated by Arab and other merchants grew, it came to fulfill a need for foreign goods previously met by the official envoys who had carried tribute to the Tang Court. Because of this merchant activity, the number of official missions coming to China from the south declined.

The decrease in official missions to Tang from both Southeast Asia and Japan does not mean that trade with Tang itself was in decline. Rather, it reflects the success of the private merchants to transport and facilitate the exchange of goods.

Foreign products came to be exchanged through private means, and the necessity for governments to fund and dispatch missions diminished.

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