

Tonio Andrade, Xing Hang, eds.. *Sea Rovers, Silver, and Samurai: Maritime East Asia in Global History, 1550-1700*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016. viii + 386 pp. \$69.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8248-5276-4.



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This is a fascinating book of essays that evoke a magical maritime region of ports, nodes, and chokepoints inhabited by sea lords and absentee rulers and lubricated by silver and other commodities. The essays make for a coherent argument about maritime East Asia as a coherent, contested space, constituted by a intriguing array of state structures, informal networks, and eccentric players. In unraveling the complex skeins of this maritime world, the volume not only gives us valuable insights into the workings of a maritime region even less understood than the Indian Ocean, but also offers useful ideas about early modern globalization and the myth of hydrophobic China and persuades us to qualify easy narratives about the West and China and the Great Divergence between the two. Most of this is done by looking at activities of sea lords, especially Zheng Zhilong, better known as Zeng Ling or Koxinga, the sea lord of Fujian whose operations alongside those of European players like the Spanish and the Dutch and English were part of a complex and crucial maritime region that linked multiple trade

networks and nodes. Almost all of the sixteen essays refer to Koxinga, his provenance, his exploits and reverses, and his latter-day representations in Asian and European sources and evoke a powerful set of impressions about the dynamics of East Asian maritime space. In a sense this makes the task of the reviewer easier as we can identify some of the key elements in the story through multiple vantage points.

But first we get a quick definition of the spatial configurations of the region, the processes that constituted it historically, and the immediate context for the articulation of a specific maritime regime that was dominated by sea lords or pirates. Their actions were prompted and persuaded by the demand for silver in China and the availability of silver supplies in Japan, and by the attitudes and policies of their rulers. The excellent introduction that prefaces the volume speaks of maritime East Asia as an identifiable physical space located within the South China Seas, bounded by the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean states and constituted by the trade and commodity flows

that connected these states with insular and maritime Southeast Asia. The circumstances enabling multilateral trade flows largely derived from the official policies of China and Japan about trade—restricting and prohibiting it by regular embargo, occasionally allowing it by extending permission for licensed trading. These policies did not match the economic compulsions of the region, either the demand for Japanese silver in China or the demand for a range of goods (silk, wheat, iron) in China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia. Consequently, informal networks of traders stepped in to drive a huge trade, albeit illegally, and work within regimes of pirate kings whose protection policies in the littoral and the high seas became rampant and emblematic of a maritime order in the region from the sixteenth century. This was especially striking in the 1620s, which saw the rise of the Zheng family, of Koxinga and his successors whose state in Fujian not only embodied the maritime dynamics of East Asia but also gave the region's maritime structure a distinct coherence. Xing Hang's essay, "Bridging the Bipolar Zheng Jing's Decade in Taiwan," brings this out brilliantly and demonstrates how bands of Sino-Japanese armed traders became important carriers in the inter-Asian trade. Zhen was able to emerge as a pirate sovereign with immense military and commercial reserves, quite unparalleled in the annals of the Eastern seas and certainly of the Indian Ocean. The question that crops up in this connection is whether Zhen was an exception or whether his operations were part of an established coastal politics that mainland states were disposed to dub as piratical aggression, and in which case would open the larger issue of piracy and maritime power and violence as a significant resource of state building that has remained firmly anchored in territorial obsessions. The question is partially answered in the affirmative, as Peter Shapinsky's essay refers to important sea lord families of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries offering protection to merchants and envoys. The case of Koxinga, however, was special in that he

scaled up the operations, making his rise and fall that much more dramatic. The fall of Koxinga and the ruthless destruction and coastal depopulation of Fujian by the Qing is addressed by Dahpon David Ho in "The Burning Shore Fujian and the Coastal depopulation," where he uses the episode of Qing retaliation against Fujian to critique the oft-held assumption of Chinese isolationism and disinterest in matters maritime and to consider the potential for early modern state-building strategies.

The energy and intrepidity of Koxinga was acknowledged by the European trading interests in the region, the Spanish in Manila and the Dutch in Southeast Asia, both of whom were important actors in the trading world of the region. Their accounts and representation of piracy and of Koxinga as well as those adopted by the ruling states of China and Korea form the subject matter of a number of the essays in the volume and are especially useful in tracking the hybrid nature of maritime East Asia and of the resilience and strength of local networks that were to hold their own against European technological and military aggression. Shapinsky's essay, "Envoys and Escorts: Representation and Performance among Koxinga's Japanese Pirate Ancestors," unpacks the category of "Japanese pirates," a category that evolved as Korean and Chinese officials from the fourteenth century represented all those as pirates who controlled the sea lanes between the coast of Guangzhou and the southern coast of Korea and the Seto Island sea at the heart of the Japanese archipelago. These representations predictably overlooked local specificity but carried the potential of defining the maritime world as non-agricultural, uncivilized, and peripheral. It was in any case, as Shapinsky shows, an unstable category. Even more illuminating is how certain perceptions of protection and ambush, popularized by ambassadorial accounts, gave sea lords a clear set of roles and priorities to aim for, thereby resulting in the demarcation of distinct maritime regions and choke points. Shapinsky's fascinating

account of sea lords like Zhen Shungong and Noshima Murakami, and of the negotiations that Chinese and Korean state officials had to employ with them, throws into relief the extraordinary dynamism of the maritime world and the social alliances that were forged between merchants and sea lords, Koxinga himself being an example of Sino-Japanese union.

Piracy, which was clearly an umbrella category that accommodated military power to ensure protection in the seas, preferential trade privileges, and control over vital sea lanes and choke-points that worked like a state, was then key to the maritime identity of the East Asian region that was simultaneously local and global. Pirates performed crucial cross-cultural diplomacy and legal maneuvers as well. Adam Clulow's essay on the history of the Breukelen case demonstrates how the Tokugawa regime responded to a claim made by Chinese merchants for an attack on a ship off the Vietnamese coast and how Nagasaki emerged as a legal node in the seventeenth century. Clearly this was an integrated maritime world where legal borders and jurisdiction were able to thwart European military incursions. The exploits of Koxinga in particular became fodder for later and retrospective acts of remembering; we have Peter Kang's fine essay on how Koxinga was portrayed in Taiwan by opposing sides and how he was at once nationalist and anti-imperialist. The essay explores professional and popular histories of Taiwan, including comic books to reflect on history and memory and the process of memorialization, and observes how the celebration of Chinese maritime energies and achievements synchronizes well with Taiwan's successful export-led growth.

The volume thus makes a strong case for looking closely at the East Asian maritime region, whose dynamics were closely imbricated in the interface between the politics of the established empires of China, Japan, and Korea, and the workings of informal networks of merchants and sea lords who dominated the sea lanes between these

three entities and the pull of global market economies represented by the Europeans—the Spanish and the Dutch in particular. Thus, if monsoon sailing schedules and the goods for bullion model explained the unity of the Indian Ocean world, then armed trading and protection and complex alignments between traders and sea lords gave East Asia a very distinct unity and coherence that in all probability found changing reincarnations in the following centuries. Piracy here was thus much more than what the term connoted in its European context. What one regrets in the volume, however, is its curious indifference to the potential of a comparative perspective on piracy and the world of trade in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Now that we have an important corpus of scholarship on piracy and its linkages with law, sovereignty, and markets, it would be useful to integrate the East Asian experience to push the frontiers of research on the politics of predation, especially in the centuries of transition. That the world of Asian trade was able to deflect the onslaught of European aggression and commercial demands until the very end of the eighteenth century is a point well established and well taken. It is perhaps time for us to reopen the larger questions of modernity, power, accumulation, and resistance by looking comparatively at the idea of space and its configurations, of society and polity—if not from the bottom up, then at least laterally, from the margins of the coast to the hinterland. In short, it is time to look at littoral spaces and their globalizing potential.

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