



East
Asian
History

NUMBER 23 · JUNE 2002

Institute of Advanced Studies
Australian National University

Editor Geremie R. Barmé
Associate Editor Helen Lo
Editorial Board Mark Elvin (Convenor)
Børge Bakken
John Clark
Andrew Fraser
Helen Hardacre
Colin Jeffcott
W. J. F. Jenner
Li Tana
Lo Hui-min
Gavan McCormack
David Marr
Tessa Morris-Suzuki
Michael Underdown

Design and Production Helen Lo
Business Manager Marion Weeks
Printed by Goanna Print, Fyshwick, ACT



This is the twenty-~~two~~ issue of *East Asian History*, printed June 2002,
in the series previously entitled *Papers on Far Eastern History*.
This externally refereed journal is published twice a year

Contributions to The Editor, *East Asian History*
Division of Pacific and Asian History
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200, Australia
Phone +61 2 6125 3140 Fax +61 2 6125 5525
email geremie@coombs.anu.edu.au

Subscription Enquiries to Subscriptions, *East Asian History*, to
marion@coombs.anu.edu.au

Annual Subscription Australia A\$50 (including GST) Overseas US\$45 (GST free) (for two issues)
1036-6008

史 CONTENTS

- 1** The Impact of Clearance and Irrigation on the Environment in the Lake Erhai Catchment from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century
Mark Elvin, Darren Crook, Shen Ji, Richard Jones, and John Dering
- 61** Astro-Historiographic Chronologies of Early China are Unfounded
Douglas J. Keenan
- 69** Between Heaven and the Deep Sea: the Religious Practice of Chinese Seafarers from the Eleventh to the Mid-Nineteenth Century
Tsu Yun Hui
- 87** *Buraku* Emigration in the Meiji Era—Other Ways to Become “Japanese”
Noah McCormack
- 109** Fishing and Fishers in Penghu, Taiwan, 1895–1970
Sigrid Schmalzer
- 129** Derivation, Intertextuality and Authority: Narrative and the Problem of Historical Coherence
Brian Moloughney
- 149** Falun Gong, Prophecy and Apocalypse
Benjamin Penny

- Cover calligraphy Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman
- Cover illustration Front endpaper (right-hand leaf), by Aō Tokei, “Nihon kokugun sōzu” (Map of Japan), from *Kokugun zenzu* (Atlas of Provinces and Counties) (1828) (source: Yamashita Kazumasa, *Japanese Maps of the Edo Period*, trans. Charles de Woolf [Tokyo: Kashiwa Shobō, 1998])

BETWEEN HEAVEN AND THE DEEP SEA. THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICE OF CHINESE SEAFARERS FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

史 *Tsu Yun Hui* 租運輝

In his 1769 voyage journal, J. G. Herder recorded this observation about sailors:

[They were] particularly attached to superstition and the marvellous. Since they have to attend to wind and weather, to small signs and portents, since their fate depends on phenomena of the upper atmosphere, they have good reason to heed such signs, to look upon them with a kind of reverend wonder and to develop, as it were, a science of portents.¹

Herder is referring to eighteenth-century Europe, but his insight also applies to pre-modern China. The Northern Song (北宋 960–1126) official Xu Jing 徐競 has this recollection of his days at sea *en route* to Korea:

On the ocean where the sky and the sea [seemed to] merge one was enveloped in blue above and below. It was like cruising on the surface of the Void. As winds gathered strength and waves surged, as thunderstorms struck and darkness reigned, dragons would appear and mysterious things would happen. Scared and shaken, one was at a loss for words.²

Although he makes no direct reference to any deity or ritual in this passage, elsewhere in the same book he describes making offerings, exorcism, and omens on the high sea. As a whole his narrative leaves the distinct impression that religious rituals were inherent to maritime endeavours. Four centuries later, Chen Kan 陳侃, the Ming (明 1368–1644) envoy to Ryūkyū 琉球, was unequivocal about the central role of the supernatural in seafaring. He writes:

On the open sea there was nothing but water in all directions. The ocean was so expansive that it seemed boundless and so deep that it seemed bottomless. As soon as strong winds started to blow, angry waves surged as high

I wish to thank the following individuals for their kind assistance: Ōba Osamu, Kawata Teiichi, and Yabuta Yutaka provided me with essential Japanese sources; Wang Zhenping and Yung Sai-shing introduced me to important Chinese material; Lo Yuet Keung and Eyal Ben-Ari made useful comments; Pai Hyung Il provided spellings for Korean place names.

¹ Frederick M. Barnard, *J. G. Herder on social and political culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.71.

² Xu Jing, *Xuanbe fengshi Gaoli tujing* [An illustrated book about the mission to Koryŏ] (Taipei: Dongfang Wenhua Shuju, 1971), pp.181–2.

³ Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, ed., *Sbi Liuqiu lu sanzong* [Three editions of a mission to Liuqiu] (Taipei: Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, 1970), p.46.

⁴ References to Chinese maritime religious practice can be found in a wide range of writings, from gazetteers of coastal counties and geographic works on foreign lands to the miscellaneous notes and collections of marvellous tales, and to the devotional literature and technical writings on shipbuilding and shipping. As an exploratory study, this paper chooses to highlight dramatic and substantive accounts by eyewitnesses. (It is only towards the end that use is made of second-hand information to reconstruct the religious context of the Chinese maritime community in Nagasaki.) In doing so, many important facts are necessarily left out. Issues such as differences in practice in relation to class, geography, religious orientation, and the passage of time can only be dealt with in future studies.

⁵ An anonymous reviewer observes that there is a similar lack of research on the relationship between Chinese religion and travel. While I take the point, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the larger issue of religion and land travellers.

⁶ See, for example, the following works: Huang Meiyang, *Taiwan Mazu de xianghuo yuyisbi* [Incense smoke and ritual in Taiwan's Mazu cult] (Taipei: Zili Wanbao, 1994); Li Xianzhang, *Maso shinkō no kenkyū* [A study of the Mazu cult] (Tokyo: Taisan Bunbutsusha, 1979); Liao Disheng, *Xianggang Tianhou chongbai* [The worship of Tianhou in Hong Kong] (Hongkong: Sanlian Shudian, 2000); Steven P. Sangren, "Female gender in Chinese religious symbols: Kuan Yin, Ma Tsu, and the "Eternal Mother," *Signs* 9 (1983): 4–25; *idem*, "History and the rhetoric of legitimacy: the Ma Tsu cult of Taiwan," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1988): 674–97; James Watson, "Standardizing the gods: the promotion of T'ien Hou ('Empress of Heaven') along the South China coast, 960–1960," in *Popular culture in late imperial China*, ed. David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1985), pp.292–324; Xu Xiaowang and Chen Yande, *Aomen Mazu wenhua yanjiu* [A study of Mazu culture in Macau] (Macau: Aomen Jijinhui, 1998).

as mountains. When the ship tumbled and shook, there was nothing human beings could do. At such a moment, if it were not for divine protection, how could the ship not capsize?³

For Chen the success of maritime journeys was inconceivable without supernatural help. Grateful that Mazu 媽祖 had interceded to save him from the treacherous East China Sea, he memorialised the court upon returning for a state offering for the goddess.

This paper is about the religious practice of pre-modern Chinese seafarers, including passengers and crew. Drawing on the more vivid firsthand accounts, it tries to reconstruct the rites seafarers performed in preparation for, during, and after maritime journeys.⁴ Since blue-water voyages usually included stopovers in foreign lands, this paper also considers seafarers' religious observances overseas. By emphasizing maritime voyages as the locus of religious action, this paper attempts to recover the rich and tumultuous experience of seafarers, something that has been largely overlooked by scholars of Chinese religion.⁵

Take the cult of Mazu for example. Despite its origin in a miracle on the sea and its popularity among fishermen and sailors in late imperial times, scholars have approached it mainly as a land-bound phenomenon. It has been treated as a textual tradition, an arena of interplay between state and local power, a symbol of religious legitimacy and communal identity, and a gendered deity.⁶ But little attention has been given to how the goddess was worshipped in the context of maritime travels. Moreover, focusing on Mazu oversimplifies the seafaring experience, since devotion to the goddess was but one aspect of a complex system of maritime religious lore and customs. This paper demonstrates that sea journeys were not just punctuated by a few heightened moments of miraculous encounters via some *deus ex machina*, but were rich in rituals major and minor, routine and impromptu.⁷ For the Chinese of pre-modern times, navigating the sea demanded as much religious vigilance as technical competence.

⁷ For the purpose of this paper *Tianfei xiansheng lu* [A record of miracles by the Heavenly Consort (Mazu) (Taipei: Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, 1960) is not particularly useful. The stories in this collection have been so drastically edited to highlight Mazu's miracles that the maritime context has lost most of its significance. Although valuable for studying Mazu devotion, such tales throw little light on the complexity of religious life at sea.

⁸ Other famous early travellers between China and Japan are the Chinese monk Jianzhen 鑑真 (J: Ganjin) and the Japanese monk Ennin 圓仁. Jianzhen arrived in Japan in 753, and a brief account of his voyage can be

found in Mahito Genkai's 真人元開 *Tō daiwajō tōseiden 東大和尚東征傳* [A record of the Tang abbot's travel to the East] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1979), pp.63–4. Ennin sailed to China in 838, but it is unclear from his diary *Nittō gubō junreiki 入唐求法巡禮記* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1986) if the sailors were Chinese (pp.1–4). His interpreter on board, for example, was a Korean (p.2). Neither of these sources have been included in the present discussion as the first represents not Jianzhen's own testimony but his biographer's, while the second source may not describe Chinese ritual practice.

This paper has three sections. Section I presents two accounts of rituals performed by Chinese seafarers in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The earlier account is an excerpt from the Japanese monk Jōjin's 成尋 diary of his pilgrimage to China.⁸ The later account comes from the aforementioned Xu Jing's record of his Korean trip. Section II examines the writings by three Ming envoys to Ryūkyū in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Section III makes use of Japanese records from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to reconstruct the religion of the Chinese who traded with Japan. These sources pertain to the religious observances of castaways and those who lodged at Nagasaki's 長崎 Chinese Quarters (Tōjin Yashiki 唐人屋敷).⁹

I

Chinese seafarers had already accumulated vast experience plying the seas of East Asia by Northern Song times. Making use of established sea routes, they travelled frequently from the Chinese seaboard to ports on the Korean peninsula and in western Japan, sometimes venturing as far as present-day Kōbe 神戸 and Ōsaka 大阪 on the eastern end of Japan's Inland Sea.¹⁰ Such seagoing vessels could measure up to several tens of meters in length with a capacity of several hundred people. While no description of Jōjin's ship is available, the "imperial vessel" (*shenzhou* 神舟) on which Xu Jing travelled was over thirty *zhang* 丈 long and seven *zhang* wide with a mainmast of thirty *zhang*.¹¹ Manned by a crew of one hundred and eighty, it had separate cabins for soldiers and officials and was equipped with sails and oars and multiple rudders.

Jōjin recorded his impressions of Chinese maritime rituals in his famous travel diary *San Tendai Godaisan ki* 參天台五台山記 (A Record of Pilgrimage to Mounts Tiantai and Wutai).¹² The following is a synopsis of what he witnessed. On the fifteenth of the third month of 1072 Jōjin and several disciples boarded a Chinese merchant vessel near Matsuura 松浦 in western Kyūshū 九州.¹³ The ship put to sea the next day but was forced back by a gusty headwind. At the anchorage the crew read a prayer and made an offering comprising chicken, wine, spirit-money, and some other paper items to propitiate the spirits. Three days later the ship weighed anchor again and made it to the open sea. However, the pilot lost his direction amid continuous rain and mist. The crew resorted to divination and obtained a positive prognosis. As if confirming the oracle, the next day was fine, and a strong wind propelled the ship forward. On the second of the fourth month, they passed by the islet Dongjiashan 東茄山. The captain and several sailors took leave to pay respect to their guardian-saint Sizhou Dashi 泗洲大師,¹⁴ whose image was enshrined on the islet. On the fourth of the fourth month Jōjin's party reached Mingzhou 明州, the major shipping centre on the Yin River 鄞江. Thus began Jōjin's sojourn in China where he eventually died.

⁹ This paper ends in the early 1800s on the assumption that China's opening to the West fundamentally altered the maritime experience of the Chinese, who began to travel in new types of vessels manned by non-Chinese crews and bound for countries beyond East and Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the emergence of reports by Western observers expands the scope of relevant sources. I am grateful to the two referees of this article for reminding me of these European reports. I will try to incorporate this information in my future research.

¹⁰ For an overview of the history of ship-building and shipping in Song China, see Wang Guanzhuo, ed., *Zhongguo guchuan tupu* [An illustrated book of ancient Chinese vessels] (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 2000), pp.107–68. Mori Katsumi's *Nissō bōeki no kenkyū* [A study of trade between Japan and Song China] (Tokyo: Kunitachi Shoin, 1948) is a fine study of maritime traffic between Song China and Japan.

¹¹ Xu did not give the specifications of his ship, one of two "imperial vessels." He merely claimed that they were three times as big as the six accompanying ones (*kezhou* 客舟), each one of which measured some ten *zhang* in length, three *zhang* in depth, and two-and-a-half *zhang* in width, and had a crew of sixty (Xu Jing, *Xuanhe fengshi Gaoli tujing*, pp.183–5).

¹² Jōjin, *San Tendai Godaisan ki*, in *Dai Nihon Bukkyō zensho*, ed. Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 100 vols (Tokyo: Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 1970–73): 72, pp.278–302.

¹³ For background information, see Kamiya Atsushi, "Tai-Ming seisaku to Ryūkyū shihai —ikoku kara 'ikoku' e" [Policy toward Ming China and control over Ryūkyū: from foreign country to "foreign country"], in *Bakubansei kokka to itiki, ikoku* [The Bakuhan country and foreign regions and countries], ed. Katō Eiichi et al. (Tokyo: Kōsō Shobō, 1955), pp.247–92 and Wang Zhenping, "Chōnen's pilgrimage to China, 983–986," *Asia Major* 7.2 (1994): 63–97.

¹⁴ Also known as Sizhou Heshang 泗洲和尚 and Sengqie Dashi 僧伽大師, he was a monk who had come to Tang China from the "western regions" (*xiyu* 西域). His cult was very popular in Ming and Qing Fuzhou 福州, where he was worshipped as Sizhou Pusa 泗洲菩薩. See Zhou Liang-gong, *Minxiaoji* 閩小記 [Brief notes / OVER

/on Min], collated by Lai Xinxia (Fuzhou: Fujian Renmin Chubanshe, 1985), pp.47–8.

¹⁵ Originally containing charts (*tu* 圖) that are now lost, this work not only describes the trip to Korea but also explains the country's history, institutions, and culture.

¹⁶ John Lagerwey, *Taoist ritual in Chinese society and history* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), pp.258–9.

¹⁷ This is a Vinaya temple (*lü yuan* 律院) built in 896. See Luo Jun et al., comp., *Baoqing Siming zhi* 寶慶四明志 [The gazetteer of Siming published in the Baoqing era] (1225–27), *juan* 卷 19, p.14b.

¹⁸ This is a temple for the deity of the Eastern Sea (*Donghai zhisben* 東海之神). Built in 1078 at the request of the ambassador to Korea Chen Mu 陳睦, it continued to attract the devotion of successive Song envoys to Korea. See *ibid.*, pp.8b–9b.

¹⁹ Chün-fang Yü, "Pu-t'o shan: Pilgrimage and the creation of the Chinese Potalaka," in Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü, eds *Pilgrims and sacred sites in China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992), pp.190–245.

Some fifty years after Jōjin went to China, Xu Jing sailed from Mingzhou for Korea (Koryō 高麗). Compared with Jōjin's cryptic references to the rituals of the crew, Xu's book, *Xuanbe fengshi Gaoli tujing* 宣和奉使高麗圖經¹⁵ (An Illustrated Book About the Mission to Koryō in the Xuanhe Era), provides more information on the religious aspect of his journey. Although Xu might have been more perceptive than Jōjin because he shared the culture of the crew, it is also conceivable that the greater number of rituals he described reflected the delegation's prestige as the bearer of Emperor Huizhong's 徽宗 edict to the Korean king. Furthermore, Huizhong's deep involvement in Daoism must not be overlooked.¹⁶ Infatuated with the Daoist master Lin Ling Su 林靈素 and fancying himself a Daoist immortal, the emperor was almost certainly responsible for the proliferation of rituals—some of which were clearly Daoist in character—in connection with this voyage.

In the third month of 1122 Huizhong appointed Lu Yindi 路尹迪 and Fu Moqing 傅墨卿 to head a mission to Korea. Xu was a member of the team. The delegation did not leave the capital Bian 汴 until a year later as the members had to go through elaborate ceremonies that included having an audience with the emperor. It finally left the capital on the fourteenth of the third month of 1123, reaching Mingzhou on the third of the fifth month. The team then boarded eight vessels and made their way downstream to Dinghai 定海, near the estuary of the Yin River. In anticipation of their arrival, a seven-day rite had been underway at Dinghai's Zongchiyuan 總持院¹⁷ to pray for their safety at sea. "Imperial incense" (*yuxiang* 御香) was presented at another temple, the Guangdewangci 廣德王祠,¹⁸ for the same purpose. This offering appeared efficacious, for it elicited the appearance of a mysterious reptile, which was taken to be the Dragon Lord of the Eastern Sea (*Donghai Longjun* 東海龍君). On the twenty-fourth, another offering of imperial incense was made at the Buddhist temple on Mount Zhaobao 招寶山 at the mouth of the Yin River. After passing this point, the flotilla sailed from the placid inland waterway onto the sea.

The next day the fleet came to moor at Shenjiamen 沈家門. There some of the crew went ashore at night to clear the ground and put up a canopy for making an offering to the Shoals—literally 'sand' (*sha* 沙). The central part of this ritual was the setting adrift of eight small wooden boats representing the fleet. Each model boat carried on it Buddhist scriptures, dried food, and a roster of the crew and passengers. The sailors described their action as worship (*ci* 祠), but Xu opined that it was an "exorcism" (*rangyan* 禳厭) and that *sha* in fact refers to "deities of mountains and waters" (*yuedu zhuzhi zhi shen* 岳瀆主治之神). On the twenty-sixth, the ambassador and his attendants, following precedents, landed on Meicen 梅岑, an island better known by the name Putuo 普陀.¹⁹ There they paid tribute to the "efficacious" (*linggan* 靈感) Guanyin 觀音 at the temple Baotuoyuan 寶陀院. While the monks were chanting scriptures, the officials performed obeisance to Guanyin. At midnight, as if responding to the prolonged praying and

chanting, the wind picked up and turned due south as was desired. The ships departed on the twenty-eighth. As the flotilla headed toward the ocean, the ambassador and his deputy put on formal court robes and, assisted by two Daoist officials (*daoguan* 道官), performed yet another round of ritual facing Baotuoyuan. They cast into the sea a talismanic register of all immortals granted by the emperor (*yuqian suojiang sbengxiao yuqing jiuyang zongzhen fulu* 御前所降神霄玉清九陽總真符籙), a memorial to the Master of Winds and the Dragon King (*fengshi longwang die* 風師龍王牒), a certificate from the heavenly official in charge of talismans (*tiancao zhibufyin* 天曹值符引), the True Diagram of the Five Peaks (*wuyue zhenxing* 五嶽真形), and a total of thirteen talismans for dissipating storms and heavy rain (*zhi fengyu deng shisan fu* 止風雨等十三符).

The next ritual reported by Xu took place on the thirtieth as the fleet was crossing the Yellow Ocean (Huangshuiyang 黃水洋). This body of water was extremely hazardous due to numerous sandbars created by silt from the Yellow River. Since many accidents had occurred here, the crew followed seafaring customs and offered chicken and grain to the Shoals and the spirits of shipwreck victims. Beyond the Yellow Ocean Xu recorded no further ritual until the fleet made contact with the Koreans off the island of Kundando 群山島 on the sixth of the sixth month. As officials on the island entertained the ambassador from the Celestial Kingdom, the crew went to worship at the local Five Dragon Temple (K: ●ryongjo 五龍宮). Xu commented that although the temple was small and the deities were represented only by paintings, the cult commanded the fervent devotion of seamen. The last ritual the sailors performed took place two days before the fleet was to reach its destination. On the islet of Hapgul 蛤窟, members of the crew presented offerings at the Dragon Temple (K: Yongsu 龍祠). Their piety was rewarded with the sighting of a green snake next day, which was considered a propitious omen. On the twelfth of the sixth month the fleet entered the port Yesōnghang 禮成港, from where the delegation proceeded to the capital overland.

The homeward voyage was mostly peaceful. The only extraordinary event took place on the Yellow Ocean. For some unspecified reason, Xu's ship lost its rudders and started to drift. Appreciating the urgency, Xu joined the panic-stricken crew in their appeal for divine intercession. Individual sailors even cut off pieces of their hair while praying, as proof of their sincerity. Shortly afterwards a "propitious light" appeared. Reassured by this and an earlier epiphany by the deity Island Conjurer (Yanyushen 演嶼神),²⁰ the sailors mustered up their courage and successfully installed new rudders. They reached Dinghai in another five days.

Despite the sketchy information furnished by Jōjin and Xu Jing, two observations can be made. First, rituals were a regular feature of maritime voyages. Some of these were performed routinely, as when sailors from Jōjin's ship took a side trip to worship Sizhou Dashi or when the ambassador to Korea landed on Meicen to worship Guanyin. Others were impromptu

²⁰ Xu was vague about when this epiphany took place. This deity was associated with an island called Yanyu 演嶼 (Conjured Island) in Putian. According to the story in *Dushi fangyu jiyao* 讀史方輿紀要 [Study notes of historical geography], a White Horse Deity (*Baimashen* 白馬神) conjured up this island to conceal the ship carrying the Song emperor from his Mongol pursuers (cited in Morohashi Tetsuji, *Daikanwa jiten* [A Chinese-Japanese dictionary] [Tokyo: Taishūkan, 1976]). This event, however, post-dates Xu's work.

responses to contingencies. Jōjin's crew resorted to divination when the pilot became disoriented. Xu's crew started to pray in earnest after the vessel had lost manoeuvrability. Seamen thus protected themselves by closely monitoring and interpreting the changing seascape and conditions on board so as to take appropriate ritual action. Such action included visiting the temples of their favourite deities, making offerings to the victims of shipwrecks, looking out for portents, consulting oracles, and, as an emergency ritual, self-mutilation. Moreover, not just professional sailors but officials were involved in ritual matters. In addition to being the beneficiaries of rites performed on their behalf, they also performed rituals in person. The ambassador took the lead to worship Guanyin on Meicen and, on a later occasion, officiated in the deployment of Daoist talismans. Xu also admitted to praying with the sailors in an emergency.

Second, Xu's account suggests that there could have been differences in practice and belief between the crew and their distinguished passengers. It was the sailors (*zouren* 舟人) who took charge of worshipping the Shoals on Shenjiamen. There is no mention of participation by officials. Conversely, it was the ambassador who led a team of "civilian and military personnel" (*guanli bingzu* 官吏兵卒) to Putuoyuan on Meicen. This time no reference was made to the crew. Admittedly, silence is no proof of absence in either case. But considered together with the next piece of evidence, it appears probable that officials and sailors did not always share the same perspective on religious matters. Xu noted differences in nuance between his and the sailors' interpretations of the cult of the Shoals. Xu understood the object of the sailors' devotion not so much as "shoals" as some natural force in general—"deities of mountains and waters." Likewise, he saw the crew's ritual not as some vaguely defined offering rite but as exorcism. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that Xu merely registered a different point of view. There is no sign that the crew's rituals bothered him, and the evidence is too scant to warrant further inferences at this point. More will be said about this in the next section.

II

The greatest and best-known nautical achievement of the Ming has to be Zhenghe's 鄭和 expeditions in the early 1400s to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and beyond. Although the eunuch-admiral's exploits were unparalleled, the Ming court's interest in the distant seas and lands that he visited turned out to be short-lived. In the next two hundred years till the end of the Ming the central government never again sponsored a similar undertaking. This however does not mean that the Chinese stopped taking to the sea. On the contrary, private merchants were ever pushing for greater freedom to trade with East and Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the court upheld the practice of sending an "ambassador of investiture" (*fengshi* 封使) to Ryūkyū whenever

a new king ascended the throne.²¹ The recollections of three such emissaries, namely, Chen Kan, Xiao Chongye 蕭崇業, and Xia Ziyang 夏子陽, provide captivating accounts of maritime religion in the Ming dynasty. Their description highlights the great importance religion had for all seafarers, be they literati-officials or professional sailors.

In 1532 the Ming court sent Chen Kan to the Ryūkyū Kingdom with an edict from Emperor Jiajing 嘉靖 confirming the legitimacy of the recently-enthroned foreign king.²² He arrived in Fuzhou 福州 in the fifth month of the following year to supervise shipbuilding. As the highest-ranking official in the delegation, he presided over the offering of rites at such critical junctures as the laying of the main beam (*dingyuan* 定艚),²³ the erection of the mainmast (*shuwei* 豎桅), the rigging (*zhiban* 治纜), and finally, the launch (*fushui* 浮水). Completed in the third month of 1534, the envoy's vessel had a two-story "yellow poop cabin" (*huanglou* 黃樓).²⁴ The upper level stored the edict whereas the lower level was for the Mazu image. The vessel was fifteen *zhang* long, 2.6 *zhang* wide, and 1.3 *zhang* deep, with thirty-three cabins for crew and passengers. It had five masts and thirty-six oars and carried two on-board sampans, two cannons, and numerous spears and bows and arrows. The crew was some 140 strong, and soldiers, craftsmen, interpreters, doctors, and officials amounted to another 200. Because of its draft, the ship went down the Min River 閩江 with only the crew. Chen and the rest travelled separately to Guangshi 廣石 at the estuary of the Min. There, after making offerings to the sea (*jibai* 祭海),²⁵ they embarked on the second of the fifth month. On the thirteenth a gale battered the ship. As water gushed in through cracks in the hull the next day, the sailors prayed fervently to Mazu for help. Some even resorted to taking vows by cutting their hair (*jianfa yi shesbi* 剪髮以設誓). They also beseeched Chen to appeal for supernatural intervention, but the latter remained unperturbed. After a series of manoeuvres, the ship stabilized and the leaks were plugged. They made contact with Ryūkyū officials on the eighteenth and reached Naha 那霸, their destination, on the twenty-fifth.

Although Chen, by his own account, kept his calm *en route* to Naha, during the return trip even he felt compelled to seek divine assistance more than once. Departing on the twelfth of the ninth month, Chen and party did not make it to the ocean until the eighteenth. After just one day, not only did the mainmast snap in a storm but the rudder was damaged too. Having lost effective control over the vessel, the crew could do nothing but pray. The envoy also kowtowed "countless times" before Mazu. Shortly after, an inexplicable red light appeared in mid-air. Taking it to be an epiphany, the sailors felt somewhat reassured. Meanwhile, the ship seemed to have stabilized. As the bad weather continued, the crew was divided over when to replace the damaged rudder. One group insisted that since a good rudder was essential for effective manoeuvring a replacement must be put in place as soon as possible. The other group countered that all steering power would be lost if bad weather prevented the new rudder from being installed after

²¹ For an accessible history of Ryūkyū see Takara Kurayoshi, *Ryūkyū ōkoku* [The Ryūkyū kingdom] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993). A concise analysis of Ming–Ryūkyū relations seen from the Edo government's perspective can be found in Kamiya Atsushi, "Tai–Ming seisaku to Ryūkyū shihai—ikoku kara 'ikoku' e," pp.247–92. Kobata Atsushi's *Chūsei Nantō tsūkō bōekishi no kenkyū* [A study of the history of trade and travel in the Southern Islands in the Middle Ages] (Tokyo: Tōkō Shoin, 1968) remains a classic.

²² Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, *Shi Liuqiu lu sanzong*, pp.1–52. Chai Shan 柴山, the first Ming envoy to Ryūkyū, went in 1425. Neither he nor the others who went in the next century wrote about their missions. Chen Kan was the first to do so. Guo Rulin 郭汝霖, Xiao Chongye, and Xia Ziyang followed his example. The book by Guo, who departed for Ryūkyū in 1561, is lost, but fragments are preserved in the writings of Xiao and Xia. Another envoy by the name of Du Sance 杜三策 went in 1633 but left no record.

²³ The character *yuan* 艚 is not found in Morohashi's *Daikanwa jiten*. Chen Kan referred to it as the "base timber" (*dimu* 底木) of a ship (Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, *Shi Liuqiu lu sanzong*, p.8).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.9–10. For an overview of shipbuilding in the Ming, see Wang Guanzhuo, *Zhongguo guzhuo tupu*, pp.169–93.

²⁵ It appears that Chen made offering to Mazu in his personal capacity. The practice was to be made official for Xiao's mission.

²⁶ Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, *Sbi Liuqiu lu sanzong*, pp.53–170.

²⁷ According to Xiao, Guo Rulin had agreed to launch a “colour boat” when his crew suspected a disaster was about to strike (ibid., p.102). A copy of the Buddhist scripture *Jingguangming jing* 金光明經 [Scripture of golden brilliance] was also offered on that occasion. Further information on this type of ritual can be found in Timothy Y. Tsu, “All souls aboard! The launch of the model junks by the Chinese of Nagasaki in Tokugawa Japan.” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 10 (1996): 37–62.

²⁸ The deputy’s decision to issue an order has a precedent. When Guo Rulin was caught in a gale, he urged Mazu to intervene by issuing a declaration (*xi* 檄), which he dictated to a clerk (Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, *Sbi Liuqiu lu sanzong*, pp.75–6).

the damaged one was taken out. Chen ordered a divination, which yielded an affirmative result. The emboldened sailors quickly put in the replacement. Chen observed that the wind subsided somewhat during the operation, which he attributed to divine intervention.

Just three days later another storm hit. This time they were forewarned by the visitation of a butterfly and a sparrow. Reasoning that such small and feeble beings should normally not be found on the ocean, Chen and the crew took them to be “supernatural beings” (*shen* 神) that had come to give warning. Sure enough, a gale struck on the night of the twenty-sixth. As the ship careened like a twig in a raging sea, the envoy donned his official dress and pledged to Mazu a commemorative stele and a commendation to the emperor. Once he made the pledge, the storm began to dissipate. When the coast of Fujian came into sight next morning, the crew was so grateful for a “second chance to live” (*zai sheng* 再生) that they kowtowed repeatedly before Mazu. Later, Chen presented offerings at Mazu’s temple in Guangshi, refurbished the building, and erected a stele on its grounds. He also memorialised the court for a state-sponsored offering in honour of the goddess, which was granted.

Some four decades later, Xiao Chongye headed a similar mission to Ryūkyū.²⁶ On the fifteenth of the fifth month of 1579, Xiao and party paid an official visit to the Mazu temple in Guangshi to present offerings and pray for safety at sea. The “ship of investiture” (*fengzhou* 封舟) cleared the outpost Meihuasuo 梅花所 on the twenty-second. Seven days into the voyage, it was blown off course. Since the crew had not sighted land for a few days they were completely disoriented. Distraught and agitated, they were further alarmed by a dragonfly in the cabin that held Mazu’s image. Fearing that it was an omen of impending disaster, an officer ordered a “colour boat” (*caizhou* 彩舟) to be made and an exorcism performed with it.²⁷ Meanwhile, to seek divine guidance on the matter, a spirit-writing session (*jiangji* 降乩) was held with a sailor who was “proficient in magic” (*xi yu wuzhe* 習於巫者). Questions were also put to Mazu by tossing divination blocks (*shenqian qiujiao* 神前求筊). The day ended without mishap.

The next day, there was great joy on board as a sighting was made of an outlying Ryūkyū island. Just as everybody was celebrating with a cup of “landfall wine” (*jianshanjiu* 見山酒), three fearsome “dragons” (that is, tornadoes) appeared out of nowhere. In a matter of seconds the sea swelled and the sky roared. Terrified sailors hastened to counter this freak phenomenon by cracking “scarlet whips” (*zhebian* 赭鞭) and burning “defiled things such as hair and feathers” (*maoyu huiwu* 毛羽穢物). At the same time they tried to prevail upon the envoy to order the “dragons” away in the name of the emperor. Xiao was hesitant, but his deputy was quick to accede to the request.²⁸ He scribbled an order on a wood plaque that absolved the “dragons” of the duty to pay homage to the imperial edict aboard. The animals were told instead to return to their hiding place without delay. As soon as the plaque was displayed, the dragons calmed down and retreated.

The ship put into Naha on the fifth of the sixth month.

In Naha the envoy's authority over nature was put to the test again. A fierce storm struck on the twenty-sixth of the eighth month. Amid the confusion, the towropes holding down the envoy's ship snapped, and the vessel was in danger of drifting out of the bay. Frightened, the locals on board quickly abandoned ship, leaving behind a handful of Chinese struggling to regain control of the vessel. At that critical moment, Xiao put on an official robe and "petitioned heaven" (*gaotian* 告天). Before long the storm subsided and the ship was secured.

The return trip was strenuous but without major mishap. Departing on the twenty-fourth of the tenth month, Xiao and party reached Dinghai on the second of the following month. Xiao followed Chen's example and memorialised the state for an offering for Mazu. But he was not merely emulating his predecessor. He had sought to institutionalise the practice for envoys to worship at Guangshi's Mazu temple both before and after their trips. In his submission to the Department of Rites prior to his departure, he observed that Chen did not pay homage to Mazu before going overseas, merely making a "thanksgiving offering" (*bao* 報) upon returning.²⁹ He opined that such *post facto* recognition was not good enough. He proposed to initiate a journey with a "votive offering" (*qi* 祈) and conclude it with a thanksgiving offering. Securing Mazu's goodwill beforehand, he reasoned, was more prudent than begging her for mercy only after disaster had struck. The court agreed, and Xiao became the first person to follow this rule.

The third case is Xia Ziyang's 1606 mission.³⁰ After presenting the obligatory offering to Mazu, Xia left Meihuashuo on the twenty-fourth of the fifth month. On the third day the ship was in the doldrums. Despite the calm, the sailors noticed that the swells were inexplicably high. Suspecting that something untoward was in store, they launched a "colour boat" as a preventive measure. They also prevailed upon Xia to pray to Mazu. A southerly wind soon gathered and took them to Naha in three days. The journey had thus been a smooth one. Only once did some disaster seem to be looming, but the timely ritual response by the crew and the envoy appeared to have vitiated it. By contrast, the homeward voyage was full of danger.

After more than four months in Naha, Xia and party made offerings to the sea and cleared port on the twentieth of the tenth month. Three days into the voyage, as the last speck of land receded beyond the horizon, a sparrow strayed into the cabin. Just as the sailors were wondering what to make of the incident, a "broken rainbow" (*duanbong* 斷虹) appeared in the northwest. Later the rudder was damaged. As the sailors tried to salvage it, a mysterious glow appeared in the sky. Its illumination allowed the sailors to swiftly repair the damage. Nonetheless, the rudder was lost in the rough sea the following day. Shocked, the sailors cried out to Mazu for mercy. As the wind momentarily weakened the crew managed to install a new rudder. But the storm regained strength and the second rudder snapped as well.

²⁹ Ibid., pp.124–5.

³⁰ Ibid., pp.171–290.

³¹ According to tradition, Mazu was born in 960 and died in 987. Her first official title was granted in 1156, some thirty years after Xu's voyage. See James Watson, "Standardizing the gods: the promotion of T'ien Hou ('Empress of Heaven') along the south China coast, 960-1960," pp.295-300.

Realizing that they were down to the last spare one, the sailors became desperate and cried. Xia and the other officials also prayed in earnest. After consulting Mazu using divination blocks, the crew installed the last rudder at a time decreed by the goddess, and the ship stabilized.

On the twenty-sixth the crew was again alarmed by the presence of sparrows on board. As the wind turned gusty the next day the rudder again came under great stress. To avoid losing this last one, the crew raised it above the water. While this saved the rudder, it also left the ship careening and drifting. Some frightened sailors resorted to "cutting their hair as propitiation" (*jianfa dairang* 剪髮代禳). By the twenty-eighth the hull started to leak severely. As the sailors strove to plug up the holes, Xia issued a "communiqué" (*jiaogao* 傲告) to the Dragon King in his capacity as the representative of the Son of Heaven. The storm duly dissipated. The next day, since there was still no land in sight, Xia promised Mazu a temple and a commendation to the court. Sure enough, the prevailing wind changed to the desired direction. That night a mysterious light appeared some distance ahead. The sailors consulted Mazu using divination blocks and received the instruction to steer clear of it. As soon as the ship amended its course the light disappeared. Relieved, the crew and passengers concluded that the mysterious light was Mazu's warning to them of hidden reefs. They made landfall next morning.

Thanks to the envoys' recollection, it is possible to expand on the observations in the previous section. It is clear that maritime voyages were not just interspersed with rituals but also bounded by them at both ends. Chen presented offerings to the sea before venturing onto the ocean and, upon returning, secured a state offering for Mazu. Later, at Xiao's urging, the court institutionalised the practice for emissaries to Ryūkyū to worship Mazu before and after a trip. Rituals also marked different phases in shipbuilding just as they did the journey on the sea. The scope of maritime religion thus extended beyond the immediate pre-embarkation rites to the very early stage of preparation. The sources add new information on seafaring beliefs and rituals as well. Perhaps the most notable phenomenon is Mazu's ascendancy as the guarantor *par excellence* of maritime safety. Whereas Xu made no reference to her, all three Ming officials described her as the focus of seamen's devotion.³¹ They acknowledged that her image occupied a place on board second in prestige only to that of the edict. And they too, like the sailors, entrusted their personal safety to her. There are other revealing details. The crew practised spirit writing, manipulated divination blocks, and observed omens disguised as atmospheric phenomena and birds and insects. To forestall impending disasters, they cracked whips, burnt ritual repellents, and launched "colour boats." High-ranking officials had their own ritual repertoire. The envoy and his deputy could, in the name of the Son of Heaven, petition heaven, address the Dragon King, and order away agitated "dragons." More than once desperate sailors beseeched their distinguished passengers to exercise their prerogative on the spirits and the elements.

It is precisely over when to invoke this extraordinary authority that the

officials betrayed traces of scepticism toward the religious fervour of the sailors. Chen and Xiao gave the impression that they consented to having Mazu on board only to “conform to the will of the people” (*shun minxin* 順民心) and to “follow customs” (*congsu* 從俗).³² There was no indication of their personal commitment to the cult. The envoys generally portrayed the sailors as emotional and prone to such exaggerated acts as howling in despair, frantic prostration, urgent taking of vows, and ritual self-mutilation. By their own account the high officials only turned to the supernatural as the last resort. Even then they tried to do it in a solemn manner: putting on their court robes to petition either heaven or Mazu. On the way to Ryūkyū, Chen refused to join the crew in supplicating Mazu although the ship appeared to be sinking in a storm. His comment that the crew could not be stopped from panicked praying and ritual self-mutilation even suggests a temporary breakdown in discipline. Since the ship did not succumb to the waves, the envoy proved prudent in keeping his composure whereas the crew appeared fainthearted. Xiao’s behaviour is even more revealing of the religious tension generated by emergencies on the sea. When three “dragons” took his ship by surprise, the crew tried exorcism to no avail. With the menacing animals closing in, Xiao was unable to decide if he should accede to the crew’s appeal for him to invoke imperial prerogative. It was his deputy who obliged, and the ship emerged unscathed. The crew’s effort to get the officials involved thus appeared to have been vindicated. Whatever the outcome, both episodes show that the officials did not always share the sailors’ enthusiasm for ritual. There were moments when the former regarded the latter as too eager to seek divine intercession. This is understandable: as representatives of the emperor, the envoys had to maintain their poise and dignity even when they faced adversity. It must be remembered, however, that none of them questioned the need for divine protection, for they themselves were reliant on the supernatural too. They only tried to maintain some distance between themselves and the crew when it came to the impromptu display of religious fervour.

III

Chinese maritime merchants first came to Nagasaki in the late sixteenth century. They continued to do so in the Tokugawa 徳川 period (1603–1868) period, despite the maritime embargo instituted in the 1630s and 40s, and their enforced segregation from the local population since the late 1680s.³³ According to contemporary Japanese sources, the Chinese vessels were usually between thirty to fifty meters long carrying up to a hundred people. Most of them had three masts with the main one exceeding forty metres.³⁴ The Chinese traders and sailors in Nagasaki may be divided into two groups according to their experience at sea. Arriving safe and sound, the majority checked into the Chinese Quarters where they conducted business and

³² Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, *Shi Liuqiu lu sanzong*, pp.9, 89.

³³ Although dated, Nagasaki Shiyakusho, ed., *Nagasaki shi shi* [A history of Nagasaki city], 9 vols (1937; reprint ed., Osaka: Seibundō, 1981) remains the most informative and accessible work on the history of the Chinese in Nagasaki. Marius B. Jansen’s *China in the Tokugawa world* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992) offers a useful survey of research in Japanese and English on the Nagasaki trade and its cultural impact. The Chinese referred to in this paper were the seasonal visitors, not the ‘naturalized’ /OVER

/ones who lived among Japanese and were barred from overseas journeys.

³⁴ The specifications changed over time as well as differed according to the origin of a ship. See Wang Guanzhuo, *Zhongguo guchuantupu*, pp.269–75, and Ōba Osamu, *Edo jidai ni okeru Chūgoku bunka juyō no kenkyū* [A study of the reception of Chinese culture in the Edo period] (Kyoto: Dōbōsha, 1986), pp.489–536.

³⁵ Ōba Osamu, ed., *An'ei kyūnen Awa Chikura hyōchaku Nankinsen Genjungō shiryō* [Materials concerning the ship *Yuanshunbao* from Nanjing which drifted to Chikura, Awa, in 1780], Edo jidai hyōchaku Tōsen shiryōshū 5 [Materials on Chinese ships that drifted to Japan during the Edo period, no.5] (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1990), p.5.

³⁶ See Hayashi Fukusai, ed., *Tsūkō ichiran* [A comprehensive record of foreign trade], 8 vols (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1912–13): 6, p.75, and Ōba Osamu, *An'ei kyūnen Awa Chikura hyōchaku Nankinsen Genjungō shiryō*, p.54.

³⁷ Yabuta Yutaka, ed., *Kansei jūninen Enshū hyōchaku Tōsen Banseigō shiryō* [Materials concerning the Chinese ship *Wanshengbao* which drifted to Enshū in 1800], Edo jidai hyōchaku Tōsen shiryōshū 6 [Materials on Chinese ships that drifted to Japan during the Edo period, no.6] (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1997), p.209.

whiled away the time between voyages. This enclave of transitory Chinese observed its own system of festivals and rituals drawing upon the services of the three “Chinese temples” (J: *Tōdera* 唐寺) as well as Japanese ones. Naturally, not all voyages were smooth and successful. A small number of seafarers experienced such difficulty at sea that their rescue along Japan's Pacific seaboard was almost a miracle. The castaways were treated with utmost caution due to the maritime embargo. They were interrogated and put under semi-confinement. Only after clearance came from the central government could they be escorted under tight security to Nagasaki for repatriation.

The experience of the castaways opens a window on the rituals performed during serious maritime accidents. The ordeal usually started with the craft sustaining some irreparable damage, causing it to lose power and manoeuvrability. As days went by, food, water, and fuel ran out while the crippled craft became more and more vulnerable to the elements. Lucky indeed were those carried by wind and current to the Japanese seaboard. When help finally came the worst might be over but the ordeal often continued. The Japanese were reluctant to let castaways come ashore, preferring to confine them on board, often for weeks. Even travelling through the local waters was risky. Some hapless Chinese had to be rescued for a second time after their ship ran aground again while under escort to Nagasaki.

The testimonies of survivors and Japanese eyewitnesses make it clear that castaways customarily turned to the supernatural for help and, after being saved, attributed their good luck to divine intercession. They reported the earnest—even compulsive—performance of ritual. When assistance finally came to Shen Jingzhan 沈敬瞻 and his crew, whose ship drifted to Chikura 千倉漣 (in present-day Chiba 千葉 prefecture) at the end of the fourth month of 1780, they had endured more than five months of extreme privation.³⁵ Shen, the merchant-captain, recalled that as drinking water ran out after three months, everybody was reduced to “crying loudly and repenting his sins” (*baoku.xiezi* 號哭謝罪). They kowtowed to the deities so many times that their foreheads bled. When they were rescued, Shen credited their good fortune to the “protection of the divine power of heaven and earth.”³⁶ Taking oaths before the deities was common among distressed sailors. Liu Ranyi 劉然乙 and Wang Qingchuan 汪晴川 reported that their ship, having left Zhapu 乍浦, Zhejiang 浙江 on the ninth of the eleventh month of 1800, narrowly escaped running aground but for a timely western wind sent by Mazu.³⁷ The craft nonetheless lost its main sail and rudder in the next few days. When a gale struck, the crew could do nothing but make pledges. Luckily they made landfall near Okinosumura 沖須村 (in present-day Shizuoka 静岡 prefecture) on the seventh of the twelfth month. Yang Qitang 楊啟堂, whose battered ship was spotted off Shimoyoshida 下吉田 (also in present-day Shizuoka prefecture) on the lunar New Year of 1826, claimed that strong wind had at one point pushed the vessel perilously close to some reef. Disaster was averted only after the crew “had pleaded [with the

deities] and sworn pledges.”³⁸ But as food and fuel became exhausted, the sailors had no other option but to kowtow before the deities, say prayers, and take more oaths. When land finally came into sight, the ship was in danger of missing it due to heavy rain and mist. It was only after the crew had made an urgent appeal for divine intervention that the weather improved, allowing the ship to cast anchor. The next day the Japanese came to their aid.

Seafarers were concerned as much about the safety of the Mazu image aboard as that of their own welfare. When Shen Jingzhan and his crew abandoned ship, a man carrying the ship’s Mazu statue was among the first to come ashore.³⁹ Once landed, he held the image up for those left behind to see. While he murmured prayers for his fellow mates, those awaiting evacuation also worshipped the image from afar. Eventually, everybody made it to shore. Once landed sailors preferred to entrust Mazu temporarily to a nearby temple. Should that prove infeasible, the image would be installed on a makeshift altar. When Gao Shanhui 高山輝 and Cheng Jiannan’s 程劍南 ship drifted to Hachijōjima 八丈島 (which is part of present-day Tokyo metropolitan area [Tōkyō to 東京都]) on the tenth day of the twelfth month of 1753, the two were keen to transfer Mazu to a local temple, Chōrakuji 長樂寺, even promising to donate some sugar (a luxury import).⁴⁰ When no suitable temple could be found (or permission was not granted), a temporary altar would be constructed. A Japanese left a drawing of the makeshift Mazu altar that Liu Ranyi and Wang Qingchuan had set up near their temporary lodging.⁴¹ It shows Mazu at the centre, her two attendants at her sides, and candles and incense pots in front. In the foreground are two Chinese, one prostrating and the other standing with palms joined. Another observer noted that these Chinese started their day by first paying respect to Mazu.⁴²

Mazu was not the only supernatural presence aboard that required attention in the aftermath of an accident. The ship’s spirit (*chuanshen* 船神) had to be sent away before the craft could be condemned. The aforementioned Cheng Jiannan arranged for a “colour boat” to carry the spirit of his vessel away before it was scrapped on the shore of Hachijōjima.⁴³ He explained to the local officials that since the craft was severely damaged, its spirit had “lost its abode” (*wugui* 無歸). He requested a “clean plank” (*jiejing ban* 潔淨板) taken from newly-felled timber to make the model boat. Scraps from the condemned vessel were later donated to Chōrakuji for the building of a new gate.

Once out of immediate danger, seafarers tried to make good their pledges. The first request made by the crew of *Yuchangfa* 郁長發, which drifted to Narashitsu 奈良志津 (in present-day Kōchi 高知 prefecture) on the twenty-seventh of the seventh month in 1808, to the Japanese was to go ashore to burn incense at local temples in fulfilment of pledges made on the sea.⁴⁴ Under maritime embargo the Chinese sometimes had to go to great lengths to do so. Yang Qiutang 楊秋堂, whose ship drifted into Shimoda Bay 下田灣 on the thirtieth of the twelfth month of 1815, had to petition the

³⁸ Matsuura Akira, ed., *Bunka gonen Tosa hyōchaku Kōnanshōsen Ikuchōbatsu shiryō* [Materials concerning the Jiangnan ship *Yuchangfa* which drifted to Tosa in 1808], Edo jidai hyōchaku Tōsen shiryōshū 4 [Materials on Chinese ships that drifted to Japan during the Edo period, no.4] (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1986), pp.1–38.

³⁹ Hayashi Fukusai, *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol.6, p.80; Ōba Osamu, *An’ei kyūnen Awa Chikura hyōchaku Nankinsen Genjungō shiryō*, p.49.

⁴⁰ Hayashi Fukusai, *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol.6, pp.50–9; Ōba Osamu, ed., *Hōreki sannen Hachijōjima hyōchaku Nankinsen shiryō* [Materials concerning the Nanjing ship which drifted to Hachijōjima in 1753], Edo jidai hyōchaku Tōsen shiryōshū 1 [Materials on Chinese ships that drifted to Japan during the Edo period, no.1] (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1985), pp.16–17.

⁴¹ Yabuta Yutaka, *Kansei jūninen Ensbū hyōchaku Tōsen Banseigō shiryō*, plate 6.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.195.

⁴³ Ōba Osamu, *Hōreki sannen Hachijōjima hyōchaku Nankinsen shiryō*, p.92.

⁴⁴ Matsuura Akira, *Bunka gonen Tosa hyōchaku Kōnanshōsen Ikuchōbatsu shiryō*, p.6.

⁴⁵ Hayashi Fukusai, *Tsūkō ichiran*, vol.6, pp.96–115.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.104–5.

⁴⁷ Ōba Osamu, *Hōreikisannen Hachijōjima hyōchaku Nankinsen shiryō*, p.34.

⁴⁸ Tanaka Kenji and Matsuura Akira, eds, *Bunsei kyūnen Enshū hyōchaku Tokutaisen shiryō* [Materials concerning the ship *Detai* which drifted to Enshū in 1826], Edo jidai hyōchaku Tōsen shiryōshū 2 [Materials on Chinese ships that drifted to Japan during the Edo period, no.2] (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1986), pp.425–6, 435.

authorities repeatedly.⁴⁵ On the sixth of the first month of 1816 he submitted the first of two petitions asking for permission to take a twenty-man party ashore. They had promised to beg for alms for the deities during a storm on the ocean. The second petition reduced the size of the landing party to ten and cited a slightly different reason. It explained that the crew had pledged to offer incense at local temples when the ship dragged anchor outside the bay several nights before. The Japanese apparently ignored both requests, for they were soon presented with four more. In the sixth petition (the fourth after the previous two), Yang reiterated his desire to go begging for alms, stressing that it was a contract with the deities that had to be honoured without delay. This was followed by another application. Now he was willing to have five men go ashore, who would solicit alms from no more than a dozen households, thus causing minimum inconvenience for the locals. The authorities remained intransigent. Yang wrote in yet again claiming that he could not cut his hair until he had honoured his pledge. Pleading that his unkempt hair was causing him much discomfort, he beseeched the officials to grant him his wish. Persistence paid off. Noting that Yang had sworn to the deities and that he was abstaining from meat and fish as well as from cutting his hair, the authorities allowed three men to come ashore. Unfortunately, the record contains no information on what happened during this hard-won trip. What it does show is that Yang dared to ask one more favour from the Japanese. On the thirtieth, in anticipation of the journey to Nagasaki, he sought approval for ten men to go and offer incense and pray for favourable wind and safety at local temples.⁴⁶ After some delay, permission came for the ten to worship at the temple Daianji 大安寺.

It was Japanese policy to keep castaways on their vessels and forbid them from communicating with unauthorized persons. The sea-wearied Chinese abhorred the cramped conditions aboard and would find every opportunity to breach the injunction, sometimes using religion as a pretext. (One wonders if other motives lay behind Yang Qitang's remarkable persistence.) During their stay at Shimoda *en route* to Nagasaki, Cheng Jiannan's crew presented a false petition in his name asking the authorities to let them pray at local temples.⁴⁷ The Japanese saw through the deception and confronted Cheng, who had to apologize on behalf of his crew and promise better discipline. Perhaps the sailors aroused the suspicion of Japanese officials when they mentioned, in addition to praying, the desire to stretch their limbs and take strolls along the shore.

During the long delays involved, castaways sought to maintain the Chinese annual ritual and festival cycle. Yang Qitang and his crew donned formal clothes on the first and fifteenth of every month to present incense to the deities. On every second and sixteenth they again dressed up to make food offerings.⁴⁸ Mazu's anniversary on the twenty-third of the third month had a special significance. Two days beforehand Yang Qitang's first mate asked the Japanese for a dozen or so chickens as an offering. On the evening before the ship hoisted colourful flags. Liu Ranyi and Wang Qingchuan,

together with the crew, celebrated the lunar New Year in their temporary lodging.⁴⁹ They set up an altar on the eve of the lunar New Year, the lunar New Year, and the fifth, which was embellished with candles, incense, and paper objects as well as duck, pork, fish, chicken, mushrooms, chestnuts, tea, rice wine, carrot, and yeast (J: *kōji* 麴).

Casualties were almost unavoidable in maritime disasters. One of Shen Jingzhan's sailors died during the vessel's five-month drift.⁵⁰ The corpse was dressed in a shroud and sealed in a wooden bucket. It was first dangled over one side of the vessel with the expectation that it would be buried on land later. But as the crew lost hope, the remains were committed to the deep. Still, a proper burial would be given whenever feasible. After a sailor from Yang Qitang's ship died, a coffin was requested from the Japanese. Two sailors then took the remains ashore together with ritual money, candles, and "meat offerings" (*sansheng* 三牲).⁵¹ The grave was installed in the grounds of a Japanese temple. It bore a Chinese-style inscription and was provided with offerings by Japanese monks for fifty days.

Unusual circumstances dictated that the rituals of castaways be impromptu and abbreviated. By contrast, the hundreds (at times thousands) of Chinese who every year reached Nagasaki without undue complication meant that a complex system of religious observances had to be maintained. Their elaborate rituals and noisy festivals, together with the attendant theatre, music, parade, and feasting, were widely reported in contemporary Japanese writings. The only regret is that these sources have little to say about rituals at sea. The description below follows the seafarers from their entry to Nagasaki Bay, through disembarkation, to life in the Chinese Quarters.

When an inbound ship passed Cape Kanzaki 神崎 at the entrance to the bay, its crew would burn incense and worship the peak on the headland.⁵² The Chinese sailors believed that the hill was an embodiment of Guanyin, one of their favourite divinities. For the Japanese the same landmark was the seat of Kanzaki Daimyōjin 神崎大明神, a Shinto-Buddhist deity. After anchor was cast, just as the crew could set foot on land, so too was Mazu invited to disembark.⁵³ A procession of sailors delivered the goddess to one of the Chinese temples for safekeeping. Leading it was a sailor dressed in dark wielding a staff to drive away demons. Immediately behind were people carrying lanterns and beating on drums and gongs. Then came the sailor carrying the statue. Walking behind was a person holding a ceremonial parasol. The statue and the staff were kept at the temple until departure time when another procession came to fetch them.

After unloading, the vessel was due for maintenance. But before work could start, a propitious day had to be selected for worship.⁵⁴ On the breakwater the captain and the pilot made offerings consisting of incense, candles, cakes, and assorted meats. They also incinerated such paper items as ritual money and miniature clothes as gifts for the spirits. Meanwhile, incense and candles were placed on the ship's altar. It was only after the "sea deity and the soul of the vessel" (J: *kaisbin senkon* 海神船魂) had been propitiated that repair work could proceed.

⁴⁹ Yabuta Yutaka, *Kansei jūninen Enshū byōchaku Tōsen Banseigo shiryō*, p.219.

⁵⁰ Ōba Osamu, *An'ei kyūnen Awa Chikura byōchaku Nankinsen Genjūngo shiryō*, p.6.

⁵¹ Tanaka Kenji and Matsuura Akira, *Bunsei kyūnen Enshū byōchaku Tokutaisen shiryō*, pp.80–1, 98.

⁵² Nigita Akiyoshi 饒田喻義, *Nagasaki meisbo zue* 長崎名勝圖繪 [An album of famous places in Nagasaki], rendered into modern Japanese by Niwa Kankichi (Nagasaki: Nagasaki Bunkensha, 1974), p.204.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.153; Nagasaki Shiyakusho, *Nagasaki sbishi*, vol.6, pp.460–3.

⁵⁴ Nigita Akiyoshi, *Nagasaki meisbo zue*, p.133.

⁵⁵ Nagasaki Shiyakusho, *Nagasaki shishi*, vol.6, pp.365–434.

⁵⁶ Timothy Y. Tsu, “Allsouls aboard!,” pp.37–62.

⁵⁷ Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, ed., *Tōtsūji kaisho nichiroku* [The daily records of the Office of Chinese Interpreters], 7 vols (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1984 [1955]), 3: p.136.

The festivals and major rituals of the Chinese Quarters were essentially similar to those back home. The more important festivals were the lunar New Year, the First Primary (Shangyuan 上元) in the first month, the Earth God (Tushen 土神) festival in the second month, the Pure and Bright (Qingming 清明) and Mazu festivals in the third month (the latter being held also in the seventh and ninth months), the Dragon Boat (Duanwu 端午) and Guandi 關帝 festivals in the fifth month, the Hungry Ghosts (Yulanpen 盂蘭盆) festival in the seventh month, the Suwa Shrine festival in the ninth month, and lastly, the Winter Solstice (Dongzhi 冬至) in the twelfth month. Except for the Suwa Shrine 諏訪神社 festival, all fall into three groups. The first group consists of such seasonal celebrations as the lunar New Year, the First Primary, the Dragon Boat festival, and the Winter Solstice. Although not without religious significance, they were mainly times of merrymaking. The second group pertains to the worship of Mazu and Guandi. The festival of Mazu was celebrated as many as three times a year with the three “Chinese temples” taking turns to host it. A symbol of profit and male bonding, Guandi found favour among merchant seamen. Festivals in the third group were designed to placate the dead. The Earth God was a kind of magistrate in the world of the dead, the worship of whom, together with the spirits under his charge, kept the dead content and peaceful. The Pure and Bright festival was the time when the living visited the graves of relatives, friends, and mates with offerings. The function of the Hungry Ghosts festival was to deliver the “orphaned” spirits from their miserable existence in limbo. The Suwa Shrine festival was an exception to the above categorization because it was a Shinto event. As Nagasaki’s pre-eminent festival, it involved the entire local population in rituals, parades, and merrymaking for many days.⁵⁵ It was too good a chance for the bored lodgers of the Chinese Quarters to miss. Every year they sought (and obtained) permission to visit Suwa and other shrines where they could join the local populace in their celebrations.

Besides such festivals, there were occasional rituals sponsored either by the community or by individuals. Most of these had to do with the welfare of the dead. The most elaborate rite in this category was the “launching of colour boats” (J: *saisbū nagasbi* 彩舟流), which took place at irregular intervals of up to ten or twenty years.⁵⁶ Requiring weeks of preparation, it featured many days of scripture-chanting by monks and the climactic incineration of one or two fairly large model boats. Loaded with provisions and representations of deceased seamen, the model boats symbolically repatriated the souls of men whose remains could not be returned home. Because of its scale, the rite required the backing of the whole community. Equally solemn but less elaborate was the Feeding of Hungry Ghosts (J: *segaki* 施餓鬼), an esoteric Buddhist rite lasting from one to three days. It took place whenever the community felt that the dead were restless. A plague that broke out in the Chinese Quarters in 1709, for example, prompted the lodgers to sponsor a Feeding rite.⁵⁷ Furthermore, illness and accidents never failed to claim an occasional victim. Funerals were traditionally handled by

the Japanese temple Goshinji 悟真寺, which had a large Chinese cemetery in its grounds. Whereas Japanese monks performed the technical part of the ritual, mates and relatives made up the procession and took part in presenting offerings to the dead. Finally, relatives sometimes requested memorial rites to be performed when they returned to Nagasaki a few years later.⁵⁸

The lodgers made occasional pilgrimages to local temples and shrines, ostensibly for worship, but sightseeing and feasting were almost always part of the itinerary. One example will have to suffice here. Fifty-six Chinese visited Nagasaki's Confucian temple in the spring of 1714. On the way they stopped at other temples and shrines to view flowers and take refreshments. At the Confucian temple (J: *seido* 聖堂), after worshipping the Confucian saints, they took a meal consisting of seven dishes and two soups.⁵⁹ Religion and pleasure went hand-in-hand. In fact, religion was practically the only excuse for the seamen to escape temporarily the claustrophobic Chinese Quarters.

Two observations may be made to end this section. The first is that self-mortification, confession, and oath-taking were the favoured rituals of last resort for seafarers. Desperate sailors injured their own bodies to prevail upon the deities to intercede. Two of the Ming envoys witnessed sailors cutting their hair when appealing for supernatural help. Such ritual self-mortification was sometimes done in association with confession. Shen Jingzhan reported that, as fresh water ran out, everybody on board "howled and repented his sins," all the while "kowtowing until his forehead bled." Just as common was the making of pledges, which was sometimes done in conjunction with self-mortification. The Ming envoys attested to the miraculous effect of their pledges to Mazu. Although they did not reinforce their vows with self-mortification, the sailors were less inhibited. Chen witnessed sailors cutting their hair while taking vows. Yang Qiutang promised to abstain from meat and stop trimming his hair until he could procure alms as offerings. In this case self-imposed discomfort was not part of the act of pledging but its fulfilment.

The second point concerns Chinese maritime religious practice on foreign soil. The Song and Ming records already show that Chinese seafarers continued to practise their rituals overseas where they probably also worshipped foreign deities. Xiao Chongye believed it his prerogative to petition heaven in an emergency although he was in Ryūkyū. Similarly, Xia Ziyang made offerings to the sea on leaving Ryūkyū just as he had done in China. More interestingly, Xu Jing reported that his crew worshipped dragon deities on two Korean islands. Although it is impossible to determine the exact character of these cults, that the temples were in Korean territory leaves open the possibility that the cults were either indigenous to Korea or some kind of Korean-Chinese hybrid. Sources from Tokugawa Japan show that Chinese seafarers were ready to adapt their religious practice to local conditions. Although not averse to building makeshift altars, they preferred to put their deities in Japanese temples. They had their own temples but were happy to

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol.4, p.117; vol.7, p.20.

⁵⁹ Tōkyō Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo, *Tōtsūji kaisho nichiroku*, vol.7, p.33.

make donations to Japanese ones as well. That they were willing to graft their religious practice onto Japanese soil is apparent: they relied on Japanese temples to provide funerary services and burial grounds, they made pilgrimages to Japanese temples and shrines, and they even gave their own religious interpretation to the Japanese landscape. In short, Chinese maritime religion did not just take place but actually took root in Japan.

Conclusion

In *Europe and the Sea* Michel Mollat suggests that the sea is a sacred space because it is perilous.⁶⁰ Across this vast region suspended between life and death,⁶¹ land and islands are the only certainty as landmark and shelter. According to Chen Kan's helmsman, without islands as reference "a ship is just as likely to end up in hell as in an unknown country."⁶² By the same token, two late-Ming navigational manuals provide meticulous information about faraway islands where fuel and water are available, where anchorage could be found, or where an offering is due.⁶³ An adequate understanding of maritime religion must therefore keep both land and sea in perspective. In the first instance, maritime religion was an extension of practice on land—or, more precisely, *homeland*. The sequence of maritime rituals began on land and, with luck, would end on land. Divine favours incurred at sea were also repaid on land. Furthermore, seafarers' ritual expertise and tools had their roots on land. Nonetheless, maritime religion was no mere transposition of land-bound, home-grown practice onto a cruising vessel. It was at heart a practical response to the vicissitudes of seafaring: the ever-changing seascape and the geography and culture of foreign lands and islands. The dangers of the sea meant that, even though much of the seafarers' religion derived from the land, it was difficult to predict when and how it would be deployed at sea. Moreover, since the sea was dotted with islands and ended, so to speak, at the shores of alien lands, the foreign landscape was as much a constituent part of maritime religion as the homeland and the seascape. Chinese mariners revered Korean and Japanese landmarks as seats of deities. They sought the service of Japanese temples and patronized them. Their own temples in Nagasaki even physically transformed the Japanese landscape. Recovering the maritime religious experience, therefore, helps to heighten our appreciation of pre-modern Chinese religion as an improvised tradition that was continually reconstituted across heterogeneous geographic, social, and cultural space.

Tsu Yun Hui

Department of Japanese Studies
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
National University of Singapore
Republic of Singapore
jpstut@nus.edu.sg

⁶⁰ Michel Mollat, *Europe and the sea* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), p.165.

⁶¹ Marcus Rediker, *Between the devil and the deep blue sea: merchant seamen, pirates, and the Anglo-American maritime world, 1700–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.153–204.

⁶² Taiwan Yinhang Jingji Yanjiushi, *Sbi Liuqiu lu sanzong*, p.12.

⁶³ Xiang Da, *Liangzhong baidao zhenjing* [Two navigational manuals] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1982), pp.36, 139, 32.