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The Religious Culture of Southern Fujian, 750–1450: Preliminary Reflections on Contacts across a Maritime Frontier

This article consists of initial ideas that I have been considering on the nature of China's maritime frontier. The specific reference is that stretch of the frontier defined by Minnan 閩南, or southern Fujian province. Its impact on the economic and political history of China during the "middle period," the centuries spanning the late-Tang through early-Ming dynasties (ca. 750–1450), has already been the subject of inquiries, including several of my own.¹ But while new insights no doubt remain to be discovered, that is not the purpose of the following discussion. Rather, I want to reflect on the frontier's impact on the religious culture of the Minnan region. I try to envision particularly the maritime frontier as a filtering membrane through which cultural influences could be received as well as distributed but always with an element of security that was rarely available on land frontiers.

WHAT IS A FRONTIER?

In broaching the theme of frontier, it is important first to establish what the term means. At its most basic the term is roughly equivalent to "border," the line that delineates one zone – perhaps a state, perhaps something less tangible – from another.² But this is not the way the

¹ See esp. *Community, Trade, and Networks: Southern Fujian Province from the Third to the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1991); and "Muslims and Hindus in the Culture and Morphology of Quanzhou from the Tenth to the Thirteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 6.1 (1995), pp. 49–74. Concerning the Minnan region that is the focus of this essay, see also Billy K. L. So, *Prosperity, Regions, and Institutions in Maritime China: The South Fukien Pattern, 946–1368* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 2000). For two much more comprehensive surveys of the maritime frontier, see Zhang Wei 張煒 and Fang Kun 方堃, *Zhongguo haijiang tongshi* 中國海疆通史 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2003), pp. 1–9. See also Li Donghua 李動華, *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan: Guanjian shidi ge'an yanjiu* 中國海洋發展, 關鍵時地個案研究 (Taipei: Daan chubanshe, 1990).

² One dictionary traces the English word from Old French *frontière*, meaning simply "front," and finds its earliest English usage to mean "front side." From that came the concept

term resonates to many. American historical discourse, for example, has long been driven by the idea of “frontier” as a boundary region separating the civilized realm that lay “behind” from a barbarous and savage realm that lay “beyond.” This was a land-based concept. In the North American experience, as well as that of other zones of European expansion such as Australia or South Africa, the sea was at the rear; it was the zone from which civilization came. The frontier always lay ahead – it was the interior. The frontier, therefore, was a contested zone in a way that the maritime rear never was or could be. And because it was contested, it was also fluid; regions could slip “behind” the frontier into the realm of the civilized, only to be lost later should the “savages” who lay beyond gain strength and tactical advantage – a rare occurrence in the process of European expansion, to be sure, but nevertheless a real aspect of a contested frontier.

China, of course, has an inland frontier. Indeed, most of China’s periphery confronts the Asian mainland – what Owen Lattimore so many years ago dubbed the “inner Asian frontier,”³ and it has been this engagement that has shaped China’s frontier consciousness. Throughout China’s history, from the invasions of the Zhou state late in the second millennium BC that led to the fall of the Shang/Yin dynasty, to those that marked the end of the Han imperial legacy in the fourth century AD, to the great invasions of the early second millennium that culminated in the Mongol conquest, and too many other occasions to mention as well, the inner Asian frontier has represented a tangible threat to imperial order. This frontier demarcated the boundary between the settled agrarian life of the empire and the migratory herding life of the steppe, and the two lifestyles were in eternal competition. The agrarianist needed stability, security, and above all boundaries that defined fields and separated holdings. The herding life was rooted in space and freedom. The values were in direct conflict, and so conflict was the result.

This frontier was never expansionary in the same way that the European colonial frontiers were; too many factors – space, distance,

of that “part of a country which ... borders another country.” See *The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles*, ed. C. T. Onions et al. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1955 rev. edn.), p. 755.

³ The *locus classicus* is *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York: The American Geographical Society, 1941), but the theme is also addressed in many of the lectures and essays collected in Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1928–1958*, with preface by Étienne Balasz (London: Oxford U.P., 1962). See also Hattori Katsuhiko 腹部克産, *Kodai Chūgoku no gunken to sono shūhen* 古代中国の郡県とその周辺 (Tokyo: Mineruba shobō, 1969).

environment to name a few – prohibited either side from gaining a decisive advantage over the other. Thus to a degree that was rarely part of the European colonial experience it was a frontier of flux and contest where each side held the upper hand at one time or another. Every bit as much as the European frontier of North America pitted civilization against savagery, however, the inner Asian frontier was perceived to pit civilization, which China has always equated with settled agriculture, against barbarism, the wayward life of the wandering herder.

As defining as the inner Asian frontier has been to Chinese history and identity, however, a cursory glance at any map of China shows a maritime littoral that is equally as long as the land frontier, stretching from Manchuria all the way to Vietnam. This is the frontier that I am interested in, and it presents a different picture. To the European immigrants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in North America and elsewhere, the maritime littorals of their new lands were, as I said, “the zone from which civilization came.” But of course those Europeans had reached their new lands via the sea. In this they were qualitatively different from the Chinese, and in that difference lies a critical contrast.

When the newly unified empire that emerged out of the wreckage of Zhou late in the first millennium BC began a pattern of expansion to the south – and expansion was almost always toward the south, for the early center of the northern plains already was confronting the limits of inner Asia – it did so through the inland river routes: the Han River through modern Hubei, the Gan and Xiang Rivers running south from the Yangtze, the delta networks of Guangdong. It would be rash and unsupportable to suggest there was no migration along the coast, but it is a fact that coastal migration was not favored. Thus as the sea was encountered it marked the limit to expansion; there were no waves of further migration across the waters – not, at least, until many, many centuries later under vastly different circumstances. To the Europeans, the sea was a source, a link to the motherlands that were the very definition of civilization. To the Chinese, the sea was a limit, a boundary against which they abutted and which marked the end of their expansion.

The sea, therefore, marked something for the Chinese that was dramatically different from European perceptions of it. Europeans knew what lay beyond, for that was whence they had come, but the vast littoral of the south for the Chinese was essentially an unknown. Except in a political sense, after the “Age of Discovery” the Europeans did not generally regard the sea as a frontier. The Chinese did. But this was not the frontier of the north, the “inner Asian frontier.” That was

dangerous, an eternal source of threat. The maritime frontier of the south was generally not a source of concern. Yet that need not mean it was benign, for it clearly was a demarcation between the empire and something beyond. And central to the Chinese world view was that anything that lay beyond the empire was a threat to orthodox civilization. Thus as much as the maritime frontier was a political boundary, it was also a cultural boundary separating civilization from the inchoate forces that lay beyond every bit as much as the far more dangerous northern frontier.

EARLY ENCOUNTERS

The expansion southward of northern polities inevitably brought the land-oriented plains cultures into contact with indigenous peoples who possessed their own, different, experiences and beliefs.⁴ One such encounter was that between the consolidating Qin and Han empires and the Yue peoples of the southeast coast. Just who the Yue were and how we should understand the textual references in Chinese sources remains an open question; classical Chinese ethnography was characteristically vague about the peoples encountered on the empire's peripheries, content instead with generalized references of which "Yue" was one. In addition to the Yue kingdom of the late-Zhou era mentioned above, for example, the ninth-century imperial gazetteer *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi* 元和郡縣圖志 refers to the "myriad Yue" (*bai Yue* 百越) in the far south, the "Yue of Min" (*Min Yue* 閩越) of the Fujian coast, and to the "eastern Yue" (*dong Yue* 東越) of the Hangzhou Bay region.⁵ More generally, the second-century *Hanshu* comments: "The myriad Yue are scattered throughout the seven or eight thousand *li* stretching from Jiaozhi (the Red River delta of modern Vietnam) to Kuaiji (the Hangzhou Bay region). Each has its own surname 各有種姓, and it is not possible to discuss them all."⁶ Ought we conclude that such references indicate

⁴ For an exploration of the distinctive culture that emerged in the south as the empire consolidated its grip, see Edward Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird: T'ang Images of the South*, 2d edn. (Berkeley: U. California P., 1985).

⁵ See Li Jifu 利吉甫, *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983 edn.) 26, p. 623, for *Dong Yue*; 29, p. 715, for *Min Yue*; and 34, p. 885, for *Bai Yue*. Sima Qian's history *Shiji* 史記 (photoprnt. of Qianlong Wuyingdian edn.; Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, n.d.), j. 113-14, alludes only to the Nan Yue 南越 and Dong Yue. For a very interesting and informative discussion of the meaning and use of the term *Yue* in predynastic China, see Erica Brindley, "Barbarians or Not? Ethnicity and Changing Conceptions of the Ancient Yue (Viet) Peoples, ca. 400-500 BC," *AM* 3d ser. 16.1 (2003), pp. 1-32.

⁶ Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1969) 28B, p. 1669; cited in Liao Dake 廖大珂, *Fujian haiwai jiaotong shi* 福建海外交通史 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2002), p. 1.

a common culture? Surely not; indeed, *Hanshu* says “each had its own surname,” no doubt a contextualized reference to tribal and cultural differences. What they do point to, if for no better reason than by virtue of their shared locations along the southeast coast, is cultures in which the sea played important, if not central, roles. The contemporary Taiwan scholar Li Donghua, for example, alludes to evidence of a ship-building tradition among the Yue peoples of the Pearl River delta region, citing texts such as the *Shanhai jing* 山海經 as well as relatively current archeological evidence.⁷ Similarly, scholars have long puzzled over the context of the well-known ship-coffins embedded in a cliff wall over an upper tributary of the Jiulong River in modern Hua’an district (Zhangzhou), a remnant of the burial practice of some anonymous but long-ago people generally thought to have been Yue.⁸

The Qin-Han impact was felt centuries later in the rebellion of Sun En 孫恩 and Lü Xun 慮循, which wracked the southeast across the turn of the fifth century. By all accounts both Sun and Lü were of Han background. However, until Lü launched a campaign up the inland river valleys into the central Yangtze heartland in 410 they conducted their rebellion primarily from the sea. This was most pronounced after Sun drowned at sea and Lü took over the rebellion’s leadership. Faced with the rallying of forces loyal to the court, Lü undertook construction of a large new fleet. The Tang-era *Jinshu* 晉書 comments: “The vessels were extraordinary; it was more than the common people were capable of 船版大積百姓弗之.”⁹ We get a further sense of the meaning of this line from a passage in *Tai ping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記, a late-tenth-century gazetteer: “The barbarian households 夷戶 of Quanzhou are also called the boat people 遊艇子. They are the remnants of Lü Xun[’s rebellion].”¹⁰ No doubt, as all modern commentators agree, Lü relied on the boat-building talents of the indigenous peoples who lived alongside and in greater numbers than the Han migrants from the north.¹¹

⁷ Li, *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan*, p. 62, citing *Nanyue conglu* 南越叢祿 (10th-c.) to the same effect.

⁸ For an overview of the prehistory of Fujian, including discussion of the Neolithic cultures, see Zhu Weigan 朱維幹, *Fujian shigao* 福建史稿 (Fuzhou: Fujian jiaoyu chubanshe, 1984), vol. 1, pp. 3–20.

⁹ *Jinshu* (Peiping [Beijing]: Kaiming shudian Ershiwu shi edn., 1934) 100, p. 273b, biog. Lü Xun.

¹⁰ Yue Shi 藥史, *Tai ping huanyu ji* (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe 1962; photoreprint of 1793 edn.) 102, p. 2b.

¹¹ On Lü Xun’s rebellion, see Tanigawa Michio 谷川道夫 and Mori Masao 森正夫, *Chūgoku minshū hanranshi* 中国民衆反乱史 (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunko, 1977) 1, pp. 121–46; Kawakatsu Yoshio 川勝義雄, *Gi Jin Nambokochō* 魏晉南北朝, vol. 3 of *Chūgoku no rekishi* 中国の歴史 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1974), pp. 203–4; and Matsuura Akira 松浦章, *Chūgoku no kaizoku* 中国の海賊 (Tokyo: Tōhō shōten, 1995), pp. 10–11.

As the history of Han settlement in the Minnan region demonstrates, the relationship between the northern immigrants and indigenous people was not always comfortable. Minnan was one of the last regions of the southeast to experience significant Han immigration, the result of its general inaccessibility from the preferred migratory routes of the interior. As migrants moved from north China along the inland river valleys, their easiest access to the Fujian coastline was via the Min River 閩江 drainage network of northern Fujian, a route that gave no access to Minnan. Among the rivers of Minnan only the Jiulong 九龍, the core of later Zhangzhou prefecture at the southern extremity of the region, reaches deep into the mountainous interior, and even it is not readily accessible from the west. Consequently, even as Han immigrants settled in growing numbers in the lower Gan River valley of northern Jiangnan, in the welcoming Hangzhou Bay region, and in the fertile lowlands around the mouth of the Min River where the city later known as Fuzhou 福州 had emerged soon after the collapse of the Han dynasty, Minnan remained the preserve of an intrepid few drawn either in anticipation of mineral wealth found in the mountainous interior or by a meditative isolation that appealed to those seeking a religious experience.

We know almost nothing about relations between those early settlers and the indigenous population; we can imagine that to the degree the latter were economically focused on the sea and so not in competition with the immigrants, relations may have been benign. This changed as the pace of Han settlement increased in the seventh century. In contrast to their forerunners whose economic interests may have coexisted with those of the indigenes, the new settlers were increasingly focused on agriculture. In a pattern reminiscent of Europe's colonial frontiers and even of relations along China's own northern frontier, this put them at odds with the native people. Outside the narrow river valleys, the best agricultural land was the malarial lowlands of the coast; their exploitation first required drainage.

We suffer from an absence of historical sources that describe exactly what was unfolding, but through the seventh century new settlers must have been taking the steps to make the plains safe, or at least safer. In 660, for example, a community of Han settlers on the Zhangzhou coastline south of the Jiulong River appealed to the Tang court for protection; not long afterward they had to abandon their coastal outpost "because the people suffered greatly from malaria."¹² By the

¹² See Wu Wenlin 吳文林 and Xue Ningdu 薛凝度, eds., (*Jiaqing Yunxiao tingzhi* (嘉慶

end of the century efforts to gain a foothold on the plains surrounding the mouth of the Jin River were yielding greater success. No later than the beginning of the eighth century a new urban node had arisen on the inland fringes of the coastal plain near the mouth of the river; this community was called Jinjiang 晉江 after the river itself. In 712, the Tang recognized this settlement as the political center of the region when it was established as the administrative center of a new prefecture – Quanzhou 泉州.¹³

As settlers encroached on the coastal plains, however, relations with the indigenes soured. We have to resort to a bit of imagination to understand what was unfolding. The indigenous culture was oriented to the sea; at the same time, the indigenes probably also practiced some rice cultivation. Both activities required access to the coastal lowlands that also held the greatest attraction to the Han immigrants, who themselves focused on the cultivation of rice. The two communities, in other words, found themselves contesting for the same land. As the immigrant population grew in number, the coexistence that had characterized relations between the earliest arrivals and the indigenes became increasingly difficult and contentious. As just noted, in 660 the community on the Zhangzhou coast, confronted with a pattern of raiding, appealed to the Tang court for protection. In 669 Chen Zheng 陳政 (d. 677) led a force of several hundred into the area, initiating a pattern of conflict between the two groups that lasted into the early-eighth century. After almost a half-century of intermittent conflict, in which both Chen Zheng and his son Yuanguang 元光 (d. 711) were killed, the indigenes were chased into the hills and Han control was consolidated.¹⁴

CONSOLIDATION, TRADE, AND THE RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF MINNAN

Domestic Responses to the Maritime Frontier

This is the context that frames my inquiry into the relationship between the maritime frontier and the religious culture of the region. The immigrants who filtered into the valleys of Minnan encountered a regional culture with a long history of contact with the sea, but they

雲霄廳志 (photoprnt. of 1935 edn.; Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1967) 17, pp. 6a–b, quoting the 12th-c. *Zhangzhou tujing* 漳州圖經.

¹³ *Taiping huanyuji* 102, pp. 1a–b.

¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion of Chen Zheng and his son, see my “Bridles, Halters, and Hybrids: A Case Study of T’ang Frontier Policy,” *T’ang Studies* 6 (1988), pp. 49–68.

brought with them their northern heritage – a heritage that, for lack of a better term, we call “Chinese.” And central to that heritage were the regional and local cults that were devoted to specific deities within the ever-changing cosmic pantheon and that have been a part of China’s culture from time immemorial.

In this, Minnan is like all of China: the landscape is dotted with shrines to cultic deities. Most, however, at best have been only indirectly tied to the sea and its influences. Qingshui zushi 清水祖師 and Wu zhenren 吳真人, for example, have been among the most important deities of Minnan ever since they emerged in the Northern Song dynasty. Both followed the Minnan maritime diaspora in later centuries at least as far as Taiwan and into southeast Asia, but neither included the maritime world among the communities they served nor were they defined by the maritime community as a protector gods.¹⁵ It is the latter, on the other hand, that I am particularly interested in, for these are the deities that interacted most directly with the maritime frontier. Although surviving records mention several such deities among those of Minnan, surviving details in source materials concern only three: the Duke of Manifest Kindness (*Xianhui hou* 顯惠候), whose cult was centered in the hills behind the Putian district city; the Lord of Illumined Kindness (*Zhaohui gong* 昭惠公), whose cult was centered on the Anhai Bay region of southern Quanzhou; and the Maternal Ancestor (*Mazu* 媽祖, also known as the Empress of Heaven [*Tianhou* 天后]), whose cult arose along the central coast of Fujian but which soon spread throughout the Chinese maritime and even riverine world.

To understand these cults and the degree to which they reflected the influence of the maritime frontier on local concerns, some further background is necessary. As Han immigrants assumed control of Minnan and the wider southeast coast, they also absorbed the indigenous culture’s orientation to the sea. While the maritime littoral remained a frontier dividing civilization from its alternatives, the long-standing distaste of the Han for the sea was gradually overcome. Indeed, the coastal sea lanes had finally become one of the viable routes of the Han

¹⁵ The link between both deities and the Chinese community in Taiwan is emphatically apparent today at their home shrines, both of which have been spectacularly renovated by foreign, primarily Taiwanese, money since the 1980s. That of Qingshui zushi, according to tradition the deified manifestation of the Buddhist devotee Chen Puzu 陳普足 (11th c.), is in the mountains of Anxi 安溪 district; that of Wu Zhenren, the deified manifestation of Wu Tao 吳本, also known as Baosheng dadi 保生大帝 and according to tradition a doctor of extraordinary talents in the early decades of the Song, sits in Baijiao village 白礁村 on the border of Zhangzhou 漳州 and Quanzhou 泉州 prefectures. On Wu Zhenren, see *Wu Tao xueshu yanjiu wenji* 吳本學術研究文集, ed. Zhangzhou Wu Zhenren yanjiuhui 漳州吳真人研究會 (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1990).

migration, a development that no doubt made the Han colonization of Minnan through the Tang possible. It is not clear exactly when the ports of Minnan, most importantly Quanzhou Bay but also a string of lesser bays and inlets along the Minnan coast that collectively became the port of Quanzhou, began to engage in trade. No doubt domestic coastal trade was as old as maritime colonization. Overseas trade, which was of greater renown although probably of no greater impact on the emerging maritime orientation of the local population, may have begun as early as the seventh or eighth centuries – certainly traders and vessels from the fabled lands of the South Seas, as the Chinese knew the archipelago regions of Southeast Asia, had been traversing the Fujian coast even before the Sui-Tang reunification of the empire – though some have argued it was not until the ninth-tenth centuries.¹⁶

As both my own work and that of Billy So have demonstrated, the impact of overseas trade, both overseas and domestic, on the regional economy of Minnan was profound. Certainly it underlay the emergence of the Quanzhou prefectural city as a major economic and cultural center. Urban populations are notoriously difficult to extrapolate from traditional Chinese census data, but modern scholars have estimated as many as 200 to 300 thousand people may have lived inside the city walls, a number that was far out of proportion to the agricultural productivity of the city's hinterland and so only supportable on an alternative economic basis.¹⁷ Possibly of greater importance, however, it also transformed life outside the city, impelling a reorientation of the agrarian economy away from its traditional role in support of the urban population toward a commercial focus that supported the trade.¹⁸ Consequently, a large if imprecise proportion of the population was at least indirectly involved in the overseas trade economy.

¹⁶ Needham cites evidence going as far back as the Han to argue that sporadic trade had linked the northern heartland with the South Seas from the beginning of the imperial era; see Joseph Needham et al., *Physics and Physical Technology*, Part 3: *Civil Engineering and Nautics*, vol. 4 in *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1971), pp. 442–43. Certainly by the middle centuries of the first millennium as the urban centers of the Yangtze delta began to flourish, trade with the South Seas became routine.

Just when overseas trade began in the ports of Quanzhou has been debated. My own view that it was by the last century of the Tang (see Clark, *Community, Trade, and Networks*, pp. 32–37) has been disputed by Billy Kee-long So (*Prosperity, Region, and Institutions*, pp. 17–24). The evidence is far too incomplete to support a definitive argument either way.

¹⁷ See Liang Gengyao 梁庚堯, “Nan Song chengshi de fazhan” 南宋城市的發展, *Shihuo yuekan* 食貨月刊 10.10 (1981), pp. 420–43; and 10.11 (1981), pp. 489–504. See also Clark, *Community, Trade, and Networks*, Appendix 2; So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions*, pp. 183–84.

¹⁸ This is the central theme of Clark, *Community, Trade, and Networks*, and also supported by So in *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions*.

In considering the role of the sea in the lives of the local people, however, the overseas trade that so influenced the regional economy may not have been as influential as relatively local imperatives. Quanzhou was a transshipment entrepôt; the goods that arrived from outside the empire had value only as they could be further distributed. Certainly overland routes were one option to the domestic traders who oversaw the distribution network. However, most of the great consuming centers – Hangzhou, Ningbo, Suzhou, Yangzhou, to name only a few – were on or near the coast. No doubt the coastal trading network, which unlike the overseas trade was overwhelmingly under domestic control, was the primary means of forwarding goods to these centers. As early as the eighth century, for example, Li Zhao 李肇 had written: “Throughout the districts of the southeast, there are none that lack access to water. Thus the goods of all the world 天下貨利 mostly move by water.”¹⁹ The coastal transshipment trade, furthermore, not only served domestic ports but extended to Korea and Japan as well; concurrently with the maturation of the Song dynasty, Japanese and Korean records routinely began to note the arrival of Chinese merchants in their ports. While many of these visitors are recorded only as “Song merchants 宋商,” many others are entered by their home ports, among which Quanzhou was prominent.²⁰

Throughout the coastal trade, vessels were commonly crewed by men from the point of origin. Thus a vessel identified as a Quanzhou vessel was routinely crewed by men from Quanzhou. Because documentation is almost nil, it is impossible to suggest how many men from greater Minnan might have been involved in this trade; if the records of Japan and Korea are a reliable indicator, however, vessels based in Quanzhou and its associated ports were a major factor. Given the niggardly soils of the Fujian coast and the poverty that they bred, it is likely that this trade played a very important role in the regional economy.

Finally, the sea was also a source of foodstuffs. Like any coastal people, those of Minnan learned to harvest the rich waters that surrounded them. Sea foods have long been an important part of the regional culinary tradition, adding protein to diets otherwise constrained by the limited harvests the land allowed. Even if we had sources to

¹⁹ *Tangguo shibu* 唐國史補, quoted in Shiba Yoshinobu 斯波義信, *Sōdai shōgyōshi kenkyū* 宋代商業史研究 (Tokyo: Kazama shobo, 1968), p. 52.

²⁰ See, e.g., Song Xi 宋晞, “Song shang zai Song Li maoyi zhong de gongxian” 宋商再宋麗貿易中的貢獻, in *Songshi yanjiu luncong* 宋史研究論叢 (Taipei: Huagang shuceng, 1962) 2, pp. 139–86, and Mori Katsumi 森克己, *Nissō bōeki no kenkyū* 日宋貿易の研究 (Tokyo: Kokuritsu shogen, 1948).

look at such a question, it would no doubt be impossible to draw a line between men who fished the sea and those who crewed the boats of the coastal trade. What is clear is that the Han society that emerged in Minnan was every bit as tied to the seas as that which it had displaced. Not surprisingly, then, the sea was an important motif in local cultic traditions.

The Duke of Manifest Kindness is one such example. We know of the Duke today because of an inscription written in 1138.²¹ Baidu Village, where the cult was based, is located in hill country a few miles north of the Putian district city. As recounted in the text, the cult's origins lay in the interregnum century between Tang and Song: "By the Five Dynasties era [907-960] there already was a temple where sacrifices were conducted by our people." Over the decades that followed, the cult appears to have flourished. Reflecting the agricultural orientation of the village, the deity was recognized for the protection he provided against disease, drought, and locusts. When Minnan found itself embroiled in the unrest that swept Fujian in conjunction with the loss of north China to the invading Jurchen in the early-twelfth century, the god broadened his powers to offer protection against bandits.

But the late-eleventh and early-twelfth centuries were precisely when the transshipment trade was reaching its greatest impact. It is impossible to know exactly how Baidu Village may have been integrated into the trade. Perhaps it was not much integrated at all, or that what integration occurred was limited to wealthier members of the village who had funds to invest in trading ventures. Whatever the link, however, the god responded by assuming the protection of mariners, both in the domestic coastal trade and the remoter trade of the South Seas. We read the following in the inscription text:

In former times, when merchants ventured out to sea they had to endure wind and waves and experience difficult crossings to find profits elsewhere. Those who had not visited the temple always had bad luck. Their boats would overturn in the wind and waves, or they would meet pirates in the marshes. But then the lo-

²¹ See "Xiangying miao ji" 祥應廟記, in *Minzhong jinshi lue* 閩中金石略, compiled by Lin Erjia 林爾嘉 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, Shuzhuang congshu di'er zhong edn., 1934) 8, pp. 21a-25b; the inscriptional text also appears in *Fujian jinshi zhi* 福建金石志, as carried in Fujian Tongji Editorial Committee 福建通紀委員會, comp., *Fujian tongji* 福建統紀 (Taipei: Datong shuju, 1968), sect. "Shi 石," j. 8, pp. 11b-15a. The cult has been discussed and the inscription partially translated in Kenneth Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1993), pp. 35-37. I have published a complete translation in Victor H. Mair, Nancy S. Steinhardt, and Paul R. Goldin, eds., *Hawaii Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2005), no. 60.

cal merchant Zhou Wei 周尾, when planning a trip to Liangzhe,²² told the god that he was going by boat. The next thing he knew, he was assaulted with wind and waves at the Devil's Gate,²³ and in an instant everything changed. The boatmen lost their color and wailed. Zhou Wei objected, "I put my faith in the spirit of the god. It oughtn't to be like this." He then called out for help, and from the empyrean came an echo. In a moment the wind calmed and the waves settled, and the crew was spared any disaster. Similarly there was the Quanzhou captain Zhu Fang 朱紡 who [while preparing to] sail to Srivijaya²⁴ asked for ashes from the god's incense, which he devoutly worshiped. His boat proceeded quickly and without incident, completing the round-trip voyage within a year and earning a hundred-fold profit. No one before or since has done so well and everyone attributes his success to the god. Ever since when merchants prepare for long voyages there is no one who does not first come and pray to the god.²⁵

There is much we would like to know about this text: Who were Zhou Wei and Zhu Fang? Why did they patronize this deity and not some other? What relationship might they have had with the Baidu Fang? For the most part, however, these questions can't be answered beyond speculation. What is apparent is that the Duke of Manifest Kindness, a local god whose cult had heretofore focused on agrarian concerns, became a patron deity of maritime merchants sometime around the turn of the twelfth century.

The Duke, moreover, was not alone among Minnan deities in his role as a protector of mariners. Further down the coast, south of the Quanzhou prefectural city, a cult devoted to the Lord of Illumined Kindness emerged in the area around Anhai Bay. This was one of the subsidiary ports in the greater Quanzhou region, as is recalled in a sixteenth-century provincial gazetteer of Fujian titled *Minshu* 閩書: "In the Song there was Anhai Market (*Anhai shi* 安海市)... When a boat came

²² Liangzhe, or "the Two Zhe," was a Song province embracing the coastal region and hinterland prefectures between northern Fujian and the Yangtze River. Hangzhou, the Southern Song capital, was in Liangzhe, and that is no doubt where Zhou Wei was headed.

²³ The Devil's Gate refers to a particularly treacherous passage along the coastal route between northern Fujian and Zhejiang.

²⁴ Srivijaya was a principality located on the southeast coast of the island of Sumatra in the Indonesian archipelago. It was the first of a succession of principalities that have controlled traffic through the critical Straits of Malacca between Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula and through which traffic between the Andaman Sea of the eastern Indian Ocean and the South China Sea must pass. Srivijaya thus was a linchpin in trade between China and the Indian Ocean and a frequent destination of Chinese merchants until its collapse in the 14th c.

²⁵ "Xiangying miao ji" 8, p. 23b.

from overseas, [the Quanzhou] prefect dispatched a clerk to levy taxes... In 1130 prefectur[al officials] requested of the court that this be established as Shijing Settlement (*Shijing zhen* 石井鎮).²⁶ No later than the mid-eleventh century, the cult of the Lord had emerged, and from the very beginning, in addition to the standard array of services extended to land-based devotees: protection from disease, bandits, and the like, the Lord extended his protection to men – and perhaps women – working on the sea. Indeed, a text probably dated to 1058 tells us:

[The Lord's] protection is especially profound in Quan[zhou]. Among the people, everyone comes to pay respects, and he is worshipped everywhere. There is nowhere that he has not penetrated, no place where he is absent... Thus, the coastal people of this place have erected this palace.²⁷

The reference to devotion among “the coastal people of the this place” is vague, yet surely refers to those who worked the adjacent coastal waters for their living, for that is what “coastal people” in Minnan have done from time immemorial. The next document describing the cult, composed in 1115, is much more explicit, for now the Lord was extending his protection not only to those who worked the coast, but also to those who, like the devotees of the Duke, went further afield:

As for sailing boats and [even] the vessels of foreigners 海舟番舶, [the Lord's] benefits have the greatest reverence. The Lord has circulated among the violent winds and surging waves, serenely sparing no energy to salve the situation. If a vessel approaches danger, the Lord changes what is dangerous to what is safe. He calms the winds and levels the waves. [Thus], eight or nine of every ten mariners has faith in his numinous power (*ling* 靈).

Clearly, the protection of mariners, including both the men and women who worked the coastline for their daily living and those who ventured afar, was a concern of at least some of the deities of the coastal regions

²⁶ *Minshu*, compiled by He Qiaoyuan 何喬遠 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1994) 33, p. 829.

²⁷ The earliest document describing the cult is not well dated. This is a stele that itself is firmly dated to 1120 (see Ding Hesheng 丁荷生 [Kenneth Dean] and Zheng Zhenman 鄭振滿, *Fujian zongjiao beiming huibian: Quanzhou fu fence* 福建宗教碑銘彙編, 泉州府分冊 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2003), vol. 1, p. 17, stele titled “Zhaohui miao xianma wen” 昭惠廟獻馬文, p. 17). The stele states that the original text was composed in “the *wuxu* year of *shaoxing*” 紹興戊戌歲, a date in the 60-year cycle of the Chinese calendar that does not exist; going back to the late Tang, *wuxu* years are 878, 938, 998, 1058, 1118, and 1178, while the *shaoxing* years are 1130–63. Based on tentative secondary information relating to some of the names cited, I have concluded the original text was probably composed in 1058 and will treat it as such, but in fact it could have been any of the *wuxu* years mentioned.

of Minnan. Local gazetteers, in fact, mention several additional cults that also extended protection to mariners, and other regions of the coast have records of more still. Without question, however, it was Mazu, the Maternal Ancestor, the Empress of Heaven, who was most widely patronized by China's mariners. In contrast to the cults of the Duke of Manifest Kindness and the Lord of Illumined Kindness, neither of whom appears to have ever spread beyond their point of origin, Mazu's cult has joined those of Guandi, Wenchang, and a small group of others as universal deities that can be found throughout the Chinese ecumene wherever it exists today. According to the popularized account, the outline of which was current by the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, the deity was the spirit of a young woman surnamed Lin 林 who lived late in the tenth century on Meizhou Island, a small community just off the southeast coast of Putian that subsisted on fishing. According to an inscription dated 1150 that represents the earliest account of the cult, Miss Lin in life was a shaman: "She could foretell a man's luck and misfortune. After her death, the people erected a temple for her on her home island."²⁸

It is not important to my present discussion that the popular tradition is inconveniently contradicted on some of its specific points. Assuming even that the woman in question lived at all – while some question this, I find no reason to doubt that she did – she most likely did not live on Meizhou Island; evidence points instead to somewhere on the adjacent mainland.²⁹ Such discrepancies, however, have little bearing on the development of the cult, which emerged on the Putian

²⁸ Liao Pengfei 廖鵬飛, "Shengdun zumiao chongjian Shunji miao ji" 聖頓祖廟重建順濟廟記, in *Baitang Lishi zupu* 百塘李氏族譜, reproduced in *Fujian zongjiao beiming huibian: Xinghua fu fence* 福建宗教碑銘彙編, 興化府分冊, ed. Ding Hesheng 丁荷生 [Kenneth Dean] and Zheng Zhenmin 鄭振滿 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1996), pp. 11–14. The entire text is presented in translation in Klaas Ruitenbeek, "Mazu, Patroness of Sailors, in Chinese Pictorial Art," *Artibus Asiae* 58 (1999), pp. 322–25; I have been greatly assisted by this translation.

The Mazu cult, as well as the text in question, has been thoroughly studied by Ri Senchō (Li Xianzhang 李獻璋), *Massō shinkō no kenkyū* 媽祖新仰の研究 (Tokyo: Taizan bunbutsusha, 1979), and Shu Tenjun (Zhu Tianshun) 朱天順, *Massō to Chūgoku no minken shinkō* 媽祖と中國の民間信仰 (Tokyo: Heika shuppansha, 1996). More focused discussions are in Xu Xiaowang 徐曉望, *Mazu de zimin: MinTai haiyang de wenhua yanjiu* 媽祖的子民, 閩台海洋的文化研究 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1999), pp. 393–406; James L. Watson, "Standardizing the Gods: The Promotion of T'ien-hou ('Empress of Heaven') Along the South China Coast, 960–1960," in David Johnson et al., eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1985), pp. 292–324; Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1990), pp. 145–48; Barend J. ter Haar, "The Genesis and Spread of Temple Cults in Fukien," in E. B. Vermeer, ed., *Development and Decline in Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), especially pp. 356–57 and 373–76; and Ruitenbeek, "Mazu, Patroness of Sailors," pp. 281–329.

²⁹ See the discussions in Ri, *Massō shinkō no kenkyū*, and Shu, *Massō to Chūgoku no minken shinkō*.

coast about the same time as that of the Duke in the early Song. This was an area where the people depended on a mixed economy of rizoculture and fishing, as was recalled by the twelfth-century Putian scholar Lin Guangchao 林光朝 (1114–1178) in what is possibly the only surviving passage from the Song that directly addresses Meizhou Island:

There is a mountain in the sea that is called Meizhou. It is only about five to seven *li* (less than three miles) across... There are perhaps a thousand households, and not one person can read. Altogether there are several tens of *qing* (= ca. 15 acres) of tillable fields, and the people can eat rice and fish.³⁰

It was, in other words, an area where the sea was central to the lives of the people.

Although the sea was inescapably present, however, like the Duke of Manifest Kindness and Lord of Illumined Kindness Miss Lin apparently began her cosmic existence as a local deity offering protection against the same inchoate forces of nature that they dealt with – indeed, even in the fully developed deified persona of the late-imperial era and into the modern era, she has been patronized for many services in addition to the protection of mariners for which she is best known. Miss Lin, after all, had been a village shaman, at least if we accept this much of the tradition, someone to whom in life the villagers must have turned for all manner of concerns. In death hers was a powerful spirit, ripe with numinous powers, very *ling* 靈 as the Chinese would say. Properly appeased, such a spirit could intervene in all manner of mundane concerns, from harvest to childbirth to success in the examinations, and these were the kinds of appeal her devotees brought to her.³¹ Given the role of the sea and fishing in the lives of her devotees, however, appeals for the protection of the men as they ventured out into the open waters were no doubt common as well.

What sets Miss Lin apart from other deities that offered protection on the high seas, what made her the “divine spirit of Meizhou Island,” the Maternal Ancestor, the Empress of Heaven, was that she supplanted them all to become the dominant patron of mariners – a process that was already well under way by the thirteenth century. Zhu Tianshun

³⁰ Lin Guangchao, “Yu Lin Jinzhong” 與林晉仲, *Aixuan ji* 艾軒集 (SKQS zhenben edn.) 6, pp. 27a–b.

³¹ See, e.g., Huang Gongdu 黃公度, “Ti Shunji miao” 題順濟廟, *Jiaweng wenji* 稼翁文集 (SKQS zhenben edn.) A, p. 57b; and Ding Bogui 丁伯桂 (1171–1237), “Shunji shengfei miao ji” 順濟聖妃廟記 (*Chunxi Lin'an zhi* 淳熙臨安志 (photort. of 1883 Wulin zhanggu congbian edn. based on 1252 comp.; Song Yuan fangzhi congkan 宋元方志叢刊, 1990) 73, pp. 15b–16b.

has found evidence of thirty-one shrines that had been established by the end of the Song, including sites as far north as Shanghai and as far south as Guangzhou.³² More immediately, Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187–1269), the great essayist of the late Song, observed, “She is not the goddess of Putian alone. I have traveled to the northern frontier, and I have served as far south as Guangzhou, and everywhere I have witnessed people’s sincere devotion to her.”³³

In all three cults we see the impact of the sea on the religious culture of Minnan. China’s cultic deities are, at one level, a manifestation of popular anxieties and dreams. Among the people of Minnan, so many of whom lived by and on the sea, survival in the face of its unpredictable wrath was a major concern. Concurrently, as the men of the region ventured more and more regularly beyond the near shores in search of the riches that could come from long-distance trading, financial prosperity became a central dream. This is not the place to consider why Miss Lin became the focal figure of mariners at the expense of so many other deities.³⁴ While she alone survives today, however, in understanding the link between regional culture and its maritime frontier the fact that so many deities at one time or another have shared her role is probably the most significant point. The common folk of Minnan shared many concerns with their peasant brethren throughout the empire, but they were distinguished by their concern for the sea. The maritime frontier was a ubiquitous part of their lives, as is reflected in the cults they supported.

Foreign Religions in the Culture of Minnan

The influence of the maritime frontier, of course, extended well beyond the indigenous cultic tradition, for by engaging that frontier the expanding Chinese cultural ecumene was also coming face to face with the myriad traditions of the outside world. This is where the link became tricky, for the elites who were the guardians of Chinese culture relied on the frontier to be the wall that filtered out the noxious influences of foreign creeds – at least, that is my argument.

Of all the foreign traditions that came to the empire via the maritime route, Islam was quite possibly the earliest and certainly the most

³² Shu Tenjun (Zhu Tianshun), *Massō to Chūgoku no minken shinkō*, pp. 58–61.

³³ Liu Kezhuang, “Fengting xinjian Feimiao” 楓亭新建妃廟, *Houcun xiansheng daquanji* 候村先生大全集 (SBCK edn.) 91, p. 18b.

³⁴ I have dealt with this question in *Portrait of a Community: Society, Culture, and the Structures of Kinship in the Mulan River Valley (Fujian) from the Late Tang through the Song* (Hong Kong: The Chinese U.P., 2007).

visible. A widely cited tradition claims that four Moslem missionaries arrived on the southeast coast at the very beginning of the Tang. The legend has been thoroughly debunked by Billy Kee-long So (Su Jilang) and retains no credibility despite its continued acceptance even in academic circles.³⁵ The earliest credible evidence of resident Moslem communities, therefore, is from the mid-eighth century, by which time evidence is strong that such communities had formed in Guangzhou (Canton) and Yangzhou.³⁶ It is hard to say just when Islam entered Minnan. Even as they accept the implausibility of an early Tang origin, some still argue for an introduction in the mid-eighth century.³⁷ While more credible than the early seventh century, this claim continues to be problematic. Indeed, the earliest concrete evidence of Islam in Quanzhou is an oft-cited inscription of the early-fourteenth century originally written in Arabic and commemorating the reconstruction of a mosque:

This mosque, which is known to all for its antiquity, its long endurance, and its good fortune, was the first [Islamic] place of worship for the people of this place [Quanzhou]. It is called the Ashab Mosque. It was built in year 400 [of the *hijra*] (that is, 1009–1010). Three hundred years later Ahmad bin Mohammed Quds, that is the famed pilgrim of the *hajj* (*hajji rukah*) from Shiraz, repaired it.³⁸

Although the dates of the text are not without controversy,³⁹ it is universally agreed that it is evidence that Islam had established a presence in and around the city of Quanzhou no later than the early Southern Song, and probably a full century earlier than that.

³⁵ The legend can be found in the *Minshu*, vol. 1, j. 7, pp. 165–66. So's assessment is in Su Jilang 蘇基朗, "Lingshan shengmu niandai kaobian" 靈山聖墓年代考辨, in So, *Tang Song shidai Minnan Quanzhou shidi lungao* 唐宋時代閩南泉州史地論稿 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1991), pp. 62–94.

³⁶ See, e.g., the discussions in Guan Lüquan 關履權, *Songdai Guangzhou de haiwai maoyi* 宋代廣州的海外貿易 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1994), pp. 40–42; and Fang Hao 方豪, *Zhongxi jiaotong shi* 中西交通史 (Taipei: Zhonghua wen hua chu ban shi ye wei yuan hui, 1959) 1, pp. 241–46.

³⁷ See Zhuang Weiji 莊為璣 and Chen Dasheng 陳達生, "Quanzhou Qingzhen si shiji xinkao" 泉州清真寺史迹新考, in Quanzhou Museum of Overseas Trade History and the Research Institute of Quanzhou History, ed., *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao yanjiu lunwenxuan* 泉州伊斯蘭交研究論文選 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1983), p. 102; originally published in *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究 1981.3. Zhuang and Chen cite *Chengda wenhui* 成達文薈, according to which the Abbasid Caliph Mansur established mosques in Guangzhou, Quanzhou, and Hangzhou in 753. As an anonymous reader for *Asia Major* pointed out, *Chengda wenhui* probably ought to be rendered 成大文薈, or "The collected essays of Chongqing Chengda University," a reference to the wartime institution located in Sichuan.

³⁸ Following the Chinese translation of the Arabic original with notation in Chen Dasheng, ed., *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao shike* 泉州伊斯蘭教石刻 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1984), p. 3.

³⁹ See Wu Wenliang 吳文良, "Zailun Quanzhou Qingjing si de shijian shiqi he jianzhu xing-

The Muslim presence is perhaps most clearly evident in the establishment of a cemetery early in the Southern Song. We hear of this from two sources: the collected works of Lin Zhiqi 林之奇 (1112–1176), and the *Zhufan zhi* 諸蕃志 of Zhao Rugua 趙汝适 (1165?–after 1225).⁴⁰ Lin wrote of a man he called Shi Nowei 施那偉, and whom Zhao called Shi Na 那 wei. Lin identified the gentleman in question as a native of Srivijaya, the thalassocratic kingdom that controlled passage through the Straits of Malacca and thus the link between the Indian Ocean and China. Zhu, on the other hand, said he was from Dashi 大食, a generic name for the Persian Gulf region. As interesting and important as this distinction is in its own right, it is impossible to resolve which claim is right and unnecessary to our concerns. Both authors agree that he was a Muslim and that he led the local Muslim community in establishing a cemetery. Lin wrote:

Mr. Shi spent freely and cared for his fellow traders [in Quanzhou]. The building of a cemetery was among his primary concerns. The cemetery was first proposed by Pu Xiabin,⁴¹ but was completed by Mr. Shi... Whenever a foreign merchant dies in Quanzhou, he is buried there... Mr. Shi himself died in 1163 and was buried here.

Islam, we can therefore conclude, was well-established in Quanzhou by the mid-twelfth-century. Zhuang Weiji and Chen Dasheng have argued, in fact, that as many as three mosques had been built in the city before the century's end.⁴² Over the following decades, and into the years of the Yuan and early-Ming dynasties, the Muslim community in the city appears to have flourished. In 1351–1352, Wu Jian 吳鑾, a native of the Fuzhou region of northern Fujian, wrote an inscription commemorating a reconstruction of the Qingjing Mosque in Quanzhou in which he claimed that there were “six or seven” mosques.⁴³

shi”再論泉州清淨寺的時間時期和建築形式, in *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao yanjiu lunwenxuan*, pp. 65–83; orig. in *Xiamen daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 廈門大學學報 (科學版) 1964.1; and Zhuang Weiji 莊爲己, “Quanzhou Qingjing si de lishi wenti” 泉州清淨寺的歷史問題, *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao yanjiu lunwenxuan*; orig. in *Xiamen daxue xuebao [shehui kexue ban]* 1963.4, pp. 65–83; and Zhuang and Chen, “Quanzhou Qingzhen si shiji xinkao,” pp. 102–14; orig. in *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1981.3.

⁴⁰ See Lin Zhiqi, *Zhuozhai ji* 拙齋集 (SKQS zhenben edn.) 15, pp. 12a–b; and Zhao Rugua 趙汝适, *Zhufan zhi* 諸蕃志, ed. W. W. Rockhill (New York: Paragon Book Reprint, 1961; based on 1783 edn. of Li Tiaoyuan) A, p. 24b.

⁴¹ The surname Pu 蒲 was commonly adopted by west Asians in China. The most famous example is Pu Shougeng 蒲壽庚, who as trade superintendent dominated Quanzhou through the Song–Yuan transition.

⁴² This is argued in Zhuang and Chen, “Quanzhou Qingzhen si shiji xinkao.”

⁴³ Wu's original inscription, said to have been compiled in 1351, was “worn out by the

Islam, however, while by far the best documented, was not the only imported religion in the cultural world of Minnan, nor were alien traditions always considered so benign. Palace Censor Yang Wei 楊畏 (1044–1112), for example, submitted the following complaint to the court in 1091:

Recently, having heard about the seductively bewitching 妖妄 texts of the commoners⁴⁴ Xue Hongjian 薛鴻漸 and Lin Mingfa 林明法, the emperor directed the fiscal intendants of Liangzhe and Fujian to root them out 根治. Now I have heard that Hongjian's teachings were originally brought to China from across the seas by a man from a strange land 異域人. This was already several decades ago.⁴⁵

Yang went on to fret that this alien teaching was spreading rapidly and must therefore be stamped out more vigorously, a recommendation that the court supposedly followed. Nothing more is heard of the threat.

This passage has caught the attention of scholars for many years. Its frustrating vagueness leaves us wondering just what religious tradition it was that so alarmed the censorious Yang Wei. Chikusa Masa'aki 竺沙雅章, citing the work of earlier scholars such as Chen Yuan 陳垣, has suggested that the text may allude to Manichaeism, although he admits this is at best speculative.⁴⁶ It is well established, in fact, that Manichaeans had reached Minnan as early as the last century of the Tang, when a small temple was established in the rural hinterland south of the Quanzhou prefectural city.⁴⁷ The religion, however, had originally

ravages of time" when the Qingjing Mosque was restored in 1507. The restorers therefore had his text transcribed into a new stele. This stele is photographically reproduced, together with a printed Chinese transcription and English translation, in Chen, *Quanzhou Yisilanjiao shike*, pl. 21.

⁴⁴ Yang's phrase is *buyi* 布衣, or "cloth gown." While the term could be used as a synonym for *shumin* 庶民, "commoner," it often carries the implications of unemployed scholars, i.e., men of learning. See Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋哲治, *Dai Kan Wa jiten* 大漢和辭典 (Tokyo: Tai-shūgen shoten, 1957–60), vol. 4, item 8778:3.

⁴⁵ *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (Taipei: Shijie shuju 1977; reissue of 1936 Beiping Library edn.), sect. "Xingfa" 2, p. 39a.

⁴⁶ Chikusa Masa'aki, "'Kissai jima' ni tsuite" 喫茶事魔について, in *Aoyama hakushi koki kinen Sōdaishi ronsō* 青山博士古希記念宋代史論叢, ed. Publication Committee (Tokyo: Seishin shobo, 1974), p. 260.

⁴⁷ There are many discussions of Manichaeism in Quanzhou in modern Chinese scholarship, although most restate the same limited information. One of the best informed is Chen Dasheng's, "Iranian Impact on the Southeastern Coast of China in the 7th–15th Centuries: A Study of the Archaeological Evidence," *Haijiaoshi yanjiu* 海交史研究 1999.2, pp. 103–4 (in English). For other recent discussions, see also Lian Yaming 廉亞明, "Zhongguo dongnan Moni jiao de zongji" 中國東南摩尼教的踪跡, *Haijiaoshi yanjiu* 2000.2, pp. 71–77; and Lin Wushu 林悟殊, "Yuandai Quanzhou Moni jiao ouxiang chongbai tanyuan" 元代泉州摩尼教偶像崇拜探源, *Haijiaoshi yanjiu* 2003.1, pp. 65–75.

entered the empire from Iran via the overland trade routes and established itself in the old capital regions of the north. Like the far more powerful Buddhist establishment that was the primary target, the tiny community of Manichaeans was also targeted in the religious persecutions of the mid-ninth century, forcing some to flee to the comparative anonymity and resultant safety of the south. *Minshu* states that at this time a Manichaean teacher passed through the Fuzhou region before finding shelter in the hinterland south of the Quanzhou prefectural city, where he built a small shrine.⁴⁸ A small community of believers persisted at least into the Yuan, and a small temple can still be found decorated with Manichaean imagery, although the local people had long forgotten its origins and treated it as a Buddhist shrine.⁴⁹

If indeed it was this community that so worried Yang Wei at the end of the eleventh century, it is interesting that he believed it had come “from across the seas,” for it is very clear that Manichaeism originally entered the region from the north via overland links. It has been argued, however, that the Jinjiang community found support over the years from Iranian traders reaching the ports of Quanzhou via the South Seas trade, and perhaps it was this on-going support from abroad that allowed the community to endure.⁵⁰ But other religions did come “from across the seas.” At least one Hindu temple, for example, was built in the southern suburbs of Quanzhou where the foreign population was concentrated. In the absence of much epigraphical discussion of the temple, it is uncertain just when it was constructed. Possibly it was as early as the late-ninth century when a shadowy figure known to Zhao Rugua as Lohuna 囉護哪 “came [to Quanzhou] by boat from across the sea.”

He said he was from Tianzhu 天竺 (a generic term for the Indian sub-continent). Because he was a foreign monk 胡僧, the foreign merchants 蕃商 collected gold and silks and precious things, for he had nothing. [Furthermore,] they bought a piece of land south of the city wall where they built a Buddhist temple 佛刹. Today (that is, the 1220s), this is the Baolin Shrine 寶林院.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Minshu*, vol. 1, j. 7, p. 172.

⁴⁹ In 1989 and again in 1993 I had the opportunity to visit this shrine, which sits on a hillside overlooking the agrarian lowlands of southern Jinjiang prefecture (Quanzhou). While claiming no expertise in Manichaeism, I was struck by the dramatic imagery of the wall motifs in which the sun, a central iconographic motif of the religion, is so obviously featured.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Peter Bryder, “Manichaeism as a Link between the Silk Roads on Land and Sea,” *China and the Maritime Silk Road/Zhongguo yu haishang sichou zhi lu: Report of the UNESCO Quanzhou International Seminar on China and the Maritime Silk Road* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin, 1994) 2, pp. 63–69.

⁵¹ *Zhufan zhi* A, p. 21b.

Following Zhao, many have assumed that Lohuna was Buddhist, but this seems unlikely. By the late-first millennium, Buddhism was in marked decline in the Indian subcontinent, especially in the southern areas from where south Asian merchants were most likely to have come. Despite Zhao's description of the shrine his welcoming expatriate countrymen built for him as Buddhist, it seems more likely that it belonged to a Brahmanical Hindu tradition.⁵²

Epigraphical evidence proving a south Asian religious presence only comes much later – indeed, from after the Song – in the form of an inscription dated 1281. In the oft-cited translation of T. N. Subramaniam, the inscription, written in Tamil script, reads:

Obeisance to Hara (Śiva). Let there be prosperity! ... [In April, 1281], the Tavachchakkaravatigaḷ Sambandhap-perumāl caused, in accordance with the *firman* of Chekachai-Khān, to be graciously installed the god Uḍaiya-nāyīnār, for the welfare of the illustrious body of the illustrious Chekachai-Khān.⁵³

According to the analysis of this text by several scholars, in 1281, in response to an edict (*firman*) of the reigning Mongol monarch Kublai Khan, local authorities bearing Sanskrit titles – and so presumably of Indic origin – installed an image of Hara, one of the many names by which the Hindu deity Śiva is known; the inscription at least points to the existence of a temple dedicated to Śiva.⁵⁴ The existence of such a temple is further confirmed by an amalgam of empirical evidence. Most tangibly, iconographic images of the Hindu gods Śiva and Vishnu can today be found in the motifs of the great Kaiyuan Temple, the most prominent Buddhist temple in the city. It is assumed the stones bearing these images were used when the temple was reconstructed in the early-Ming dynasty following a fire.⁵⁵ While we know nothing specific

⁵² After long arguing that the Baolin Shrine was most likely Hindu, in his most recent work Billy So thinks that there is too little evidence for such a conclusion; see *Prosperity, Regions, and Institutions*, p. 357, note 36. His caution is well taken, although I believe the evidence, slight as it may be, is equally strong on either side.

⁵³ T. N. Subramaniam, "A Tamil Colony in Medieval China," in R. Nagaswamy, ed., *South Indian Studies* (Madras: Society for Archaeological, Historical, and Epigraphical Research, 1978), pp. 1–52, quoted in Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600–1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), p. 228.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade*, p. 228, and John Guy, "The Lost Temples of Naggapatnam and Quanzhou: A Study in Sino-Indian Relations," *Journal of the Institute of Silk Road Studies* 3 (1993–94), pp. 291–310.

⁵⁵ See John Guy, "Tamil Merchant Guilds and the Quanzhou Trade," in Angela Schottenhammer, ed., *The Emporium of the World: Maritime Quanzhou, 1000–1400* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001), pp. 283–308. In a personal communication, Ho Chuimei, of the Field Museum of Natural History, told me that in the late 1990s she saw the remains of a second Hindu temple in the rubble of a construction site in the same area, but because she was unable to persuade the

about the provenance of the stones, it is likely that they derive from a temple that was knocked down to make way for construction of the so-called “Wing Wall 翼城” in the mid-fourteenth century.⁵⁶

More explicit evidence of a south Asian presence comes from later. The fifteenth-century provincial gazetteer of Fujian titled *Ba Min tongzhi* 八閩統志 records the existence of a shrine it calls the “Middle Indian Temple” (*Zhong Tianzhu si* 中天竺寺), located in the southeastern suburbs.⁵⁷ Possibly this is a later name for the Baolin Shrine, which must have been located in the same area; it is impossible to say for certain. What seems clear is that this was indeed a south Asian shrine. The gazetteer offers no comment on it, and it is therefore uncertain when it was built or exactly what tradition it served. Turning again to Zhao Rugua, we learn, on the other hand, of Lobazhiligan 羅巴智力干 and his son, natives of Malabar, on the southwestern coast of the Indian subcontinent, who resided in the southern suburbs of Quanzhou as Zhao wrote.⁵⁸

THE MARITIME FRONTIER AS MEMBRANE

What I have argued up to this point is that the sea had a profound effect on the religious life of the greater Minnan region, either by encouraging the local people to incorporate maritime issues in their local cults or by bringing alien religions from the distant lands with which the region was in trade contact. Finally, I want to return to a more theoretical consideration of this frontier, for which I will borrow the biological concept of a membrane. According to one source, a biological membrane may:

- offer protection to the organ or cell that it envelopes;
- provide anchoring sites that allow the organ or cell to maintain its shape;
- regulate transport in and out of the organ or cell that it envelopes;
- provide a passageway across the membrane for certain molecules.⁵⁹

With these criteria in mind, let us consider in what ways China’s maritime frontier acted as a membrane.

authorities of the historical importance the materials were not preserved. Whether the remains were in fact a second temple or further evidence of the single temple is uncertain.

⁵⁶ On the Wing Wall, see (*Qianlong*) *Jinjiang xianzhi* (乾隆) 晉江縣志 (photopr. of 1765 edn.; Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1967) 2, p. 2b.

⁵⁷ Huang Zhongzhao 黃仲昭, *Ba Min tongzhi* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1991) 77, p. 823.

⁵⁸ Zhao, *Zhufan zhi* A, p. 15b.

⁵⁹ See <http://cellbio.utmb.edu/cellbio/membrane.htm> (accessed October 15, 2003). These are

Protection

Perhaps the protection it afforded is the simplest and most direct parallel between China's maritime frontier and a biological membrane. In the biological world, the skin – while unique among the body's membranes because it is both membrane and organ – is an obvious example of a membrane that offers protection. The body is shielded from all manner of outside threats: bacteria, desiccation, ultraviolet radiation, to name but a few, by the skin. In a similar manner, China's maritime frontier protected China.

China's coast, as is well known, was chronically plagued by pirates. The most notable and best known example is the dreadful raids by the so-called "Japanese pirates" (*wokou* 倭寇) of the mid-Ming; these were of such duration and destructive potential that the state was forced to adopt a series of defensive measures. However, almost all eras are marked by one raiding pattern or another: for example, the devastating raids of "Persians and Arabs" that "destroyed the warehouses and burned down the dwellings" in Guangzhou in 758,⁶⁰ or the assaults linked to the Visaya kingdom of the Philippines that caused so much grief to the outer ports of greater Quanzhou in the early-thirteenth century.⁶¹

Destructive as such raids could be, however, their threat was akin to the infections that sometimes invade the skin. Rarely were they more than irritants; sometimes, as in the case of the "Japanese pirate" raids, the state actually had to take steps to control them. Yet, like most infections, they did not threaten the stability of the state itself; they were a nuisance, even a threat to regional security, but on a national scale the threat they represented stood in radical contrast to the land-based threats of the northern frontier, where potential adversaries abut in immediate proximity and could threaten the state itself. Distance was a key factor in minimizing these seriousness of these raids. Once past the off-shore islands, including Taiwan and Hainan, both of which effectively lay beyond the ecumene of Chinese culture through the centuries in question yet neither of which represented a tangible threat, one encounters the vast expanse of the open ocean. A potential invader had to cross many miles of open sea to reach China from the

four of ten defining features of the biological membrane, as defined in this source; the others are explicitly biological and not relevant to my discussion. I have adaptively reworded the criteria.

⁶⁰ Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Taipei: Hongshi chubanshe, 1983) 228, p. 7062.

⁶¹ See Zhen Dexiu 真德秀, "Shen shumiyuan cuoshi yanhaishi yizhuang," in *Zhen wenzhong-gong wenji* 真文忠公文集 (SBCK edn.) 8, pp. 159–65. For a more general discussion of piracy along the China coast, see Matsuura, *Chūgoku no kaizoku*.

archipelago lands of the Philippines or Indonesia to the south or Japan to the north. As the Japanese discovered in the late-sixteenth century, even Korea – which beckoned to the newly-unifying Japanese empire under Hideyoshi as a land bridge leading to China – was itself too far removed to be a viable recourse. It was not until the nineteenth century, in fact, when Europeans had sufficiently mastered the technological arts of transportation to allow the massive projection of force across great distances, that the maritime frontier became a source of threat. By that time, however, the long history of maritime security had so blinded the Chinese to the altered potential that they were unable to recognize it for what it really was.

Protection, however, did not derive simply from distance. The frontier also provided a means to recognize who came from outside. Characteristically, land frontiers – whatever they may look like on a map – are not ethnographically well-defined. Across the frontier one encounters a mixed zone in which abutting cultures are intermingled. In our own time and culture we might think of the frontier between the United States and Mexico – a frontier that has developed its own dynamic over the past several decades but along which the Hispanic culture of the south has long intermingled with the Anglo culture to its north, a phenomenon obvious to anyone who has passed through border cities such as Ciudad Juarez, Tijuana, San Diego, or El Paso. Less visibly, a similar intermingling can be found along our northern frontier with the French regions of Canada. In contemporary China the frontier between the northeastern provinces and Korea has long been an intermingled zone, one that has become a pressing problem in the geo-politics of the twenty-first century. Maritime frontiers, on the other hand, provide a much cleaner cultural, and often ethnic or racial, delineation. As easy as it may be for a Korean to meld into the Korean communities of Manchuria or a Mexican into the Mexican communities of southern California, it is hard even today for an Indonesian or a Filipino, to say nothing of an Arab or Persian, to meld into the cities and communities of the Chinese coast.

Shape Definition

The ocean littoral represents a very stable boundary, one that is far more tangible and rigid than any land frontier can be. Land boundaries are malleable; land routinely changes hands between competing states and entities through war or treaty, as well as through passive processes such as migration. Thus the shape defined by land boundaries can change radically, as the shape of China changed with the incor-

poration of Turkestan and Manchuria during the Qing dynasty, as the shape of the United States changed via the Mexican War of 1846–48, or as the shape of the Russian Empire changed with the incorporation of the Central Asian sultanates in the nineteenth century.

By contrast, except as a result of the imperceptibly slow geological processes that add or subtract land along littorals, maritime frontiers are generally unchanging. It was, of course, this quality of the maritime frontier that caused the Chinese to stop when they reached it. For centuries the ecumene that began in the Yellow River valley pressed to the south. In the classic manner of land boundaries, the shape of the empire progressively changed as the valley of the Han and Yangtze Rivers, then the south-leading valleys of the Gan and Xiang and their myriad tributaries were settled and incorporated. But then the migrants ran up against the littoral. Their alternatives were to go further by boat – something that ultimately did happen but that was yet many, many years away – or to accept the limit the ocean imposed. As much as the inland frontiers of the empire have changed over time, geology prevents the maritime frontier from similar change. Thus this frontier has long defined the shape of China.

Regulation of Transport and a Filtering Passageway across the Membrane

The last two criteria of a biological membrane, based on my list, above, translate over to a cultural frontier as linked together. They are perhaps the most fascinating parallel to the organic membrane, because while the maritime frontier most certainly did allow for transport in and out of China, it acted as a filter limiting what could make that transit. The thrust of my discussion so far has been to establish that there was a discourse that went on across the maritime frontier. The culture along the littoral was strongly influenced by the frontier and the engagement of the people of the littoral with the sea. More tangibly, people from outside the ecumene came to China bearing alien traditions; they brought their culture and their religion with them. Yet the engagement between China and these outside traditions was restricted; the frontier provided a membrane through which only “certain defined influences” could actually enter the culture.

Let us consider this in regard to the Muslim community. I have explained that the Muslim community expanded throughout the decades and centuries of the Song and into the Yuan. As this community grew, its members appear to have mingled freely with the indigenous population. While Tang policy, for example, had sought to seques-

ter foreigners in designated ghettos, the so-called *fanfang* 蕃坊, Song regulations seem to have been much more relaxed. Several texts, for example, suggest that in Quanzhou foreigners “lived randomly (*zaju* 雜居)” among the local Han population and casually commingled in the public areas of the city.⁶² Wang Dayou 汪大猷 (1120–1200), who served as prefect of Quanzhou during the Qiandao era (1165–1173), commented that “foreign merchants lived randomly among the people 蕃商雜處民間.”⁶³ Similarly, Chen Fuliang 陳傅良 (1137–1203), who served in Quanzhou at the very end of his life, observed: “Quanzhou is a great city... . There foreigners and natives live together (*zaju*).”⁶⁴ And then in 1261, Wu Hao 吳浩, the Quanzhou prefect, in a memorial to the court complained that “random distribution of foreigner and natives 蕃漢雜居” was one of the city’s “four difficulties,” by which he meant unique and complicated challenges.⁶⁵

The phrasing, however, may be misleading, for other evidence suggests that foreigners, and especially Muslims, clustered together. It is well known that institutions serving the maritime trade, most notably the offices of the local trade superintendent, clustered outside the city’s walls on the southeast in the area known as Quannan 泉南.⁶⁶ All three Song-dynasty mosques as well as the Muslim cemetery established by Shi Nowei were located in this area, as was the Baolin Temple established in honor of the Indian monk Lohuna. Apparently this is also where many of the foreign community lived. Zhao Rugua, for example, observed that merchants from south India “lived south of the city wall.”⁶⁷ Likewise, the Quanzhou prefectural gazetteer says of the northern Song, “Foreign trading vessels came in great numbers, and the wealthy ones [among the merchants] amassed great fortunes. They lived together south of the city.”⁶⁸ Finally, *Fangyu shenglan*, a guide to places of beauty and interest around the empire compiled sometime

⁶² See the citations and quotations in Chen Dasheng, “Lun fanfang” 論蕃坊, *Haijiaoshi yanjiu* 1988.2, pp. 67–74. The question is also addressed in So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions*, pp. 54–55. Chen does provide evidence of casual intermingling, even intermarriage, among natives and non-natives in ninth-century Guangzhou.

⁶³ Lou Yue 樓鑰, “Wanggong xingzhuang” 王公行狀, *Gongkui ji* 攻媿集 (SKQSZB ed.) 88, pp. 1a–3b.

⁶⁴ “Cimian zhi Quanzhou zhongsheng zhuang” 辭免知泉州中省狀, *Zhizhai wenji* 止齋文集 (SKQSZB ed.), cited in Chen Dasheng, “Lun fanfang,” p. 70.

⁶⁵ See Liu Kezhuang, *Houcun xiansheng daquanji*, j. 62, cited in Chen Dasheng, “Lun fanfang,” p. 70.

⁶⁶ The most systematic discussion of this district and the spatial distribution of Quanzhou generally is So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions*, chap. 7, “Ch’üan-chou as a Regional Center.”

⁶⁷ *Zhufan zhi* A, p. 15b, referring to Nanpi guo 南毗國.

⁶⁸ (*Qianlong*) *Quanzhou fuzhi* (乾隆) 泉州府志, j. 75, cited in Chen Dasheng, “Lun fanfang,” p. 70.

in the mid-thirteenth century, observes: “Among the many foreigners some are white and others black. All live in Quanzhou in the Foreigners’ Alley 蕃人巷.”⁶⁹ While the passage doesn’t specify the alley’s location, it does state that it was linked to trading ships and that places it in the Quannan area.

The evidence suggests, therefore, that despite their greater legal freedom, Muslims generally remained on the periphery of the culture and society in which they lived. They appear to have been overwhelmingly if not exclusively overseas merchants who had taken up residence in the city for trade purposes. While they associated with the indigenous population – sometimes they married their women,⁷⁰ and we have already seen that leaders of the community could turn to leaders of the Chinese community to request dedicatory inscriptions – they seem neither to have become part of nor proselytized to the local population. There is no evidence to suggest even a small incidence of conversion. Not until the Ming dynasty, when their links to their west and southeast Asian homelands were disrupted by restrictive trade policies, did they cease to hold themselves apart and gradually merge into the broader native population. Yet, as the renewed academic interest in recent years has demonstrated, even as they intermarried with native kin groups and lost visible characteristics distinguishing them from non-Muslim neighbors, Muslims such as the Ding of Chendai 陳埭丁 (Jinjiang district, Quanzhou) continued to carry an attenuated memory of their distinct heritage.⁷¹ In short, the “maritime membrane” limited the cultural penetration of the traditions that Muslim merchants brought to these shores.

This provides an instructive contrast to Manichaeism. We know nothing about the “commoners” Xue and Lin against whom the censorious Yang Wei was so agitated. What is significant is that Yang believed that the heterodoxy – be it Manichaeism or something else – had come from outside the filter of the maritime frontier. Yang was troubled by their teaching’s having somehow penetrated the maritime membrane. It had found an embrace not only among foreigners in China but

⁶⁹ Zhu Mu 朱穆, *Fangyu shenglan* 方輿勝覽 (undated Song edn. in collection of Seikaido Library) 12, p. 7a.

⁷⁰ See, for example, the evidence cited in Huang Tianzhu 黃天柱, “Quanzhou diqu huizu de chengyin, tedian yu fenbu” 泉州地區回族的成因、特點與分布, in Chen Guoqiang 陳國強 et al., eds., *Chendai huizu shi yanjiu* 陳埭回族史研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1990), pp. 98–99. Huang states categorically, “Almost all the Muslims of Quanzhou ... are the descendants of unions between Arab and Persian Muslims [who came to Quanzhou for trade] and native women” (p. 99).

⁷¹ See the collected essays in *ibid.*

apparently even among the Han people. Of course, the protection that membranes offer is rarely perfect; pathogens, be they organic threats to our physical health or cultural threats to our social well-being, do slip through, as did Manichaeism. But in that case the body-politic eventually rallied: except for the one temple that was subverted into a Buddhist shrine in rural Jinjiang, it was stamped out.

We are led to the occasional complete exceptions. Membranes, be they physical or cultural, do allow “certain defined influences” to slip through. Like Islam, the religious traditions brought by south Asian merchants, whose numbers were so much smaller and whose lasting imprint on the region was so much less, were marginalized. Nevertheless their tradition is very likely a source of one of the most deeply embedded and enduring icons of Chinese culture – the divine but irascible monkey Sun Wukong. He was the central figure of the wonderful chantefable *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 (*Journey to the West*) who accompanied the monk Xuanzang 玄奘 on his early-seventh-century journey to India to gather sutras.

Xiyou ji is a truly Chinese narrative. As all devotees of Chinese culture know, it is rooted in the actual journey of Xuanzang, who evaded the emperor’s prohibitions on travel and reached India out of personal devotion to a search for Buddhist texts.⁷² Xuanzang’s journey, however, quickly entered the popular imagination. Citing the work of Isobe Akira, Victor Mair has traced antecedents to the *Xiyou ji* narrative at least as far back as the late-Tang.⁷³

Although it is not clear just when Sun Wukong was added to the *Xiyou ji* tradition, it is apparent that he was the composite result of many threads. There were, for example, indigenous monkey cults in China that long predate the emergence of the narrative. Isobe, again cited in Mair, has found evidence of monkey cults in Fujian as far back as the late-Tang,⁷⁴ while Meir Shahar has examined a monkey cult surrounding the Lingyin Temple of Hangzhou as another possible source of Sun Wukong.⁷⁵ As Mair explains, however, at least as important

⁷² For a highly accessible if sometimes suspect account of the historical Xuanzang, see Sally Hovey Wriggins, *Xuanzang: A Buddhist Monk on the Silk Road* (Boulder: Westview, 1998).

⁷³ See “Suen Wu-kung = Hanumat? The Progress of a Scholarly Debate,” *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Sinology* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1989), p. 694, citing Isobe Akira 磯部彰, “Genpon *Saiyūki* ni okeru Son gyōsha no keisei, Ko gyōsha kara Son gyōsha e” 元本西遊記に於ける孫行者の形成, 猴行者から孫行者へ, *Shūkan Tōyōgaku* 集刊東洋学 38 (1977), pp. 103–27.

⁷⁴ Mair, “Suen Wu-kung = Hanumat?,” pp. 694–95.

⁷⁵ Meir Shahar, “The Lingyin Si Monkey Disciples and The Origins of Sun Wukong,” *HJAS* 52.1 (1992), pp. 193–224. For further evidence of monkey cults in China and their possible

to the definition of Sun Wukong as any indigenous traditions was the Hanuman/Hanumat tradition that had spread throughout maritime southeast Asia. Hanuman was the divine companion of Lord Rama, the central figure of the Indian epic, the *Ramayana*. As Indic culture spread through southeast Asia in the early centuries of the common era, it was spearheaded by *Ramayana*, and eventually the tales of Lord Rama and his simian disciple became central cultural motifs.

Not surprisingly, therefore, the emerging *Xiyou ji* narrative and the thriving, cosmopolitan culture of the port of Quanzhou came together to provide crucial elements to the monkey figure. This essay is not the place to enter into the academic debate about where, how, or when the character of Sun Wukong took shape. Mair, however, has analyzed the famous panel on the western pagoda of the Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou depicting a simian figure said to be Sun Wukong.⁷⁶ This, like its eastern counterpart, is a five-tiered pagoda constructed in the thirteenth century. Both pagodas are faced with panels depicting famous Buddhist personages, real and legendary, and guardian spirits. But the one panel – the so-called eleventh panel on the fourth tier of the western tower, following the discussion of Ecke and Demieville – is different.⁷⁷ Where the figures on all other panels are human in form, this one is clearly simian.

Mair has compared the iconography of the panel to images of Hanuman from southeast Asia and found striking parallels. He concludes that the panel indeed depicts Sun Wukong. The image, he argues, is a slightly modified adaptation of southeast Asian Hanuman iconography. Ultimately, it was this iconography that came to Quanzhou via the same maritime trade routes that brought the religious complex of the maritime world to the city. But here we reach a crucial difference, for, as I have argued, the impact of the imported religions in general was minimal. Mair, himself, even broached this in his 1989 essay: “If it is postulated ... that the *Ramayana* did not pass China’s borders, then we are faced with the task of explaining what made China, unlike all of its neighbors, so immune to this story?”⁷⁸

link to the origins of Sun Wukong, see also Hera S. Walker, “Indigenous or Foreign? : A Look at the Origins of the Monkey Hero Sun Wukong,” *Sino-Platonic Papers* 81 (Philadelphia: Dept. of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1998).

⁷⁶ Mair, “Suen Wu-kung = Hanumat?,” pp. 697–700.

⁷⁷ See Gustav Ecke and Paul Demieville, *The Twin Pagodas of Zayton: A Study of Later Buddhist Sculpture in China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1935), p. 35, and Wang Hanfeng 王寒楓, *Quanzhou dongxi ta* 泉州東西塔 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1992), pp. 158–59.

⁷⁸ Mair, “Suen Wu-kung = Hanumat?,” p. 664.

My answer is simple. The membrane of the maritime frontier was effective. Foreign traditions did not transit that membrane easily. When they did, they did so because they fit into a Chinese cultural milieu in which they became assimilated and Chinese. The *Ramayana*, as much as the Koran or the Upaniṣad, was inescapably foreign. This was more than the membrane of the frontier would allow to pass. Even Hanuman was foreign. It wasn't Hanuman who slipped through the maritime membrane, but his iconography. The character who donned that iconography did so in an entirely Chinese framework.

CONCLUSIONS

I introduced this essay as a tentative exploration of “initial ideas” concerning China's maritime frontier. I have sought to demonstrate that the maritime frontier can be viewed as a cultural membrane. Far more, I believe, than the land frontier that separated China from northern and central Asia, the maritime frontier provided a barrier across which foreign influences rarely penetrated.

Despite the emergence of phenomena such as the *wokou* pirates and Jesuit missionaries in the Ming, I believe this pattern endured until the nineteenth century when, all too obviously, the maritime frontier was overwhelmed by alien influences every bit as much as the inland frontier ever had been. But perhaps there was a link. Perhaps the very security traditionally associated with the maritime frontier made it impossible for the Chinese to recognize the threat it could present. Only when it was too late – only when the frontier had already been breached, did the state attempt to react and regain control. But by then control was lost, and the myth of frontier invincibility shattered. But that shattering lies well beyond the parameters of my present work. In an earlier time, the maritime frontier was, I conclude, an effective cultural membrane.