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The Yuan Khanate and India: Cross-Cultural Diplomacy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

INTRODUCTION

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were a watershed in Asian and world history. The Mongol conquests of Asia and Eastern Europe, the formation of Islamic states in southern Asia, and the expansion of commerce along the Indian Ocean and in the Mediterranean region resulted in the formation of complex political, religious, and commercial networks that linked the Far East to Europe. Cross-cultural interactions reached unprecedented levels in the earlier part of this period that contributed to the launching later on of the great maritime voyages by Zheng He 鄭和 (1371–1433) and Vasco da Gama (d. 1524).

The most significant development in Eurasia during the thirteenth century was undoubtedly the creation by the Mongols of the largest continuous land empire in the history of the world.¹ “The result,” according to the editors of a recent work on the Mongols, “was the opening up of Asia from East to West and back again, creating great opportunities for cultural exchanges and interaction.”² The accounts of John of Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck, Marco Polo, and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa all underscore the intensity as well as the complexity of cross-cultural exchanges during the Mongol period.

I WOULD like to thank Thomas Allsen, Michael Brose, Hugh Clark, Alan DiGaetano, Geng Yinzeng, Victor H. Mair, and the two anonymous reviewers for *Asia Major* for their comments and suggestions. In this article, the use of question marks “?” after transliterations indicates that a reconstruction from Chinese to Indian languages remains doubtful.

¹ See David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1990), p. 5.

² Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan, “Introduction,” in Reuven Amitai-Preiss and David O. Morgan, eds., *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. [1].

Significant political transformation was also taking place in southern Asia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. At the same time as Mongol troops marched into the Persian Gulf and destroyed the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate in Baghdad, Islamic forces were penetrating deeper into the Indian subcontinent. By the early-thirteenth century, the slave Quṭb al-Dīn Aybek (r. 1206–1210) had inherited territories conquered by his Afghan master Muḥmūd of Ghazna (d. 1030) and founded the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526).³ Another Afghan called Muḥammad Bakhtiyār (d. 1206) invaded parts of eastern India and laid the foundations for the Bengal Sultanate (1368–1576).⁴ In the first quarter of the fourteenth century, Muslim forces entered the Deccan region and southern India, establishing, at first, various outposts and then, in 1347, the Bāhmanī Sultanate (1347–1527).⁵

Much before the establishment of the above Islamic sultanates in southern Asia, Muslim traders had asserted their dominance along coastal India. They are known to have settled on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts of southern India as early as the eighth and ninth centuries.⁶ By the thirteenth century, Muslim merchants also established their guilds in the Southeast Asian archipelago and directed much of China’s maritime trade. In fact, the Muslim diaspora, consisting of traders from diverse ethnic background, played a crucial role in linking the markets in China to those in the Mediterranean region. Thus, by the time the Mongols amassed their empire across Eurasian lands, their commercial network, with significant contribution by Jewish and non-Muslim Indian and Southeast Asian merchants, had already unified the maritime world. Indeed, in the view of Janet Abu-Lughod, the thirteenth century witnessed the emergence of a “world system” that integrated the major trading ports and inland markets of Europe, Africa, and Asia into a single, large-scale and effectively organized trading system.⁷

³ On the Delhi Sultanate, see Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1999).

⁴ The most recent and detailed study of the Bengal Sultanate is Syed Ejaz Hussain’s *The Bengal Sultanate: Politics, Economy and Coins (AD 1205–1576)* (Delhi: Manohar, 2003).

⁵ See K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar* (Delhi: Oxford U.P., 1975), pp. 227–63. On the establishment of Islamic empires in India, see André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Volume III: Indo-Islamic Society, 14th–15th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), esp. chap. 4.

⁶ See André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Volume 1: Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, 7th–11th Centuries* (1990; rpt., New Delhi: Oxford U.P., 1999), esp. chaps. 3 and 4.

⁷ See Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1989).

Exchanges between China and India during this defining phase of Asian and world history have attracted only limited attention.⁸ The fact that Sino-Indian interactions during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries come after the more celebrated Buddhist phase and before the illustrious voyages of admiral Zheng He to Indian ports seems to be the major reason for this relative scholarly neglect. This paper demonstrates the complex nature of diplomatic interactions between India and China during the Yuan period. It argues that the frequent exchange of envoys between these two regions stemmed from a mutual interest in preserving and profiting from commercial activity across the Indian Ocean. The Yuan court's missions to southern Asia also formed an important part of Qubilai Khan's (Shizu 世祖, r. 1260–1294) strategy to maintain communication links with the Īlkhāns in Persia and his aspiration to be recognized as the great khan of the Mongol Empire. These court-to-court exchanges in the Yuan period, I suggest, strengthened the commercial and diplomatic links between China and southern India and paved the way for Zheng He's voyages to trading ports in India during the Ming period.

THE DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS OF YANG TINGBI

Chinese rulers rarely sent diplomatic missions to Indian kingdoms. During the first millennium AD, Chinese envoys were dispatched to India only for strategic military purposes (such as those sent to the southern Hindukush region during the Han and Tang dynasties), to undertake Buddhist activities, or in search of longevity drugs on behalf of the emperor (the latter two motivations being prevalent in the seventh century).⁹ Diplomatic missions from China to India became more

⁸ Two scholars who have done exceptional work on this topic are Karashima Noboru 辛島昇 and Roderich Ptak. Karashima's works include: "Jūsan seiki matsu ni okeru minami Indo to Chūgoku no aida no kōryū: Senshu Tamirugo kokubun to 'Genshi' Bahachijiden o megutte" 十三世紀末における南インドと中國の間の交通, 泉州タミル語刻文と元史馬八兒伝をめぐって ("Relations between South India and China at the End of the Thirteenth Century: On the Quanzhou Tamil Inscription and Descriptions of Ma'bar in the *History of the Yuan* [Dy-nasty]"), in Enoki hakushi shōju kinen Tōyō shi ronsō hensan iinkai, ed., *Enoki hakushi shōju kinen Tōyō shi ronsō* 榎博士頌壽紀念東洋史論叢 (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1988), pp. 77–105; and "Trade Relations between South India and China During the 13th and 14th Centuries," *Journal of East-West Maritime Relations* 1 (1989), pp. 59–81. Some of Ptak's important studies are, "China and Calicut in the Early Ming Period: Envoys and Tribute Embassies," *JRAS* (1989), pp. 81–111; and "Yuan and Early Ming Notices on the Kayal Area in South India," *BEFEO* 80 (1993), pp. 137–55. Works by Chinese scholars on specific aspects of Sino-Indian interactions during the Yuan period are cited below.

⁹ These exchanges are discussed in Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations*, 600–1400 (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and U. of Hawaii P., 2003), Introduction and chap. 1.

frequent after the twelfth century. The *Yuanshi* 元史 (*History of the Yuan Dynasty*) reports that within a period of three decades, between 1272 and 1296, the Yuan court dispatched about sixteen missions to India. A majority of these missions visited either Kollam/Kaulam (Quilon) on the southwestern Malabar coast of India or the Ma'bar kingdom on the Coromandel coast in the southeast.¹⁰ Almost during the same period, eighteen embassies from India are recorded to have arrived at the Yuan court, a majority from Kollam and Ma'bar (see table, below).

Table of Embassies Exchanged between India and Yuan China Recorded in Yuanshi

	YUAN COURT TO INDIAN KINGDOMS	INDIAN KINGDOMS TO YUAN COURT
1226 ?		From India
1272	To Xindu (i.e., India) To Malabar (Baluobo)#	
1274		From Malabar (Baluobo)
1275	To Malabar#	From Malabar (Baluobo)
1279		From Ma'bar
1280	To Kollam* To Kollam*	From Ma'bar
1281	To Ma'bar To Kollam*	
1282		From Kollam (twice)
1283	To Kollam*	Buddhist monk from Ma'bar
1284		From Ma'bar
1285	To Ma'bar	
1286		From Ma'bar
1287	To Malabar#	From Kollam From Ma'bar (twice)
1288		From Ma'bar
1289		From Ma'bar
1290	To Ma'bar	
1291	To Kollam	From Ma'bar
1291 ?		From Kollam
1293	To Kollam	
1294	To Kollam	
1294 ?	To Ma'bar	
1296	To Ma'bar	
1297		From Ma'bar
1314		From Ma'bar

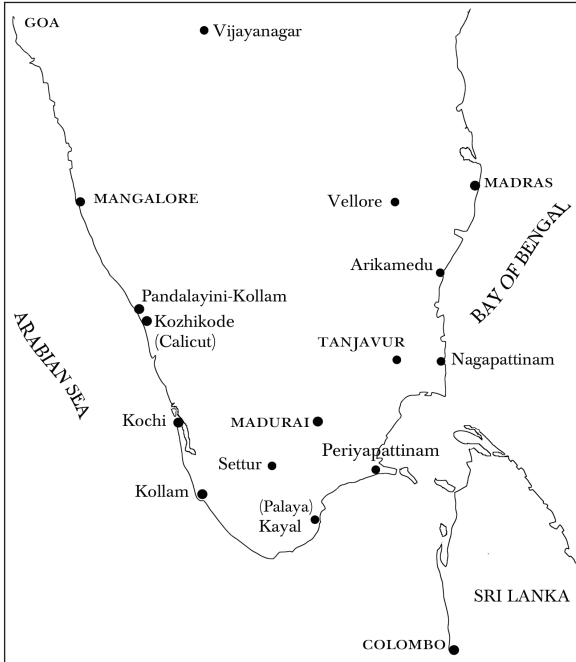
Missions of Yiheimishi

* Missions of Yang Tingbi

¹⁰ The destination of the other mission, dispatched in 1272, is recorded as "Xindu" 忻都 (that is, India). See *Yuanshi* (rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua, 1976) 7, p.143.

For local economies in East and South Asia, the increasing significance of international commerce may have been a principal reason for this upsurge in diplomatic missions from the Yuan court to India in the late-thirteenth century. A second, and equally important, motive seems to have been the Mongol ruler Qubilai Khan's desire to expand his military and political influence beyond coastal China. Both these objectives can be discerned from the four missions of the Yuan official Yang Tingbi 楊庭璧 to southern India between 1280 and 1283.¹¹

Qubilai's accession as the great khan of the Mongol empire in May, 1260, came against the backdrop of a struggle for succession



Map of Southern India

between him and his younger brother Ariq Böke (d. 1266), which eventually led to a four-year civil war among the successors of Chinggis Khan (d. 1227). Although Qubilai eventually emerged victorious, questions about his style of governance and challenges to his claim as the great khan remained. Qaidu (1236–1301), the grandson of Ögödei (1229–1241), with support from

¹¹ Another Mongol official, a Uighur named Yiheimishi 亦黑迷失 (Yighmish), was sent to southern India on multiple missions. He visited southern India in 1272, 1275, and 1287 (see table, above). Unlike Yang Tingbi's missions, Yighmish may have been sent to undertake religious ceremonies on behalf of the Mongol ruler. In fact, in 1284 he was dispatched to Sri Lanka to make offering to the Buddha's relic. Later, in 1287, he was sent to Ma'bar to fetch the Buddha's begging bowl. See *Yuanshi* 131, pp. 3198–99. He also appears in the work of Rashīd al-Dīn; see *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, trans. John Andrew Boyle (New York: Columbia U.P., 1971), pp. 279, 298–99, and 330. Yighmish's missions and the Buddhist interactions between the Yuan court and southern Asia are examined in Tansen Sen, "Buddhism and Sino-Indian Interactions during the Yuan Period," in 2006 *nian Beijing daxue Fojiao yu hexie shijie guoji xueshu yantaohui, lunwen ji* 2006 年北京大學佛教與和諧世界國際學術研討會論

the Chaghadayid khanate in Central Asia, mounted the most serious challenge to Qubilai. Military campaigns against Qaidu failed to yield results and the Central Asian region remained outside Qubilai's sphere of influence.¹²

The dispute among the Mongol khanates seems to have played a significant role in the formation of Qubilai's strategy toward states beyond coastal China. First, Qubilai tried to continue his predecessors' policy of expansion. This included the naval attacks launched against Japan (in 1274 and 1280) and Southeast Asian states (against Champa and Java in 1281 and 1293, respectively). Second, Qubilai attempted to persuade the rulers of maritime states to submit to the Yuan khanate and recognize him as the great khan of the Mongol empire. Third, because the alliance between Qaidu and the Chaghadayids blocked commercial and communication routes through Central Asia, the maritime route along the coastal regions of Southeast and South Asia to the Persian Gulf proved to be the only conduit through which Qubilai could foster international commerce and maintain contact with the Īlkhāns of Persia, his main ally in the Chinggisid civil war.

Foreign kingdoms that failed to submit to Qubilai's demands were often threatened with military repercussions. In 1277, for example, Qubilai ordered his generals to invade the kingdom of Pagan 緬國, in present-day Myanmar (Burma), because the Pagan king not only refused to send tributary missions to the Yuan court, but had also killed three Mongol emissaries. Also, in 1281, after repeated demands by the Yuan court that the king of Champa 占城 (present-day southern Vietnam) personally lead one of the tributary missions to China, Qubilai sent an armada of one hundred naval ships under the command of general Sögetü 唆都 against this Southeast Asian kingdom.¹³ Although both operations ended in military setbacks for the Mongols, Pagan and

文集 (*Harmony in Discord: Buddhism as Means of Integration across Cultures*) (Beijing: Beijing Daxue zhexuexi, 2006), pp. 134-40.

¹² On the challenges to Qubilai Khan's accession and the resulting civil wars, see Peter Jackson, "The Accession of Qubilai Qa'an: A Re-examination," *Journal of the Anglo-Mongolian Society* 2.1 (1975), pp. 1-10; John W. Dardess, "From Mongol Empire to Yüan Dynasty: Changing Forms of Imperial Rule in Mongolia and Central Asia," *MS* 30 (1972), pp. 117-65; and Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1988), chaps. 3 and 4. A detailed study of Qaidu is Michal Biran's *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997).

¹³ On these two episodes, see Morris Rossabi, "The Reign of Khubilai Khan," in Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*, vol. 6 of *The Cambridge History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994), pp. 414-89, esp. pp. 484-85; and Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, pp. 213-19.

Champa eventually agreed to send tribute and acknowledge their vassalage to the Yuan court.¹⁴

One suggestion that similar demands may also have been made on the kingdoms in southern Asia comes from the biography of Jialu'nadasi 迦魯納答思 (Karandas) in the *Yuanshi*.¹⁵ Karandas, a Uighur, is said to have been "knowledgeable about Indian religion 天竺教 (Buddhism) and [conversant] in the languages of various [other] kingdoms." Karandas was ordered by Qubilai to receive training in Buddhism from the state preceptor and then engage in translating Buddhist texts.¹⁶ *Yuanshi* states that:

[When] the [Yuan] court planned to embark on military operations against Siam 暹國, Lavo 羅斛 (present-day Ban Ta Khli in Thailand), Ma'bar 馬八兒, Kollam 俱藍, Samudra 蘇木都刺 (in northeastern Sumatra), and other kingdoms,¹⁷ Karandas memorialized [saying]: "All these are petty and distant states. Although we can [easily] invade them, what can be gained [by belligerence]? The initiation

¹⁴ Morris Rossabi writes that in order to "enhance his credibility as a ruler of the Mongol and Chinese worlds" Qubilai "needed to pursue an assertive, even aggressive, foreign policy"; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, p. 76. Emphasizing the commercial underpinning of the Yuan naval missions, Lo Jung-pang writes, "In contrast to the campaigns on the mainland which were territorial in aim, the purpose of the seaborne expeditions against Japan, Champa, Annam and Java as well as the embassies to the states of Malaya, Sumatra and Southern India were to force these states not only to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Mongol khan but also to become units in the vast overseas economic empire with China as the center"; Jung-pang Lo, "China as a Sea Power, 1127-1368: A Preliminary Survey of the Maritime Expansion and Naval Exploits of the Chinese People during the Southern Sung and Yuan Period," Ph.D. diss. (Berkeley: U. of California, 1957), p. 109. For an extensive study of the Yuan campaigns against the Southeast Asian kingdoms, see *ibid.*, chap. 13, and Jacques Dars, *La marine chinoise du X^e siècle au XIV^e siècle* (Paris: Economica, 1992), pp. 328-45.

¹⁵ Qubilai's demand that Indian states submit to him is also reported by Rashīd al-Dīn. Qubilai, he writes, "sent ambassadors by sea to most of the countries of India [to call on them] to submit. They were compelled to promise this and up to the present time ambassadors pass to and fro discussing the terms of submission"; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Successors of Genghis Khan*, p. 272.

¹⁶ *Yuanshi* 134, pp. 3260-61. On Karandas's participation in Buddhist activities, see Herbert Franke, "A Note on Multilinguality in China under the Mongols: The Compilers of the Revised Buddhist Canon, 1285-87," in Edward H. Kaplan and Donald W. Whisenhunt, eds., *Opuscula Altaica: Essays Presented in Honor of Henry Schwarz* (Bellingham: Western Washington University, 1994), pp. 286-98, esp. 290-91.

¹⁷ Marco Polo reports that on the Yellow River he saw 15,000 ships belonging to Qubilai, which, according to him, were "to carry his armies to the islands of India of the Ocean sea whenever there is need, if they rebel; or to any remote and distant region"; A.C. Moule and Paul Pelliot, trans., *Marco Polo: The Description of the World* (London: George Routledge & Sons Limited, 1938) 1, p. 138 [309]. Although there may not be any correlation between the notice in the *Yuanshi* and Marco Polo's record about the naval buildup, together these two reports seem to underscore Qubilai's plan to expand his empire beyond the southern shores of China. On the role of some of these Southeast Asian kingdoms in the trading circuit between India and China during the thirteenth century and their interaction with the Yuan court, see Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: U. of Hawaii P., 1985), pp. 209-31.

of military operations will only lead to the destruction of people's lives. [It would be] better to send embassies [to these kingdoms and] discuss the calamities [of warfare] and benefits [of submitting peacefully]. Attacking [those who] do not submit [peacefully] will not impede [the plan]. The emperor accepted his opinion [and] ordered Yuelayenu 岳刺也奴, Tiemie 帖滅 and others to proceed [to these kingdoms] as envoys. [As a result,] the kingdoms that surrendered [peacefully] were more than twenty.¹⁸

It is not clear when Karandas made the above suggestion, but it may have been in 1278–79, when the court was considering attacking Champa. Like Karandas, the Mongol general Sögetü, in 1278–79, also recommended diplomacy over military conflict. As a result, in the twelfth lunar month of Zhiyuan 至元 16 (December 1279–January 1280), Sögetü, along with two other Yuan envoys, was sent to the king of Champa Shilizayaxinhebalamahadiewa 失里咱牙信合八刺麻哈迭瓦 (Śri Jayā Simhavarman Mahādeva?, also known as Indravarman VI).¹⁹ This diplomatic mission to Champa was dispatched in the same month the Yuan court sent an embassy to Kollam led by Yang Tingbi (see below for the sequence of events that led up to the dispatching of this mission by the Yuan court).

Yang had previously displayed his military skills during the invasion of key towns in southern China under Sögetü.²⁰ Upon reaching Kollam in the third lunar month of Zhiyuan 17 (April–May, 1280), he quickly secured “conditions of surrender” (*jiangbiao* 降表) from the ruler of the kingdom called Binadi 必納的 (Pāṇḍya?).²¹ The Kollam ruler also promised to send a tributary mission to the Yuan court within a year.²²

¹⁸ *Yuanshi* 134, p. 3260, and 19, p. 405, reports on a Chinese mission to Ma'bar in 1296 that included a delegate named Yueleyenu 岳樂也奴, which slightly varies from the name of the Mongol envoy Yuelayenu 岳刺也奴 noted in Karandas's biography. This means that the proposal to send missions was implemented by Qubilai Khan. Temür Khaghan (Chengzong 成宗, r. 1294–1307), who succeeded Qubilai in 1294, seems to have initiated the 1296 mission. Thus, Yuelayenu and Yueleyenu were probably two different people.

¹⁹ See *Yuanshi* 210, p. 4660.

²⁰ *Yuanshi* 210, p. 4669. On Yang Tingbi and other Yuan mission to South Asia, see W. W. Rockhill, “Notes on the Relations and Trade of China with the Eastern Archipelago and the Coast of the Indian Ocean during the Fourteenth Century, Part I,” *TP* 15 (1914), pp. 419–47, esp. pp. 429–38. See also Yang Qinzhang 楊欽章, “Yuandai Quanzhou yu NanYindu guanxi zinzheng” 元代泉州與南印度關係新證, in Lianheguo jiaokewen zuzhi haishang sichou zhi lu zonghe kaocha Quanzhou guoji xueshu taolun hui zuzhi weiyuanhui 聯合國教科文組織海上絲綢之路綜合考察泉州國際學術討論會組織委員會, ed., *Zhongguo yu haishang sichou zhi lu* 中國與海上絲綢之路 (Quanzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1991), pp. 195–207. On general Sögetü's role in the battles against the Southern Song court, see Lo, “China as a Sea Power,” chaps. 9 and 10.

²¹ The “conditions of surrender,” we are told, were written in “Muslim script.”

²² *Yuanshi* 210, p. 4669.

In the latter half of 1280, seemingly because of the diplomatic overtures of the Mongols, embassies arrived at the Yuan court from the kingdoms of Champa, Ma'bar, Kollam, Java 闍婆, and Jiaozhi 交趾 (present-day northern Vietnam). Representatives of Champa and Ma'bar reportedly submitted memorials acknowledging "vassalage" (*chengchen* 稱臣) to the Yuan court.²³ However, the court was disappointed that other kingdoms, including Kollam in southern India, had failed to "submit."²⁴ It appears that in order to express its dissatisfaction, Yang Tingbi was ordered by the Yuan court to return to Kollam.

Accompanying Yang Tingbi on his second mission to India was Hasaerhaiya 哈撒兒海牙 (Qasar Qaya), who was appointed commissioner of the Pacification Office [in-charge of] Kollam 俱藍國宣慰使.²⁵ The mission departed China in the first lunar month of Zhiyuan 18 (January–February, 1281). However, due to unfavorable winds and diminishing provisions on the ship on which they were traveling, the Chinese embassy had to disembark at the Xincun 新村 (literally, "New Village" = Punnaikayal? that is, present-day Kayal) port of the Ma'bar kingdom on the Coromandel coast.²⁶ In Kayal, Yang inquired about the land route to Kollam, but, as is discussed in the next section, the local officials refused to reveal it to the Chinese entourage. Unable to accomplish their mission, Yang Tingbi and Qasar Qaya returned to China. Qasar Qaya reported to the court that it would be more appropriate to send the mission in the eleventh lunar month, when the winds were favorable to travel to Kollam.²⁷

Following Qasar Qaya's recommendation, Yang Tingbi was sent for a third time to southern India in the eleventh lunar month of Zhiyuan 18 (December 1281–January 1282). He reached Kollam in the second lunar month of the following year (March–April, 1282) and had an audience with the king (presumably the same leader he met in 1280), the king's minister Mahema 馬合麻, and other officials of the kingdom. *Yuanshi* tells us that the king and his officials "received with reverence" the imperial seal and letter that Yang Tingbi had brought with him. In the following month, the king of Kollam sent one of his officials named Zhu'alishamanglibadi 祝阿里沙忙里八的 on a tributary

²³ *Yuanshi* 11, pp. 225–27.

²⁴ *Yuanshi* 210, p. 4669.

²⁵ *Ibid.* On Qasar Qaya and his activities in the Annan region, see Louis Hambis, *Le chapitre CVIII du Yuan che* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954), p. 85.

²⁶ See Ptak, "Yuan and Early Ming," p. 140.

²⁷ *Yuanshi* 210, pp. 4669–70; and 11, p. 236. Rockhill also points out the possible connection between the objective of Liu Mengyan's mission and the assistance sought from Yang Tingbi in 1281. See Rockhill, "Notes," p. 434, n. 1.

mission to China. Before departing Kollam in the fourth lunar month (May–June, 1282), Yang met representatives of the Syrian Christian and Muslim communities settled in the region. The two representatives, perhaps belonging to local trading diasporas, sought Yang’s permission to send annual tributary missions to the Yuan court. He also met a person from the kingdom of Sumuda 蘇木達國 (Semenat?/Somnath, in present-day Gujarat state), who, we are told, came especially to see the Chinese envoy because Kollam had officially submitted to the Yuan court. On his way back to China, Yang Tingbi stopped at and secured “submissions” from the kingdoms of Nawang 那旺國 (Nakur, present-day Nicobar Island?) and Sumatra.²⁸

In the first lunar month of Zhiyuan 20 (January–February, 1283), only a few months after his return to China, Yang Tingbi was appointed the commissioner of the Pacification Office and sent on a fourth mission to Kollam. He was given imperial gifts that included bows, arrows, saddles, and a bridle.²⁹ Although the details of Yang Tingbi’s visit to Kollam in 1283 are not given in the Yuan sources,³⁰ the outcome of his four missions to South Asian kingdoms is highlighted in *Yuanshi*. An entry under Zhiyuan 23 (1286–87) states that as a result of Yang Tingbi’s missions, ten kingdoms, including Ma’bar, Semenat, Nakur, and Samudra, sent their representatives to submit to the Yuan court.³¹

These submissions indicate that Yang Tingbi had successfully accomplished the goal of persuading kingdoms in southern Asia to dispatch tributary missions to the Yuan court and recognize Qubilai as the great khan of the Mongol empire. However, the Yuan court may have had other considerations in sending these missions to southern India. One was that Kollam and Ma’bar were perceived as two of the most powerful kingdoms in the local region. This is discerned from a record in *Yuanshi* that states that “among all foreign nations across the seas, only Ma’bar and Kollam are capable of commanding [other] king-

²⁸ *Yuanshi* 210, p. 4670; Rockhill, “Notes,” pp. 434–35, and O. Franke, *Geschichte des chinesischen Reiches: Eine Darstellung seiner Entstehung, seines Wesens und seiner Entwicklung bis zur neuesten Zeit* (Berlin: Verlag von Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1930–1952) 4, pp. 460–65, and 5, pp. 230–31.

²⁹ *Yuanshi* 20, p. 250.

³⁰ *Yuanshi* 20, p. 251, reports that a golden badge was presented to Wani, the king of Kollam. Rockhill has suggested the Chinese diplomat who presented the badge may have been Yang Tingbi. However, Rockhill errs in the punctuation of the *Yuanshi* passage, stating that a title of “Imperial Son-in-Law” was also conferred upon the Kollam king; Rockhill, “Notes,” p. 338.

³¹ *Yuanshi* 210, p. 4670. See also *Yuanshi* 14, p. 292, where envoys from the same ten kingdoms are listed as arriving in the ninth lunar month, but the role of Yang Tingbi in prompting these missions is not mentioned.

doms.”³² The Chinese scribes are perhaps referring to the military prowess of the Pāṇḍyan kingdom under kings Jatāvarman Sundra Pāṇḍya II (r. 1251–1268) and Māṅavarman Kulaśekhara I (r. 1268–1308/09). During their rule, the Pāṇḍyans had conquered most of southern India and invaded northern Sri Lanka.³³ Since the southern coastal region of India was on the main communication route between Yuan China and the Īlkhāns, alliance with the Pāṇḍyan kingdom and the later rulers of the region may have been strategically vital for the Yuan court.³⁴

The importance of the south Indian ports to international commerce, on the other hand, is highlighted in the thirteenth and fourteenth century sources, including stone inscriptions from the Malabar and Coromandel coasts written in South Indian and Arabic languages, works of the Persian historians Waṣṣāf (fl. 1300s) and Rashīd al-Dīn (ca. 1248–1318), and Marco Polo’s (1254–1324) *Description of the World*. Tamil and Telegu inscriptions, for example, provide an extensive list of commodities traded through the Coromandel coast and, on some occasions, the duties levied on various items. They also indicate the continued dominance of the South Indian guilds, especially the Tamil merchant associations Ayyāvoḷe and Maṅigrāmam, along the southern coast of India and northern Sri Lanka.³⁵ Arabic inscriptions (especially those inscribed on epitaphs) from the region evidence the presence of Muslim merchant communities in the coastal towns of Kayal, Calicut, and Cochin.³⁶ Marco Polo reports the presence of foreign communities,

³² *Yuanshi* 97, p. 4669.

³³ See Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, chap. 10.

³⁴ The importance of coastal India to the diplomatic exchanges between the Yuan court and the Īlkhāns can be discerned, for example, from Waṣṣāf’s report of an embassy sent to the Yuan court by the Īlkhān ruler Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) in 1297 (see also n. 58 below). The embassy seems to have traveled to China through the southern coast of India. During the return voyage, the ambassador leading the embassy died near Ma’bar. He was buried in a tomb in Ma’bar that was, we are told, “near that of his uncle.” See H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians. Volume 3: The Muhammadan Period* (1871; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1966), pp. 45–47. Additionally, there is evidence of collaboration between the Īlkhāns and the Yuan court in regard to southern Asia. *Yuanshi* 8, p. 148, reports that in 1273 Qubilai requested that the Īlkhān ruler Abaqa 阿不合 purchase (longevity?) drugs from Sri Lanka on his behalf. On the conflict between the four khanates and the relations between the Īlkhāns and the Yuan court, see Thomas T. Allsen, “Changing Forms of Legitimation in Mongol Iran,” in Gary Seaman and Daniel Marks, eds., *Rulers from the Steppe: State Formation on the Eurasian Periphery* (Los Angeles: Ethnographic Press, U. of Southern California, 1991), pp. 223–41.

³⁵ See Meera Abraham, *Two Medieval Merchant Guilds of South India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1988), pp. 143–49, 150. See also R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 BC to AD 1300* (Delhi: Oxford U.P., 1996), pp. 323–26.

³⁶ See Mehrdad Shokoohy, *Muslim Architecture of South India: The Sultanate of Ma’bar and the Traditions of the Maritime Settlers on the Malabar and Coromandel Coasts (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Goa)* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), esp. “Part One: The Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu).”

including Muslims, Christians and Jews, at Kollam.³⁷ Also noteworthy is the work of the Southern Song scholar Zhou Qufei 周去非 (1135?–1189?) called *Lingwai daida* 領外代答 (*Information of What Is Beyond the Passes*). Zhou reports that Chinese and foreign traders traveling between the Persian Gulf and China often changed ships at Kollam.³⁸

Preserving commercial relations with these important transit ports in southern India, therefore, may have been equally pivotal for the Yuan court. This is apparent from the events leading to Yang Tingbi's first mission to Kollam. The mission was dispatched shortly after Qubilai's army had overthrown the Southern Song dynasty and taken control of three important commercial ports in southern China: Fuzhou, Quanzhou, and Guangzhou. The Mongols had already expressed their support for long-distance and domestic trade when they invaded northern China. The administration of commercial activity, they had recognized, generated considerable revenue for the government.³⁹ After the Mongol forces occupied the flourishing ports of southern China, local officials called attention to the potential profits from maritime trade. One such official was Pu Shougeng 蒲壽庚, the superintendent of maritime commerce at Quanzhou.⁴⁰

³⁷ See Moule and Pelliot, *Marco Polo* 1, p. 179 [414].

³⁸ See Zhou Qufei, *Lingwai daida jiaozhu* 領外代答校注, annot. Yang Wuquan 楊武泉 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1999), j. 2, pp. 90–91; j. 3, pp. 126–27. The passages are translated in Jitsuzō Kuwabara's "On P'u Shou-keng: A Man of the Western Regions, Who Was the Superintendent of the Trading Ships' Office in Ch'üan-chou towards the End of the Sung Dynasty, together with a General Sketch of the Arabs in China during the T'ang and Sung Eras," *MTB* 2 (1928), pp. 1–79; and 7 (1935), pp. 1–104. See *MTB* 2 (1928), p. 65.

³⁹ On the encouragement and administration of foreign trade by the Mongol rulers, including the important role played by Muslim merchants, see Morris Rossabi, "The Muslims in the Early Yüan Dynasty," in John D. Langlois, Jr., ed., *China under Mongol Rule* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1981), pp. 257–95. See also Elizabeth Endicott-West, "Merchant Associations in Yüan China: The Ortoγ," *AM* 3d ser. 2.2 (1989), pp. 127–54. On the collaboration between the Yuan court and the seafaring merchants, see K. Satō, "On the Form of Maritime Trade and Commerce in the Near East and the Far East from the Tenth to the Thirteenth Centuries of the Christian Era," in *Proceedings of the Second Biennial Conference of International Association of Historians of Asia* (Taipei: n.p., 1962), pp. 335–37. Pointing to *Yuanshi* 94, p. 202, Satō writes (p. 336) that during the Yuan dynasty "officials of the government office of foreign trade (*shih-po-ssu* [*shibosi*] 市舶司) entrusted ships and capitals belonging to the government to the merchants who applied for the position of the trustee, and the profits were divided between the government and the merchant in proportion of seventh per cent for the former and thirty for the latter." He notes that a similar form of collaboration, known as "*qirāq*" or "*muqārāda*," also existed in the Near East.

⁴⁰ Kuwabara's "P'u Shou-keng" was the first detailed study on Pu Shougeng in a Western language. For a recent analysis of Pu Shougeng's role in maritime trade and politics during the Song-Yuan transition period, see Billy K. L. So, *Prosperity, Region, and Institutions in Maritime China: The South Fukien Pattern, 946–1368* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), chap. 5 and appendix B.

Pu Shougeng, who shifted his allegiance from the Song court to the invading Mongols in 1277, actively lobbied the Yuan court to promote maritime trade.⁴¹ In August–September, 1278, Pu and the Mongol general Sögetü presented a memorial emphasizing the benefits of encouraging maritime trade. In response, the court ordered the two petitioners to undertake appropriate measures to attract seafaring traders to China.⁴² However, the measures taken by Pu Shougeng and Sögetü failed to induce a larger influx of foreign traders to Chinese ports. Perhaps the foreign traders were deterred by the lingering skirmishes between Yuan forces and remaining Southern Song troops in the coastal region. Thus, in the fifth lunar month of the following year (June–July, 1279), when Pu sought to renew imperial support for encouraging maritime trade at Chinese ports, the court rejected his petition.⁴³

Within a few days of the court's rejection, however, envoys were reported to have arrived from Ma'bar and Champa. But, as noted above, the Yuan court expressed its disappointment that other rulers, including the king of Kollam, neglected to send appropriate representatives. As *Yuanshi* reports, "the Branch Secretariat wanted to dispatch fifteen persons as envoys to invite [representatives from] the kingdoms [that had failed to submit to the Yuan court]. [But,] the emperor said, '[The issue of sending envoys] cannot be solely determined by Sögetü and others. Unless I give the orders, no one should send the envoys.'"⁴⁴ Despite the objection, the emperor, in the twelfth lunar month of Zhiyuan 16, sent officials from the Hanlin Academy to consult with Sögetü on the strategies to attract foreign traders to China.⁴⁵ It was in the same month, perhaps as a result of the discussions between the Hanlin officials and Sögetü, that the Yuan court ordered Yang Tingbi to proceed to Kollam.⁴⁶ Jitsuzō Kuwabara is probably correct in observing that Yang

⁴¹ Maritime trade and local economy at the port-city of Quanzhou, where Pu held the post of the superintendent of maritime commerce, witnessed a decline in the period between 1200 and 1279. Pu seems to have been particularly affected by this economic slump at Quanzhou because he and his family are known to have owned and operated a large number of mercantile ships that were engaged in private trade with foreign countries. Thus, Pu may have lobbied the Yuan court not only because of the possible economic benefits to the national and local economy, but also due to his personal monetary interests. On the economic slump at Quanzhou between 1200 and 1276, and the revival of maritime trade under the Yuan, see So, *Prosperity*, chaps. 4 and 5.

⁴² *Yuanshi* 10, p. 204; and 129, p. 3152; Rockhill, "Notes," pp. 429–30; and Kuwabara, "P'u Shou-keng" (part 2, 1935), p. 66, and pp. 80–83.

⁴³ *Yuanshi* 10, p. 221; and Kuwabara, "P'u Shou-keng" (part 2), p. 81.

⁴⁴ See *Yuanshi* 210, p. 4669; and Kuwabara, "P'u Shou-keng" (part 2), p. 81.

⁴⁵ *Yuanshi* 10, p. 217; and Kuwabara, "P'u Shou-keng" (part 2), p. 82.

⁴⁶ *Yuanshi* 10, p. 218, reports that envoys were also sent in the same month to Champa and Java.

Tingbi's close association with Sögetü during the invasion of Southern Song territories may have played a major role in his selection.⁴⁷

Because of Yang Tingbi's missions, it seems, the rulers of Ma'bar and Kollam began sending regular tributary missions to China. The Syrian Christian and Muslim trading communities in coastal India also may have dispatched their own representatives to the Yuan court. The purpose of these tributary missions was to enter into the trading activity in coastal China. In fact, a bilingual inscription found in Quanzhou indicates that traders from southern India had begun to return to coastal China shortly after Yang Tingbi's first mission. Written in Tamil and Chinese, the inscription bears the date April 1281 and notes of the installation of an idol of Śiva in a Brahmanical temple at the Chinese port for the "welfare" of the Yuan ruler.⁴⁸ The accounts of Marco Polo and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, and the Chinese work *Daoyi zhi lue* 島夷誌略 (*Brief Record of the Island Barbarians*) also demonstrate that commercial relations between India and China expanded rapidly over the next few decades.⁴⁹ While Marco Polo and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, for example, report of trading ships traversing between Indian and Chinese ports, Wang Dayuan 汪大淵, the author of *Daoyi zhi lue*, suggests the presence of merchants in the coastal regions of India.⁵⁰ The benefit to the Yuan court for propagating maritime trade is reflected in the taxes collected from merchants, which increased from 4,500 ingots of silver in 1271 to 450,000 ingots by 1286.⁵¹

Thus, Yang Tingbi had not only succeeded in establishing diplomatic and tributary relations between southern India and China and advancing the political goals of Qubilai Khan, his missions seem to have also invigorated the trading contacts between the two regions and maritime commerce across the Indian Ocean. As discussed in the

⁴⁷ Kuwabara, "P'u Shou-keng" (part 2), p. 82.

⁴⁸ See T.N. Subramaniam, "A Tamil Colony in Mediaeval China," in R. Nagaswamy, ed., *South Indian Studies* (Madras: Society for Archaeological, Historical and Epigraphical Research, 1978), pp. 1-52; and Sen, *Buddhism*, pp. 227-31.

⁴⁹ See Sen, *Buddhism*, pp. 228-31, and idem, "The Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks to Southern Asia, 1200-1450," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 49.4 (2006), pp. 421-53. For archeological evidence from the Indian coast, see Y. Subbarayalu, "Chinese Ceramics of Tamilnadu and Kerala Coasts," in Himanshu Prabha Ray and Jean-François Salles, eds., *Tradition and Archaeology: Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), pp. 109-14. In fact, private trade between China and southern India seems to have grown to such an extent that the Yuan court was forced to ban the trade in luxury goods with kingdoms in South India. The prohibition was issued in the second year of the Yuanzhen reign period (1296); see *Yuanshi* 94, pp. 2402-3.

⁵⁰ See Sen, "Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks," p. 426; and idem, *Buddhism*, p. 232.

⁵¹ See Rossabi, "The Muslims," p. 279.

next section, the Chinese diplomat may have even assisted a Ma'bar official obtain asylum in China.

THE POLITICAL REFUGEE FROM MA'BAR

On his second mission to Kollam in 1281, Yang Tingbi was forced to disembark at the port-city of Kayal on the Coromandel coast because of unfavorable winds. *Yuanshi* states that at Kayal, Yang met two local officials, including a person named Buali 不阿里 (Abū 'Alī). This meeting seems to have triggered protracted, behind-the-scenes negotiations between Abū 'Alī and the Yuan court that ultimately resulted in Abū 'Alī's defection to China in 1291.

According to *Yuanshi*, soon after the Yuan embassy led by Yang Tingbi landed in Kayal they met a Ma'bari official named Mayindi 馬因的. The Yuan envoys told Mayindi that they were on their way to Kollam and sought permission to proceed to the Malabar coast over the land route. Declaring the land route impassable, Mayindi denied consent and instead referred Yang Tingbi to Abū 'Alī. However, Abū 'Alī too, tendering his own excuses, refused to disclose the route to Kollam to the Yuan representatives. What transpired next was an intriguing episode that reveals political discord within the Ma'bar kingdom, at least in the Kayal region.

In the fifth lunar month (May–June, 1281), two persons hastily came to the lodge [where the Yuan entourage was staying].⁵² In private, on behalf of their leader, they communicated the real reason [for not revealing the land route to Kollam]: “I implore your superior court to bless me. I will serve the emperor with all the heart. My envoy Zhamaliding 札馬里丁 (Jamāl al-Dīn) has [already] visited the [Yuan] court. My clerk has also gone to [meet] the sultan [of Kayal?]. [However, I have been] accused of insubordination. The sultan has confiscated my gold and silver, [impounded my] land and [other] property, and [arrested] my wife and slaves. Moreover, [he] wants to have me killed. I have been able to escape [execution] by making excuses. At present, the sultans [of Ma'bar], five brothers in all, have assembled in the Jiayi 加一 (Old Kayal?) region and are planning to clash with Kollam.

⁵² Liu Yingsheng 劉迎勝 believes that these two persons were the aforementioned Ma'bar officials Mayindi and Buali. See his “Cong 'Buali shendao beiming' kan nan Yindu yu Yuan chao ji Bosi wan de jiaotong” 從不阿里神道碑銘看南印度與元朝及波斯灣的交通 (The Interactions between Southern India, the Persian Gulf and the Yuan Dynasty as Seen from the Funeral Inscription of Buali), *Lishi dili* 歷史地理 7 (n.d.), pp. 90–95; see p. 93.

When [they] heard that Celestial (that is, Yuan) envoys had come [to Ma'bar], the people were told to portray their kingdom (that is, Ma'bar) as poor and lowly. These are all lies. All the gold, pearls and precious objects of the Muslim kingdoms are produced in this country. Moreover, Muslim [merchants] all come here to trade. It is known that various kingdoms [in this region] are willing to submit [to the Yuan court].⁵³ If [the present ruler of] Ma'bar surrenders, my envoys, carrying letters [from me], will go and summon these kingdoms. They can all be persuaded to submit [to the Yuan court].⁵⁴

In other words, the person who secretly communicated with the Yuan embassy wanted Qubilai to protect him from one (or more) of the co-rulers of Ma'bar in exchange for the acknowledgement of submissions from, and possibly trading rights in, kingdoms located in southern India.

When Yang Tingbi returned to China, he must have conveyed this request to the Yuan court. We find that the Yuan court, in the eleventh lunar month of Zhiyuan 18 (December 1281–January, 1282), sent Liu Mengyan 留夢炎 on a diplomatic mission to the Ma'bar kingdom.⁵⁵ *Yuanshi*, however, offers no insights about the purpose or results of this mission. Nor does it furnish any detail about what happened to the person seeking aid from the Yuan court or the nature of the political discord within the Ma'bar kingdom. But, two fifteenth-century Korean sources and a funerary inscription preserved in the fourteenth-century Chinese work *Zhong'an ji* 中庵集 (*Collection of [Records from the] Middle Hut*) permit us to speculate on the identity of and the events leading to the Yuan court's decision to grant asylum to a native of Ma'bar.

The Korean works *Koryōsa* 高麗史 (*History of the Koryō [Kingdom]*) and *Tongguk t'onggam* 東國通鑑 (*Comprehensive Mirror for the Eastern Kingdom*), completed in 1451 and 1485, respectively, have identical records about a “prince” from Ma'bar called P'aehali (Ch. Bohali) 孛哈里:

⁵³ There may be some truth to the importance of Ma'bar in international commerce reported here. Waṣṣāf, writing about the kingdom, states: “The curiosities of Chín and Máchín, and the beautiful products of Hind and Sind, laden on large ships (which they call junks), sailing like mountains with the wings of the winds on the surface of the water, are always arriving there. The wealth of the Isles of the Persian Gulf in particular, and in part the beauty and adornment of other countries, from 'Irák and Khurásán as far as Rúm and Europe, are derived from Ma'bar, which is so situated as to be the key of Hind.” See Elliot and Dowson, *History of India* 3, p. 32.

⁵⁴ *Yuanshi* 210, pp. 4669–70. Rockhill's translation of this passage has numerous errors. See Rockhill, “Notes,” pp. 432–33. For another rendering and detailed examination of this passage, see Ptak, “Yuan and Early Ming,” pp. 140–43.

⁵⁵ *Yuanshi* 11, p. 236.

[In the sixth lunar month of the twenty-fourth year of King Ch'ung'yöl (Ch.: Zhonglie) 忠烈 (that is, 1298)], P'aehali, the prince of Ma'bar, sent an embassy to [the Korean court] to present a cap stitched with silver threads, handkerchiefs embroidered with gold, five *jin* thirteen *liang* (about seven pounds) of aloeswood, and two rolls of native cotton-cloth. Previously, the king had given the daughter of Ch'ae In'gyu 蔡仁揆 in marriage to [the Yuan] chief minister Sangha 桑哥. [After] Sangha was executed [by the Yuan court],⁵⁶ the emperor (that is, Qubilai Khan) presented the woman Ch'ae to P'aehali. [Because] P'aehali was at odds with the ruler of his country, [he] defected to Yuan [China] and has been residing in Quanzhou. And now, because of [his marriage to] Ch'ae, [P'aehali] has sent an envoy to [establish a channel of] communication with the Korean king.⁵⁷

The funerary inscription of Buali (Abū 'Alī) included in *Zhong'an ji*, seems to be narrating the life of the same Ma'bari native who appears in the above episode.⁵⁸ Liu Minzhong 劉敏中 (1243–1318), the author of the short treatises and epitaphs that comprise *Zhong'an ji*, composed

⁵⁶ This took place on August 17, 1291. On Sangha and the reasons for his execution, see Herbert Franke, "Sangha," in Igor de Rachewiltz et al., eds., *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan Period* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), pp. 558–83. Earlier studies on Sangha include Franke's "Señ-ge, das Leben eines uigurischen Staatsbeamten zur Zeit Chubilai's, dargestellt nach Kapitel 205 der Yüan-Annalen," *Sinica* 17 (1942), pp. 90–113; and L. Petech, "Sang-ko, A Tibetan Statesman in Yüan China," *AOASH* 34.1–3 (1980), pp. 193–208.

⁵⁷ *Koryōsa* (Seoul: Tongbanghak Yōn'guso, 1955) 33, p. 676a.

⁵⁸ The transcriptions of foreign names from *Zhong'an ji* follow the passage included in Chen Gaohua's 陳高華, "Yindu Mabaer wangzi Bohali lai Hua xinkao" 印度馬八兒王子李哈里來華新考, *Nankai xuebao* 南開學報 4 (1980), pp. 70–73. Chen's edition is housed in the Beijing Library. In the SKQS edn., however, the name appears as Buhaer 布哈爾. See Liu Minzhong, *Zhong'an ji*, SKQS edn. (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1972) 16, pp. 133–35. The later editors of *Zhong'an ji* seem to have distorted the transcriptions of foreign names. See also, Geng Yinzeng, *Hanwen Nanya shiliao xue* 漢文南亞史料學 (English title: Historical Data of South Asia from Chinese Sources) (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1991), pp. 291–93. Kuwabara identifies Buali as Fakhr ud-Dīn Ahmad, the son of Jamāl ud-Dīn, the prince of the Kish Island in the Persian Gulf. This Fakhr ud-Dīn Ahmad, according to Kuwabara, "in the year 1297, as an envoy of Ghazan, the Ilkhan of Persia, came by sea to China. He was granted an audience to the Yüan emperor, and by his order married to a noble lady of the court. After living in China some years, he took his return voyage to Persia and died two days before his arrival at Mābar"; see Kuwabara, "P'u Shou-keng" (part 2), p. 63. Karashima, who was apparently unaware of the funerary inscription of Abū 'Alī, accepts this identification by Kuwabara; see Karashima's "Trade Relations," p. 74. Nilakanta Sastri and T.N. Subramaniam have also discussed the identity of the South Indian who sought assistance from the Yuan court. While Nilakanta Sastri proposes that the person may have been the Pāṇḍyan ruler Kulaśekhara, Subramaniam thinks it was a descendant of the Chōla king Rājendra III. These identifications are flawed because not only were the two Indian scholars unaware of the Korean records and the funerary inscription written by Liu Minzhong, they also misconstrued the notices on Yang Tingbi in *Yuan shi*. Nor it seems were they acquainted with the identification offered by Kuwabara. For the identifications by Nilakanta Sastri and Subramaniam, see the latter's "A Tamil Colony," pp. 25–44.

the funerary inscription of Abū ‘Alī in the second lunar month of Dade 4 (February–March, 1300). Liu reports that Abū ‘Alī died at the Yuan capital Dadu (that is, present-day Beijing) in the tenth lunar month of the previous year at the age of forty-nine *sui*. Abū ‘Alī’s body was subsequently sent to Quanzhou for burial. Following the usual format of epitaph writing, Liu provides a brief biographical sketch, which he says was based on the documents at the Ministry of Rites that he had “carefully examined.”

Abū ‘Alī, according to the funerary inscription, was formerly called Sayidi 撒亦的, probably a transliteration of the Arabic name Sayyid.⁵⁹ His family was originally from the city of Helahedi 合刺合底 (Qalhat/Qara-qada)⁶⁰ and later migrated to “Xiyang” 西洋 (literally, “Western Oceans”). There, the family was engaged in commerce, and his father, also named Abū ‘Alī, received imperial favor from the ruler and his four brothers. Because of his service to these five brothers, Abū ‘Alī, we are told, was termed “the sixth brother.” After the death of his father, the younger Abū ‘Alī (hereafter referred to as Sayyid) inherited the family business. Liu Minzhong reports that when Sayyid came to know that the Yuan court had pacified China, he sent his envoys to present tribute of native products.

In Zhiyuan 28 (1291), Qubilai sent envoys Aliba 阿里伯 and Bie-tiemuer 別帖木兒 (Beg Temür) to carry an Imperial letter and invite Sayyid to China. Upon receiving the invitation from the Chinese ruler, Sayyid, according to the funerary inscription, was so moved that he renounced his wife, slaves, property, and family business and traveled to China along with five hundred tribute carriers. Impressed with Sayyid’s acts of devotion, the Yuan ruler rewarded him with gifts, including silk, and a wife surnamed Cui (that is, Kor.: Ch’ae). Sayyid was also given various titles and an official post in the Fujian prefecture. A son and two daughters survived him.

Although Liu Minzhong does not explicitly confirm that Sayyid was a native of Ma’bar, Chen Gaohua has persuasively argued that “Xi-

⁵⁹ In the SKQS edn. of *Zhong’an ji*, the name is transcribed as Satishi 薩提世.

⁶⁰ The SKQS edn. has Halahada 哈喇哈達. Liu Yingsheng identifies the city as Qalhat, that is present-day Amman; see Liu, “Cong ‘Buali,” p. 91. A place called Helaheta 合刺合塔 appears in *Yuanshi* 22, p. 477, where, in September 1301 a major battle took place between the Yuan forces and Qaidu. According to Paul Pelliot, Helaheta/Halahata in the *Yuanshi* could stand for *Qara-qata, Mongolian *Qara-qada (“Black Rock”), located somewhere in the vicinity of Qayaliq in Central Asia and under the domain of Qaidu. If the site of the battle and Sayyid’s hometown were indeed one and the same, then there could be a simple explanation for Qubilai’s interest in the Ma’bari resident: the Yuan ruler wanted to acquire strategic information about the Central Asian city occupied by Qaidu. Pelliot’s note appears in his *Notes on Marco Polo* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1959–63) 1, pp. 128–29. See also, Biran, *Qaidu*, p. 53.

yang” in the funerary inscription stands for the kingdom of Ma’bar. One bit of compelling evidence is a record in the *Yuanshi*, which reports that in 1291 envoys Bietiemuer 別鐵木兒 (Beg Temür) and Yilieshijin 亦列失金 were sent to the Ma’bar kingdom (the mission mentioned by Liu Minzhong).⁶¹ Chen Gaohua also argues that although the Buali (that is, Abū ‘Alī) mentioned in *Yuanshi* and *Zhongan ji* (and P’aehali in the Korean sources) were the same person (that is, the Sayyid of the funerary inscription), he was not a prince (as the Korean sources imply), but an influential trader (as the funerary inscription indicates) who settled in Ma’bar. Because of a dispute with the ruler of Ma’bar (as *Yuanshi* and the Korean sources inform us),⁶² Sayyid sought assistance from Yang Tingbi in 1281 and eventually defected to China in 1291. After arriving in China, Qubilai bequeathed a Korean woman, née Ch’ae, as his wife. He lived and worked in Quanzhou, and was buried there after his death in 1299.

The Indian sources are silent about the diplomatic interactions between the Ma’bar kingdom and the Yuan court and make no mention of this episode. However, contemporary authors and inscriptions describe a complex administrative system under the Pāṇḍyas, who had emerged as a major military power in southern India during the second half of the thirteenth century. Marco Polo speaks of “five brother kings” of Ma’bar;⁶³ the Persian historian Waṣṣāf notes four Pāṇḍyan brothers ruling simultaneously over four autonomous regions of the kingdom;⁶⁴ and Tamil inscriptions suggest that at least three Pāṇḍyan kings may have reigned simultaneously in the latter part of the thirteenth century.⁶⁵

Reports of joint-rulers and the five royal brothers of Ma’bar are also found in the Chinese sources noted above. In the funerary inscription,

⁶¹ *Yuanshi* 16, p. 351; Chen, “Yindu,” pp. 71–72. For a detailed discussion on the term “Xiyang” in Chinese sources, see Fang Ming, “Shi ‘Xiyang,’” 釋西洋, in Wang Tianyou 王天有, Xu Kai 徐凱, and Fang Ming 方明, eds., *Zheng He yuanshang yu shijie wenming: jinian Zheng He xia Xiyang 600 zhou nian lunwen ji* 鄭和遠航與世界文明紀念鄭和下西洋600周年論文集 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2005), pp. 97–113.

⁶² We learn about a civil war within the Ma’bar kingdom at the end of Kulaśekhara’s reign (c. 1308/09) from Waṣṣāf’s *Tajziyat al-Amṣār wa-Tajziyat al-A’ṣār*. It is not clear if Sayyid’s dispute with the ruler of Ma’bar and his defection to China had anything to do with the conflict brewing within the Ma’bar kingdom. The dispute among the descendants of Kulaśekhara eventually led to the penetration of Islamic forces into the Tamil territories. See Elliot and Dowson, *History of India* 3, pp. 49–54; Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 206–7; and Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, p. 217.

⁶³ Moule and Pelliot, *Marco Polo* 1, pp. 381, 412.

⁶⁴ Elliot and Dowson, *History of India* 3, p. 32; and pp. 52–54.

⁶⁵ Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom: From the Earliest Times to the Sixteenth Century* (Madras: Swathi Publications, 1972), p. 158.

Sayyid's father (that is, the elder Abū 'Alī), for example, is reported to have gained the designation "sixth brother" of the five co-rulers of Ma'bar. Additionally, *Yuanshi* records that in Ma'bar, Yang Tingbi was secretly informed about the plans of the five sultans to launch a military offensive against Kollam. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri explains that "the system of joint-rulers or co-regents that thus prevailed in the latter part of the thirteenth century in the Pāndya (*śiḥ*) empire must have been the result of the great extension of the empire during this period and an imitation of the practice of sending out princes of the royal family as viceroys which had prevailed in the Chola empire."⁶⁶

Evidence from India also validates the accounts of the migration of Muslims from the Persian Gulf region to southern India. Due to environmental reasons, natives of Yaman and Hadramaut, as Andrew D.W. Forbes has demonstrated, migrated to various regions of the Indian Ocean, including to southern India in the thirteenth century.⁶⁷ The tombs of some of these emigrants have been discovered at Indian ports, including Kayal. Among the entombed at Kayal are people who bear the name Sayyid, commonly associated with the Ḥaḍramī merchants. It is possible that the person who defected to China belonged to the same group of Ḥaḍramī migrants who had settled in southern India during the thirteenth century.⁶⁸

Chen Gaohua explains that because Sayyid's father, the elder Abū 'Alī, was called "the sixth brother" of the five rulers of the South Indian kingdom, the younger Abū 'Alī (that is, Sayyid) styled himself as "the prince of Ma'bar" (hence the designation of "prince" in the Korean sources).⁶⁹ According to Thomas Allsen, however, the use of the title "prince" in the Korean sources "might suggest that this person was the head of the merchants in Ma'bar, that is, *malik al-tujjār*, literally, 'prince of traders,' a title often bestowed on the leader of the commercial community in a given town or region."⁷⁰ At some point, before his meeting with the Yuan envoy Yang Tingbi in 1281, one of the Ma'bar

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁶⁷ Andrew D. W. Forbes, "Southern Arabia and the Islamicisation of the Central Indian Ocean Archipelagoes," *Archipel* 21 (1981), pp. 55-92. See also André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World, Volume II: The Slave Kings and the Islamic Conquest, 11th-13th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 276-77.

⁶⁸ On the migrations of Ḥaḍramī merchants, see Robert Bertram Serjeant, "The Ḥaḍramī Network," in Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin, eds., *Asian Merchants and Businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea* (New Delhi: Oxford U.P., 2000), pp. 145-53.

⁶⁹ See Chen, "Yindu," pp. 70-73; and Ptak, "Yuan and Early Ming," pp. 142-43.

⁷⁰ Email communication, December 24, 2005.

rulers must have given Sayyid an official post in Kayal (thus the title of “Grand Councilor” stated in *Yuanshi*). But the relationship between Sayyid and one or more of the rulers of Ma’bar seems to have turned hostile, and he secretly sought help from the Yuan court (as reported in *Yuanshi*). The Yuan court may have initially offered him asylum in 1281, when it dispatched the envoy Liu Mengyan to Ma’bar. A decade later, the Yuan embassy to Ma’bar in 1291 seems to have escorted Sayyid to China.

Why the Yuan court agreed to grant asylum to the Ma’bari native and what it intended to gain from the defection of Sayyid is difficult to ascertain from the available sources. Perhaps the Yuan court believed that Sayyid would be able to provide strategic information, both political and economic, regarding coastal India, which was, as noted above, considered vital for preserving the maritime trading and communication links between China and the Persian Gulf.⁷¹ Sayyid’s defection apparently did not have any adverse effect on the diplomatic intercourse between Ma’bar and the Yuan court. Embassies are reported to have been exchanged between the two regions in 1294, 1296, 1297, and 1314.

It is surprising, however, that *Yuanshi* does not include any account of diplomatic exchanges between Ma’bar and China after the Muslims from northern India took control of the region in 1333. Karashima Noboru explains the absence of such records by stating that, “The sultan’s envoys, if they had been sent, might have been mentioned in the *Yuanshi* under some other name than Ma’bar, which we are unable to recognize as such. The character of their trade might have changed from ‘governmental’ to ‘private’ resulting in no recognition of it in the official records.”⁷² While it is true that private trade between China and southern India increased rapidly in the fourteenth century, the absence of records on the diplomatic exchanges between China and southern India in the fourteenth century is perhaps a reflection of the shortcomings of *Yuanshi* concerning the Yuan court’s contacts with foreign countries. In fact, the dynastic history has no record of the Yuan court’s interactions with northern and eastern India.⁷³ The evidence for such interactions and the continuing diplomatic exchanges between

⁷¹ On another possible reason for the Yuan court’s interest in the Ma’bari native, see above n. 60.

⁷² Karashima, “Trade Relations,” pp. 73–74.

⁷³ On the shortcomings in *Yuanshi* regarding the Yuan court’s interactions with foreign countries, see Herbert Franke, “Sino-Western Contacts under the Mongol Empire,” *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 (1966), pp. 49–72.

the Yuan court and India during the fourteenth century are to be found in the work of the Moroccan traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa.

IBN BAṬṬŪṬA'S DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO CHINA

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reached the banks of the Indus River in September of 1333, three years after he had departed Mecca.⁷⁴ From 1334 to 1341, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa held an official post and led an affluent life at the court of Muḥammad b. Tughluq (r. 1324–1351), the ruler of the Delhi Sultanate in northern India. In 1341, because of his involvement in political strife within the Sultanate, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa resigned from his post and decided to return to his homeland. However, soon after Muḥammad had consented to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's request to leave India, the sultan recalled him and ordered that he, as an ambassador of the Delhi Sultanate, accompany fifteen members of the Yuan court's embassy to the Sultanate on their return trip to China.⁷⁵ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's account of this mission to China provides valuable information about the diplomatic and commercial relations between the Delhi Sultanate and China, the Yuan court's continued interest in maintaining trading ties with India, and the magnitude of maritime exchanges between India and China during the fourteenth century.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reports that the Yuan embassy, which seems to have arrived in Delhi in 1340,⁷⁶ brought with it a bounty of gifts, including slave girls, velvet cloth, musk, a jeweled robe, embroidered quivers, and swords. When the Yuan ruler also sought permission to rebuild a Buddhist temple in the Himalayas,⁷⁷ Muḥammad refused to grant permission, but decided to respond with an embassy of his own to the

⁷⁴ For a complete translation of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's work, see H. A. R. Gibb [and C. F. Beckingham], *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, A.D. 1325–1354. Translated with Revisions and Notes from the Arabic Text Edited by C. Deffrémery and B.R. Sanguinetti* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1958–1994). For a shorter narrative of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travels, see Ross E. Dunn's *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century* (Berkeley: U. of California P., 1986).

⁷⁵ Gibb, *Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* 3, p. 767.

⁷⁶ See Dunn, *Adventures*, p. 213.

⁷⁷ Gibb, *Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* 4, p. 773. Aziz Ahmad believes that the Yuan embassy sought to rebuild this temple in the Qarāchil region where Moḥammad's forces, attempting to conquer Khurāsān and Transoxiana (that is, Afghanistan and western Central Asia respectively), were defeated by local hillmen. In fact, Ahmad seems to suggest that Moḥammad's military expedition into the Himalayan region, because of its proximity to the Chinese border, instigated the Yuan mission to the Delhi Sultanate; see Ahmad Aziz, "Mongol Pressure in an Alien Land," *CAJ* 6 (1961), pp. 182–93. Indeed, according to Ḍiyā al-Dīn Baranī, Muḥammad's intention was to "bring under the dominion of Islām this mountain, which lies between the territories of Hind and those of China, so that the passage for horses and soldiers and the march of the army [to Khurāsān and Transoxiana] might be rendered easy"; see Elliot and Dowson, *History of India* 3, pp. 241–42. For a detailed study of the military expeditions launched by Muḥammad b. Tughluq, including the identification of the Qarāchil region and a discussion

reigning Mongol ruler, Toghon Temür (Shundi 順帝, r. 1333–1368). According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Muḥammad

requited his present [to the Yuan ruler] with an even richer one – a hundred thoroughbred horses saddled and bridled, a hundred male slaves, a hundred Hindu singing- and dancing-girls, a hundred pieces of *bairamī* cloth, which are made of cotton and are unequalled in beauty, each piece being worth a hundred dinars – a hundred lengths of the silk fabrics called *juzz*, in which the silk material of each is dyed with four or five different colours – four hundred pieces of the fabrics known as *ṣalāḥī*, a hundred pieces *shīrīn-bāf*, a hundred pieces of *shān-bāf*, five hundred pieces of *mir‘iz* woolens, one hundred of them black and a hundred each in white, red, green, and blue, a hundred lengths of Greek linen, a hundred pieces of blanket-cloth, a *serācha*, six pavilions, four candelabra in gold and six in silver enamelled, four golden basins with ewers to match, and six silver basins, ten embroidered robes of honor from the Sultan’s own wardrobe and ten caps also worn by him, one of them encrusted with pearls, ten embroidered quivers one of them encrusted with pearls, ten swords one of them with a scabbard encrusted with pearls, *dasht-bān*, that is gloves, embroidered with pearls, and fifteen eunuchs.⁷⁸

The Indian ruler also ordered the amir Zahīr al-Dīn and the eunuch Kāfūr to accompany Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and the Yuan envoys, led by a person named Tursī, to China. Escorted by about one thousand cavalry, the entourage left Delhi on August 2, 1341.⁷⁹

The massive entourage proceeded by land through Daulatabad toward the port of Cambay in present-day Gujarat. From there they planned to take the maritime route to Calicut. In Calicut, which by this time had emerged as the leading commercial port in southern India, the delegation intended to board an ocean-going vessel across the Bay

of Baranī’s report on the Khurāsān offensive, see Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, chap. 13; and Peter Jackson, “The Mongols and the Delhi Sultanate in the Reign of Muḥammad Tughluq (1325–1351),” *CAJ* 19 (1975), pp. 118–57.

⁷⁸ Gibb, *Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* 4, p. 773–74. Gibb and Benkingham have identified some of the textiles mentioned in this passage (p. 774, nn. 3–7). For a detailed study on the exchange and significance of textiles and clothing culture during the Mongol period, see Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1997). The implication of one of the gifts, the “robes of honor” (*tashrif-i khaṣṣ*), which was carried by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, is noted by Allsen. “The sharing out of a prince’s wardrobe,” he writes, “in whatever form it was manifest, created special personal ties and was a common feature of all the Mongolian courts, early and late, east and west” (p. 50).

⁷⁹ On the date of his departure and details about the people who accompanied Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, see Dunn, *Adventures*, p. 214.

of Bengal to China.⁸⁰ This itinerary, instead of a shorter trip through Central Asia, may have been selected because of the political instability in Central Asia after the death of the Chaghadayid ruler Tarmashirin (r. 1326–1334).⁸¹ It is also possible that the Yuan delegation had taken a similar sea-land route through Calicut and Cambay to the court of Muḥammad and wanted to return the same way it came.

Unfortunately for Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and members of the north Indian embassy to the Yuan court, the land-and-sea journey was beset by mishaps and misfortunes. Before the mission reached Cambay, Hindu insurgents killed many of its members, including the eunuch Kāfūr. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa himself was robbed and taken captive. After he managed to escape, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa rejoined the depleted mission and reached Calicut through Cambay without further incident. But, the night before Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was to set sail from Calicut, a severe storm struck the coastal town and destroyed the ship carrying the sultan's gifts and slaves to the Yuan ruler. Only Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who was onshore praying, and two other Indian officials survived the disaster. The Yuan envoys, who had left the port before the storm, although buffeted by the turbulent seas, were able to reach Kollam. Despite losing all the gifts and presents intended for Toghon Temür, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was determined to complete his journey to the Yuan court. Sometime in mid-1346, six years after he had departed Delhi, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa eventually reached the Chinese coastal port of Quanzhou.

Although Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reports that he traveled to Dadu, the Mongol capital, modern scholars have judged his account of the journey from Quanzhou to the capital as apocryphal. It seems that he had not only failed to gain audience with the Yuan ruler, but also decided to leave after a very short stay. He began his return voyage to India sometime in either December 1346 or January 1347.⁸²

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's journey, even though a failed mission, provides important information about diplomatic exchanges between northern India and China. His travelogue not only attests to the court-to-court

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 214.

⁸¹ On the relations between the Delhi Sultanate and the Chaghataids during the reign of Muḥammad b. Tughluq, see Jackson, *Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 231–37. Dunn gives the following explanation for the indirect route taken by the entourage to Cambay: “The landward itinerary from Delhi to Camby was hardly the most direct route possible, as Daulatabad lay some 240 miles southeast of the port. Sultan Muhammad may have given his envoys official business in Daulatabad that the *Rihla* fails to mention, or perhaps he instructed the caravan to make an appearance there as a symbolic show of Delhi's continuing authority in the Deccan”; see *Adventures*, p. 214.

⁸² Ibid., p. 266.

contacts between the Yuan dynasty and the Delhi Sultanate, but also demonstrates that there were Muslims from various parts of the world who frequently traveled between Delhi and China. At Quanzhou, for example, he met Maulānā Qiwām al-Dīn who had previously visited Delhi with his maternal uncle. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa also mentions a Muslim preacher in China called Burhān al-Dīn whom Muḥammad b. Tughluq wanted to invite to India.⁸³ His record, therefore, fills some of the historical gaps in *Yuanshi* concerning Sino-Indian interactions and confirms that there were regular interchanges of envoys, traders and other individuals between northern India and China during the fourteenth century.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa gives a detailed account of the maritime links between coastal India and Quanzhou during the fourteenth century. Especially noteworthy are his reports of the assistance of seafaring merchants provided to official representatives traveling between India and China. In Kollam, for example, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa writes that Chinese merchants, perhaps from a local diaspora, provided clothing to the Chinese envoys whose belongings were lost in a shipwreck. Additionally, at Calicut, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa identified Chinese ships that provided passage to Indian and Yuan diplomats.⁸⁴ The encouragement and support that states, including the Yuan court and kingdoms in coastal India, provided to merchant communities in the fourteenth century may have prompted traders to offer aid and comfort to court officials visiting important overseas trading emporia or markets.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's work also includes valuable information about some of the lesser-known items traded between southern Asia and China in the fourteenth century. He reports, for example, that areca nut was exported to China from the Malabar coast. China also imported fish and coconut cords from the Maldives. Among the Chinese pottery (porcelain) exported to India were platters, which, according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, had "remarkable properties; they can fall from a great height without breaking and hot food can be put in them without their colours changing or being spoiled."⁸⁵

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of commercial activity between India and China witnessed by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was the involvement of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The ships sailing between India and China seem to have been owned and operated by the Chi-

⁸³ Gibb, *Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* 4, pp. 899-900, 906; and 3, p. 677.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 4, pp. 813-15.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 4, pp. 811, 832, 827, and 904-5. On the presence of Chinese traders at coastal India during the Yuan and Ming periods, see Sen, "Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks."

nese; Muslim traders from different parts of Asia visited and exchanged goods at the coastal ports in India and China and the intermediary region; and the Hindu kingdoms in southern India and the Mongol court in China encouraged and gave state support to long-distance trade and traders. Indeed, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's journey from the Delhi Sultanate to China demonstrates the complex, multiethnic, and intense nature of trade and commerce between India and China in the first half of the fourteenth century.

CONCLUSION

The Yuan missions to Indian courts marked a discernable change in the nature of the diplomatic exchanges between India and China, especially in regard to the motives that led to the sending of emissaries from China to the Indian courts. The key reasons for this shift were Qubilai's strategy toward maritime states and the tremendous upsurge in cross-continental commerce in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Before the twelfth century, very few, if any, Chinese embassies were sent to India with the objective of promoting commercial links between the two regions. By the thirteenth century, not only had China emerged as one of the most lucrative markets in the world, the rulers in China also recognized the economic benefits of facilitating and regulating foreign trade at its borders and in the coastal towns. As a result, the Song court, for instance, often dispatched diplomatic envoys overseas to promote trading relations and induce foreign traders to China.

After the Mongols occupied the flourishing ports of coastal China, they continued the previous policy of fostering maritime trade. And similar to the preceding Song dynasty, the Yuan court sent special missions to foreign kingdoms to exact tribute and to entice seafaring traders to Chinese ports. The missions of Yang Tingbi to southern India demonstrate the Yuan court's intention to secure access to the important transit point in Indian Ocean both for political and commercial reasons. Indeed, this seems to be the first time in Chinese history that court officials were sent beyond the Bay of Bengal to demand submissions, forge diplomatic alliances and promote international trade, illustrating the complexity of cross-cultural diplomacy during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The Chinggisid civil war that centered on Qaidu in Central Asia seems to have forced Qubilai to explore the maritime routes for military expansion, political alliances, and commercial profit. To prove his mettle as the heir to the great khans and demonstrate his true Mon-

gol heritage, qualities that were being questioned by some members of the Chinggisid family, Qubilai launched several military campaigns against island states in East and Southeast Asia. At the same time, he dispatched envoys to the Indian Ocean kingdoms who demanded that the foreign rulers send tributary missions to recognize Qubilai as the great khan of the Mongol empire.

By the time envoys from the Yuan court began to arrive in Kollam and Ma'bar, Chinese merchants were already sojourning to the Coromandel and Malabar coasts of India. Advances in shipbuilding technology during the Southern Song period had enabled Chinese traders to gain dominance gradually over the maritime lanes between coastal China and southern Asia.⁸⁶ This explains why, when Ibn Baṭṭūṭa traveled to China in the mid-fourteenth century, he observed that ships traversing the Bay of Bengal were mostly Chinese. Although many of the traders and intermediaries continued to be Muslims, it is evident that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Chinese had gained control of a larger share of shipping and transportation of commodities across the Bay of Bengal. In this context of the expanding Chinese maritime frontier,⁸⁷ the Yuan missions to South Asia not only served the political goals and economic interests of the court and private traders, but also, through the execution of tributary treaties, might have reinforced the Confucian rhetoric of Chinese world order.⁸⁸

The intensive trading activity and the unprecedented diplomatic and commercial relations between China and coastal India during the Yuan dynasty provided the Chinese authorities with an opportunity to obtain detailed information about trading centers, commodities, and commercial routes along the Indian Ocean. This may explain why the Ming ruler Chengzu 成祖 (or, the Yongle 永樂 emperor; r. 1403–1425), in the early fifteenth century decided to dispatch the Chinese naval fleet, under the command of Zheng He, to major port-cities across the Indian Ocean. In fact, Chinese familiarity with the coastal region of India may have made the Malabar coast one of the main destinations of the Ming armada. The display of naval power and the commercial activity that accompanied Zheng He's voyages, in turn, persuaded foreign states to send tributary missions to the Chinese court and promoted maritime

⁸⁶ Details are discussed in Sen, "Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks."

⁸⁷ On the concept and nature of the Chinese maritime frontier, see Hugh Clark's "The Religious Culture of Southern Fujian," in this volume of *AM*.

⁸⁸ See Michael Brose's detailed discussion of the Confucian rhetoric in Yuan foreign policy in the essay "Realism and Idealism in the *Yuanshi* Chapters on Foreign Relations," in this volume of *AM*.

trade with China. Indeed, the solicitation of tributary missions and the promotion of maritime trade, which were the main objectives of Yang Tingbi's missions, could have been the basis of Zheng He's voyages to southern Asia.⁸⁹ In short, the Yuan missions not only conferred official support to Chinese mercantile activity between China and coastal India, but also laid the foundations for the grand maritime expeditions of Zheng He to southern Asia and beyond.

⁸⁹ For details, see Sen, "Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks."