



# The issues of islands governing in early Ming Dynasty



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**Abstract** Ming Dynasty is a key transitional period in China's maritime history. It marks the shift from outward expansion to passive defense, whereas underground marine trades were rampant and China had to face the rising Western powers. It deserves to examine Ming's maritime management by different perspectives including the coastal islands. This research focuses on *Veritable Records of the Ming* (明實錄) and explores key terms such as 'island' (島) and 'isle' (嶼) via the approach of 'Digital Humanities' to sum up the main issues of islands governing in early Ming Dynasty: 1. To subjugate political rivals on the sea and to defeat remnant Mongolian militaries. 2. To surrender rebels and appease refugees on the coastal islands. 3. To suppress and defend against Japanese pirates. 4. Diplomatic relations with neighboring countries. These issues reflected that Chinese dynastic regime transition from Yuan to Ming not only drastically altered the order of the East Asia seas after 14th c., but was also the key factor for the island governing policies in the early Ming period. This article investigates the issues of islands governing to discuss how the internal and external situation and the characteristic oceanic consciousness influenced the marine affair policy decision in early Ming Dynasty.

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## Preface

### Introduction

After Qin(秦) and Han(漢) Dynasties, the core areas of Chinese maritime culture gradually moved from the coast of Shandong(山東), Jiangsu(江蘇) and Zhejiang(浙江) southward to Fujian(福建) and Guangdong(廣東). During Han and Tang(唐) Dynasties, Guangzhou(廣州) was the most famous harbor of international trade in South and West Asia for its long-

lasting prosperity (Xu, 1999). Since the late Tang Dynasty, the 'Eastern Ocean Navigation Routes'(東洋航路) in the West Pacific had connected to the 'Western Ocean Navigation Routes' (西洋航路) in the Indian Ocean and thus formed the Maritime Silk Road and Asian trade circle based on the manufacturing exports from China. During the Five Dynasties(五代) period, 'The Eastern Ocean Navigation Routes' was then expanded southward, and cities like Fuzhou(福州) and Quanzhou(泉州) had been incorporated into the Asian maritime trade network before they became two major ports of the Song(宋) Dynasty (Yang, 1998).

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Since the Song Dynasty, Chinese maritime industry was in full swing across the east and south coast area of the country. It was no more individual phenomena, but a common undertaking in coastal communities. It fostered a large-scale maritime culture which highlighted the production of maritime commodities, shipbuilding, port management and navigation training, etc. In general, Yuan(元) Dynasty kept the same approach of Song and had broader diplomatic relations with foreign countries and was the only dynasty in the Chinese history that launched naval offensives abroad (Xu, 1999). The booming seafaring industry during Song and Yuan Dynasties turned many originally isolated islands off the southeast coast of China to an integrated maritime network and started the history of Han(漢) people's immigration to the outlying small islands (Huang, 2009).

In late Yuan Dynasty, there were various groups of coastal traders operating regional networks that spanned from the Bohai(渤海) in the northeast to Hainan(海南) and the Vietnam coast in the deep of south. Fujian, Guangdong and Zhejiang were the important bases for these networks. Trade along the Chinese coast, as trade in the open sea, provided many opportunities to make money to move up the social ladder. The local populace of certain coastal towns and villages was heavily orientated towards coastal and sea trade and derived much of its income from maritime commerce. The trade at the end of Yuan period was more or less free. Merchants could sail abroad without too many laws and regulations standing in their ways, and the tribute trade was not very significant (Ptak, VI, 1998).

But the commerce-oriented maritime policy in the peace-time had a major shift in Ming(明) Dynasty. The new government, highly centralized and tightly organized, aimed at restoring peace and order in the interior of China as well as trying to secure the border regions. It therefore also attempted to control the coast line and the wealthy merchants in the coastal centres, some of whom had openly worked together with anti-Ming forces during the transitional period from Yuan to Ming. To counterbalance the influence these merchants, Taizu Emperor(太祖, Hongwu(洪武), 1328–1398) prohibited private overseas trade (Ptak, I, 1998).

Therefore, the most parts of the maritime trade routes transformed into a naval defense and tributary system. From the late Yuan to the early Ming periods, the partisans of Fang Guozheng(方國珍, 1319–1374) and Zhang Shicheng(張士誠, 1321–1367) both were Zhu Yuanzhang's(朱元璋) political rival, fled between offshore islands and were complicit with Japanese pirates to loot the coast area, so the order of 'Eastern Ocean Navigation Routes' was disrupted. In the year of 1372, the Ming government ordered Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces to build warships for the defense against Japanese pirates, and set up all kinds of naval defense facilities at the key locations along the coast, and implemented a strict patrol system to beef up its naval security after 1387 ((Ming) Zhang Tingyu, vol. 91; vol. 322). Moreover, Ming Dynasty issued many times the bans of communication with foreigners. It regulated that only certain countries or tribes can trade with China in a tributary form, and no other private overseas trade was allowed ((Ming)Feng et al., vol. 280).

Even though, Taizong Emperor(太宗, Yongle(永樂), 1360–1424) supported the Seven Treasure Voyages along 'Western Ocean Navigation Routes'(西洋航路) directed by Zheng He(鄭和, 1371–1433), which marked the peak of maritime

development in Ming periods. According to the preface of 'Handwritten Copy of Navigation Chart in Ming Period'(傳鈔明代針簿) which had been preserved in Quanzhou(泉州), Yongle Emperor started in 1403 sending several imperial envoys, including Zheng He, to the Eastern and the Western Oceans for the purpose of inspection, political propaganda and implementing policies. The navigation chart used for the voyages had been preserved since the Yuan Dynasty (Zhuang, 1996). Therefore, the achievement of navigations by Zheng He was based on the maritime development during Song and Yuan Dynasties, which the pattern is different from how the Europeans explored and discovered the new routes around a hundred years later. Zheng He successfully maintained the maritime traffic between East and West Asia, and set up the foundation for Chinese merchants to prevail on the Maritime Silk Road (Xu, 1999). A lot of coastal islands were the key location of the voyages.

A hand-written manuscript of navigation chart composed in the early Ming period with the title "*Shunfeng xiangsong*" (順風相送, 'Despatched on the Following Winds') with the accompanying pronunciations in Roman script for the four characters by Michael Shen during his visiting to Oxford University in 1638: 'Xin Fum Siam Sum,' which is now preserved in the Bodleian Library of Oxford University (Brook, 2013). The manuscript records the water-ways from Fujian to Jiaozhi(交趾, in Vietnam), which went by the following islands as key landmarks: Wuhumeng(五虎門) – Guangtangshan(官塘山) – Dongshashan(東沙山) – Wuqiushan(烏坵山) – Taiwushan(太武山) – Wuyu(浯嶼) – Nanaoshan(南澳山) – Dashinjian(大星尖) – Dongjianshan(東姜山) – Wuzhushan(烏豬山) – Hainanlimushan(海南黎母山) – Haibaoshan(海寶山) (Bailongwei Island(白龍尾島), now in the Beibu Gulf(北部灣), west of Leizhou Peninsula(雷州半島)) (Yang, 1998).

After Zheng He, the official large-scale voyages of Ming Dynasty were replaced by naval defense, seafaring prohibition, fights against Japanese pirates and limited tributary trades. As the naval defense was tightened, the Ming Dynasty's overseas trade with surrounding countries was maintained by tributary relationships; but Japanese and Chinese naval militant groups took the advantage of the shortages of supply and demand to do illegal international trade. In fact, they looted most of the time. The rise of Japanese and Chinese pirates was closely related to Ming's monopolist tributary trade and the seafaring prohibition policy. It reflected the insuppressible demand for the commercial activity in the East Asia and the prosperity but imbalance of the maritime trade network in the region. Ming's stress on naval defense and maritime ban had prompted civilians to engage in maritime smuggling or even immigrate abroad. Such a trend hence gradually became the main drive of the expansion of marine activities. And coastal islands were the strategic places for the geo-political wrangles and conciliation between authorities and civilians as well as between Ming Dynasty and the Japanese pirates.

### Background

Islands seem to be isolated spots in the ocean, but traditionally, they have been the key reference points for navigation and were highly important for voyager's fresh water supply as well as resting and trading. Hence, originally isolated islands became a connected seafaring network. The islands absorbed

excessive populations from the mainland; on the other hand, they were served as both outposts and return-targets for distant voyages, and were the contact zones for the locals and foreigners. The cultural landscape of the coastal islands was formed by the interplay between governmental ruling, immigrant's settlement and overseas trade. Those were the key parts in the development of Chinese maritime culture, and reflected the fluctuation and the diversity of maritime activities in East Asia. The relative phenomena require more and systematic investigations.

There are many islands of various sizes alongside the coastline of China. More than 7000 of these islands are larger than 500 squared meters. The three main features are: (1) Extensiveness: there are 38 latitudes ranging from Bohai Bay to James Shoal. (2) Small islands outnumber big ones: China has only 13 islands larger than 100 square kilometers but 6800 islands which sizes varies between 0.0005 and 4.9 square kilometers. (3) Being near-shore: 98% of China's islands have distances less than 100 km to mainland and it forms the major geographical feature of the islands in the China seas. But 94% of the several thousands islands are uninhabited. Only 433 of them have populations. Those relatively larger islands were spatially ideal for the coastal communities' economic activities like farming, fishing and sea commerce. Gradually, new communities formed on the islands, which were later merged into the Chinese jurisdictions (Zhang, 2001).

There had been human activities on many coastal islands of China from pre-historical times to Ming period, but the evolving processes of the culture on each island differed drastically. Take Chang Island (長島) of Temples Archipelago (廟島群島) at Shangdong Province as example, its civilization has lasted from the Neolithic age to now-days. Zhoushan Archipelago (舟山群島) of Zhejiang Province had also been a famous fishing ground, and almost every dynasty of China had jurisdiction over there until 1384, when islanders were forced back to the mainland due to the increasing deadly attacks and collusion with Japanese pirates. Dongtou Islands (洞頭列島) had populations since 6th c. B.C. but mostly temporary inhabitancy before Tang and Song. Later, the islanders returned to the mainland to flee Japanese pirates even before the maritime ban of Ming (Lyu, 1999).

Matsu Islands (馬祖列島) in the estuary of the Min river (閩江) of Fujian Province had a different pattern of development. There had once been ancient civilization since 4000–4500 years ago, but later had a long-lasting cultureless period until The Five Dynasties, and permanent settlements appeared only after Song and Yuan. In 1387, the Ming government moved the Matsu islanders to the mainland for preventing against Japanese pirates; as a result, China had stopped civil administrative but military control of Matsu for over 500 years (Huang, 2009).

While Kinmen Islands (金門列島), had accommodated refugees fleeing upheavals and settled down since Jin Dynasty in 4th c. during Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties until now (Lyu, 1999). Otherwise, it has been culturally flourishing since ancient times and deeply affected by 'Min School of Confucianism' (閩學), and Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200) had allegedly gone across the sea to teach here. Besides, unlike other islands residents were evacuated to the mainland, Kinmen islanders were instead recruited to strengthen the naval defense during the early Ming period. Ming government since then expanded the jurisdiction scale on the islands, and as the military person-

nel and immigrants gradually settled down, Kinmen became the home for many families and clans (Chiang, 1999).

### *Materials, method and aims*

In general, 'the maritime trade routes' in Song and Yuan had transformed into 'the system of naval defense and tributary trade' in Ming period. It shows that major changes of internal and external situation heavily affected the governance pattern on the islands with three major stages in the Ming Dynasty: (1) early period: Hongwu–Tianshun (洪武~天順, 1368–1464) (2) middle period: Chenghwa–Jiajing–Lungqing (成化~嘉靖~隆慶, 1465–1566–1572) (3) late period: Wuanli–Chongzhen (萬曆~崇禎, 1573–1644). *Veritable Records of the Ming* (明實錄) is an official chronicle which records major governing tasks of 15 Ming emperors. It is hence an important historical material and a foundation for understanding how the Ming government handled island issues and formed relevant policies. This article focuses on *Veritable Records of the Ming* and explores the key terms such as 'island' (島) and 'isle' (嶼) via the approach of 'Digital Humanities,' classifies the relative narratives and investigates the issues of islands governing to discuss how the internal and external situation and the characteristic oceanic consciousness and thoughts influenced the marine affair policy decision in early Ming Dynasty and attempts to highlight the historical features of the evolving process.

### **Island issues in the internal situation**

The dynastic regime transition from Yuan to Ming not only drastically altered the order of the East Asia seas after 14th c., but was also the key factor for the island governing policies in the early Ming period. Internally, the Taizu Emperor's rival, Fang Guozheng, had occupied the coastal areas for more than 20 years and islands accommodating large amount of refugees and rebels who often colluded with Japanese pirates; while many remnant Mongolian militaries became bandits and kept on harassing the north. Externally, the escalating invasion from Japanese pirates prompted Ming government to implement seafaring prohibition and naval defense against them. On the other hand, Ming still needed to keep healthy relations with surrounding countries to maintain the maritime order in the East Asia. After all, the islands governing in the early Ming period had the following major issues:

#### *To subjugate political rivals on the sea and to defeat remnant Mongolian militaries*

In the late Yuan period, rival warlords rose one after another. Fishing and salt industry giant Fang Guozheng was falsely inculpated and fled to Songmen island (松門島) outlying of Zhejiang in 1348, and began robbing canal traffics and coastal regions. Fang's militants later occupied neighbor islands and coastal counties: Wenzhou (溫州), Taizhou (台州), Mingzhou (明州) after repeatedly defeated the governmental force of Yuan ((Ming) Zhang Tingyu, vol. 123). Fang tried to align with Zhu Yuanzhang to attack their common enemies in 1359, but his attitude changed all the time (VRM, Taizu, vol. 7).

According to the narratives about the battle, coastal islands are Fang's base for both insurgence and resurgence and

strongholds from where he took back three coastal counties and became one of the regional powers (VRM, Taizu, vol. 8). For Zhu Yuanzhang, although being vexed by Fang's double-faced attitudes, he could only make rhetoric threat such as "I will send hundreds of thousand troops onto all the islands" as not being able to fully control those islands. Until 1367, Fang surrendered to Zhu's force on the Zhoushan Island (舟山島) (VRM, Taizu, vol. 27). Coastal islands were where Fang rose to power and got defeated by Zhu's army. The elimination of Fang's power also marked that Zhu got a more powerful grip over coastal islands and set up the foundation of naval defense for Ming Dynasty.

In 1368, Zhu became the Emperor and the Ming Dynasty took the place of the falling Yuan regime. In preventing Mongolian's invasion, Ming government set up military outposts on the Lianyun Island (連雲島) to control the coastal stronghold. Ming's force crushed Mongolian's army led by Hanachu on the island in 1375 (VRM, Taizu, vol. 75; vol. 102) and blocked Mongolian's motivation of southward invasion. Ming's establishment of naval defense on Lianyun Island and its victory over Mongolian's remnant troops also marked how Zhu dealt with rebellion powers of coastal areas and islands from Zhejiang to Liaodong (遼東) during the transition of regimes in early Ming Dynasty.

#### *To surrender rebels and appease refugees on the coastal islands*

During the process of regime changes throughout Chinese history, many fugitives fled to the coastal islands and stayed there. Some merchants and bandits were also active on those islands and collided with Japanese pirates. For the early Ming government, most residents on coastal islands were either insurgents or refugees who needed to be subdued and brought under control for the sake of maritime security and stability. For instance, the Ming government executed a Cantonese from Dongguan (東莞) He Di who escaped to an island after leading a massive uprising that killed over 300 officials in 1393. The Regional Military Commission of Canton (廣東都指揮使司) later sent troops to defeat He Di and escorted him to the Capital to be executed (VRM, Taizu, vol. 230). Dongguan was close to the Guard Town of Nanhai (南海衛), which was on an island in the estuary of Zhu River (珠江) and not far from the coast. Ming's 'Guard Town' (衛所) and naval defense facilities were well established by then. Therefore, He Di had little chance to flee to the islands and build up strongholds like Fang Guozhen did in late Yuan Dynasty.

Taizong (Yongle) Emperor took an amnesty policy towards outlaw islanders. For example, he released some seashore looters convicted of the death penalty in 1403. He said those fugitives were so impoverished that they had no choice but to plunder. He blamed local governments had failed to take care of the civilians as the cause of the terrible situation. Further, he sent officials to appease the islanders and brought the imperial edict to decree to the other fugitives: "Once being law-abiding citizens of this country, you had no choice but to loot to survive due to the lack of resources or the cruelty of officials. As an emperor, thus respect Heaven and comply with Dao, I understand the human nature are fond of life and dislike death and see all citizens as my own children. Therefore I shall pardon all those who demonstrate genuine repentance and hereby proclaim a general amnesty in order for you to resume legiti-

mate occupations and live in peace and joy. Obstinance will only lead to the loss of this opportunity and irremediable regret" (VRM, Taizong, vol. 21).

The imperial edict showed more benevolence than deterrence and successfully subdued islanders around Quanzhou without resorting to any military force. Such a move signified Ming's benevolent policy and confidence backed by its strong naval defense. The amnesty policies towards fugitive islanders in the early Ming period mostly happened in the reign of Yongle Emperor and focused on islands in the southeastern seas. His pacifying policy showed certain sympathy for the fugitives, and the amnesty was put into effect even as far as the Penghu Islands (澎湖列島) near Taiwan in 1404 (VRM, Taizong, vol. 32). His edicts often showed sympathy and mercy to the fugitive islanders. He dispatched envoys to various islands to proclaim: "You were all originally obedient citizens but unfortunately mistreated by cruel officials, then escaped to the islands and were forced to loot for survival. You have been displaced without normal occupations for years while not yet lost your conscience; you dare not return to homeland due to the fear of punishment. I felt great pity upon the hearing of your situation and hereby proclaim that your crime shall all be pardoned like winter snow melted away by the spring sun. You should return to homeland and resume previous lives without hesitation. Otherwise the regrets shall be difficult to compensate" (VRM, Taizong, vol. 52).

This benevolent stance also encouraged rank-and-files at the coastal Guard Towns to proactively persuade islanders to surrender. For example, Lin Lai (林來), the self-named mayor of Baiyuyang island (白嶼洋), was induced to capitulate by a soldier called Zhou Goer (周狗兒) from Guard Towns of Chaozhou (潮州衛). In 1407, Lin led more than 800 people of 365 families to surrender. Yongle Emperor ordered them to be naturalized into Chaozhou and rewarded both Lin and Zhou with great amount of money (VRM, Taizong, vol. 63).

In addition, the government also appeased the ethnic minorities in Guangdong's coastal islanders and recruited them into the military for the purpose of naval defense. In the early Ming period, the Tanka (蜑家) people roamed coastal islands without definite settlements. Some of them became pirates or bandits. In 1392, Hongwu Emperor recruited around 10 thousand Tanka people as naval force and naturalized them into Guangzhou. 10 years later, the Emperor also follow the advice from local officials to conscript one thousand Tanka households into regional defense for managing and monitoring purpose; on the other hand, many officials from the North couldn't acclimatize to the geographical conditions of the South and became sick or even died (VRM, Taizu, vol. 223).

In addition to the water-proficient Tanka people, the Li (黎) people who were active around the coastal areas of Guangdong especially in Hainan Island were also a major target of Ming's pacifying policy since the beginning of regime. However, the government had been dispatching military to crack down fierce civil rebellion until 1384, the year when Ming's local official successfully induced a key tribe leader to capitulate and eventually control the whole ethnic group. Moreover, Ming Dynasty also offered inducements such as tax relief or bestowing official ranks to pacify the Li people. By the year of 1420, there were totally 1670 Li tribes, more than 30 thousand households naturalized and the insurgence



was almost ceased and come to an end ((Ming)Zhang Tingyu, vol. 319). Later, Xuanzong Emperor(宣宗, 1426–1435) further applied the “carrot and stick” approach towards the Li people, and it proved that a large island like Hainan is far more complicated than small isles in terms of conquer or pacification (VRM, Xuanzong, vol. 19, p. 505; (Ming)Zhang Tingyu, vol. 319).

In the year of 1454, Canton region suffered from the looting by ‘water pirates’(水賊) who haunted in coastal islands and the ethnic minority Yao(瑶) people around mountain areas. Being seriously short of manpower, local governments suggested converting the ‘water pirates’ and banishing them to Leizhou(雷州), Lianzhou(廉州), Gaozhou(高州) and Zhaoqing(肇慶) in order to fight against Yao people to maintain the law and order in the frontier. The proposal was approved by the Yingzong Emperor (英宗, 1427–1464) (VRM, Yingzong, vol. 246).

In general, the Yongle administration had a powerful naval force and rather tolerant pacifying policies, so it could subdue exiled islanders and ethnic minorities more efficiently. In fact, Ming’s attempts and efforts to naturalize coastal residents (including Han, Tanka and Li) was an important step to unify the country and restore social order in the early period of regime.

### Island issues in the external situation

#### *To suppress and to defend against Japanese pirates*

It was one of the major issues for Ming’s governance over the islands in the early years. There’re about 50% related records of early Ming about island governing in *Veritable Records of the Ming*, in particular Japanese pirates invasion and Ming’s against fights.

#### *Invasion and suppression*

During the early period of Ming, Japan was in turmoil due to constant military conflict. Many ‘ronins’ (浪人, ownerless samurais) went to the coastal islands along southeastern China to seek their livelihood. When failing to do business, they started robbery. Later, these ‘ronins’ cooperated with the warlords remnant from Yuan Dynasty and became the main force harassing the region. At the start of Ming Dynasty, Japanese pirates often attacked and robbed residents in Chongmin Island(崇明島) of Suzhou(蘇州) and the coastal areas. In 1369, Ming government responded with naval operations. During the battles, meritorious military officials could be promoted, and families of the dead would be compensated and rewarded. The dynasty even sent envoys to worship the god of East China Sea(東海), and it simply shows how seriously they regarded this issue (VRM, Taizu, vol. 41).

What follows were the records of Japanese pirate invasions afterward: In the summer of 1374, invaded Jiaozhou Bay(膠州灣) in Shandong. Ming’s coastal guards chased the pirates to the waters near Ryukyu (Okinawa); they captured some of the pirates, who were later escorted to the capital. In the spring of 1384, there were frequent invasions to eastern Zhejiang. The pirates invaded Zhejiang and Guangdong in the winter of 1389, and eastern Zhejiang in the spring of 1394 again, then Liaodong in the winter, Shandong and eastern Zhejiang again in 1398 ((Qing)Gu Yingtai, vol. 55).

As the frequency is concerned, during the reign of Hongwu Emperor, Japanese pirates launched invasion about every 3 years. When it comes to the spatial scope, the invasion ranged from Liaodong to Guangdong, and Zhejiang was the worst hit area. Whereas in the Yongle period, coastal islands near Shandong became the hot zone of attack and defense.

After Yongle Emperor moved the capital to Beijing, the Bohai Sea area became a key location for naval defense. Liaodong and Shandong peninsula reached deeply into the Bohai Sea; together with the Changshan archipelago at the converging water between the Bohai Sea and the Yellow Sea(黃海), the three areas formed a natural defense guarding the capital against any threat from the sea, but also became the target of pirate invasion. Changshan archipelago and other coastal areas were invaded many times by Japanese pirates in 1406, 1408 and 1409 (Chao, 2014). Ming’s troops once chased the pirates from Shandong to Zhejiang and all the way to Uiju(義州) border of Joseon(朝鮮) until no longer seen ((Qing)Gu Yingtai; VRM, Taizong, vol. 86; vol. 89; vol. 96).

In addition, Japanese pirates invaded eastern Zhejiang again in 1411, then Shandong in 1416 and Liaodong in 1419. In the same year, the chief commander of Liaodong, Liu Jia ng’s(劉江) army crashed Japanese pirate force at Wanghaiwo(望海渦) in today’s northeastern Dalian city and suppressed enemy’s momentum. Although still being unable to fully stop the harassment, but the victory had stabilized the overall situation ((Qing)Gu Yingtai; VRM, Taizong, vol. 177; vol. 213). Afterward, until the Jiajing period, Japanese pirate invasions in 1425 and 1442 were basically limited at eastern Zhejiang and smaller in scale. Although Ming’s force often made gains in the fights, some Japanese pirates still hid in the coastal islands (VRM, Xuanzong, vol. 2; Yingzong, vol. 93).

According the records above, China’s naval defense faced a complicated challenge due to the length of its coastline; Different Japanese pirate groups could launch invasion easily at the multiple points from south to north. On the other hand, the Ming military force needed to deliberate defense zones and clearly specified accountabilities in order to deploy the defense force efficiently and flexibly. During the mid-late Yongle period, Japanese pirates’ harassments against coastal islands of China had basically been brought under control, but it was not totally ended.

#### *Defense measures*

During the early Ming period, the areas invaded by Japanese pirates spanned from Liaodong to Zhejiang, and the coastal islands of Zhejiang and Shandong suffered the most. While Ming’s defense measures were carried out along the coastline from Liaodong to Guangdong with setting up military base and deploying troops. In addition, the following measures were also included: (A) building new fleets and ferries; patrolling the coast and using warship to drive out the pirates (VRM, Taizu, vol. 78; Yingzong, vol. 83). (B) Establish castles, forts and bunkers on highlands along the seaside to monitor activities around coastal islands (VRM, Taizu, vol. 240; Taizong, vol. 203). (C) Re-deploying naval force units to improve supply and response; rewarding those who achieved outstanding military merits and renovating temples on islands to boost the morale (VRM, Taizu, vol. 41; vol. 75; vol. 166; vol. 183; vol. 255; Xuanzong, vol. 37; vol. 59; Yingzong, vol. 106). (D) Forced the islanders to move back inland and farmlands

were allocated to them by local authorities (VRM, Yingzong, vol. 184). But salt producers or dealers were not subject to this regulation (VRM, Taizu, vol. 219).

#### *Diplomatic relations with neighboring countries*

Ming Government sent envoys to establish good diplomatic relations but admonishing that Japan should concede and make pirates under control (VRM, Taizu, vol. 39). As to Southeast Asian countries, Ming declared and asked to repatriate the Chinese fugitives hiding in islands and make them living normal lives back home (VRM, Taizong, vol. 12A). Most diplomatic island issues were focused on the closer relation with Joseon. For instance, Ming sent the credentials to remind Joseon of defending against Japanese pirates (VRM, Taizu, vol. 46). Besides, Ming Government often succored the Korean fishermen, traders, people who drifted into Chinese islands and helped them back home to show the preferential treatment (VRM, Yingzong, vol. 232). Nevertheless, because of that the early Ming government forbade all private Chinese trade with foreign countries, the tribute system that Ming Emperors imposed on the neighbor countries, ostensibly to achieve political stability by establishing proper relations between them and China, in effect prohibited their own subjects from liking up with foreigners (Leonard, 2008).

#### **Conclusions**

The issues of islands governing in early Ming Dynasty were focused on suppressing and defending against Japanese pirates. The coastal islands became military connect zone formed the national defense issues and derived the internal affairs issues of appeasing and control the refugee in the islands, and the foreign affairs issues of maintaining the international order of East Asia. There is relative comment said that the knowledge of China's and Japan's traditional relationship with the maritime sphere is crucial to our understanding of the global implications of Chinese and Japanese history in early modern and contemporary times (Leonard, 2008).

On suppressing and defending against Japanese pirates, the military needs of coastal defense as the precondition, all of islands could be divide 2 types: 1. Set up military base, deployed troops, and enlarged the scale of military facilities. 2. Forced the islanders to move back inland, just sailed around for guarding. The distribution of issues related islands were from Liaodong to Guangdong, and focused on Shandong, Zhejiang coastal sea areas where Japanese pirates invaded. Under the paramount consideration awareness of 'Coastal defense' Ming Government often declared the people who stayed in the islands and overseas as criminals and made the 'seafaring prohibition policy.' Nevertheless, under the influence of Confucianism and real situation needs, Ming Dynasty eventually took appeasing policy for the islanders with benevolence as internal affairs, and formed the international order by differentiate the relations between closer and distance countries as foreign affairs about island governance.

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