

Distance Matters?: Human Trafficking in Maritime East Asia in the 14th and 17th Centuries

Global History and Maritime Asia Workshop

April 9, 2010

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Objectives

- Introduce concrete descriptions of trafficking in human beings from foreigners' observations and literatures in medieval Japan,
- Identify active involvement of maritime networks in human trafficking and
- Provide some references to researches on slave trade in world history.

Excuse

- This presentation is based upon my old work “Iminzoku no Jinshin-baibai: Hito no Ryuutu” (Trafficking in Foreigners: Distribution of Human Beings) in *Ajia no nakano Nihonshi III (Japanese History in Asia III)*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, Tokyo, 1992, pp.225-244.

What I have learned from previous studies

- I could find neither clear distinction nor relation between inhabitant debt bondages and objects, non-Japanese, for human traffickers.
- The former is usually certified with those days' documents. Some of them are still extant today.
- The latter is depicted in travelogues, reports and letters written by foreigners, and literatures in medieval Japan.

How to look at objects for human traffickers.

- **Travelers' eyes: travelogue by Choseon (朝鮮) diplomat, reports and letters written by Christian missionaries**
- **Embodied patterns: scripts of Nou (能) or Kyogen (狂言) in medieval Japan**

Korean Diplomat's Observation

- Choseon government sent Song Heui-Gyeong (宋希璟) and his delegation to Japan in 1420. He left for Japan in the second month and came back to Choseon capital Hansong (漢城) in the eleventh month, and wrote a travelogue “Nosongdang-Ilbon-Haengnok” (老松堂日本行錄) in which he describes encounters of a slave and an ex-slave from China.

Off the Coast of Tsushima

- A small boat comes up to the ship of Choseon delegation. A fisherman in the boat tries to sell fish. Son witnesses a slave with hair shaved. The slave tells a story why he is there. He was a platoon chief (小旗) in Taizhou (台州), Zhejiang Province (浙江省), abducted by pirates, and sell to the fisherman. He has been floating in the boat for two years, and asks Son to buy him.

Translator in Kyoto 1

- Son stays at the house of a translator, Wei-Tian (魏天) in Kyoto. Being a young boy he was kidnapped in China, and brought to Japan.
- Since then, He was sold to a Choseon officer I-Jaan (李子安), and chosen as a member of delegation to Japan. In Japan, he happened to be found and taken by a member of the Ming China delegation to Japan.

Translator in Kyoto 2

- In China, the emperor received him in audience, and ordered him to go back to Japan and serve as a translator.
- In Japan, he was married and had two daughters. Ex-King (Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu) loved him. Now He is very rich.

Raising Cattle 1

- A Chinese Sokei-kanjin (祖慶官人) captured in Mingzhou (明州=寧波) is the leading character in Nou (能) “Tousen” (唐船) or Kyogen (狂言) “Toujin Kodakara” (唐人子宝).
- Sokei-kanjin has raised cattle or served as translator for ten years in Hakozaki. Two sons from Mingzhou show up with a lot of treasure one day. They try to redeem their father from his owner. The owner allows them to take the father back home, but wants to have his two sons with Japanese wife.

Raising Cattle 2

- Tag of war happens between the sons from Mingzhou and in Hakoziaki. Finally, the owner permits the father and the sons in Hakoziaki to return home.
- In Kyogen “Toujin Kodakara”, the sons from Mingzhou and the father pronounce Chinese like sound in their conversation.

Distribution of Chinese Slaves

- Arii Tomonori (1985) recognized 59 cases of Chinese slaves to Japan during 1372-1466, and identified 14 cases from Zhejiang Province out of 17 cases having data of places captured in China.
- Those slaves or ex-slaves work as translators, trade ship captain, residents in temples , or labor for transportation sector in Hakata, ports in Inland Sea or Kyoto.

Captured in Korean Peninsula 1

- **Wakou (倭寇 Japanese invaders) raid coastal areas in Korean peninsula in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. Not only food and other productions confiscated as taxes but also human beings are targeted for their prey.**
- **These captured are primarily employed as guides for predators to places rich in prey.**

Captured in Korean Peninsula 2

- Tanaka Takeo (1987) interprets these captured further.
- Japanese from diverse places in the Western Japan and Ryukyuan missions to Choseon sent these ex-captured back to Choseon court as gifts.
- Ryukyu Kingdom is the southern end of their distribution. Tsushima, Iki and several places in the northern Kyushu are densely populated areas for them. They are found even ports in Inland Sea and Kyoto.