

19. The international situation at the beginning of the Early Modern Times

19.1 Economic order in East Asia

International relations prior to the Sengoku Period were characterized by the international order in East Asia, mainly the *Kango* trade between the Muromachi Shogunate and the Chinese Ming dynasty after the early 15th century. *Kango* was the obligatory voyage certification issued by the Ming for trade abroad. Only when the trade vessel had *Kango* certification was this trade considered formal trade. China allowed other nations to trade only by bringing goods as tribute and receiving gifts in return.

Economic interchange in those days involved the Muromachi Shogun being approved by the Ming dynasty as the ruler of Japan putting the shogun on a firm basis among Japanese society.

However, the main stream of international trade shifted away from the shogunate to the Shugodaimyo Hosokawa and Ouchi families and its purpose changed to the pursuit of economic profit in the latter half of the 15th century. Soon the Sengoku Period begun and the *Kango* trade stopped. Then the *Wako* private trade groups appeared replacing the Ming oriented trade system.

Parallel to the appearance of the *Wako*, Portuguese trade vessels appeared in East Asia. Portugal desired trade with the Ming, but lacked Ming approval, forcing the Portuguese to trade instead with the *Wako*. The first Portuguese gun was imported to Tanegashima Island in 1543 (Tenbun 12). Originally the Ming regime was displeased with the *Wako* trade, describing the *Wako* as *Nanwa* (South Wako). The Ming proceeded to suppress the *Wako*, driving them away to the southeast of



Fig.123 Japan Islands Map (1595).

Suppression forced the Portuguese into cooperation with China and a trade relationship was concluded at a national level, allowing Portuguese vessels to visit Japan. Francisco de Xavier, the Christian missionary, visited Kagoshima in 1549 (Tenbun18) the first stage of Portuguese presence in Japan. A trade agreement for East Asian waters was established between Japan, Portugal, and China. This agreement gave rise to trade between Japan and Ming using Portuguese vessels. The main import item from China was raw silk and from Japan, silver.

Japan's silver output increased finally in the 17th century reaching one third of global production owing to the transfer from Korea in 1533 (Tenbun 2) of silver refining technology. Acceptable domestic conditions were arranged in the Sengoku Period of the 16th century under such new technologies.

19.2 Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea

TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi expressed his intent immediately after his inauguration as *Kanpaku* (The chief adviser to the Emperor) in 1585 (Tensho 13) to rein in first Korea and then the Ming. Various views on his motivation can be considered but clear one of his aims was to distract his lords' increasing territorial ambitions regarding the continent. After completion of national unification, his next step would be the dispatching troops to Korea.

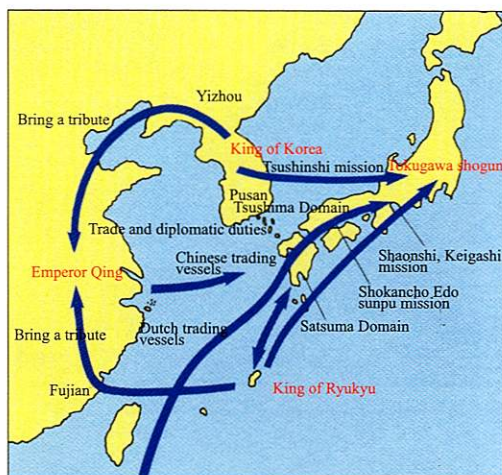


Fig.124 Economical order in East Asia in the 18th century.(Reference: Reorganization of the feudal system and establishment of Japanese oriented society, Early Modern Times II, Japanese Complete History.)

International order centering on the Ming dynasty gradually decayed, the Japanese Muromachi Shogunate fell into ruin, with ODA Nobunaga and TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi appearing as the new political forces. In accordance with the Ming's downfall, official and orderly trade gradually dissolved. Such change in international affairs and the new confidence and unification of his country, brought extravagant dreams to Hideyoshi.

In March 1592 (Bunroku 1) Hideyoshi organized nine armies totaling 160 thousand troops to advance on Korea. The first Korea invasion (*Bunroku-no-eki*) began. The Korean capital Hanseong (Seoul) surrendered and Japanese forces spread throughout Korea. Against this invasion, loyal Korean forces were raised from all areas of Korea. The Ming dispatched reinforcements to Korea. In 1596 (Keicho 1), against Hideyoshi's request, peace was negotiated between Japan and Ming excluding Korea. Hideyoshi, angered by the negotiation, dispatched forces (*Keicho-no-eki*) to Korea again the following year 1597 (Keicho 2). However with Hideyoshi's death in 1598 (Keicho 3), his forces withdrew from Korea and the seven-year war ended.

19.3 Prohibition of Christianity and national isolation

After Francisco de Xavier's visit to Japan, Christianity, connected with the Portuguese trade, was spread by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus. However, their methods of spreading the religion caused Daimyos, such as Arima, Omura, Otomo, to impose Christianity on their people and to donate lands to the Society of Jesus, further expanding their territories. As a result, international relationships based on the separation of state and religion came into question. TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi ordered the banishment of Christian missionaries. After Hideyoshi's death, TOKUGAWA Ieyasu reversed the banishment, considering trade benefits. However, he reintroduced



Fig.125 Protective wall on Cheju-do Island, Korea's preparation for Hideyoshi's invasion.

Christianity's prohibition and banished missionaries from the whole countries in 1613 (Keicho 18).

Nevertheless the missionaries continued to illegally enter Japan. Therefore Ieyasu promulgated a series of national isolation orders from 1633 (Kan'ei 10) to 1636 (Kan'ei 13) including prohibitions on Japanese travelling abroad, the prohibition of Christianity and shogunate control over all foreign trades. Portuguese vessel arrivals were banned in 1636 (Kan'ei 13) and the Dutch mercantile house was relocated from Hirado to Dejima, Nagasaki in 1641 (Kan'ei 18). Only Dutch and Ming trade vessels would be allowed entry to the one trading port of Nagasaki. Thus the shogunate gained complete the control of international relations.

International interchange was completely banned except for trade involving Dutch or Ming vessels. National isolation brought a shogunate-monopolized system of international trade and traffic. At the same time, Japanese centrism established an international order giving low status to Korean, Ryukyu and Ainu people compared to the other nationalities. For example the Korean attitude had been based on national equality but when a Korean envoy visited Japan in 1636 (Kan'ei 13) the shogunate newly demanded tribute from Korea's emperor and requested the Korean envoy a religious shrine in Nikko. The new attitude affected the Dutch only in connection with their trade relationship. The Dutch mercantile house director had newly to visit Edo annually after 1633 (Kan'ei 10).



Fig.126 Kosatsu of Christianity prohibition notice. The Edo shogunate posted notices for the detention of missionaries and other Christians. This board, posted in May 1711(Shotoku 1)states rewards for informants against these actions.