

JAPAN IN THE CHINESE DYNASTIC HISTORIES

Later Han Through Ming Dynasties

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## HISTORY OF THE MING

(Ming Shih 322)<sup>1</sup>

## Foreign Countries: Japan

Japan is the country of Wa-nu of old. Its name was changed to Japan early in the Hsien-hêng era (670-674) of T'ang. It was so named because of its nearness to where the sun rises in the eastern sea. The land is surrounded by water except in the northeast, where it is bounded by high mountains.

It has five inner provinces, seven circuits, and three islands -- a total of one hundred fifteen provinces, comprising five hundred eighty-seven counties. Several tens of minor domains are all under its domination. The small provinces are only a hundred li in extent, and the large ones do not exceed five hundred li. Families in each small province are [about] one thousand in number; in the large ones they do not exceed ten or twenty thousand.

The ruler of the country generation after generation is known as Wang [King]; all officials are also hereditary. Prior to the Sung dynasty, there was intercourse with the Middle Kingdom, and visits to the Court with tribute were made without cessation. Details are seen in the previous histories.

Shih-tsu of the Yüan dynasty [i.e., Kubilai] several times dispatched Chao Liang-pi as emissary [to the Japanese] to extend an invitation to them, but they did not come. Thereupon, Hsin-tu and Fan Wên-hu were ordered to head a force one hundred thousand strong to subjugate them. When this squadron reached Goryüsan,<sup>2</sup> it met a hurricane, and all the forces went to the bottom of the sea.

Later, invitations were again sent many times, but the Japanese failed to come; and to the end of the Yüan dynasty, there was no intercourse opened.



[Then] the Ming came into power and Kao Huang-ti<sup>3</sup> was on the throne. First Fang Kuo-chên and then Chang Shih-ch'êng<sup>4</sup> were put to death. Those rebel leaders who escaped abroad often gathered the islanders around them and came to raid the coastal provinces of Shantung.

In the third month of the second year of Hung-wu (1369),<sup>5</sup> the Emperor sent an agent, Yang Tsai, bearing a message of conciliation from the Court to Japan, and reprimanding her at the same time for the raids. The message said: "If you are friendly toward the government, then appear at the Court; otherwise make armed preparations to defend yourselves. In case you attempt raid or robbery, orders will be instantly given to start a war of subjugation. We desire you, O King, to consider well."

The King of Japan, Ryōkai,<sup>6</sup> would not listen. He again raided Shantung and moved on to plunder the people of the sea-coast prefectures of Wên, T'ai, and Ming,<sup>7</sup> raiding as far down the coast as the prefecture of Fukien.

In the third month of the third year (1370), the sub-prefect of the prefecture of Lai,<sup>8</sup> Chao Chih, was dispatched with a reprimand. Crossing the water, he reached Chê-mu-yai and entered the [Japanese] domain. The keeper of the official gate would not let him come inside the gate. Chih wrote a letter to Ryōkai, and Ryōkai let Chih come inside. Then the latter talked of the might and virtue of the Middle Kingdom. He presented also the Imperial message he had brought censuring the disloyalty [of Ryōkai],

Ryōkai then said: "My country is located far out in the east, but it has never ceased to admire the Middle Kingdom. The Mongols, however, are barbarians like ourselves. They wanted to make us their slaves [but] our loyal predecessor would not yield. Thereupon a courtier by the name of Chao was sent to beguile us with honeyed words. Even before his speech was concluded, a squadron a hundred thousand strong was in full array on our shore. As heaven brought thunder and tornado,

these forces were capsized all at once. Now a new sovereign is ruling in the Middle Kingdom and his ambassador is again known as Chao. Is he not a Mongol's son, who is here to beguile us again with honeyed words in order to make a sudden attack?" [Ryōkai] cast glances to left and right and was about to slay [the envoy].

Chih, however, remained unmoved and took time to explain, saying: "The sovereign of our great Ming [Empire] is divine, both in literature and in arms, beyond any comparison with the Mongols. Nor am I either a descendant of the Mongol emissary; so if you still wish to dispatch me, then dispatch me."

Ryōkai was taken aback. He came down to take the hand of Chao Chih and treated him with the utmost cordiality. He sent the monk, Sorai,<sup>9</sup> with a memorial to the Throne, addressing himself [to the Emperor] as a subject, and [he sent] tribute of horses and other native products. He also sent home more than seventy prisoners captured in the two prefectures of Ming and T'ai. In the tenth month of the fourth year (1371), they arrived at the capital.

T'ai-tsu, in appreciation, gave a banquet and gifts to the delegates. As the people [of Japan] adored Buddha, he thought that they might be won over by means of the religion of the west. Accordingly he gave orders to monks Tsu-ch'an and K'o-ch'in and others,<sup>10</sup> eight altogether, to accompany the delegation on its return trip. He bestowed on Ryōkai the Court calendar as well as delicate silks of excellent designs.

The same year, Wên-chou was sacked. In the fifth year (1372), Hai-yen and Kan-p'u<sup>11</sup> were plundered; raids were also made on several prefectures on the coast of Fukien. In the sixth year (1373), Yü Hsien<sup>12</sup> was appointed Brigade-General to be sent to sea for patrol. The Wa raided Lai and Têng.<sup>13</sup>

Tsu-ch'an's party had already reached Japan and begun preaching religion, to the profound edification of the people



of the country. The King,<sup>14</sup> however, was disdainful and held the party in prison for two years. They returned to the capital in the fifth month of the seventh year (1374). The Wa raided Chiao-chou.<sup>15</sup>

Ryōkai was still young. There was a certain Jimyō<sup>16</sup> who was contesting with him for the throne and bringing about internal disorder.

In the seventh month of the same year, a minister<sup>17</sup> [of Japan] sent a delegation headed by the monk Sen Monkei<sup>18</sup> with a written message addressed to the Grand Council, and with horses and indigenous products as tribute. They came with a memorial which was not addressed to the Throne. The Emperor decreed to reject it; nevertheless gifts were given to the delegates and they were sent home. Some time later, Ujihisa,<sup>19</sup> Governor of an island, sent a monk with a memorial to the Throne and also with tribute, but the Emperor again rejected [the embassy] as it had come without a memorial from the King; besides, the date was not given in accordance with the Court calendar. Still a gift was given to the envoy. An order was given to officials of the Department of Ceremony to dispatch a note reprimanding the impropriety [of the envoy] in overstepping his bounds by bringing the tribute unofficially.

As raids and plundering followed in rapid succession, the Secretariat was also ordered to send a note of reprimand.

Thereupon, in the fourth month of the ninth year (1376), the monk Kei Teiyō<sup>20</sup> and others came with tribute to ask for pardon. Displeased with the insincerity of the memorial, the Emperor issued an edict of warning, but a banquet and gifts were given according to precedent.

In the twelfth year (1379), the tribute came and in the thirteenth year (1380) it came again. It came without the memorial, but with a letter from Minamoto Yoshimitsu,<sup>21</sup> the Barbarian-subduing Generalissimo, addressed to the Premier.

The wording was arrogant so that the tribute was rejected and an envoy dispatched to carry an Imperial edict of reprimand. In the fourteenth year (1381), the tribute was brought again,<sup>22</sup> and again the Emperor rejected it. An order was given to the Department of Ceremony to send a note censuring the King, as well as a note censuring the Barbarian-subduing Generalissimo, and indicating the intention of declaring war.

[Then] Ryōkai replied to the Emperor: "Your subject has heard that the three divine ones initiated the sovereignty and that five Emperors<sup>23</sup> left the Throne to their successors. Since there is a ruler in the Middle Kingdom, there is no reason why there should not be a ruler among the barbarians. The universe is immense in scope and defies the rule of a single monarch; the cosmos is enormous in breadth, affording space for various states to exist independently. After all, the world is the world of the world, not the world of a single person. Your subject lives in the remote and poor country of Wa. A small strip of land -- its castles and moats are less than sixty; its fiefs and domains are short of three thousand. Even so, we are contented. Your Majesty is lord of the Middle Kingdom, the monarch of ten thousand chariots. Cities and moats are more than several thousands; fiefs and domains extend a million li. Still you are of discontented mind, entertaining from time to time desire for total subjugation. When heaven moves toward murder, stars and planets change their positions; when earth moves toward murder, dragons and serpents run amuck; when man moves toward murder, heaven and earth become topsy-turvy. In olden times, Yao and Shun<sup>24</sup> were virtuous -- so the Four Seas came to pay homage to them. T'ang and Wu<sup>25</sup> acted with benevolence, and from the eight quarters came tribute.

"Your subject is informed that the Celestial Court entertains the plan of starting warfare. I can say for my small country that it also has a program for keeping enemies at bay. In the literary field, we have the moral literature of Confucius



and Mencius; and in the field of war, we possess the military strategy and tactics of Sun and Wu.<sup>26</sup> We are also informed that Your Majesty has appointed trusted generals and has also raised a brave and strong army to come to conquer our domain. I desire to warn you that the land of marshes and valleys, the islands of hills and waters, have their natural way of defense. We are not going to bend our knees by the wayside to take orders from others. Obedience is not necessarily the way to save life; neither is opposition the way to certain death. Let us meet at the foot of Mt. Garan<sup>27</sup> to try the battle. Your subject is not frightened. If you win and I lose, then the desire of the great country will be gratified; on the other hand, if your subject wins and you lose, you will become the laughing stock of the small countries. It is an old saying that it is best to make peace, but that only the strong can stop fighting and thus rescue the populace from the abyss of misery and save the masses from suffering. A special envoy is therefore being dispatched to visit the red painted steps of Your Majesty's Court. We pray that your great country will consider this well."

When the Emperor received this memorial, he was exceedingly irate. Taking the failure of the Mongols as a warning, however, he desisted from beginning war.

In the sixteenth year (1383), the Wa raided Chin-hsiang<sup>28</sup> and P'ing-yang.

In the nineteenth year (1386), an envoy<sup>29</sup> came to the Court with tribute, but it was rejected.

The year following (1387), Chou Tê-hsin,<sup>30</sup> Marquis of Chiang-hsia, was ordered to visit four coastal prefectures of Fukien to make a survey of the actual situation, and to move to other locations guard stations and forts which were found not to be strategic. From every family one out of three taxable males was drafted for the guard service, and as many as sixteen forts were built. Visiting supervisors were increased to forty-five; a little more than fifteen thousand soldiers were raised.

T'ang Ho,<sup>31</sup> Duke of Hsin-kuo, was also ordered to visit and make a survey of the eastern and western prefectures of Chekiang, and to reorganize the coastal defenses. As many as fifty-nine forts were built. From every family comprising more than four adult males, one was drafted as a guard; and more than fifty-eight thousand seven hundred soldiers were raised to guard the forts above mentioned. Thus the coast defense was greatly improved. In the intercalary sixth month, an order was given to Fukien to prepare one hundred sea craft and to Kuang-tung to prepare twice as many. They were to meet in the ninth month at Chekiang to go to capture Wa. That plan, however, was not carried out.

Some time before this, Hu Wei-yung<sup>32</sup> had plotted treason. He wanted to obtain aid from Japan, and so he entered into a close friendship with Lin Hsien, the guard commandant of Ningpo. False representation was made to the Emperor to the effect that Lin Hsien had committed an offense, so that he was sent into exile in Japan and thus enabled to establish contact and connection with the ruler [of Japan] and his vassals. Then later, through another representation to the Emperor, Hsien was restored to his former post and an emissary sent to bring him home. Through [this emissary] a letter was sent in secret to the ruler of Japan in order to obtain armed assistance. [Then] Hsien returned home. The King sent [with him] the monk Nyōyō at the head of about four hundred warriors on the pretense of visiting the Court to offer tribute. Among the presents was a giant lantern which held powder and swords hidden in it. Before the party arrived, however, Wei-yung had been defeated, so that the scheme was of no avail. The Emperor still remained unaware of this malicious plot. When it was exposed many years later, he put Hsien's entire family to death. He became exceedingly afraid of Japan and made up his mind to sever all relations and to devote his attention to maritime defense. When, however, Prince Tō Yūji<sup>33</sup> arrived to enter the Imperial Academy, the Emperor was good enough to treat him with cordiality. In the