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# A Shift in Song Tribute Policy and the Emergence of the Terms “Koryō Merchants” and “Japanese Merchants”

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the fact that the Song government, at least until 1141, only allowed vessels based in China to engage in foreign trade, while opening its ports only to foreign ships that were tribute vessels. This was a result of the Song's efforts to maintain the Sinocentric tribute system despite its diminishing power and international influence. However, worsening fiscal circumstances during the Southern Song period led the Song court to turn toward an anti-tribute policy due to the financial burden caused by the tribute system. By abandoning tribute practices, the Song came to permit trade with foreign ships as well. Reflecting this shift in the Song's policies, “Koryō merchants” and “Japanese merchants” appeared in maritime trade throughout the East China Sea, which had been dominated by Song merchants. These appellations are believed to be closely associated with the maritime route, rather than the ethnic origin of the merchants referred to.

**Keywords:** Song, tribute system, multi-state order, trade vessels, tribute vessels, certificate of passage, Koryō merchants, Japanese merchants

## Introduction

The Song dynasty (960–1279) of China was unable to establish dominance in foreign relations due to the resistance of strong nomadic states. Therefore, the tribute system of the Song could not be utilized to the same extent as it had been under the Tang. The tribute system of the Tang required foreign states to present tribute to the Chinese dynasty in return for recognition of their sovereignty, and only such tributaries had the right to establish diplomatic relations with China and conduct trade under the exclusively accepted form of tribute. The Song, unable to establish the tribute system as the Tang did, permitted private trade alongside official overseas trade under the ostensible purpose of conducting tribute missions, a policy stance that was maintained until the early fifteenth century, when the Ming dynasty was founded and prohibited overseas trade with the exception of tribute (Enomoto 2007a, 3; Von Glahn 2014, 249–50).

The Song established and operated maritime trade offices (*sibosi* 市舶司) charged with managing trade vessels. The existence of these offices, together with policies of permitting private trade, has produced the perception in modern scholarship that the Song allowed free travel for trade vessels both based in China and overseas (Kondō 2001, 19; Zheng 2004, 51; Wade 2013, 79–80). However, this

does not mean that the Song government consistently permitted overseas trade by foreign vessels after 989 when Chinese vessels were permitted to conduct maritime trade (Fujita 1917, 183). This paper seeks to demonstrate that, among ships based overseas, the Song opened its ports only to tribute vessels, at least up to 1141. This is consistent with the argument that tribute relations continued to play an important role until the end of the Northern Song (Kim Sönggyu 2005, 147).

The Song's tribute policy reveals its intention to ensure the country's security in the international arena by incorporating neighboring states into the tribute system, even at the cost of the economic disadvantages inherent within it (Fairbank 1953, 31). However, the deterioration of the economy during the Southern Song (1127–1279) led to the gradual abolition of international exchanges based on tribute. By abandoning tribute practices, the Song came to permit trade by foreign ships as well. This shift in the Song's policies is reflected in the appearance of "Koryö merchants" and "Japanese merchants" in maritime trade throughout the East China Sea, which had been dominated by Song merchants. This paper will examine the change in the attitude of the Song with regard to tribute trade in the mid-twelfth century with a focus on the emergence of the terms "Koryö merchants" and "Japanese merchants," a topic that has not been dealt with outside of South Korea and Japan.

### **Appearance of "Koryö Merchants" and "Japanese Merchants"**

The first maritime force to regularly conduct trade in the East China Sea consisted of Silla merchants under Chang Pogo (張保臯, 790?–846) in the ninth century. After the tenth century, there is no concrete information on the activities of Silla merchants, and Chinese maritime merchants began to play a leading role. However, the emergence of Chinese merchants should not be interpreted as a power transfer between two different ethnic groups, because the Silla merchants who engaged in maritime trade mostly worked with Tang merchants while residing in China. Although Silla maritime merchants disappeared from historical sources, their knowledge and personal networks were passed down to Chinese traders (Enomoto 2007b, 88–90). Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to say that maritime trade among the three countries in East Asia during the Song period was led by Chinese merchants.<sup>1</sup>

However, the terms "Koryö merchants" and "Japanese merchants" begin to appear in Song sources from the late twelfth century. The oldest extant reference to "Koryö merchants" in Song sources is from 1159, the first case of traders who visited the Song, as opposed to shipwrecked sailors or official envoys. As for "Japanese merchants," the first reference dates to the 1160s, roughly the same period that the "Koryö merchants" appeared (Enomoto 2001, 52n1 and 58n80).

These historical records were generally believed to refer to people from Koryö and Japan conducting trade with the Song, and have been used to support

<sup>1</sup> This applies to the private trade that was not conducted in the form of a tribute system, and it is not intended to diminish the role of Koryö merchants who travelled to the Song with the Koryö tribute missions.

the theory that merchants from those two countries, as well as China, engaged in the Sino-Koryō and Sino-Japan trade. Mori Katsumi argues that Japanese merchants emerged as key agents in the Sino-Japan trade, which was previously dominated by Song merchants, due to the appearance of the expression “Japanese merchants” in Song sources beginning in the late twelfth century (Mori 2008, 209–32). The mentioning of “Koryō merchants” in Song records was also presented as evidence for trade activities by Koryō merchants, though it was recognized that Song merchants played the dominant role in the Sino-Koryō trade (Kim Sanggi 1959, 60–63; Paek 2006, 123–30).

However, Enomoto Wataru has recently criticized the existing theory on “Koryō merchants” and “Japanese merchants,” as based too much on the viewpoint of the modern nation-state while re-establishing their historical context with the help of sources from the period in question (Enomoto 2001, 211–34). He insists that the term “Koryō merchants” or “Japanese merchants” refers to traders who traded with the Song under commission from Koryō or Japan, and that these merchants were mostly of Chinese origin.

Consequently, the previous viewpoint that regards the appearance of the term “Japanese merchants” as reflecting ethnic change among merchant groups lost credibility, and most recent studies have concentrated on links between the economic power of Japanese aristocrats and temples and the activities of Song merchants (Saeki 1988, 102–10; Ōba 2001; Murai 2005, 169–85). Consequently, scholars are currently examining the emergence of “Japanese merchants” in connection with changes in Japanese society. In addition, the re-evaluation of “Koryō merchants” and “Japanese merchants” in Japan has also created the need for South Korean historians to reconsider viewing “Koryō merchants” as people of Koryō (Yi 2011, 10–11).

In this respect, the research conducted by Enomoto is groundbreaking in clearly defining the characteristics of “Koryō merchants” and “Japanese merchants” based on the historical records of the period, rejecting the modern ethnic concepts associated with these terms. His research presents a range of implications for the trading practices of Song merchants as overseers of trade in East Asia while also raising some new questions.

Even before the appearance of the term “Koryō merchants” or “Japanese merchants,” Song merchants commissioned by the ruling elites of Koryō or Japan conducted maritime trade and imported goods into these countries. For instance, Koryō requested a Song merchant to import a printed set of Buddhist scriptures around 1089.<sup>2</sup> As for Japan, there was a Song merchant around 1116 who engaged in overseas trade in cooperation with the Japanese Buddhist temple Daisenji (大山寺) of Dazaifu (太宰府) (Kawazoe 1988, 19; Hayashi 1998, 576–80; Hattori 2005, 35). In addition, from 1026 to 1151, three Song merchants presented their names to senior Japanese aristocrats to establish a patronage relationship.<sup>3</sup> This practice

<sup>2</sup> *Su Shi wenji* 31, “Qi jin Shanglu guo waiguo zhuang” 乞禁商旅過外國狀 [Appealing to forbid merchants from travelling to foreign countries].

<sup>3</sup> *Shōyūki* 177, entry for Manju 3/6/26 万寿三年六月二十六日; *Tamefusa-kyō-ki* 226, entry for Kaanji

of registering one's own name meant placing oneself under the control of the recipient, thereby establishing a relationship between a patron and client (Nakada 1938, 935–41). These examples indicate that there had been Song merchants who conducted maritime trade under commission by Koryō and Japan even before the 1150s and 1160s. It is therefore necessary to identify why these Song merchants started to be referred to as “Koryō merchants” or “Japanese merchants.” With this question in mind, this paper will examine the historical background against which the terms “Koryō merchants” and “Japanese merchants” appeared.

### Change in Ship Classification during the Song

Enomoto explains the reason why the Song referred to certain merchants as “Japanese merchants” in connection with the trade practices of the day (Enomoto 2001, 215–18). At that time, dispatching a trade vessel required a huge investment in material and human resources, and thus required funding from the ruling elite or powerful Buddhist temples. Therefore, he argues that trade vessels travelling to the Song under commission by the ruling elite or Buddhist temples in Japan were referred to by the Song as “Japanese ships” (*wochuan* 倭船; *ribenchuan* 日本船), while those in charge of such trade vessels were called “Japanese merchants.” He also adds that the subjects of his analysis were chosen from merchants who acted as ship captains and that he does not deny the presence of Koryō or Japanese people among the sailing crews or merchants aboard such ships. His viewpoint implies, however, that the method of classifying ships was the key factor in the emergence of the terms “Koryō merchants” and “Japanese merchants,” which referred to the nationality of those who commissioned the trade, as opposed to a classification according to the merchants’ ethnicity. To further clarify the method through which the Song identified incoming and seagoing ships it is necessary to review trading procedures.

In order to prevent bronze coins from being smuggled out of the country, in 1141 the Song enacted a law that required one official, unrelated to the maritime trade offices, to be dispatched to personally inspect the cargo of a ship in advance of its departure. He would be followed by another official sent to conduct a second cargo inspection and to keep monitoring the ship until its departure.<sup>4</sup> Under Song law, all outgoing vessels subject to inspection were classified into two types: vessels for overseas trade (*fanfan* 販蕃) and ships used to repatriate foreign tribute missions (*waijan jinfengrenshi huijanchuan* 外蕃進奉人使回蕃船). This shows that ships were divided into trade vessels and tribute ones. Among the former, as will be shown below, only ships registered in China were allowed to conduct trade.

Trade vessels heading to other countries included those of foreign merchants as well as Chinese ones. During the Song period, there were many foreigners who engaged in trade between their home countries and the Song while residing in and around Song ports. There they formed a foreign residential settlement called *fan*

5/7/21 寛治五年七月二十一日; *Ukaiiki shō* 200, entry for Ninpei 1/9/24 仁平元年九月二十四日.

<sup>4</sup> *Song huiyao jigao* 44: 23a–b, entry for Shaoxing 11/11/23 紹興十一年十一月二十三日.

*fang* (蕃坊). Given the fact that a law was enacted in 1114 aimed at fifth-generation foreigners residing in China, it can be surmised that they began to live in China much earlier in the Song period.<sup>5</sup> Foreigners residing in China contributed to stimulating overseas trade. According to the *Song shi* (宋史), vessels from Nanpi (南毗, present-day Malabar) only travelled to Song ports occasionally due to the long distance. However, as two father-son merchants from Nanpi travelled to live in Quanzhou (泉州), more ships visited it.<sup>6</sup>

The Song government applied the same trade regulations to ships owned by foreign merchants based in China as it did to those of Chinese merchants. Chinese merchants who intended to sail out of a Song port for overseas trade had to report to the authorities the names and number of people onboard, the vessel's name, the type and amount of cargo, destination, and so on, to obtain a certificate of passage called a *gongping* (公憑) from the maritime trade offices (Mori 2008, 26–32). According to the regulations regarding ships registered in China but owned by foreigners, the relevant authorities would inspect the cargo, the people onboard, the destination, and so on in order to issue a certificate of passage, while the number of weapons on the ship would be recorded to verify that no loss or damage had occurred to them during the inspection on the ship's return to port.<sup>7</sup> This shows that foreign ships, like Chinese ones, had to be issued a certificate of passage after the authorities' inspection when intending to embark for maritime trade.

Trade vessels had to submit the certificate of passage from the maritime trade offices in order to conduct overseas trade upon their return. Unlike these trade vessels, only tribute ships like the *waifan jinfengrenshi huifanchuan* (外蕃進奉人使回蕃船) were able to arrive and depart freely without the need for a certificate of passage. Therefore, seagoing ships could be divided into trade vessels and tribute ones depending on whether they possessed a certificate of passage.

However, even tribute ships required evidentiary documents to be accepted as such by the Song. For example, in 1026 Zhou Liangshi (周良史), who claimed to be the Japanese tribute envoy of the Dazaifu (太宰府, the government headquarters in Kyushu that was in charge of Japanese foreign affairs), arrived at Mingzhou (明州, present-day Ningbo) and requested permission to present Japanese local specialties as tribute to the Song court at the command of the head of the Dazaifu. However, the governor of Mingzhou (a prefecture of Liangzhe circuit 兩浙路)<sup>8</sup> rejected the tribute on the grounds that Zhou Liangshi did not bring diplomatic documents to be submitted to the Chinese emperor (*biaowen* 表文) from Japan.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Song huiyao jigao* 44: 9b–10a, entry for Zhenghe 4/5/18 政和四年五月十八日.

<sup>6</sup> *Song shi* 489, 14091.

<sup>7</sup> *Chōya gunsai* 20: 452–55, “Dai Sōkoku shōkyaku no koto” 大宋國商客事 [Cases of Song merchants].

<sup>8</sup> The Song divided the empire into regional circuits (*lu* 路) to coordinate policymaking between the central government and the over 300 prefectures in the empire (Mostern 2011, 36–38).

<sup>9</sup> *Song huiyao jigao* 44: 4b, entry for Tiansheng 4/10 天聖四年十月. Zhou Liangshi, born to a Chinese father and Japanese mother, began to engage in trade around 1026 by travelling between the Song and Japan. He established ties with the highest Japanese elites through the head of the Dazaifu (Mori 2009, 237–43).

However, not every request to offer tribute without diplomatic documents was rejected by the Song court. In 1079, Xihe lu jingluesi (熙河路經略司, the Military Commission at Xihe circuit, located in present day Gansu Province) reported that when an envoy of Yutian (於闐, present-day Khotan) arrived to present tribute without a *biaowen*, the envoy was immediately persuaded to return to his country, as there was no way to accept the tribute in accordance with the law. In response to this report, the Song court allowed tribute to be accepted if the envoy strongly insisted on presenting it.<sup>10</sup>

However, it was only in the previous year, 1078, that an imperial order had been issued to ban tribute from Yutian without a *biaowen* from its king. According to this order, the Song court allowed Yutian tribute missions to travel to the capital only when they brought both *biaowen* and gifts from the king. In addition, the number of people accompanying the envoy to the capital could not exceed fifty, with the number of donkeys and horses also set to match the number of people. Excess personnel stayed at Xizhou (熙州, present-day Linxia County, Gansu Province) under the care and control of a designated officer, and were allowed to conduct trade in compliance with regulations.<sup>11</sup> This example implies that Yutian occasionally presented tribute without diplomatic documents from the king before 1078 which the Song nonetheless accepted.<sup>12</sup>

It seems that the Song strove as much as possible to treat foreigners as being a part of a tribute mission, even when doing so was not in accordance with the formalities of the tribute system. This stance is also evident in the case in which Japanese monks who travelled to the Song to study were received in an audience with the emperor according to the ritual for accepting tribute. Japanese Buddhist monks, including Chōnen (齋然), Jakushō (寂照), Jōjin (成尋), Kaishu (快宗), and Kaikaku (戒覺), travelled to the Song on pilgrimage between the end of the tenth century and the late eleventh century. They had audiences with the Song emperor and the visits were characterized as “tribute” by the Song court (Ishii 1993, 267–73). Since these meetings were different from an audience granted to an ordinary tribute mission,<sup>13</sup> the monks followed the procedures reserved for foreign monks who visited the Song court in the company of a foreign tribute envoy, who were not in the same position as a foreign envoy representing a country (Hirose 2011, 280–90). However, Buddhist monks were generally treated as members of a tribute mission even when the purpose of their visit was a religious pilgrimage rather than

<sup>10</sup> *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 300, entry for Yuanfeng 2/10/Wushen 元豐二年十月戊申. Once foreign envoys arrived at prefectures on the Chinese border, they were provided accommodation and placed under the control of the supervising military intendants of each region (Li 2004, 53).

<sup>11</sup> *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 295, entry for Yuanfeng 1/12/Yichou 元豐元年十二月乙丑.

<sup>12</sup> During the period between 1078 and 1098, the Northern Song government strengthened control over tribute by allowing a tribute envoy to visit the capital only when bringing diplomatic documents from his king and by placing limitations on how often tribute or imperial gifts were offered. This situation is in contrast to the policy of attracting tribute in the early years of the Northern Song dynasty, which enabled envoys and merchants from countries bordering western China to travel to the capital regardless of diplomatic documents (Li 2004, 51).

<sup>13</sup> The Song court was naturally aware of the difference between these Buddhist monks and the official tribute missions (Ishii 1993, 267–73).

a diplomatic mission, which reflects the Northern Song policy of encompassing private exchanges with foreign countries within tribute relationships.

The abovementioned Buddhist monks all travelled to China on vessels owned by Song merchants who had sailed into Japanese ports. This implies that merchants or monks from Koryō or Japan could travel between their home countries and China using Song merchant vessels without resorting to the dispatch of tribute ships. In terms of the ethnic origin of these merchants, it is possible that merchants from Koryō or Japan engaged in the Sino-Koryō or Sino-Japan trade even before the term “Koryō merchants” or “Japanese merchants” appeared in extant records.

The Song regarded vessels that were not registered in China as tribute ships, at least up to 1141, as far as permitting their entry into Chinese ports was concerned. This can be verified in the *Yuanfeng shibo tiao* (元豐市舶條), which compiled existing trade-related regulations in 1080. This collection is mostly comprised of regulations on trade vessels departing China, with provisions for foreign ships only in regard to tribute (Zhang 1995). Even though there is no fully complete extant copy of the *Yuanfeng shibo tiao*, the known surviving provisions of the collection can be used to speculate on the work as a whole, and the existence of regulations regarding tribute vessels among foreign ships provides an important clue with regard to maritime trade at the time.

The only way for foreigners to trade with the Song, other than under the guise of tribute, appears to have been to commission Song merchants. Upon being commissioned, Song merchants first returned to China to submit the certificate of passage issued prior to departure to the maritime trade offices. After completing trade transactions in the Song, a new certificate was required in order to return to the client country or the commissioned goods had to be consigned to other ships heading to the country concerned. This kind of maritime trade initiated at the request of foreign countries had no effect on the classification method for trade vessels since the overseas trade was handled entirely by Song vessels that possessed a certificate of passage.

However, there is evidence that this method of ship classification into outgoing trade ships and incoming tribute vessels had already changed by the early thirteenth century. For instance, Zhao Shanmi (趙善謐), an official in charge of the Commodity Monopoly Bureau (*quehuowu duchachang* 榷貨務都茶場) at the capital of Hangzhou (杭州), drew up the following petition to the emperor in 1205:

The maritime trade offices in Quanzhou and Guangzhou (廣州)<sup>14</sup> are actively purchasing frankincense. However, the government agency has occasionally failed to pay for the goods on time due to the shortage of funds or embezzlement by officials. In severe cases, to avoid

<sup>14</sup> Important regions where the maritime trade offices were installed during the Song period included the Liangzhe circuit (兩浙路), Fujian circuit (福建路), and Guangnan circuit (廣南路). With regard to sea routes, the Liangzhe circuit was responsible for ships coming from and going to Koryō or Japan, while the Fujian and Guangnan circuits were in charge of Southeast Asian traffic. The maritime trade offices were installed in Quanzhou for the Fujian circuit and in Guangzhou for the Guangnan circuit, along with five places for the Liangzhe circuit: Hangzhou, Mingzhou, Xiuzhou, Wenzhou (溫州), and Jiangyin-jun (Shi 1968, 55–75; *Baoqing Siming zhi* 6, “Shibo” 市舶).

official trade, trade ships pretended to have been stranded, travelled to the maritime trade offices at Mingzhou, Xiuzhou (秀州), and Jiangyin-jun (江陰郡) at the Liangzhe circuit (兩浙路, encompassing southern Jiangsu and Zhejiang), and disguised frankincense as other items. After paying customs they traded the goods privately with the aim of evading national taxes. To prevent this problem, the maritime trade offices at Quanzhou and Guangzhou should strive to attract frankincense merchants in various ways and secure funding for purchasing the goods by selling tax-exemption certificates for monks (*dudie* 度牒).<sup>15</sup> Also the maritime trade offices at Mingzhou, Xiuzhou, and Jiangyin-jun should purchase all frankincense brought by foreign ships or returning Chinese ships, thus preventing its private trade.<sup>16</sup>

The above petition by Zhao Shanmi was submitted because frankincense was an item under government monopoly and the control of the Commodity Monopoly Bureau.<sup>17</sup> The implication from the above example is that although frankincense was subject to monopoly by the maritime trade offices at Mingzhou, Xiuzhou, and Jiangyin-gun, the government agencies failed to identify frankincense as it was rarely traded there. Exploiting this weakness, traders tried to disguise frankincense as different substances as a means to avoid the costs associated with official trade.

In the above petition, Zhao Shanmi divided vessels entering the Song into *fanchuan* (蕃船) and *huibo* (回舶). The former refers to ships coming from foreign countries, while the latter refers to Chinese ships returning after visiting other states. Thus, incoming ships could be separated into two types, as *huibo* ships had to submit the certificate of passage that they had been issued previously, while *fanchuan* did not. This example is different from the case of 1141 in that the ships classified were outbound vessels, as opposed to incoming ones. The 1141 example divided ships into trade vessels and tribute vessels, that is, in terms of the characteristics of the ships, while the example of 1205 classified vessels based on the location from which a ship's activities took place. In other words, ships were classified by their base of operation. The criterion of division was whether they possessed a certificate of passage. This suggests that the change in the method of classifying ships was associated with a shift in policy, whereby the previous stance of separating ships into trade or tribute vessels switched to essentially treating all vessels as trade vessels. The background and reason behind this policy change will be examined in the following section.

### Shift in the Tribute Policy of the Song

The Song policy of attracting foreign tribute ships existed since the earliest days

<sup>15</sup> It has been confirmed that the maritime trade offices at the Guangnan, Fujian, and Liangzhe circuits were given tax-exemption certificates for monks and the money from their sales were spent on trading funds. See *Song huiyao jigao* 44: 11b–14b, entry for Xuanhe 7/3/18 宣和七年三月十八日; Jianyan 2/6/10 建炎二年六月十日; Shaoxing 2/4/26 紹興二年四月二十六日.

<sup>16</sup> *Song huiyao jigao* 44: 33a–b, entry for Kaixi 1/8/9 開禧元年八月九日.

<sup>17</sup> Frankincense was identified as a government monopoly since the tenth century. Although it was removed from government monopolies in 1206, this appears to have been only a temporary measure. See *Song huiyao jigao* 44: 1b, entry for Taipingxingguo chu 太平興國初; Katsuno 1985, 12–13.

of the dynasty. The Song court dispatched eight eunuchs in four fleets of ships to neighboring countries in Southeast Asia in 987, seeking to invite tribute missions and to purchase precious goods, such as aromatic wood and herbs, rhinoceros horns, ivory, pearls, and Borneo camphor. Each mission carried three copies of imperial credentials with a blank space for the name of the recipient country, and each message was delivered after arriving at a country and inserting its name.<sup>18</sup> This illustrates how the Song invited neighboring states to present tribute after unifying China in 979.

However, the Song did not continue the highly regulated tribute system established by the Tang. In East Asia, after the tenth century, China's reduced influence and the relative growth in the power of its neighbors led to a multi-state order unlike that of the past, which resulted in a significant change in the existing Sinocentric tribute system (Kim Sōnggyu 2000, 36–40; Chaffee 2010). For example, Koryō and the Xixia (西夏) presented tribute not only to the Song but also to the Liao (遼), a state of affairs which is referred to as “subordinate relations under two different countries.” As it became difficult to impose a unipolar order on neighboring countries, the Song employed a policy of differentiated responses and management by dividing countries into several groups in terms of the level of threat they posed, Song degree of interest, geographical distance, and so on (Zhang 1998, 62). Unlike the Tang, the Song designated residential facilities for the foreign missions of each nation or region, and set separate regulations regarding audiences with the Chinese emperor for each country, including the Liao, the Xixia, Koryō, and Annam (Jiaozhi 交趾).<sup>19</sup>

As the Song witnessed its power diminishing in the international environment, it implemented policies to maintain the Sinocentric tribute system, for instance by classifying its neighbors, offering different treatment, and allowing even foreign merchants (*haiwai fanke* 海外蕃客) or ethnic minorities (*zhuman* 諸蠻) to present tribute (Kim Sōnggyu 2010, 224–25). Some foreign merchants granted imperial audiences were from such places as Southeast Asia, India, and Islamic regions, which did not share borders with the Song (Kim Sōnggyu 2010, 227). For example, Pu Ximi (蒲希密), who will be discussed further in the following section, falls into this group of foreign merchants.

In 993, Li Awu (李亞勿), a vice chieftain from the Arab lands (Dashi 大食)<sup>20</sup> presented tribute on behalf of Pu Ximi. Although Pu Ximi, a ship-owner from the same region, had arrived at Guangzhou himself, he could not make his way to the capital because of illness and his advanced age. Thus, he delegated Li Awu to present tribute on his behalf.<sup>21</sup> A diplomatic document, or *biaowen*, presented by Pu Ximi to the Chinese emperor reads as follows:

<sup>18</sup> *Song huiyao jigao* 44: 2b, entry for Yongxi 4/5 雍熙四年五月.

<sup>19</sup> See Kim Sōnggyu 2000, 53–58.

<sup>20</sup> The Chinese term Dashi (大食) used to have two different meanings during the Song period: in a broad sense, it refers to all Islamic people and countries, while in a narrow sense, it refers to the Arab people (Fujiyoshi 1990, 158–59).

<sup>21</sup> *Song shi* 490, 14118–4119.

When I was in the Arab lands, I received a letter from the leader of the foreign residential settlement in Guangzhou (*Guangzhou fanzhang* 廣州蕃長) that contained the recommendation to travel to the Song capital to present tribute while extolling the Emperor's virtues, as he had issued an imperial order (*zhaoshu* 詔書) at the Guangnan circuit (廣南路) out of his kindness and generosity to praise foreign merchants for their hard work and to allow foreign goods to be circulated smoothly and in great quantities. Finally, I crossed the sea on a vessel carrying tribute and wished to fulfill my long-cherished desire to present tribute to the Emperor under the blessing granted by his virtuous example while looking upon his lands. Although I had arrived in Guangzhou, it was still a long way to the court where the Emperor resides. Weakness due to old age and illness impeded my trip to the court, and I was deeply saddened upon thinking about the court gate. By coincidence, I met Li Awu who also planned to present tribute, and I asked him to offer my tribute of silk and medicine to the Emperor on my behalf. Tribute items include 50 pieces of ivory, 1,800 catties (*jin* 斤) of frankincense, 700 catties of wrought iron, a bolt of red cotton cloth, four bolts of five-colored silk, two bolts of quality white fabric, and 100 bottles of rose water.

Pu Ximi offered tribute, such as silk and medicine, along with a *biaowen* declaring his tribute, the latter at the advice of the Guangzhou *fanzhang*.<sup>22</sup> In response to the tribute, the Song court bestowed on him a royal letter as well as imperial gifts, including a silk outer coat, silverware, and a bolt of silk.

This example shows that the Song court invited foreign merchants, as well as governments, to present tribute, and accepted their diplomatic documents and tribute while offering a royal letter and imperial gifts in return. Although this practice in the form of tribute essentially constituted actual trade (Kuwabara 1989, 92–93n8), the Song required both foreign countries and merchants to preserve the formalities of the tribute system. In other words, the Song sought to incorporate those engaging in trade into the tribute system by forcing them to follow tribute practices.<sup>23</sup>

As indicated above in the case of Pu Ximi, the Song court invited and accepted private tribute offered under the name of an individual merchant, as opposed to state-level tribute. As it was presented at the recommendation of the leader of the foreign residential settlement in Guangzhou, it constitutes evidence that private tribute was encouraged from foreign merchants from Southeast Asia who entered Guangzhou.

By contrast, countries such as Koryō and Japan, with which China had established tribute relations before the Song period, were invited by the Song court

<sup>22</sup> During the Song period, a leader of foreign residents (*fanzhang* 蕃長) was appointed to manage the foreign residential settlement at Guangzhou, where ships from Southeast Asia commonly arrived. One of the leader's duties was to obtain tribute from foreign merchants (*Pingzhou ketan* 2: 290). The case of Pu Ximi is an example of such a leader encouraging foreign merchants to present tribute to the Song court.

<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to discern what were official tribute missions or simple merchants among the many "tribute" missions during the Song period. Since foreign merchants could be given preferential treatment depending on compliance with the tribute form, many foreign merchants travelled to Chinese ports under the pretext of tribute missions (Li 2004, 47; Yang and Chen 2008, 313–15). This confirms that preferential treatment was the reason for following tribute formalities, but it also suggests that trade may have been impossible without adherence to tribute practices.

to pay official tribute. In 1068, the Song emperor ordered that an envoy be sent to Koryō to persuade the king, whose wisdom was praised, to present tribute, as Koryō, despite having faithfully done so since the early years of the Song period, had ceased the practice. As a result, a Song envoy, Huang Shen (黃慎), visited the Koryō court to transmit the Song emperor's wishes, which led Koryō to resume offering tribute in 1071, restoring a tributary relationship that had been severed for approximately forty years.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, the Song also sent an official letter to Japan in 1117 through merchants named Sun Junming (孫俊明) and Zheng Qing (鄭清). The letter contained the message that, “Japan is a country that cherishes humility as a virtue and possesses rare and precious national products. It had once presented tribute in the past, but the tribute practice has been discontinued for some time. Thus, the Song invites Japan to resume this practice.”<sup>25</sup> However, Japan refused to be incorporated into the tribute relations as required by the Song, thereby preventing the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.<sup>26</sup>

The Song initially sought to raise its political authority by incorporating its relations with foreign countries into the tribute system, regardless of economic gain or loss. However, fiscal difficulties faced by the Song court eventually made it difficult to maintain this position. Thus, the Song court began to apply more strict standards to financially burdensome tribute missions.<sup>27</sup> More specifically, the Song government restricted the frequency of tribute missions, received and entertained foreign envoys at provincial locations to prevent them from reaching the capital, and/or placed limitations on the number of envoys allowed to visit the capital (Kawahara 1980, 160).

As the financial situation worsened during the Southern Song, a policy shift of encouraging trade rather than the tribute system appears to have taken place. As a means to maintain a huge bureaucracy and cover vast military expenditures, the Song placed greater emphasis on trade, thus leading the tribute system to survive in name only with no real benefits (Li 2004, 48). This meant that the rulers of the Southern Song dynasty not only ceased to promote foreign tribute practices, but also refused to accept or only partially accepted tribute items, instituted restrictions on tribute missions travelling to the capital, and further cut the scale of tribute trade so as to reduce government expenditure. The tribute restrictions were further tightened during the reign of Emperor Xiaozong (孝宗, r. 1162–89). Soon after ascending the throne in 1162, the emperor issued the following edict banning foreign tribute:

Since my ascendance to the throne, foreign tribute continued to be presented. My

<sup>24</sup> *Koryōsa* 8: 177, entry for Munjong 22/7/Sinsa 文宗二十二年七月辛巳; *Huangchao biannian gangmu beiyao* 19: 450, entry for Xining 4/8 熙寧四年八月.

<sup>25</sup> *Shintei Zoku Zenrin kokuhōki* 68–71, recorded in an entry for Genei 1 (1118) 元永元年.

<sup>26</sup> Bielenstein indicates that the Japanese court sent monks to the Song on official diplomatic missions (2005). However, they were not envoys officially dispatched by the Japanese court, although the Song court chose to regard them as representing Japan. See Ishii 1993.

<sup>27</sup> See footnote 12.

predecessor as emperor was modest and did not receive tribute from foreign countries. I lack talent and virtue, and therefore I cannot accept foreign tribute either. Therefore, local officials should actively persuade foreign envoys to return to their country and must not report their arrival to the court.<sup>28</sup>

According to the edict, Emperor Xiaozong was not only unwilling to greet and entertain foreign tribute missions in the capital but prohibited reports of their arrival to the central government. This was a significant change from receiving the arrival of foreigners or foreign ships as part of the tribute system. The continuation of Emperor Xiaozong's anti-tribute attitude<sup>29</sup> and Song's anti-tribute policy can be seen in the resulting decrease in foreign tribute missions beginning in the 1160s and 70s. Koryŏ dispatched its last tribute mission in 1164.<sup>30</sup> The frequency of tribute by Arab countries dramatically declined in the Southern Song period and no tribute can be confirmed after 1168 (Yang and Chen 2008, 306–14). In addition, tribute presented by Champa (Zhancheng 占城, today central and southern Vietnam), which first began in 960, appears to have ended in 1176 (Chō 1974, 266–73).

Naturally, there were some countries that still presented tribute in the thirteenth century. However, the Song court dispatched messengers to these countries to persuade them not to present tribute anymore.<sup>31</sup> This demonstrates that the Song sustained its anti-tribute stance into the thirteenth century. It appears that the Song took the position of regarding incoming ships as trade vessels, not tribute ships, as it implemented a policy to discourage foreign tribute practices. The implementation of the anti-tribute policy seems to have allowed trade by foreign ships. Thus, incoming foreign ships no longer needed to pose as tribute vessels. As seen in the example of 1205 discussed above, trade ships came to be classified as *fanchuan* or *huibo*, a possible result of the shift in Song policy.

The policy change of the Song can also be seen in its attitude toward Buddhist monks from Japan. During the period of the Northern Song, Japanese monks arriving in China were treated as if they were a part of tribute missions, for example, being granted audiences with the emperor, who bestowed titles (*shihao* 師號) on them, along with the purple robes of a patriarch (*ziyi* 紫衣). However, no records are found that Japanese monks travelling to the Song after 1167 were granted an audience with the Song emperor (Enomoto 2010, 144–45). This may be attributable to the abolition of previous practices that treated visitors to the Song as tribute missions.

According to a statement by Emperor Xiaozong, the policy shift appears to have begun during the reign of his predecessor, Emperor Gaozong (高宗, r. 1127–

<sup>28</sup> *Song shi* 119, 2814.

<sup>29</sup> *Song huiyao jigao* 7: 49a; 51b, entry for Longxing 2/6/21 隆興二年六月二十一日; Qiandao 9/1/6 乾道九年正月六日.

<sup>30</sup> *Song shi* 487, 14052.

<sup>31</sup> *Song huiyao jigao* 4: 99–101, entry for Qingyuan 6/8/14 慶元六年八月十四日; Kaixi 1/8/23 開禧元年八月二十三日.

62). Although it is difficult to identify the precise date, the policy change could have been made after 1141, given that ships were still divided into trade vessels and tribute vessels in that year.

Abandoning the formality of tribute practices contributed toward establishing the foundation for recognizing all vessels as trade ships. Under such circumstance, it was not necessary for merchant ships sailing between countries under commission by Koryō or Japan to be issued a certificate of passage from the Song authorities to cross the East China Sea. The word “Koryō merchants” or “Japanese merchants,” which refers to the captains of Koryō or Japanese ships, seems to reflect changes in maritime trade. Merchant ships engaging in trade in the East China Sea became able to take the maritime route departing from Koryō or Japan to China and then returning to the point of departure, as well as the maritime route starting from China to Koryō or Japan and then returning to China. The Song began to classify the ships departing from Koryō or Japan as “Koryō ships” or “Japan ships,” respectively, and referred to the captains of these ships as “Koryō merchants” or “Japanese merchants.” Therefore, the appearance of “Koryō merchants” or “Japanese merchants” in Song records in the mid-twelfth century seems to reflect the change in the tribute policy of the Song.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the fact that the Song government only allowed vessels based in China to engage in foreign trade, while opening its ports solely to tribute vessels among foreign ships, at least up to 1141. This was the result of the Song’s efforts to maintain the Sinocentric tribute system, despite its diminishing power and international influence. However, worsening fiscal difficulties during the Southern Song period led the court to turn toward an anti-tribute policy due to the financial burden of the tribute system. While implementing policies that discouraged tribute practices, the Song came to permit trade by foreign ships. Consequently, the Song’s method of classifying each ship as a trade or tribute vessel based on its purpose changed into treating all ships as trade vessels and classifying them according to the point of departure regardless of whether they were based in China or overseas.

Reflecting this shift in Song policy, “Koryō merchants” and “Japanese merchants” appeared in maritime trade throughout the East China Sea, which had previously been led by Song merchants. These terms refer to merchants who sailed into Chinese ports under commission by Koryō or Japan. However, most of them were Chinese in ethnicity, and there was no fundamental difference in ethnic origin between them and other Song merchants. Arguably, the only meaningful difference was in the direction of their maritime trade route: Song merchants conventionally departed for Koryō or Japan and returned to China, while “Koryō merchants” or “Japanese merchants” travelled the opposite way. The latter trade route became available as the Song government allowed incoming foreign ships to conduct trade. Thus, the appearance of “Koryō merchants” and “Japanese merchants” is closely associated with the change in the Song’s tribute policy.

Through this investigation, this paper has sought to rectify the

conventionally accepted theory that all trade vessels were able to travel freely to China from the early years of the Song period. The existence of the maritime trade offices and Song policies of permitting private trade contributed toward creating the perception that the Song government allowed free travel to China by trade vessels based in foreign states as well as in China. However, incoming foreign vessels were prohibited from conducting trade without assuming the appearance of tribute vessels until the mid-twelfth century, when a shift in the tribute policy took place in the Song court. Before the mid-twelfth century, the Song government implemented policies that subsumed all exchanges with foreign states under tribute relationships, thereby leading to restrictions on travel by trade vessels.

## GLOSSARY

<i>biaowen</i>	表文	<i>jin</i>	斤
Chang Pogo	張保臯	Jōjin	成尋
Chōnen	齋然	Kaishu	快宗
Daisenji	大山寺	Kaikaku	戒覺
Dashi	大食	Li Awu	李亞勿
Dazaifu	太宰府	Liangzhe circuit	兩浙路
<i>dudie</i>	度牒	Liao	遼
<i>fanchuan</i>	蕃船	lu	路
<i>fanfan</i>	販蕃	Mingzhou	明州
<i>fanfang</i>	蕃坊	Nanpi	南毗
<i>fanzhang</i>	蕃長	Pu Ximi	蒲希密
Fujian circuit	福建路	Quanzhou	泉州
Gaozong	高宗	<i>quehuowu duchachang</i>	
Guangzhou	廣州		權貨務都茶場
<i>gongping</i>	公憑	<i>ribenchuan</i>	日本船
Guangnan circuit	廣南路	<i>shihao</i>	師號
<i>Guangzhou fanzhang</i>	廣州蕃長	<i>sibosi</i>	市舶司
<i>haiwai fanke</i>	海外蕃客	Sun Junming	孫俊明
Hangzhou	杭州	<i>wai fan jin feng ren shi hui fan chuan</i>	
Huang Shen	黃慎		外蕃進奉人使回蕃船
<i>huibo</i>	回舶	Wenzhou	溫州
Jakushō	寂照	wochuan	倭船
Jiangyin-jun	江陰郡	Xiaozong	孝宗
Jiaozhi	交趾	Xihe lu jingluesi	熙河路經略司

Xiuzhou	秀州	<i>zhaoshu</i>	詔書
Xixia	西夏	Zhancheng	占城
Xizhou	熙州	Zheng Qing	鄭清
<i>Yuanfeng Shibo Tiao</i>	元豐市舶條	Zhou Liangshi	周良史
Yutian	於闐	<i>zhuman</i>	諸蠻
Zhao Shanmi	趙善謐	<i>ziyi</i>	紫衣

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