

Chapter III

The Rise and Fall of the Tonkin-Nagasaki Silk Trade during the Seventeenth Century

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For about half a century, from the 1640s to the end of the 1680s, Tonkin played significant role in the maritime trading networks of the China Sea region by exporting raw silk at a time when it became increasingly difficult to obtain raw silk from China. In an attempt to cut into potentially lucrative silk trade, traders of diverse origins visited Tonkin's political capital and primary market, Hanoi. Apart from the Dutch East India Company (the VOC), private Chinese traders fiercely competed for Tonkinese raw silk because they were the only commercial agents allowed to trade with Japan directly and Japan was by far the largest importer of raw silk in the region.

Scholars such as W. Klein, Leonard Blussé, and more recently Hoang Anh Tuan provided detailed analyses on Dutch business transactions between Tonkin and Nagasaki.¹ In general, they agree that the Dutch export of Tonkinese raw silk to Japan was at its zenith from 1641 to 1654 and on the decline thereafter. On the other hand, Henriette Buggé's quantitative research proved that Chinese maritime traders were not inferior to the Dutch in exporting Tonkinese silk to Japan.² Still, it is fair to point out that due primarily to the lack of information on Chinese mercantile activities, the Tonkin-Nagasaki silk trade has been understood predominantly from the Dutch perspective. By placing the Tonkin-Nagasaki silk trade into the context of Chinese maritime commerce and relating that to the vicissitudes of the Dutch trade between the two places, this essay attempts to delineate a more balanced

¹ P. W. Klein, "De Tonkinees-Japnse zijdehandel van de Vereenigde Oost-indische Compagnie en het inter-Aziatische verkeer in de 17e eeuw," in *Bewogen en Bewegen: de historicus in het spanningsveld tussen economie en cultuur*, ed. W. Frijhoff and M. Hiemstra (Tilburg: Gianotten, 1986), 152–177; Leonard Blussé, "No Boats to China: The Dutch East India Company and the Changing Pattern of the China Sea Trade, 1635–1690," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1996): 51–76; Hoang Anh Tuan, *Silk for Silver: Dutch-Vietnamese Relations, 1637–1700* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007).

² Henriette Buggé, "Silk to Japan: Sino-Dutch Competition in the Silk Trade to Japan, 1633–1685," *Itinerario* 13, no. 2 (1989): 34.

picture of early modern maritime commerce in the China Sea region.

Since the different factors that affected the Tonkinese raw silk export occurred at different places—and often contemporaneously—it is not entirely practical to trace the sequence of events in a strict chronological order. Instead this essay focuses on several important events that brought about changes in the dynamics of maritime commerce in the China Sea region and examines how each event contributed to shaping the course of the trade between Tonkin and Nagasaki through the seventeenth century. To begin with, we shall look at changes in Japan's foreign policy during the 1630s and how they resulted in elevating Tonkin's position in the regional commercial networks in the following decades. The issues and conditions in China will be discussed later.

The Beginnings

There is no record on the status of Tonkinese raw silk in the Japan market during the first two decades of the seventeenth century. In 1619, William Adams (1564–1620) reported in his log book that Tonkinese silk was “the commodity most desired” for export to Japan.³ Then, in February 1634, the VOC observed that the Chinese junks imported 250,000 catties of raw silk to Japan including some from Tonkin.⁴ Until 1635 when the *bakufu* prohibited Japanese people from either leaving or returning to Japan, the Japanese merchants were active in trading between Tonkin and Japan. Each year the Japanese brought 25,000 to 30,000 taels of silver to Tonkin and, in exchange, purchased raw silk.⁵ In addition, Portuguese merchants, including some Jesuits, were instrumental in the raw silk trade. From their base at Macao, they conducted lucrative silk-for-silver trade between China and Japan since the late sixteenth century. The Portuguese Macao-Tonkin route was inaugurated in 1626 by Jesuit missionaries following the Japanese Christians who previously migrated to Tonkin via Macao.⁶ Regular trade transactions between Macao and Tonkin existed until the 1660s.⁷ From 1636 to 1638, the Portuguese imported much

³ C. J. Purnell, ed., *The Log-book of William Adams, 1614–1619* (London: The Eastern Press, 1916), 183.

⁴ *DB 1634*, 249.

⁵ *DB 1637*, 157.

⁶ Gonoi Takashi, “Nihon Iezusukai no Tōnan Ajia fukyō to Nihonjin shisai [The Catholic church in Japan and their missionary works in Southeast Asia in relation to diasporic Japanese communities],” *Nihon rekishi* 399 (1981): 58–59.

⁷ George Bryan Souza, *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630–1754* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 119.

more Tonkinese raw silk into Japan than Chinese raw silk.⁸ There is no doubt that Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese traders were engaged in transporting raw silk from northern Vietnam to Japan and that Tonkinese raw silk comprised a substantial share of Japan's import of raw silk in the mid-1630s.

In the meantime, having failed to settle themselves in mainland China, the Dutch established Casteel Zeelandia on the island of Taiwan 臺灣 in 1624. With no direct access to the Chinese market, the Company was dependent on Chinese boats traveling back and forth between Fujian 福建 and Taiwan for their supply of raw silk. Most of these Chinese ships were under the influence of Zheng Zhilong 鄭芝龍 (1604–1661), father of Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功 (1624–1662) or Koxinga.⁹ In 1636, in order to fully enforce anti-Christian measures and put down Jesuit infiltration, the *bakufu* was considering the possibility of terminating their relationship with the Portuguese, who had been the largest carrier of Chinese raw silk to Japan. Concerned about the future import of raw silk, the *bakufu* repeatedly questioned the Dutch merchants if they were capable of bringing in as much raw silk as the Portuguese had done. In 1637, the VOC responded to this by dispatching the *Grol* from Hirado to northern Vietnam with the aim of opening trade with Tonkin. Now that the Japanese merchants were out of overseas trade, the Dutch saw the perfect opportunity to take over the trade, which used to be controlled by the Japanese.¹⁰ In the following year, the VOC officially established a factory in Tonkin and began exporting Tonkinese raw silk to Japan.

In 1639, the Portuguese merchants were expelled from Japanese soil indefinitely and no longer allowed to trade with Japan. The *bakufu* sought to compensate for any shortages that might be incurred by the termination of the Portuguese Macao-Tonkin pipeline. In order to ensure a continued supply of raw silk the *bakufu* most likely approached Chinese merchants in Nagasaki with a request to increase their import of raw silk.¹¹ Such an official promotion of junk trade must have provided incentive for some Chinese merchants to expand their silk trade and encouraged others to start new businesses with Tonkin, which had a good record of exporting raw silk to Japan in the preceding years.

⁸ Takase Kōichirō, “Makao-Nagasaki kan bōeki no sōtorihikidaka, kiito torihikiryō, kiito kakaku [The turnover, amount, and price of raw silk of the Portuguese trade at Nagasaki in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries],” *Shakai-keizai-shigaku* 48, no. 1 (1982): 67–68.

⁹ Blussé, 65.

¹⁰ Nagazumi Yōko, “17 seiki chūki no Nihon-Tonkin bōeki nitsuite [The Tonkinese-Japanese trade in the mid-seventeenth century],” *Jōsai daigaku daigakuin kenkyū nenpō* 8 (1992): 25–26.

¹¹ Tashiro Kazui, “Foreign Relations during the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 8, no. 2 (1982): 293.

Chinese Competition

By eliminating the Japanese and Portuguese merchants, the introduction of the Japan's so-called *sakoku* policies during the 1630s created new opportunities not only for the Dutch but also for the private Chinese traders to increase trade between Tonkin and Nagasaki. As a result, the 1640s saw the rise of Tonkin as a leading exporter of raw silk in the region. In 1641 when Zheng's junks started trading directly with Japan, Tonkinese silk products grew its importance in the VOC's intra-Asian trade.¹² As mainland China was off-limits and the Zheng refused to cooperate, the VOC found a solution at Tonkin. In 1642 and 1643, the Dutch merchants discovered that with few prospective buyers around, farmers in Tonkin considered abandoning sericulture.¹³ The *Dagh-register Nagasaki* confirms that no Chinese junks from Tonkin were registered in the 1642 trading season and a mere 580 cattles of raw silk were imported to Nagasaki from Tonkin in 1643.¹⁴

In the second half of the 1640s, however, Chinese maritime traders invigorated their commercial activities and, as a result, created intense competition for raw silk on the Tonkin market. In 1647, the Dutch merchants at Nagasaki mentioned that a prominent Chinese resident of Japan sent his junks to Tonkin with a large capital.¹⁵ In the same year, two Chinese junks from Japan appeared at Tonkin with a sum of 80,000 taels in silver. Chinese merchants offered what the Dutch considered excessively high prices and succeeded in purchasing 40,000 cattles of raw silk as well as other commodities. Only after their departure were the Dutch able to purchase raw silk.¹⁶ In 1648, Chinese traders arrived at Tonkin with 120,000 taels of silver. Again, by bidding the highest price, they bought most of the silk available on the market. The Dutch had to wait to enter the market until these Chinese had departed for Japan.¹⁷ In 1649, three Chinese junks departed from Nagasaki to Tonkin.¹⁸ By that time, the Dutch factors recognized Chinese mercantile activities as foremost threat to the company's operation at Tonkin.¹⁹ In 1650, a Chinese trader come to Nagasaki from Tonkin with capital worth 80,000 taels. Learning that this particular Chinese trader would not return to Tonkin that year, Antonio van Brockhorst, the chief of the Dutch factory at Nagasaki, felt hopeful about

¹² Blussé, 67.

¹³ C. C. Van der Plas, *Tonkin 1644/45: Journal van de Reis van Anthonio van Brouckhorst* (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen te Amsterdam, 1955), 22.

¹⁴ Daily records of the factory on Deshima [DN], Oct. 16, 1642, NFJ 56; DN, Nov. 7, 1643, NFJ 57.

¹⁵ DN, Aug. 6 and 9, 1647.

¹⁶ *GM*, vol. 2 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 325.

¹⁷ Hoang, 153.

¹⁸ DN, Dec. 17, 23, and 25, 1649, NFJ 63.

¹⁹ Blussé, 143–164.

the Company's business prospects in the next trading season at Tonkin because "the Company would not be hindered as much by the Chinese."²⁰ It was clear that during the second half of the 1640s Chinese merchants with substantial financial capabilities began exporting Tonkinese raw silk to Nagasaki and Chinese shipping 清 activities cast a shadow over the future course of the VOC business at Tonkin.

Different groups of Chinese merchants were involved in exporting Tonkinese raw silk and their arrival intensified competition for raw silk in the Tonkin market. Ships belonging to the Zheng family competed with other Chinese merchants such as He Bin 何斌 (or Pincqua) from Taiwan and the Wei brothers (Wei Zhiyuan 魏之琰 [d. 1654] and Wei Zhiyan 魏之琰 [1618–1689]) from Fuqing 福清.²¹ Bidding against each other, their strong commercial activities led to an increase in the purchase price of raw silk in Tonkin. In 1650, for instance, the arrival of six Chinese junks completely thwarted Dutch business. Chinese merchants offered high purchase prices that the Dutch could not afford.²² It was only after their departure that the VOC managed to procure raw silk.²³ In 1652, the arrival of five Chinese junks again spurred competition in Tonkin. While the Dutch factory had approximately 250,000 taels available for that trading season these five Chinese junks together brought a sum of 400,000 taels of silver.²⁴ In 1654, the Governor-General Joan Maetsuycker (1606–1678) could not help but noticing that "if Chinese traders would continue to offer high purchase price for raw silk, the VOC would no longer be able to obtain much silk in Tonkin in the coming years."²⁵ In the face of the acute competition in the Tonkin market, the VOC shifted its primary silk supplier once again from Tonkin to Bengal in the mid-1650s.²⁶

²⁰ DN, Oct. 19, 1650, NFJ 63.

²¹ For the career of He Bin, see Tonio Andrade, "Chinese under European Rule: The Case of Sino-Dutch Mediator He Bin," *Late Imperial China* 28, no. 1 (2007): 1–32. Regarding the Wei brothers, see Iioka Naoko, "Wei Zhiyan and the Subversion of the *Sakoku*," in *Offshore Asia: Maritime Interactions in Eastern Asia*, ed. Anthony Reid, Momoki Shirō, and Fujita Kayoko (Singapore: Singapore University Press, forthcoming); Iioka Naoko, "Literati Entrepreneur: Wei Zhiyan in the Tonkin-Nagasaki Silk Trade" (Ph. D. diss., National University of Singapore, 2009).

²² DN, July 23 and 26, 1650, NFJ 63.

²³ *GM*, vol. 2, 450–451.

²⁴ *GM*, vol. 2, 702; Kurihara Fukuya, "Oranda Higashi Indo gaisha to Tonkin, 1653: Generale Missiven 1654 yori [The Dutch East India Company and Tonkin in 1653: Seen from the 'General Missive' of 1654]," *Tokyo joshi daigaku shakai gakkai kiyō* 21 (1993): 16.

²⁵ Kurihara, 26.

²⁶ Blussé, 68; Hoang, 148–149.

The Qing Maritime Ban and the Zheng's Landing on Taiwan

In China, the Qing 清 court struggled to establish control over China littoral. In order to prevent the coastal population from supplying aid and provisions to the Zheng naval forces, the Qing issued a series of restrictive maritime policies. With the promulgation of a maritime ban (*haijin* 海禁) in 1655 all Chinese maritime activities were considered illegal. From 1661 onwards, the Qing introduced more drastic measures to eliminate any possibility of collaboration between the Zheng navy and the local population. The residents of such coastal provinces as Guangdong 廣東, Fujian, Zhejiang 浙江, Jiangsu 江蘇, and Shandong 山東 were forcibly relocated inland to a distance of fifteen to twenty-five kilometers.²⁷ Gradually being cornered, Zheng Chenggong launched an attack on the Dutch on Taiwan. In 1662, after a nine-month siege, the Dutch fortress fell, thus bringing an end to the Dutch rule over the island.

The Qing maritime ban and the Zheng's landing on Taiwan exerted a substantial influence on Chinese commercial shipping between Tonkin and Nagasaki. Firstly, with the loss of Taiwan, the VOC sought to revive its position in the China Sea region. As part of their effort to restructure their business organization in Asia, the Dutch merchants at Tonkin explored the possibility of overland trade by dispatching an exploratory expedition to the border area between Tonkin and China.²⁸ At the same time they adopted more aggressive policies towards Chinese junks sailing in high seas. In 1662, hoping to secure the purchase of Tonkinese raw silk, the governor-general and the Council of the Indies at Batavia ordered their fleet leaving for the China coast to attack the rich junks trading between China and Japan. In the summer of 1663, the governor-general dispatched a vessel from Batavia to Tonkin for the purpose of intercepting the fully laden Chinese junks leaving Tonkin for Nagasaki.²⁹ Due to this procedure, two junks under Wei Zhiyan, who had been the most successful in exporting Tonkinese raw silk to Nagasaki since the mid-1650s, were blockaded by the Dutch ships and unable to depart Tonkin for two consecutive years. Furthermore the governor-general instructed Dutch merchants in Tonkin to attack Chinese junks trading from Tonkin to Cambodia as well as Siamese junks sailing from Tonkin to Nagasaki.³⁰ However, the strategy failed because the magistrates of Nagasaki and other Japanese officials, who had a personal stake in these Chinese junks, explicitly expressed their strong discontent

²⁷ Cheng K'o-ch'eng (Cheng Kecheng 鄭克晟), "Cheng Cheng-kung's Maritime Expansion and Early Ch'ing Coastal Prohibition," in *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. E. B. Vermeer (Leiden and New York: Brill Academic Publishers, 1990), 238–240.

²⁸ Hoang, 106–109.

²⁹ *DB 1663*, 194, 690.

³⁰ Hoang, 114.

at the Dutch handling of these Chinese junks. In addition, the Trịnh government of Tonkin provided the Chinese junks with protection against the Dutch aggression.³¹ When it became obvious that both Japanese and Tonkinese authorities did not want the Dutch to intrude the Chinese commercial activities, the VOC had to give their Chinese competitors free rein.³²

Secondly, the Zheng's withdrawal from the mainland intensified competition among Chinese maritime traders. Though Taiwan produced deerskins and sugar, which were in high demand in Japan, the island did not produce silk. Fujian's export industry depended on the supply of raw silk from Jiangsu and Zhejiang.³³ As these areas came under the influence of the Qing, silk became scarce and expensive in Fujian. Chinese merchants were no longer able to find sufficient amounts of export items at such major commercial port as Fuzhou 福州, Amoy 廈門, Quanzhou 泉州, and Zhangzhou 漳州.³⁴ Zheng Jing 鄭經 (1642–1681), who succeeded his father Zheng Chenggong after the latter's untimely death, strove to find a way to obtain silk and other merchandise outside China. He approached the Spanish at Manila and the English at Banten.³⁵ As the condition along China's southern coastal regions turned against them, Zheng's forces resorted to more violent acts towards Chinese junks trading in the China Sea region. In 1673, English merchants observed that the "Chinese in Taiwan were chiefly bent on attacking the Tonkin junks bound for Japan."³⁶ Zheng's fleets were clearly targeting the rich cargoes of Chinese junks sailing from Tonkin to Nagasaki. They succeeded at least once during the summer of 1676: the Zheng naval vessels ambushed and plundered a junk belonging to Wei Zhiyan near Macao while it was en route to Japan.³⁷

³¹ Iioaka, "Wei Zhiyan and the Subversion of the *Sakoku*." Also see Hoang, 113–114.

³² Letter from the governor-general of Batavia to Nagasaki, Apr. 25, 1665, in *DB 1665*, 89–90.

³³ Fan Jinmin 范金民, *Jiangnan sichoushi yanjiu* 江南絲綢史研究 [Historical studies on silk in Jiangnan] (Beijing 北京: Nongye chubanshe 農業出版社, 1993), 261–262; Xu Xiaowang 徐曉望, "Wanming Fujian yu Jianzhe de quyu maoyi 晚明福建與江浙的區域貿易 [On the regional trade between Fujian and the two provinces Jiangsu and Zhejiang in the late-Ming dynasty]," *Fujian shifan daxue xuebao (zhe she)* 福建師範大學學報 (哲社) 1 (2004): 22–30.

³⁴ Pang Xiping 龐新平, "Kai-hentai kara mita Shinsho no kaikin to Nagasaki bōeki [Chinese junk trade with Nagasaki during the period of the maritime ban in the early Qing as seen from *Kai hentai*]," *Osaka keidai ronshū* 55, no. 1 (2004): 232–233, 238.

³⁵ E. H. Blair and J. A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493–1898* (Cleveland, Ohio: A. H. Clark, 1903–1909), vol. 42, 119.

³⁶ Quoted from C. R. Boxer, *Jan Campagnie in Japan, 1600–1850: An Essay on the Cultural, Artistic and Scientific Influence Exercised by the Hollanders in Japan from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950), 183.

³⁷ DN, Aug. 5, 1667, NFJ 89.

In sum, in the mid-seventeenth century, while Japanese and Tonkinese interventions rendered the Dutch attempts to hinder Chinese commercial activities invalid, unavailability of the supply of Chinese raw silk increased competition for the purchase of Tonkinese raw silk among Chinese maritime traders.

The Revolt of the Three Feudatories, 1673–1681

In 1673, Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612–1678) of Yunnan 雲南 revolted against the Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1661–1722). That triggered the anti-Qing movement known as the Revolt of the Three Feudatories. Geng Jingzhong 耿精忠 in Fuzhou and Shang Zhixin 尚之信 (d. 1680) in Guangdong followed Wu. Initially, Geng and Shang, the two warlords from the coastal provinces, not only dispatched their own junks to Nagasaki but also invited other Chinese traders to visit their ports. They encouraged foreign trade and promised to protect traders against the Qing navy. Yet, their initiatives soon went to naught for both Geng and Shang surrendered to the Qing in 1676.³⁸ From then on, although some private junks still managed to slip through the Qing lines of inshore defense and reached Japan, the Chinese maritime traders found it exceedingly difficult to gather enough merchandise to fit out ocean-going junks at any Chinese port.³⁹

Under the circumstances some traders visited Tonkin because their access to Chinese ports was denied. In April 1675, a Chinese merchant arriving in Tonkin reported that his junk first “went from Batavia last year to Canton [Guangdong] where she loaded and went to Japan. And this year [his junk] went to Canton again from Japan but could not negotiate his affairs there by reason of the war between the usurping Tatar and the Chinese. Most China at present prohibits all trade even to their own people therefore this China man came hither [Tonkin].”⁴⁰ After Shang Zhixin was arrested and executed in 1680, Guangdong came under Qing control.⁴¹ In 1683, a junk from Guangdong submitted a report to the Nagasaki authorities explaining that three junks, including his, were chased away from Guangdong by the Qing patrol boats, one of them took shelter at Tonkin and the other two headed to Cochinchina.⁴² These accounts highlight Tonkin’s position in the China Sea trade

³⁸ Tanaka Katsumi, “Shinsho no Shina enkai: Senkairei o chūshin toshite mitaru [China coast in the early Qing period: The removal from boundary],” *Rekishigaku kenkyū* 6, no. 1 (1936): 73–81; no. 3: 319–330.

³⁹ Pang, 234–239.

⁴⁰ IOR, G/12/17, pt. 2: 130v.

⁴¹ Pang, 236–237.

⁴² Hayashi Harukatsu and Hayashi Nobuatsu, eds., *Kai hentai* [Conditions accompanying the change from the Ming to the Qing] (henceforth cited as *KH*), vol. 1 (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1981), 359–360, 388–392.

during the seventeenth century. When Chinese ports became inaccessible from the sea, Tonkin functioned as an alternative outlet for traders who wished to procure goods for the Japanese market.

Overland traffic between China and northern Vietnam was another critical factor affecting the position of Tonkin in the China Sea region. Chinese traders from Guangxi 廣西 province regularly visited Tonkin through overland routes connecting northern Vietnam and China. It took roughly thirty days to cross the mountains between Guangxi and Hanoi.⁴³ The Vietnamese officials as well participated in trade across the border. In 1672, the English were informed that “*Ung-ja Hans*, one of the four great governors of the Kingdom [of Tonkin], who commands all that part of the country bordering China, is a great merchant.”⁴⁴ Between 1673 and 1681, Wu Sangui and, after his death, his grandson Wu Shifan 吳世璠 (d. 1681) were at war with the Qing. As a result, transport of silk goods from Zhejiang—which, as mentioned before, was the major center of silk production in China—was severely interrupted and silk products became rare especially in the Yunnan, Sichuan 四川, and Guizhou 貴州 provinces. Guangxi merchants traveled to Hanoi on foot and procured Tonkinese raw silk for export the war-stricken provinces. On arrival of the Guangxi traders, the purchase price of raw silk soared accordingly.⁴⁵

Rise of Ningbo and Demise of Tonkin

The demise of the Tonking-Nagasaki silk trade by Chinese maritime traders may be attributed to the Qing conquest of Taiwan and the consequent lifting of the maritime ban in the mid-1680s. From the 1650s to the early 1680s, as the Qing tightened control over the coastal areas, the number of Chinese junks visiting Nagasaki decreased gradually (Table 1). In 1681, this number was at its lowest.⁴⁶ The Qing’s measures to strengthen coastal security were taking full effect. In 1683, the last remnants of the Zheng regime surrendered to the Qing. In the following

⁴³ *KH*, vol. 1, 208–209.

⁴⁴ IOR, G/12/17, pt. 1: 38r.

⁴⁵ *KH*, vol. 1, 208–209.

⁴⁶ According to Dutch sources, no Chinese junk appeared in Nagasaki in 1681. Iwao Seiichi, “Kinsei Nisshi bōeki ni kansuru sūryōteki kōsatsu [A quantitative survey on the Sino-Japanese trade in the early modern period],” *Shigaku zasshi* 62, no. 11 (1953): 12. On the other hand, Japanese sources reveal that nine junks arrived at Nagasaki. Arano Yasunori, “Kinsei chūki no Nagasaki bōeki taisei to nukeni [The trading system and contraband trade in Nagasaki in the middle of the Tokugawa era],” in *Nihon kinseishi ronsō* [A collection of historical studies on Japan under the Tokugawa bakufu], ed. Bitō Masahide Sensei Kanreki Kinenkai (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1984), 407. Either way, the least number of incoming Chinese junks was recorded in 1681.

years, the restrictions that had been imposed for about three decades on the coastal and overseas shipping were finally removed. Upon lifting of the ban, numerous commercial junks sailed out from mainland China to the outer sea, completely changing the rhythm of commerce in the East and Southeast Asian waters.

The number of Chinese junks that arrived at Nagasaki shows the sudden and enormous expansion of direct shipping between mainland China and Japan. Although the two sets of figures presented in Table 1 do not exactly match, a common trend can be observed: a sharp increase in the number of Chinese junks visiting Nagasaki after 1685. Japanese sources reveal that eighty-five junks from various ports of China flocked to Nagasaki in 1685 alone.⁴⁷ This number continued to rise until 1688 when a disproportionately high total of 194 Chinese vessels gathered at Nagasaki.⁴⁸ On average, both the Dutch and Japanese sources agree that more than one hundred junks visited Nagasaki every year during the second half of the 1680s.

Table 1 Chinese Shipping to Nagasaki in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century (Annual Average of Five-Year Periods)

Year	Number of Chinese Junks	
	According to the Dutch Archives	According to Japanese Sources
1650–1654	54.8	N/A
1655–1659	54	N/A
1660–1664	42.2	N/A
1665–1669	36.8	N/A
1670–1674	33	31.8
1675–1679	28.6	28.2
1680–1684	23.4	23.0
1685–1689	118.8	119.4
1690–1694	81	81.4
1695–1699	81.6	77.2

Source: Iwao, 12–13; Arano, 407.

Notes: Chinese junks include those from mainland China, Taiwan, and all other Southeast Asian ports. As for the period of 1685–1689, the numbers include those junks that were forced to leave Nagasaki without trading.

⁴⁷ Hayashi Fukusai, ed. *Tsūkō ichiran* [Catalogue of the seaborne traffic], vol. 4 (Osaka: Seibundō Shuppan, 1967), 300, 310.

⁴⁸ Arano, 407.

The immediate impact of the lifting of the ban was that Ningbo 寧波 and its offshore island Putuoshan 普陀山 reemerged as major trading centers for the Japan trade. In the early 1690s, Ningbo clearly supplanted Tonkin as the hub of raw silk export to Japan. In 1691, a Chinese merchant, whose junk just sailed into Nagasaki from Tonkin via Ningbo, reported that “due to its convenient location, numerous junks from many different places were unremittingly gathering at Ningbo and therefore, to be honest, it was impossible to know exactly how many junks were coming to Nagasaki from there.”⁴⁹ This shift was reflected in the itineraries of junks traveling between Tonkin and Nagasaki (Table 2). Merchant junks from Ningbo began to appear at Tonkin en route to Nagasaki. Moreover, even those that used to trade directly between Tonkin and Nagasaki called at Ningbo. For example, in 1693, a Chinese trader, who had been in the business between Tonkin and Nagasaki for the previous few years, arrived at Tonkin, hoping to secure the purchase of Tonkinese raw silk and textiles. However, when he found the supply of raw silk to be rare and expensive, he decided not to purchase any raw silk in Tonkin. He directed his junk to Putuoshan where it was loaded the vessel with raw silk and textiles prearranged and transferred from Ningbo.⁵⁰ From 1694 to 1696, no Chinese junk arrived at Nagasaki from Tonkin (Table 2). In 1697, a junk from Tonkin reappeared in Nagasaki. A report submitted by a chief merchant of this junk is indicative of grim commercial prospects in Tonkin at the end of the seventeenth century. Upon his arrival at Nagasaki, he reported to the Nagasaki authorities that “there was no junk leaving for overseas at a harbor of Tonkin [at the time when his junk departed there]. Many commercial junks used to visit this place in order to obtain products of Tonkin. Junks from Tonkin had visited Nagasaki for many years. However, in recent years, no junks came to Tonkin for trade.”⁵¹

Table 2 “Tonkinese Junks” as Recorded in *Kai hentai*, 1680–1712

Year	Ship No.	Navigation Route
1680	15	N/A
	25	Tonkin–Nagasaki
1681	N/A	Tonkin–(wrecked on the way to Nagasaki)
	N/A	Tonkin–(wrecked on the way to Nagasaki)
1682	4	Tonkin–Nagasaki
1684	2	Tonkin–Nagasaki
	4	Tonkin–Nagasaki

⁴⁹ *KH*, vol. 2, 1317–1318.

⁵⁰ *KH*, vol. 2, 1565–1566.

⁵¹ *KH*, vol. 2, 1933–1934.

1686	71	Tonkin–Nagasaki
	72	Tonkin–Nagasaki
1689	42	Tonkin–Nagasaki
	44	Amoy–Tonkin–Nagasaki
1690	82	Tonkin–Nagasaki
	87	Amoy–Tonkin–Nagasaki
1691	18	Ningbo–Nagasaki
	85	Wenzhou 温州–Nagasaki
1692	59	Tonkin–Nagasaki
1693	58	Ningbo–Tonkin–Putuoshan–Nagasaki
1697	86	Amoy–Tonkin–Putuoshan–Nagasaki
1698	70	Ningbo–Tonkin–Nagasaki
1699	37	Ningbo–Tonkin–Nagasaki
1702	88	N/A
1703	N/A	N/A
1708	101	Guangdong–Tonkin–Nagasaki
	102	Tonkin–Nagasaki
1710	52	Ningbo–Tonkin–Ningbo–Nagasaki
1711	55	Ningbo–Tonkin–Putuoshan–Nagasaki
1712	62	Ningbo–Tonkin–Putuoshan–Wenzhou–Nagasaki

Source: Modified from Iioka, “Ayutaya kokuō no tainichi bōeki,” 98.

Note: Ship No. is as registered at Nagasaki.

Between 1690 and 1712, the Nagasaki authorities classified fourteen Chinese junks into the category of “Tonkinese junk,” even though seven of them actually came from Ningbo.⁵² Only three junks (No.82 of 1690, No.59 of 1692, and No.102 of 1708) sailed directly from Tonkin to Nagasaki (Table 2). All the three junks belonged to a Tonkin-based Chinese trader called Lin Yuteng 林于騰 who had been trading between Tonkin and Nagasaki since the late 1660s.⁵³ He was the only Chinese merchant carrying out bilateral trade with Japan after 1685. His last junk appeared at Tonkin in 1708, which marked the end of the direct shipping between Tonkin and Nagasaki. After returning to Tonkin, he sold his old junk to another

⁵² Before 1715, the Chinese interpreters at Nagasaki geographically categorized all incoming Chinese junks according to several factors such as port of departure and origins of cargoes. However, the criteria were not consistently applied over the course of the seventeenth century. Therefore, it was possible that a junk that came from Ningbo to Nagasaki by way of Tonkin was classified as a Tonkin junk. See, Iioka, “Ayutaya kokuō no tainichi bōeki,” 69.

⁵³ Iioka, “Literati Entrepreneur,” 108–143.

Chinese merchant from Ningbo and retired from overseas business.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The seventeenth century witnessed Tonkin's rise and fall as an international entrepôt in the China Sea region. While the supply of Chinese raw silk suffered due to the Ming-Qing transition and the subsequent political turmoil in China, Tonkin gained its importance as an exporter of raw silk for the Japanese market. Chinese maritime traders took advantage of the void that was created by the *sakoku* policies of the Tokugawa *bakufu* and the maritime ban by the Qing court. Tonkinese raw silk was in demand so long as the Qing maritime policies prohibited Chinese junks from going overseas and Tonkin enjoyed privileged access to the Japanese market. However, when the Qing rescinded the ban and silk from the lower Yangzi River Delta once again started flowing out into overseas markets, Tonkinese raw silk lost its competitive edge and Tonkin lost its relevance to commercial junks that had to sneak past the ban in the past.

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⁵⁴ *KH*, vol. 3, 2680.

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