

Titel	Seafaring, Trade and Knowledge Transfer: Maritime Politics and Commerce in Early Middle Period to Early Modern China
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Projektbeschreibung	<p>The ascendancy of China as a maritime power was very obvious by the thirteenth century when large battle ships, sent by the Mongol rulers of the Chinese Yuan court (1271–1368), started military offensives against Japan (in 1274 and 1280) and the kingdoms of Champa (in 1281) and Java (in 1292–93). But, although Chinese authorities did not officially sponsor maritime trade before the late Tang dynasty (618–906), maritime relations have been very active since the fourth century at the latest. The great upswing of maritime trade and commerce, however, occurred during the mid Tang to early/mid Song, the so-called Tang-Song transition period (c. 850–1200). While on the one hand Chinese politics and society experienced a Neo-Confucian reorientation with quite negative attitudes especially towards the northern “barbarians”, her maritime borders became increasingly permeable and foreign traders were rather welcomed than banned. The reasons for the shift of trade routes from the traditional overland to maritime routes have to be sought for in the political instability in Central, North and East Asia, and, last but not least, in China herself. The importance of this period notwithstanding it is still very much unexplored in historical studies, above all because China was divided into several kingdoms at that time (I).</p> <p>By the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279), China’s maritime trade had received an unforeseen peak. China functioned as the economic motor of the whole Asian region. With the Mongol conquest, when China became part of the Mongolian Empire, new avenues in the exchange of knowledge, products, and human migration emerged. And to an unforeseen extent did maritime space also serve for military purposes, as the offenses of the Yuan navy against Japan, Champa and Java may show (Song-Yuan transition; II).</p> <p>With the founding of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), Chinese rulers suddenly officially implemented a new policy, which to a certain extent can be characterized as a form of “iron-curtain-policy” both towards their northern and north-western neighbours and towards their sea border (maritime prohibition policy between 1371 and 1567). Historians even speak of a kind of “rupture” between a period of pro- and a sudden anti-foreign and anti-maritime commerce policy. The shift from the Yuan period promotion of maritime trade to the early Ming maritime trade proscription, the question of to what extent maritime commerce was actually maintained – after all it was in the course of the Ming when “international” trade relations experienced another unforeseen peak – and which characteristics the inter-relation between military and commercial activities possessed during this “Yuan-Ming transition” (1350–1500) is an almost absolute white sheet in maritime history, a fact that has much to do with the underestimation of the importance of maritime commerce</p>

	<p>for both the Yuan and the Ming and a kind of reluctance of sinologists to study the Mongol Yuan period. A thorough investigation of China's maritime policy, of local maritime activities, and commercial and technological exchange during that time is, therefore, of major importance to understand the background behind this change as well as the involvement and interaction of official, in particular military (naval), government authorities and personnel in and with private commerce (II, III).</p> <p>In the late sixteenth century, a semi-nomadic people, the Manchus, rose in Northeast Asia and eventually invaded China and established their own dynasty, the Qing, as rulers. Again ruled by a foreign people, China largely extended her borders into north and northwest Central Asia and colonized new territories, while maritime relations and commerce seemingly played only a minor role and the focus lay basically on border security. While this is not absolutely incorrect, recent scholarship has already started to show that maritime commerce was much more important for the Qing than hitherto suspected. But exactly because continental space was more important for the Manchu rulers than maritime space, the latter has still rather been neglected and underestimated in historical research, both in terms of commercial and cultural exchange as well as human interaction. The fourth sub-projects intend to fill this gap (IV, a and b).</p> <p>Periods Investigated (1) Tang-Song transition (c. 850–1200); (2) Song-Yuan transition (c. 1200–1350); (3) Yuan-Ming transition (c. (1350–1500); (4) Ming-Qing transition (c.1500–1800);</p>
Methode	Comparative Historical Analyses
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