

## A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON A *MIRROR OF JAPAN* (RIBENYIJIAN)<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** After the reign of Emperor Jiajing of the Ming Dynasty, as the Japanese pirates' problem became more and more serious, books devoted to the study of Japan began to be published. Among them, the most important ones are *A Brief Survey of Japan* (Ri Ben Kao Lue), *A Compilation of Japanese Maps* (Ri Ben Tu Zuan), *A Mirror of Japan* (Ri Ben Yi Jian), *A Survey of Japan* (Ri Ben Kao), *A Record of Japanese Customs* (Ri Ben Fen Tu Ji), and *A Biography of Japanese Pirates in Qiantai* (Qian Tai Wo Zhuan). Out of these, *A Mirror of Japan* is a special one. In addition, there are also special books that depict the general ambiance of Japan, such as *A Collection of Coastal Military Maps* (Chou Hai Tu Bian), *Resistance to Japanese Pirates in Ming Dynasty* (Huang Ming Yu Wo Lu), the *Compilation of Coastal Defense* (Hai Fang Zuan Yao) and the *Continuation of Coastal Defense Category in Zhedong and Zhexi Regions* (Liang Zhe Hai Fang Lei Kao Xu Bian). Zheng Shungong, the author of the book *A Mirror of Japan*, visited Japan twice, so many contents in the book are based on his own experience and knowledge. Therefore, the breadth and scope of his research on Japan had gone beyond the similar literature of the Ming Dynasty. Moreover, the Japanese pirates' record and analysis in the book are of great research value. Before the publication of Huang Zunxian's *Annals of Japan* (Ri Ben Tu Zhi), *A Mirror of Japan* was one of the highest levels of monographs on Japan in ancient China.

**Keywords:** *A Mirror of Japan* (Ri Ben Yi Jian). Zheng Shungong. Monographs on Japan. Coastal-defense literature. Resisting-Japanese literature.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1523 (the second year of Jiaping in the Ming Dynasty), Jeong went to Kyoto with Japanese monk Changho on a mission to Japan. In 1555 (the 34th year of Jiaping in the Ming Dynasty), he again volunteered to be dispatched to Japan and was allowed to set out in May 1556. As for the reason for Zheng Shungong's mission to Japan, it is said that: "In the year of Yimao (the 34th year of Jiaping in Ming Dynasty), he went to The Prefecture to make a statement that Meng Shengming would not be guilty of stupidity. He sent the military department to the governor's army gate and sent his letter to Zhejiang province to discuss the situation. He was sent to Japan, interviewed the barbarians' situation, randomly opened an oracle, and returned to the implementation of the report (ZHU, 2014, p. 201)." As Japanese pirates ravaged the southeast coast of China, the Ming court carried out a policy of opening up a wide range of channels to allow people from all walks of life to present their suggestions. The Ming Dynasty also issued a notice in this regard: "One person should be appointed, but those who defend the Japanese army should have open disclosure cards and come to the headquarters from time to time for selection (ZHU, 2014, p. 211)." It was under this background that Zheng Shungong volunteered to go to Japan with the permission of the Ming Dynasty.

Zheng Shungong's "A Mirror of Japan" is an important historical material for the study of Japanese pirates and Sino-Japanese relations in the Ming Dynasty. In recent years, this book has earned accolades from academic circles because it also records the relevant contents of Diaoyu Island and takes into account the jurisdiction of Diaoyu Island in ancient China. However, due to various reasons, the book *A Mirror of Japan* has had limited circulation in history and has not been recorded in various bibliographies of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. During the period of the Republic of China, Wang Yong's Catalogue of Coastal Defense in the Ming Dynasty and Wu Yunian's Historical Records of Japanese Pirates in the Ming Dynasty collected no less than 150 books of literature on resisting Japanese pirates in the sea, but none of them recorded the book *A Mirror of Japan*. This has continued to the present day. So far, no scholars have systematically collated *A Mirror of Japan*. Taiwan scholar Zheng Liangsheng, based on the photocopies of the old copies in the 28th year of the Republic of China ("One Mirror of Japan" in the 28th year of the Republic of China is based on photocopies of old manuscripts, with a total of five volumes. According to Japanese scholar Watanabe Sano's "One Mirror

of Japan”: Introduction to Japan at the End of the Ming Dynasty” textual research, this manuscript is a copy of the ancient bookstore in Wendian Pavilion on Longfusi Street, Beijing.), collated the contents of volumes 6 to 9 of the book. In addition, academic circles failed to explore the origin, compilation style, ideas, and other contents of *A Mirror of Japan* at the time. There were only Historical Materials of Portugal and Australia in *A Mirror of Japan* by Tang Kaijian (1995, p. 23), research on the Collections of Japanese Sea Charts, and the maritime routes between China and Japan in the Ming Dynasty by Zhu Jianqiu (2000, p. 35), Japanese Pirates’ Historical Materials in Zheng Shungong’s *A Mirror of Japan* by Zheng Liangsheng (2001, p. 35), Zheng Shungong and his *A Mirror of Japan* by Shi Peilei (2010, p. 21), Zheng Shungong’s Voyage to Japan by Zheng Changyong. Moreover, there were also only a few articles available about Zheng Shungong’s biography and the writing of *A Mirror of Japan*, such as Bian Li’s textual research on Zheng Shungong’s native place, life story, and diplomatic mission to Japan in the Ming Dynasty (ZHU, 2014, p. 231).

Historically, after the completion of “*A Mirror of Japan*”, it was not published in large numbers, resulting in restricted circulation. The original edition has not been found, and some manuscripts persevered in the Qing Dynasty. According to the Japanese scholar Nakajima Kei’s statistics, there are fourteen collections of six major types of “*A Mirror of Japan*” that we have a record of thus far. There are two more common versions now: one is the photocopy of the old manuscript in 1939 (the twenty-eighth year of the Republic of China) mentioned above. The Japanese scholar Watanabe Sano called his manuscript a copy of the ancient bookstore in the Palace of Wendian Pavilion on Longfusi Street in Beijing. The other is a transcript completed by Hiroshi Mikoshiri in 1937. The Japanese manuscripts include the collection of the National History Research Office of Kyoto University and the collection of the Affiliated Library of Kyoto University. Mitsujiri Hiroshi is based on these two manuscripts.

*A Mirror of Japan*, written by Zheng Shungong of the Ming Dynasty has 16 volumes which are divided into three parts (BIAN, 2017, p. 16). Among them, Fhai Tujing has three volumes to mainly record the author’s travels to Japan. Zheng Shungong set out from Guangzhou and sailed through Wuqiu Mountain to Arima Island in Japan. The ship encountered a typhoon and drifted to the country of Bungo, Japan. Bungo Kingdom was one of Japan’s decree-based countries, and it is about the area except for the northern

part of the current Oita Prefecture. The lord is the town of Yuanyi, a daimyo during the Warring States Period of Japan (i.e., Otomo Zonglin). Zheng Shungong's return route first started from Fenghou Kingdom, passed through Horseshoe Reef located on the south side of the Five Islands and northwest of Yakushima Island, wound through Da and Xiaoliuqiu, and finally returned to Guangzhou after a 40-day voyage. The southeastern coast is raging, and Zhejiang and Fujian are the most poisoned by Japanese pirates. Although Zhejiang and Fujian have relatively mature sea routes to Japan. In order to avoid Japanese pirates, Zheng Shungong, from the perspective of travel safety, after weighing, chose to travel to and from Japan via Guangdong. The first volume, WanLiChangGe, describes Zheng Shungong's courses and the islands he passed through during his sailing after he went from Guangdong to Japan. The second volume, Cang Hai Jin Jing, contains many maps to mainly record the situation of the islands in the sea along the way. The third volume, Tian Shi Ji Cheng, focuses on the geographical situation of Japan and his whereabouts of himself, and the mission. The fourth volume, Jue Dao Xin Bian, aims to record the geography of Japan, territory and division. Volume I contains a number of maps of Japan with explanations, including those drawn by Japanese visitors and Ming people, as well as those drawn by Zheng Shungong himself. Zheng Shungong's *"A Mirror of Japan"* "New Edition of Absolute Island" includes the following 11 kinds of maps: "China's East Overseas Fence Japan Travel Base Map", "Bungo Island Barbarian Drawings", "First Azusa Examination Sketches", "Continued Azusa Examination Sketch, Map of Guangyu Map, Map of Japanese Maps, Map of Yidu City Gate, Map of Yiwang Palace, Map of Kubo Palace, Map of Shanchengfang City, Hirado Island picture". The other three volumes introduce mountains and rivers of Japan, prefectures and counties, lanes and markets, daily utensils and so on, and each of them is explained and examined according to the type family. The nine volumes of Qiong He Hua Hai are the focus of the book, of which volumes 1 to 5 deal with the history, language, culture, politics, economy, products, climate and even folklore and religion of Japan. Similarly, volumes 6 to 9 mainly record the traffic situation between China and Japan before the Longqing Period of the Ming Dynasty, as well as the contents related to Japanese pirates. The articles in each volume are listed in the table below (ZHENG, 2017, p. 56):

Table 1- Contents of each volume in *A Mirror of Japan*

Volume 1	Introduction, climate, geographical position, water source, seasons, race, surname, country names, nationals
Volume 2	Territory, cities, strategic posts, bridges, roads, rooms, people, treasures, plants, birds and beasts, utensils
Volume 3	Collective deliberation, drawing, ritual and music, patrol, colors, clothing, men and women, body, hairpin, marriage, farming and sericulture, twist flax fibres and weave, woodcutting and animal husbandry, fishing and hunting, diet, medicinal cakes (attached with targeted diseases), funeral, ghosts and gods, Buddhist doctrine
Volume 4	Culture and education, books, characters, salutation, events, poetries and proses
Volume 5	Message: Astronomy (61), geography (246), seasons (120), characters (164), palaces (86), utensils (294), birds and beasts (247), flowers and trees (245), body (166), clothing (75), treasures (35), food (96), literature and history (57), voice and countenance (122), heavenly stems and earthly branches (34), divinatory symbols (8), numbers (30), and versatility (1,315)
Volume 6	Sailing, marine fairs, escaping, capture and conquest
Volume 7	Tribute, memorial to the Emperor, official communication, kanhe, tribute period, tribute person, tribute object, tribute ship, tribute road, wind and flood, water and fire, diplomatic missions, city ship, reward, seal, tally granting
Volume 8	Appraising through discussion
Volume 9	Jieshi, Haishen

Source: our production

The categories in the book *Qiong He Hua Hai* are mentioned in great detail. Among them, contents such as “strategic posts”, “bridges”, “roads”, “houses”, “collective deliberation”, “farming and sericulture”, “twist flax fibres and weave”, “woodcutting and animal husbandry”, “fishing and hunting”, “diet”, “medicinal cakes”, “ghosts and gods”, “Buddhism doctrine” and so on are not found in other Japanese research books of Ming Dynasty, so it has a very high research value. Before the Ming Dynasty, research in China on Japan mainly focused on the official history of the past dynasties, which were mainly based on hearsay or copied according to tradition, and few materials were originating directly from Japan. Since the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty, there have been several books on the prevention and control of

Japanese pirates and the study of Japan, which benefited from the support of local governors and officials on the one hand, and was also spearheaded by the liberal policies of the Ming royal court on the other. Among the works on studying Japan, the most important ones are “A Brief Survey of Japan”, A Collection of Coastal Military Maps, *A Mirror of Japan*, A Study of Japan, etc. However, *A Mirror of Japan* is the greatest on the subject, which is briefly analyzed below.

## 1 UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF MESSAGES RECORDED

The special books on Japan in the Ming Dynasty often include a column of messages. The so-called message is to mark the pronunciation of Japanese vocabulary with Chinese characters. Such stylistic rules and layout first appeared in Xue Jun’s A Brief Survey of Japan for helping the officers and soldiers defending waters from Japanese pirates understand them more profoundly, to attain an advantage of knowing themselves and the enemy, as his autobiography says:

If it weren’t for the polite words spoken by the wise kings of the previous generation, the scholars wouldn’t dare to speak, so their dialect is not worth mentioning. Words are the voice of the heart. Through their voices, we can observe the inner hypocrisy and truth. Therefore, marking pronunciation with Chinese characters is like marking and distinguishing in Chinese. It is used to help soldiers on the border to know more, and it is also a defense method. So readers don’t have to over-interpret these messages if there are any unreasonable places. (JUN, 1797, p. 41)

The A Brief Survey of Japan was written in 1523. While those in the book A Collection of Coastal Military Maps 1561, which has more accurate studies and events, have more content than those in the former, but copies the Collections’ messages, including astronomy (11), seasons (17), geography (9), directions (6), treasures (8), characters (64), affairs (91), body (14), utensils (44), clothing (10), diet (20), flowers and trees (9), birds and beasts (11), numbers (16), and versatility (27), totaling 357 which are divided into 15 categories.

*A Mirror of Japan* was written a little later than A Collection of Coastal Military Maps. It contains topics such as astronomy (61), geography (246), seasons (120), characters (164), palaces (86), utensils (294), birds and beasts

(247), flowers and trees (245), body (166), clothing (75), treasures (35), diet (96), literature and history (57), voice and countenance (122), heavenly stems and earthly branches (34), divinatory symbols (8), numbers (30), and versatility (1,315), totaling 3,401 which are divided into 18 categories.

A Study of Japan was also written in the Wanli period. Topics analysed in this book include astronomy (40), seasons (17), climate (6), day and night (12), months (13), number of days (30), today and tomorrow (11), five elements (5), sexagesimal cycle (10), twelve branches (12), a cycle of sixty years (11), geography (32), charcoal (16), palaces (40), cities (14), countries (8), directions (9), characters (30), monarchs and ministers (26), officials (6), military and civilian (8), religious sects (11), crafts (19), scumbags (14), heavy patients (17), relatives (44), greetings (6), body (67), clothing (23), bedding (9), piece goods (14), colors (12), the five cereals (14), diet (30), harmony (12), cooking (12), numbers (16), calculation (28), utensils (40), internal organs (22), craftsman's tools (6), farm tools (6), rig (20), horse gear (6), stationery (26), military equipment (28), percussion instrument (20), spices (9), medicine (6), treasures (31), flowers and trees (22), fruits (22), vegetables (31), weeds (8), birds and beasts (11), personnel (119) and island names (71), totalizing 1,208 which are divided into 57 categories.

The above statistical data shows that the messages recorded in *A Mirror of Japan* are the most voluminous, which is almost ten times as many as that in A Brief Survey of Japan and A Collection of Coastal Military Maps, and the classification is slightly more detailed. There are 57 kinds of messages recorded in the book A Study of Japan, but the number of them is about one-third of that in *A Mirror of Japan*. So many messages have been recorded in *A Mirror of Japan* for enabling Chinese people to know more about Japan.

By comparing the same message words in “Japanese Examinations”, “Chaohai Map Compilation”, “Japanese Examinations” and “*A Mirror of Japan*”, the following phenomena are found (ZHENG, 2017, p. 66). First, the remarks in “*A Mirror of Japan*” are closer to the standard Japanese pronunciation, and are mainly based on Japanese reading (original Japanese pronunciation), or both Japanese reading and phonetic reading are marked at the same time. Second, compared with “Japanese Examinations”, “Chaohai Map Compilation” and “Japanese Examinations”, “*A Mirror of Japan*” also has its wrong parts, such as the word “Shao”, the Japanese one marked with the pronunciation of “small”, “Zhi” “Easy World”. The other three books marked “Sugu is water” and “Shugu is water” are all correct. Three, the Japanese

words in “*A Mirror of Japan*” feel rather biased, such as the word “head”, “Japanese Research Brief”, “Chou Hai Tu Bian”, and “Japan Kao” respectively use the words to pronounce “Azhuma, Keshulai” and “keshulai”. “Cheng Lai” and “Kecheng Lai” are the pronunciations of daily finger words, while the pronunciation of “Hotai” is relatively uncommon for the corresponding word in “Japan One Mirror”. Fourth, the hometown of Xue Jun, the author of “Review of Japan”, is Ningbo, and the message in “Chaohai Tubian” was corrected by the author Zheng Ruozeng who sent Ningbo merchants and envoys to Japan. The author of “One Mirror of Japan”, Zheng Shungong, is from Huizhou. Reflected in the Chinese pronunciation of the same message words in each book, there is a big difference in pronunciation due to the disparities between the Ningbo dialect and the Hui dialect. Follow the dialect pronunciation and discover some interesting phenomena. For example, from the pronunciation of modern Mandarin, “Japan One Morris or” is recorded as “Mimi” (mimi), which is closer to Japanese “みみ”, and “Japanese Examinations” and “Chouhai Tubian” are recorded as “Meimei” because “meimei” in Ningbo dialect is also pronounced “mimi”, so both are accurate pronunciations in the context at the time. Five, for example, the Chinese word “Niu” is pronounced “Niao Shi” in the message of “One Mirror of Japan”. In other books, it is “Hu Shui”. This is due to differences in the author’s origin and dialect pronunciation, resulting in deviations when translating the pronunciation of the same Chinese vocabulary.

At present, the Japanese invasion has not yet subsided, the people’s pain has not passed, and the war is raging everywhere. To win, barbarians will resort to deception and sophistry, while those with good morals should be loyal to the gods they believe in. For both of them, it is also useful to use messages and phonetic symbols. According to the investigation, during the last years of Jiaping, there were two cases of intercepting and killing Japanese tribute missions. In Yinxian, Xue Jun wrote a book *A Survey of Japan*, which divided a total of more than 300 messages into 15 categories. It is concluded that even if the original pronunciation of Japanese is followed in letter and spirit, there will inevitably be mistakes when one does not know Japanese at that time. Nowadays, thieves and bandits come one after another, and it is difficult to distinguish between one enemy from another. Soldiers have all kinds of misleading information. Later, I learned that Japanese consists of 47 words, which can be translated into Chinese characters, adjusted for phonetic notation, and can be used for translation. Therefore, the colloquial language used in daily communication is divided into 18 categories, with all

phonetic notations below Japanese words. People need to be familiar with the pronunciation of words and Japanese culture. This needs to be disseminated to the border areas so that the soldiers could not mislead and the generals would not be charged with deceiving the monarch. This is the proof of the exercise based on this article (ZHENG, 2017, p. 72).

It is reasonable that the messages recorded in *A Study of Japan* are more in volume than those in *A Brief Survey of Japan*, *A Collection of Coastal Military Maps*, and *A Mirror of Japan* because the book came to the surface later. In addition, through comparison, we can find that a lot of the contents of *A Study of Japan* are excerpts from *A Brief Survey of Japan* and *A Collection of Coastal Military Maps*. Therefore, its author must have read the above two books. According to the fact that the messages in *A Study of Japan* were divided into 57 categories, we can infer that the author had tried his best to collect all the relevant available information. However, it is 2,200 less than *A Mirror of Japan*. Therefore, it can be assumed that the author of *A Study of Japan* had never read *A Mirror of Japan*. Besides, Wang Yong's *Records of Coastal defense Maps in Ming Dynasty* (MingDaiHaiFangTuJiLu) and Wu Yunian's *Records of Japanese Pirates in Ming Dynasty* (MingDaiWoKouShiJiZhiMu) together recorded no less than 150 kinds of Japanese defense works in Ming Dynasty, but not *A Mirror of Japan*. All these reflect the limited spread of *A Mirror of Japan* in the Ming Dynasty and even in later generations, but it does not mean that the book is of low value.

However, it is interesting to note that Zheng Ruozeng, the author of *A Collection of Coastal Military Maps*, once saw the book. Fortunately, this is recorded in Zheng Shungong (1556, p. 89)'s *A Mirror of Japan* as below:

As the announcement document reached women, an official named Zheng Ruozeng heard about the book and wanted to know more about it. So Zheng Shungong took out this book for Zheng Ruozeng to read. After reading this book, Zheng Ruozeng said: "In the past when I compiled *A Collection of Coastal Military Maps and Compilation of Japanese Maps*, the news about the Japanese and foreigners was not true. It's a pity that I read this book so late. And now I can finally revise my work concerning it". Zheng Shungong insisted that this was not necessary. Zheng Ruozeng said: "Because this is closely related to the affairs of state, I will definitely do it." Alas, even though I have never compiled such books, I would feel pity that I did not see Zheng Shungong's book as early as possible when I first saw it. If a man has great ambition and is devoted to his country, how can he not want to see Zheng Shungong's book earlier?

According to this paragraph, Zheng Shungong was quite famous at the time. Zheng Ruozeng had taken the initiative to visit him because he knew that Zheng Shungong had personally gone to Japan and was familiar with Japan. As an aide to governor Hu Zongxian, Zheng Ruozeng devoted himself to the study of Japanese pirates and Japan. He was the leading expert in the study of Japan at that time. However, after reading the *A Mirror of Japan*, he still said with emotion that “In the past when I compiled A Collection of Coastal Military Maps and Compilation of Japanese Maps, the news about the Japanese and foreigners was not true. It’s a pity that I read this book so late. And now I can finally revise my work concerning this book”. In this regard, Zheng Shungong politely expressed humility. But Zheng Ruozeng said, “Because this is closely related to the affairs of state, please don’t be self-effacing.” Zheng Ruozeng had a heartfelt affirmation of *A Mirror of Japan*. Although the book has not been widely spread since its completion, some people who have known about it have affirmed its value. From the perspective of seeking truth, it is gratifying to find a confidant.

## 2 A FIELD SURVEY OF JAPANESE GEOGRAPHY

Zheng Shungong, a native of Xin’an, visited Japan twice. The first time was in May 1529, the eighth year of Jiajing. He travelled with the Japanese monk to Kyoto to identify the Chinese and Japanese medicine for Hatakeyama Yoshinobu. In 1556, at the Yang Yi’s behest, governor of Zhejiang Province, he went to Japan to appease Japanese pirates. As for his second visit to Japan, according to the first volume of *Juedao Xinbian*, Zheng Shungong stayed there for half a year. Generally speaking, it is very difficult for ordinary people to acquire 3,401 Japanese words within half a year. Hatakeyama Yoshinobu was a daimyo (a powerful lord) that governed Noto (now Ishikawa-gun) at the time. That is to say, Zheng Shungong had been to the Noto Peninsula in Honshu. It can be judged that Zheng Shungong knew Japan pretty well even before his second visit to Japan. Among the numerous writers who wrote books on Japanese Studies in Ming Dynasty, only Zheng Shungong had ever been to Japan. Therefore, many records about Japanese geography in *A Mirror of Japan* are more accurate than in other related works, and some contents are not found in other books altogether.

For example, the description of the territory of Japan in *A Brief Survey of Japan* is as follows:

It is an island country on the sea in the southeast of our country, built leaning the mountains, with the west and the south facing the sea. A mountain lies in the northeast corner. The vast expanse is thousands of miles away. The distance from Maoren Country (now Sakhalin) in the northeast corner to Wenren Country (the place where Proto-Japanese live) is about 7,000 Li. It is about 4,000 Li to the Dwarf Country on the sea south of the island. There is a river along the west. From the west, you can see Danluo (now Jeju) on the opposite side. Over 12,000 miles across the sea, there are Paekche, Redang, and Daifang County. (XUE, 1996, p. 19).

The records in *A Collection of Coastal Military Maps* are relatively simple:

Japan, that is, ancient Yamato, far away from the Chinese central mainland across the sea. It is an island country. According to the *Book of Sui*, it is located southeast of Paekche and Silla, with a land and water area of 1,500 km<sup>2</sup>. The terrain is high in the east and low in the west. (ZHENG, 2007, p. 154).

Japan lies in the east of the sea. Its terrain is like a lute, thousands of miles from east to west and hundreds of miles from south to north (ZHENG, 2007, p. 176).

The description in *A Study of Japan* is a little more in detail:

Japan, the ancient Yamato, an island country, located southeast of Paekche and Silla, has a terrain like a lute, high in the east and low in the west, thousands of miles from east to west and hundreds of miles from south to north. (LI, 1983, p. 119).

Let's look at the description in *A Mirror of Japan*: "According to my investigation, the whole land of Japan is vast, about 3,870 li from east to west and 530 Li from north to south." (ZHENG, 1939, p. 97).

Japan, the ancient Yamato, is an island country on the sea in the southeast of our country. Tsukushi no Kuni (now Kyushu), that is, Juxie (an ancient Japanese tribe) is located in the west of the country. It is more than 7,000 Li northeast of Guangzhou and 5,500 Li from Fujian. It is more than 1,700 Li from Zhejiang, more than 3,000 Li from Huai, less than 3,000 Li from Qi, and more than 2,000 Li from Liao. It is 1,440 Li from Tsukushi no

Kuni to South Korea and 480 Li from Tsushima in the west of Tsukushi no Kuni to South Korea (ZHENG, 1939, p. 104).

Zheng Ruozeng's first paragraph was quoted from the Book of Sui, and the second paragraph pointed out that "Japan lies in the east of the sea. Its terrain is like a lute, thousands of miles from east to west and hundreds of miles from south to north, and the island of Kyushu lies in the west of the southern tip of Japan. Although Zheng Ruozeng's description is not accurate, it is already very concrete in terms of the Chinese understanding of Japan at that time. A Study of Japan is probably a combination of the records of A Brief Survey of Japan and A Collection of Coastal Military Maps. However, the saying "it is located at the southeast of Paekche and Silla" is just as wrong as that in A Brief Survey of Japan. It is most specifically recorded in *A Mirror of Japan* that "Japan is 3,870 Li from the east to the west, and 530 Li from the north to the south". As in Ming Dynasty, one Li is about 490 meters, and the record by Zheng Shungong is roughly accurate after conversion. Compared with the other three books, Zheng Shungong's description of Japanese territory is the most reliable. In addition, Zheng Shungong also recorded the courses in Japan from Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Shandong, Liaoning, and even Korea. Such a detailed record is far beyond the other books.

According to the records in *A Mirror of Japan*, Zheng Shungong seems to have visited many places in Japan, such as his description of the climate in Japan, Note:

There are four distinct seasons on this island. For the part southeast of our country, just like what is described in the Book of Han and the Record of Sui, both the land and the climate are warm. Since this area is warm, the frost begins in the midwinter. For the part northeast of our country, both the land and the climate are cold, the snow on Mount Fuji in the Suruga River does not disappear all year round. I did not know this before. (ZHENG, 1939, p. 87).

In his book, Zheng Shungong mentioned "Mount Fuji", and described that "snow did not disappear in four seasons" around it, and also said that "I did not know this before". From his tone of voice, he seemed to have been to Mount Fuji. If so, Zheng Shungong should have visited many places on Honshu Island during his first visit to Japan. This can be confirmed by his description of Japanese roads

The roads in Japan extend in all directions, much like the thoroughfares in northern China. The road from Oosumi to the capital is like the rugged mountain road in southern China. The roads from Yamashiro no Kuni to Kantarea are open to traffic. But the roads from Tosanokuni to its capital are all narrow, so the most convenient way of transportation is by boat (ZHENG, 1939. p. 97).

From Zheng Shungong's description, he has a very intuitive understanding of the road traffic in Japan, and he has likely visited these places. In addition, the paragraph mentions that "the roads from Tosanokuni to its capital are all narrow". If these records were obtained by Zheng Shungong through his personal experience, he must have also arrived at Shikoku Island in Japan.

### **3 JAPANESE VIEWS AND ANALYSIS OF JAPANESE PIRATES**

*A Mirror of Japan* has a very detailed record of Japan, involving history, politics, territory, products, customs, culture, language, and so on. Many of the contents are what Zheng Shungong saw and heard after he visited Japan. For example, his description of Japanese etiquette:

According to the Book of the Han Dynasty, half-squatting shows respect in etiquette. In the Records of Sui, it is pointed out that people should sit with their legs crossed. In Textual Research, it is believed that people salute with their hands folded over their chests, regardless of rank or inferiority, without the etiquette of bowing or kowtow. Nowadays, according to Japanese etiquette, when ordinary people enter the the princes and nobles' family, they must first take off the clogs or shoes and the knives they wear. When entering the door, they need to kneel on the ground outside the hall and enter only after they are allowed to do so. They should answer whatever the host asks and leave immediately after answering all the questions. If you are going to visit a family of equal status, take off your coat before entering winter, and the host needs to bow down and greet you with his hands crossed. When you enter the room, you should bow down on the ground to greet each other, then kowtow and bend your legs to sit down, drink tea, eat, and finally knock over a drink. After the host opens the flagon, everyone drinks with the highest ritual of offering a libation. To avoid getting drunk, people who can't drink will drink for a pretense and spill it on the ground. When a servant arrives outside the hall to serve, he should first ask for instructions and then enter.

After entering, he needs to walk on his knees and cooperate with the host when he delivers food to the guest. When the guests say goodbye, the host should do his utmost to see them off with good manners. If ordinary people meet Chinese emissaries or Japanese officials head-on on the road, they need to stand aside barefoot, take off their weapons and wait for them to pass first. If they are on the way together, they need to wait for them to go far before they can go. No matter whether they go north or south, they need to wait for officials to pass first before walking slowly. When women meet, they bow and talk (ZHENG, 1939, p. 117).

The description in this paragraph is very specific and gives a vivid sense of the scenes, and also corrects the wrong records in Xue Jun's *A Brief Survey of Japan* that "they do not behave in a courteous way, let alone the courtesy of kneeling and bowing". Although this paragraph does not praise the Japanese directly, the purity and beauty of Japanese customs can still be felt between the lines, which is quite different from other records about Japan in the same period. Because the Japanese pirates invaded and harassed China's coastal areas frequently and did great harm to China, the authors of these books had a negative impression of the Japanese. Zheng Shungong also talked about it:

According to the *Book of Han*, people in Japan are not obscene, not jealous, vulgar, not stealing, less arguing. The *Record of Sui* mentioned that they were straight and elegant. Japanese folkway is so pure and good. However, according to the books *Insects Records* (YingChongLu), *Records of Foreign Lands* (YiYuZhi), and *A Brief Survey of Japan* (RiBenKaoLue), the Japanese are said to be cunning and greedy, and are regarded as intruders and hated like animals. Although it has been a long time since ancient times, race has not changed. How can it become so antagonistic? According to the previous Japanese folkway, human nature advocates morality and justice. Both good and evil are nurtured and educated by custom, depending on the person's own willingness to be a good person or an evil person (ZHENG, 1939, p. 123).

In the Han Dynasty and even the Tang Dynasty, the Chinese still believed that the Japanese were "not obscene, not jealous, vulgar, not stealing, less arguing", and "straight and elegant". In the Ming Dynasty, for example, books such as *Records of Foreign Countries* and *A Brief Survey of Japan* believed that "Japanese barbarians were cheating and greedy". Naturally, the reason was that the Japanese pirates in the Ming Dynasty invaded China, but there were also some authors' biases. Zheng Shungong had a relatively objective view of Japan. He believed that "both good and evil are nurtured and

educated by the folk custom, depending on the person's own willingness to be a good person or an evil person". When the Chinese public had a one-sided opinion of Japan, it was really rare for Zheng Shungong to look at problems in such a rational way. Because of this objectivity, his views on the Japanese pirates are also better than others, which can be proved by his evaluation of Yang Shouchen's remarks on Japanese pirates,

Yang Shouchen, a servant of the Ministry of official affairs, wrote in his book that the Japanese slaves were greedy and treacherous. Since the Tang Dynasty and even present times, they have been suffering from Chinese malady. During the Hongwu years, Japan often paid tribute but did not respect it. The imperial court did not trade with Japan to punish them. In the early Yongle period, they paid tribute again. Since then, they had paid tribute continuously and made frequent contacts, and learned deeply about the strength of China's national power and the trend of mountains and rivers. At this point, they began to indulge in treachery, often carrying goods and weapons in ships, secretly snooping around the waterway, taking out weapons to invade coastal areas if they found an opportunity, and claiming to pay tribute if they didn't have a chance. The purpose of invading the coastal areas is to seize property, and the purpose of paying tribute is to covet the rewards from the Chinese government. They can obtain benefits in any way. This is their treacherous stratagem. Moreover, the swords and seashells they paid tribute to were not urgently needed by the Chinese government and were of low value, which was not beneficial to the country or the people's livelihood. However, our government treated them kindly, hoping to inspire them to get on well with China and at the same time to stabilize the scourge of their invasion of the coastal areas. Now their treacherous tricks, as mentioned earlier, are not intended to make friends with us. Whether we accept their tribute or not, we will be violated, so there is no need to hesitate. Since they came into China in the name of tribute and were killed, it was like the injustice of our government. But if we accept their tribute, we'll catch in their scheme. The Ming imperial edict should be issued to list their disrespect. But we are merciful, so we do not kill them, but only return their tribute to them and expel them from the country. All the generals' officials in the waterway should be explicitly told to strictly guard the waterway. If they came again, we will see through their pretense of paying tribute. Then their trick will not work (ZHENG, 1939, p. 129).

Zheng Shungong's comments are as follows: The above words show the sincerity to the monarch and the people, as well as making groundless presumptions. The fault is reflected in that the Japanese pirates plundered when they had the chance, and pretended to be tributary ships when they didn't. Little did they know that the tributaries were sent by the king of Japan, while the traitors and thieves were all stubborn people. Now the Japanese have long studied Chinese poems and books and are quite familiar with Chinese etiquette, so we can't classify them all as thieves and robbers as what Northern Wei Dynasty did. The aggressor caught will be punished by law. If it weren't for uniting with the enemy like the bandits hiding along the coast, how dare they invade China? Nowadays, the Japanese who came to China in the name of tribute are slaughtered, as if they were forced to surrender in such a way, which is neither valiant nor just, and is against the ancient Chinese belief in benevolence. But this didn't get the point, so there were rumors that tributaries could not be allowed to enter the country and be expelled. There are also some eminent monks who we invited to serve. Why can't people who come here be exhorted with kindness and told clearly about our legal system, instead, they are always punished with slaughter, and those who run away can be punished by the government by issuing a notice to show their righteousness without killing them? However, if all the foreign ministers who came to pay tribute were killed, the envoys of the tribute would not come again, and the Japanese pirates were more closely connected with the coastal bandits. Can these bandits, such as rats and mice, who are everywhere, be eliminated and never reappear? They invade and consume the state treasury every year, making the people miserable. If we accept these useless tributes from them, it is in line with the etiquette of the sages and can also benefit the coastal people, which is the real way to control the Japanese people.

Zheng Shungong quoted Yang Shouchen's discussion on the contribution of the Japanese slaves by Yang Wenyi and Zhang Zhuke. Since many books involving defending Japan in the Ming Dynasty, such as *A Brief Survey of Japan*, *A Collection of Coastal Military Maps*, *A New Collection of Coastal Military Maps* (ChouHaiChongBian), and *A Record of Other Countries in the World* (ShuYuZhouZiLu), all record this comment, it had a great influence. Many modern and contemporary scholars will quote Yang Shouchen's saying when analyzing the Japanese pirates' problem in the later period, "the Japanese pirates plundered when they had the chance, and pretended to be tributary ships when they didn't". Zheng Shungong pointed out that the Japanese envoys, who came to China to seek tribute were sent

by the Japanese king, while the Japanese pirates who invaded coastal areas of China were the stupid but conceited people in Japan. The reason why they dare to invade China is that “they are all Japanese exiles who want to make Chinese hate the Japanese in this way”. The author thinks that Zheng Shungong’s so-called exiles should include the powerful families in coastal areas of China, the people who colluded with foreign enemies, and the sea bandit groups such as Xu Dong, Wang, Zhi, and Chen Sipan. It is precise because these forces have seduced and even participated in the Japanese pirates for many years that it is difficult to calm down the Japanese rebellion for a long time. Yang Shouchen confused the Japanese pirates with the tribute envoys.

Therefore, he thought that “the Ming imperial edict should be issued to list their disrespect. But we are merciful, so we do not kill them, but only return their tribute to them and expel them from the country. The officials of all the generals in the waterway should be explicitly told to strictly guard the waterway. If they came again, we will see through their pretense of paying tribute. Then their trick will not work.” In fact, this is a way to cut off the tribute, supplemented by strengthening the sea ban policy. Zheng Shungong thought that this method would make “the exiles get a deep and solid plan”. His analysis clarified that the Japanese pirates had nothing to do with the tributaries. Therefore, he opposed Yang Shouchen’s practice of cutting off tribute and declaring the sea ban. In this regard, Zheng Ruozeng explained in *A Collection of Coastal Military Maps* that,

The ships that come to pay tribute are allowed by our law and the foreign trade management authority, for open mutual trade. Private trade at sea is prohibited by our law, and it is trade smuggling. Since the chaos of the year of Jiashen, the trade between our government and Japan Island has been blocked. Just as the Japanese ships came to pay tribute, the sea vendors took the opportunity to sell goods and had to ask Japan to guard against them. The government could not prevent them. Western ships are all over Oceania, Japanese ships are all over China’s coastal areas, and all the merchant ships in the past have become pirate ships. Therefore, some foolish people said that the rise of the Japanese pirates was due to the block of foreign trades and the fact that Japan was not allowed to pay tribute. If Japan is allowed to pay tribute and open the foreign trade, it will benefit both sides, and the Japanese pirates will naturally be eliminated, but I don’t think so. If the tributes were sent by the king of Japan for a fixed period, with relevant national documents as proof, and then they came on time, with national documents proved to be

correct, I wonder why they are not allowed to pay tribute. In this way, the tribute is paid normally, and the commerce is carried out normally, there will be no need to open them for trade. The tributaries did not enter the country for a fixed period of biperiden or have any national documents to prove that. Under the guise of paying tribute, they acted as pirates. If it is allowed, how can we benefit? As tribute is not allowed, can the foreign trade be opened alone? (ZENG, 1556, p. 852).

Zheng Ruozeng and Zheng Shungong happen to hold the same view. Like the old saying that great minds think alike.

## CONCLUSIONS

“South Japanese and northern invaders” were two important border defense problems in the Ming Dynasty. Correspondingly, a large number of special works on frontier defense and coastal defense emerged, one of which was *A Mirror of Japan*. Before the publication of Huang Zunxian’s Annals of Japan in the late Qing Dynasty, Zheng Shungong was the only one who ever visited Japan twice. He stayed in Japan for a long time and was familiar with Japanese and Japanese culture. Compared with other similar works, such as A Brief Survey of Japan, A Collection of Coastal Military Maps, and A Sand survey of Japan, *A Mirror of Japan* is superior in its layout, style, content, nation, and even accuracy, and has a very high literature value. It is no exaggeration to say that *A Mirror of Japan* is one of the highest-level books in ancient China. In addition, there are also many noteworthy points in the record and analysis of the Japanese pirates in the book. Due to various reasons, *A Mirror of Japan* had a limited spread in history, which has been continued to this day, resulting in weak academic research on the book, so it is necessary to do further excavation.

TONG, J.; MA, J. Um estudo preliminar sobre o espelho do Japão (Ribenyijian). *Transformação*, Marília, v. 45, n. 4, p. 117-136, Out./Dez., 2022.

**Resumo:** Após o reinado do Imperador Jiajing, da Dinastia Ming, à medida que o problema dos piratas japoneses se tornava cada vez mais grave, começaram a ser publicados livros dedicados ao estudo do Japão. Entre eles, os mais importantes são *Uma Breve Pesquisa do Japão* (Ri Ben Kao Lue), *Uma Compilação de Mapas Japoneses* (Ri Ben Tu Zuan), *O Espelho do Japão* (Ri Ben Yi Jian), *Uma pesquisa do Japão* (Ri Ben Kao), *Um registro de Costumes Japoneses* (Ri Ben Fen Tu Ji) e *A Biografia de Piratas Japoneses em Qiantai* (Qian Tai Wo Zhuan). Entre eles, *O Espelho do Japão* é um especial. Além disso, há também livros especiais para apresentar a situação geral do Japão, como *A Coleção de Mapas Militares Costeiros* (Chou Hai Tu Bian), *Resistência aos Piratas Japoneses na Dinastia Ming* (Huang Ming Yu Wo Lu), a *Compilação de Defesa Costeira* (Hai Fang Zuan Yao) e a *Continuação da Categoria de Defesa Costeira nas Regiões Zhedong e Zhexi* (Liang Zhe Hai Fang Lei Kao Xu Bian). Como Zheng Shungong, autor do livro *O Espelho do Japão*, visitou o Japão duas vezes, muitos conteúdos do livro são baseados em sua própria experiência e conhecimento. Portanto, sua pesquisa sobre o Japão foi além da literatura semelhante da Dinastia Ming, em amplitude, profundidade e precisão. Além disso, o registro e as análises dos piratas japoneses no livro são de grande valor de pesquisa. Antes da publicação dos *Anais do Japão* (Ri Ben Tu Zhi), de Huang Zunxian, *O Espelho do Japão* era uma das monografias de mais alto nível sobre o Japão, na China antiga.

**Palavras-chave:** *O Espelho do Japão* (Ri Ben Yi Jian). Zheng Shungong. Monografias sobre o Japão. Literatura de defesa costeira. Literatura de resistência contra o Japão.

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