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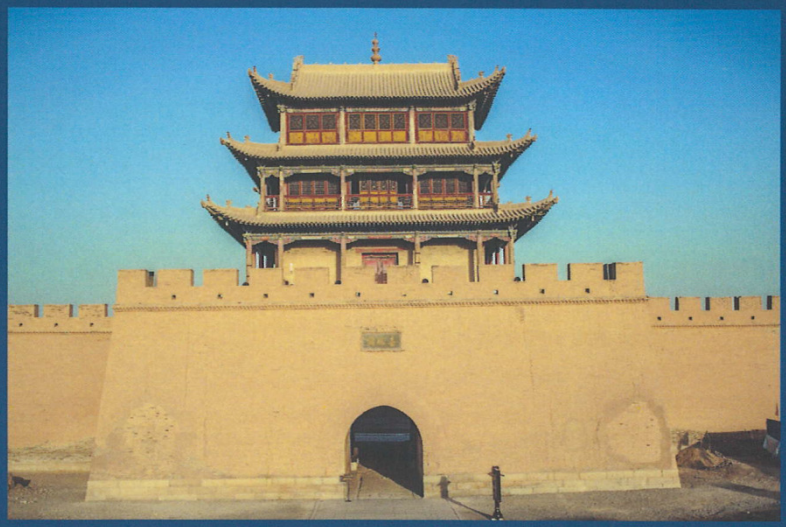
THE TIMURID EMPIRE AND MING CHINA:

THEORIES AND APPROACHES CONCERNING THE RELATIONS OF THE TWO EMPIRES

ZSOMBOR RAJKAI



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PREFACE

A comparative study of the historical relations of the Timurid Empire (1370–1506) and Ming China (1368–1644) forms the subject-matter of the present book. Although they were not adjacent empires, the relationship between the two dynasties shows certain particularities that deserve special attention not only within the scholarship of Sino–Central Asian historical contacts, but also for the understanding of the formation of pre-modern inter-state and intercultural relations in a non-Western context. Nonetheless, this book, slightly unconventionally, is not based on a detailed analysis of primary sources, but instead, looks at modern international research on Sino–Central Asian relations through taking a comparative look at theories and approaches found in the secondary literature. The reason for this approach is that, while numerous research studies have produced valuable findings using primary sources, very little has been done to compare and analyse theory building *per se* concerning Sino–Central Asian relations. To fill this gap, this book, employing *theory (building)* and *approach* as its main analytical aspects, compares Western, Japanese and Chinese studies on early Timurid–Ming contacts and stresses the applicability of these studies to a broader historical context. While aiming to promote the development of similar comparative studies in the future, this book also points to the problematic relationship of cultural ideologies and political realities with regard to frontiers and boundaries in the East and Central Asian context. As is demonstrated in the final chapter, further research on early fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian relations has much to contribute to our understanding of the nature of frontiers and boundaries on China's margins, not just in a geographical sense, but also in regard to the formation of inter-state and intercultural relations.

The remarkable historical relationship of the two empires has aroused early scholarly interest amongst Western, Chinese and Japanese academic circles. Most of these studies discuss the two empires from 'macro-level' perspectives, such as diplomatic relations, though the subject also has great potential for studies from 'micro-level' (cultural anthropological) perspectives, focusing on the lives of and interactions between (semi-)

nomadic peoples and Chinese officials and commoners. Nonetheless, it must be noted that hitherto micro-level perspectives have been less utilised than macro-level ones. Among other things, the common historical experience of the Chinggisid Empire in Ming China and the newly emerging Timurid Empire in the late fourteenth century gives a useful analytical framework for comparative studies. In both cases, the Chinggisid heritage functioned as a sort of overall 'shadow' of the past – even though in the case of Ming China its historical influence did not last for more than about half a century.

As is demonstrated in this book, the relationship of the two empires occupies a unique place in the history of Sino–Central Asian relations. This uniqueness is well expressed in Ralph Kauz's opinion (2005), in pointing to a possible political constellation of the two regions during the early fifteenth century – even though this constellation was never realised. Furthermore, interestingly, the study of the relationship of China and Central Asia six hundred years ago may be important not only for historians, but also for researchers of current Sino–Central Asian conditions. In recent years China's attention has turned to Central Asia again, attempting to create friendly relationship with the countries there. This active political effort by contemporary China may have promoted modern Chinese research on fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian conditions, seeking the roots of a 'traditionally friendly' relationship between the two regions.

Last but not least, the present book, in discussing various theories and approaches, displays numerous Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Mongolian, Chinese and Japanese words, titles and personal names. As for Arabic, Persian, Turkic and Mongolian names the transcription systems provided by Beatrice F. Manz (1989) are employed,[1] whereas for Chinese names the Hanyu Pinyin phonetic system is used, and for Japanese names the Revised Hepburn system of romanisation is utilised. Furthermore, the original characters for Chinese and Japanese expressions and personal names are also provided at their first appearance.[2] Finally, it must be noted that the order of Chinese and Japanese personal names is displayed in the original name order, that is, with the family name preceding the given name.

[1] A major exception refers to the name of the founder of the Timurid Empire that is written as *Timur* (a widely popular form in the Western literature) in this book instead of *Temür* as suggested by Manz.

[2] It must be noted that whereas traditional Chinese characters are employed in the case of titles and names referring to pre-modern times, simplified forms are used for titles and names pertaining to modern times.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is based on my Ph.D. dissertation[3] of the same title, defended in 2008 at Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest, Hungary).[4] First of all, I am extremely thankful to my academic adviser, Professor István Vásáry, for his constant support and guidance in producing my dissertation. It was Professor Vásáry, who, in the late 1990s, kindly drew my attention to the extremely exciting historical field of fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian relations, which has kept fascinating me ever since that time. Secondly, I am also in great debt to Professor Barnabás Csongor for his kind encouragement and support regarding the interpretation of classical Chinese texts related to this subject. I also wish to thank the Departments of Turkish and Chinese Studies at Eötvös Loránd University for providing me with a profound education in Turkic and East Asian studies during the long years I was an enrolled student at these departments throughout the 1990s. Likewise, I am also very grateful to the review committee of my dissertation, especially to Professor Ildikó Bellér-Hann (University of Copenhagen, Denmark) and Professor Mária Ivanics (University of Szeged, Hungary), for their very useful and detailed comments that greatly helped me revise my dissertation and shape it into this book.

Among the people who helped me accomplish my dissertation, I owe special thanks to Professor Ralph Kauz (University of Bonn, Germany), Professor Csaba Oláh (International Christian University, Japan), and Professor Kubo Kazuyuki 久保一之 (Kyoto University, Japan) for their encouragement and kind help for providing me with information and materials on Western, Chinese (Kauz, Oláh) and Japanese research

[3] Two papers based on this dissertation were also published (see Rajkai 2010 and 2012).

[4] Eight years have passed since the completion of my dissertation in 2007. During this time, there have been additional publications on Timurid–Ming contacts, especially in the Chinese literature (most of them are briefly addressed in this book). Likewise, there have been additional publications on the life and works of the Chinese envoy Chen Cheng (e.g., Sally K. Church [2010] and Michel Didier [2012]), which are also briefly mentioned in this book. All this, however, does not affect the general conclusions presented in the final chapter of this book.

studies (Kubo) regarding the historical contacts of the Timurid Empire and Ming China. Furthermore, I am also extremely thankful to Professor Morris Rossabi (Columbia University, USA), Professor Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜 (Nanjing University, China), Professor Kawaguchi Takuji 川口琢司 (Japan) and Natalia Karimova (Uzbekistan) for their readiness to provide me with valuable information while I was writing my dissertation. I am also deeply indepted to the Department of Sociology at the Graduate School of Letters of Kyoto University for shaping my sociological insight that greatly contributed to the articulation of the basic research concern for this book based on my dissertation in Hungary. Likewise, I also owe special thanks to my current working place, Ritsumeikan University's College of International Relations (Kyoto, Japan), for providing a stimulating and supportive research environment.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Imre Hamar at Eötvös Loránd University for his continuous encouragement and support for the publication of this book. Likewise, my thanks are also due to Professor Tom French of Ritsumeikan University's College of International Relations for his careful proofreading of the entire manuscript and his very useful comments. The present volume could not have come into existence without this intensive support. For all remaining mistakes the author is of course responsible.

Finally, last but not least, I am also very grateful to my parents in Hungary for their constant support throughout the long years I was working on my dissertation, as well as to my wife and daughter in Japan for their great patience while shaping my dissertation into this book.

INTRODUCTION

The Timurid Empire and Ming China emerged almost at the same time in the second half of the fourteenth century, on the ruins of the former Chinggisid Empire. The formation of the two dynasties also coincided with the historical period when China attempted a remarkable opening up to the outside world.[1] The two dynasties, despite obvious differences in their politico-cultural orientations, surprisingly, faced similar challenges, such as, the legitimacy of their power with, and against, the Chinggisids, although both empires addressed these in different ways. Their historical evolution also showed astonishing similarities in the timing of their periods of prosperity and decline, giving the impression as if their histories had been advancing hand-in-hand. Furthermore, the two empires also became major powers at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and then – though Ming China managed to survive the Timurid dynasty in Central Asia by about a century – both started weakening from about the middle of the fifteenth century. Nonetheless, despite the huge distance between them, the two were not cut off from each other, but had a vibrant level of communication during their early histories. The basic communication channel took shape in the dispatching of tribute missions from Central Asian cities to the Chinese capital at regular intervals, while China also sent envoys to Central Asia from time to time. It is remarkable that Central Asian tribute missions did not vanish with the collapse of the Timurid Empire, and continued even after the Timurid dynasty in Central Asia ceased to exist in the early sixteenth century. Besides diplomatic missions, the other important communication channel was trade, which took place at market places in the Chinese capital, and the Chinese border.

[1] The seven marital expeditions led by a Chinese eunuch, Zheng He 鄭和, in the early fifteenth century had the potential to extend the physical borders of China's cultural sphere. During these expeditions, the Chinese managed to get as far as the eastern side of Africa. Nonetheless, these expeditions were called off from the 1430s and Ming China gradually adopted a defensive isolationist policy thereafter.

The Timurid dynasty with its pro-active but loosely knit foreign contacts, as well as Ming China with its fluctuating yet tightly knit foreign policy give a very interesting contrast for historians of Central Asia and East Asia. Both the Timurid Empire, with a uniquely mixed Islamic–Mongol cultural background, and Ming China, with a traditional Confucian background, claimed cultural supremacy and implied an ideological absence of borders with their own rulers in the centre. Nonetheless, the two empires had to face frontiers and borders on their margins both in a geographical sense and in the form of diplomatic relations, which sheds light upon a discrepancy between their cultural ideologies and actual conditions.[2] The different cultural orientations and beliefs of the two empires might also have led to incessant political and military conflict. Yet, despite the unsuccessful attack by Timur, the founder of the Timurid Empire, on China in 1404–1405, and other smaller diplomatic conflicts, the two empires – through active diplomatic correspondence during the early fifteenth century – had the potential to form a new international central power relationship, which could have made a significant impact not only on the history of Asia, but also on later European expansion – even though this relationship never ultimately came into existence.[3] This discrepancy between cultural beliefs and political realities gives a very interesting field for studying frontiers and boundaries within the East and Central Asian context.

The primary sources concerning Timurid–Ming Chinese relations mainly consist of classical Persian and Chinese texts – with an overwhelming majority of the latter dominating the available material. Ralph Kauz argues that the research on the two empires may give much more work to Sinologists than to scholars of Iranian or Turkic studies simply due to the dominance of Chinese sources.[4] Kauz also points out that the Timurid historians concentrated on *recording events* rather than *describing geography*, which suggests a form of regression from the great

[2] One of the most remarkable embodiments of this contradiction is the Great Wall of China, which was supposed to protect the Middle Kingdom from nomadic tribes in the north, but which also proved to be an obstacle to extending the physical border of the Chinese cultural sphere. Ironically, people in China could enjoy geographical 'borderlessness' to a greater extent during the reign of the (Mongol) Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) than under the (Chinese) Ming dynasty. Nonetheless, in ancient China, foreigners were considered 'barbarian' and 'inferior' not because of assumed Chinese nationalist (ethnic) sentiments, but rather – to put it simply – because they "did not follow the Chinese way" (Fairbank 1942: 130).

[3] See Kauz 2005: 1.

[4] See *Ibid.*: 20.

Arabian tradition of geographical knowledge.[5] It can be assumed that the reason for the dominance of Chinese sources over the Persian ones may go back to the lack of a systematic 'China policy' from the Timurid dynasty. In contrast, Chinese sources tell us very little about the administrative structure or military organisation of the Timurid dynasty, putting more emphasis on the descriptions of local products, customs, habits, and locations, due to a strong geographical focus (albeit an incorrect one in certain cases). This variance reveals an obvious difference in types of information seemingly focused on by the two empires.

Among the Persian sources on Ming China, one can find the following important works. In the first place, the *Zubdat al-tawārīkh* by Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū (Nūrallāh 'Abdallāh b. Luṭfallāh al-Khwāfī) (died 1430) must be mentioned. Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū – by using numerous historical works – compiled the history of the Timurids (up to 1427), basing his work mainly on the *Ẓafarnāma* by Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī and the *Muntakhab al-tawārīkh* by Mu'īn al-Dīn Naṭanzī, to which he added his own personal experiences. The particular significance of Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū's work is that it records the Chinese and Timurid embassies. However, as Ralph Kauz points out, many of the Timurid envoys are not included in Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū's work.

The *Maṭla'-i sa'dayn wa-majma'-i baḥrayn* by Kamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī (died 1482) embraces a longer time than that of Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū: from 1304 to 1470. Although Samarqandī's work can be regarded as the main source of the period between 1427 and 1470, and thereby a kind of continuance of Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū's work, he stops writing about the Timurid–Ming Chinese embassies after 1427, and information on the Timurid–Chinese embassies in his work concerning the time up to 1427 is similar to that of Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū.[6]

Another important Persian source on the two empires is the account by Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh of his journey to China between 1419 and 1422. This work gives much more information about Ming China than any other Persian text. Although Ghiyāth al-Dīn's original account does not survive, it was compiled into the works by both Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū and Samarqandī, and there is also a Turkish translation of Ghiyāth al-Dīn's journal that was accomplished in 1495 by Ḥājji b. Muḥammad. This

[5] See *Ibid.*: 19.

[6] Besides these two main works, the following can be mentioned: Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī's *Ẓafarnāma*, Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī's *Ẓafarnāma*, Faṣīḥ Aḥmad b. Jalāl al-Dīn Khwāfī's *Mujmal-i Faṣīḥī*, Mīrkhwānd's *Tarīkh-i rawḍat al-ṣafā*, as well as Khwāndamīr (Mīrkwānd's grandson)'s *Ḥabīb al-siyar* (see *Ibid.*: 17).

Turkish work was carefully studied by Ildikó Bellér-Hann (1995), who made an English translation and linguistic analysis of it. She calls Ghiyāth al-Dīn's journey account one of the most detailed Muslim works on China.[7] Another useful account is the late fifteenth-century work of a certain Central Asian merchant, 'Alī Akbar Khatā'ī, who wrote a report on China, which was devoted to the Ottoman ruler, Sulṭān Sulaymān I.[8]

As for Chinese sources, Zhang Wende 张文德 (2006) has listed all the important works concerning the relations of the Timurid dynasty and Ming China. Among the Chinese sources, *Xiyu fanguozhi* 西域番國志 and *Xiyu xingchengji* 西域行成記[9] – two accounts written by a Chinese official called Chen Cheng 陳誠[10] – seems to provide the most important

[7] Bellér-Hann 1995: 5. Bellér-Hann states that the original account written in Persian has not survived, but it does exist in larger compilations of historical and geographical texts such as in the works by Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū and Samarqandī – though the two Persian versions are not completely identical (*Ibid.*: 10–14). Moreover, Bellér-Hann gives a detailed description of the Western editions of the Naqqāsh account, saying that Henry Yule (1915) made an abbreviated English translation based on the French translation of Étienne Marc Quatremère (1843) of the version by Samarqandī (*Ibid.*: 11), while K. M. Maitra (1934 [1970]) made an English translation of the version by Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū (*Ibid.*: 13). Edward Rehatsek (1873) also made a translation from the text found in the appendix of Mīrkhwānd's *Tarīkh-i rawḍat al-ṣafā*.

[8] 'Alī Akbar spent many years in Peking. Later he settled down in Istanbul where, in 1516, he produced an account of his experiences. Bellér-Hann draws attention to the fact that although 'Alī Akbar's account was written a century after that of Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh, there are some similarities between the two accounts in regard of their subjects and literary genre. Moreover, just as in the case of the Naqqāsh account, the original work was written in Persian, while a Turkish translation was made later, in 1582. These similarities led to some confusion in later years (*Ibid.*: 19). Nonetheless, Bellér-Hann also asserts that the two accounts complement each other very well, since Naqqāsh as an envoy and 'Alī Akbar as a merchant, experienced China from different viewpoints (*Ibid.*: 20).

[9] Both accounts were presumably made by the Chinese envoy Chen Cheng, who was sent to Central Asia in 1414. The first account (*Xiyu fanguozhi*) is a description of seventeen Central Asian cities, seen through the eyes of this Chinese official. Among the cities, the description of Herat takes up half of the text. The *Xiyu fanguozhi* can be regarded as the Chinese counterpart of the work written by the Persian Ghiyāth al-Dīn a few years later. The other account (*Xiyu xingchengji*) is more like a diary of the journey from China to Herat, noting the names of places the embassy went through and the lengths of time they stayed at each place. This second account is considered to be less valuable in terms of information regarding Central Asia.

[10] It is not clear whether the emperor himself or someone else ordered Chen Cheng to make a written report of his mission in 1414–1415. It can be assumed that he decided to do so on his own, as Chen Cheng took the opposing side to the future

Chinese information on early fifteenth-century Central Asia. Alongside these the *Mingshilu* 明實録[11] is arguably the most important source for studying the foreign contacts of Ming China. Besides the Persian and Chinese sources, there are also two sources in European languages. One of them was written by Ruy González de Clavijo, and the other one by

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emperor in the war between the Jianwen 建文 emperor (1399–1402) and the future Yongle 永楽 emperor (1403–1424) for the throne at the turn of the fourteenth–fifteenth century. Chen Cheng started his official career in the 1390s, in the later part of the reign of the Hongwu 洪武 emperor (1368–1398), but he could not avoid being forced out in 1402 when Yongle seized power. Therefore, Chen may have regarded the imperial order to be sent to Shāhrukh in 1414 as an opportunity to 'remedy' his earlier mistake and recover his scholarly career. To produce a travel account about the embassy, therefore, seems to have served Chen Cheng's desire to reinforce his position in the officialdom, by showing himself as a devoted official. In this sense, this first mission after the start of a new era with Yongle's reign became highly important for Chen Cheng, and turned out to be so successful that he was ordered to go to Central Asia three more times (in 1416, 1418 and 1424) – though he was called back on his last mission due to the death of the Yongle emperor. ('Successful' here must be taken cautiously, because most of the envoys were not really happy about receiving orders to go to Central Asia. The way to there was regarded as dangerous, as is pointed out in Felicia J. Hecker's study (1993). However, Chen Cheng was in an unusual situation due to the break in his official career after 1402, and therefore the fact that he was sent four times to Central Asia during Yongle's reign can be considered a kind of 'success'.) It can be assumed that it was no longer in Chen Cheng's interest to keep writing about his experiences, since he had been 'rehabilitated' already, but it can also be assumed that after having accomplished the two accounts, it did not seem to be important to make new ones for a while. In either case, with these two accounts, Chen Cheng did far more than any other Chinese officials throughout the fifteenth century, and this helped him inscribe his name upon the pages of history.

[11] This text was compiled based on imperial edicts, orders, official reports, archives and other historical writings. Its contents are voluminous in relation to historical events, thus it is very useful for scholars studying the politics, economy, military affairs, culture, etc. of Ming China. As for China's foreign relations with Central Asia, one has to look up the section about the Xiyu 西域 (the Western Region). Unfortunately, since the compilers were presumably not completely familiar with the conditions in Central Asia, several mistakes can be found in the texts, such as the mixing-up of places and dates, persons and incidents. However, these mistakes occur in specific cases only. What seems to be a bigger problem is that it is difficult to establish whether all the events described in the *Mingshilu* (such as imperial orders to send embassies to Central Asia) did happen in reality, or whether (some of) these were merely just proposed without being carried out. Yet, the *Mingshilu* can be regarded as the most complete source among all those available (see Kauz 2005: 16). Also see Franke 1968: 6–23, 28, 201 for a detailed discussion of the *Mingshilu*.

Johannes Schiltberger. Clavijo was a Spanish envoy, who was sent to Timur in Samarqand between 1403 and 1406. In his report, he describes the impolite way Timur treated the envoys from China in the late 1390s. Schiltberger, who was a sort of military slave of Timur (between 1402 and 1405) and then of his sons, Shāhrukh and Mīrānshāh, and then of Abu Bakr, the son of Mīrānshāh, (until 1414), kept writings about Timur and his military campaigns.

Nevertheless, the core subject of this book does not pertain to the study of the primary sources, as might be expected, but to that of the secondary literature. The reason for this choice of subject is not due to a neglect of the primary sources, but to the fact that the international research on Timurid–Ming Chinese contacts does not appear to have advanced in a unifed way. This fact gives a more or less 'uncoordinated' charactersitic to the development of the international research on this subject. On the other hand, to say *uncoordinated* here may sound rather provocative, suggesting as if there had been no contact between the various studies at all. Such a suggestion, however, would not be correct.

One of the latest and most complete studies on the subject uses international scholarship abundantly. Kauz (2005) discusses the historical process of the diplomatic relations between the two empires in chronological order, by making use of – along with Persian and Chinese primary sources – modern studies in the Western and Chinese literature.[12] In doing so, Kauz addresses these studies in connection with the respective diplomatic missions between the Timurids and Ming China, providing the reader with a well-organised arrangement of these missions. Nevertheless, the possible arrangement of these studies is not limited to such a structure alone. Among other things, the aforementioned uncoordinated condition of the international research also refers to the absence of a study that would systematically analyse the subjects and topics, as well as the theories and approaches, presented by various scholars for describing the relationship of the two empires. This weakness is hindering the development of the Timurid–Ming research and makes it difficult to open up future avenues of research. Therefore, there is a high need to summarise and discuss the international research in this matter. Such a summarising work, however, may so far have been hindered by the fact that it needs one not only to know Western languages, but also to

[12] Kauz briefly mentions some of the Japanese reseachers' works related to the subject too.

be able to read Chinese and Japanese.[13] The present book is devoted to filling this gap in the scholarship.

Nonetheless, the structure of this book is not arranged according to the theories and approaches of the respective studies, as could be expected, but it is first divided into chapters addressing Western, Japanese and Chinese studies, and then subdivided according to the main subjects. The theories and approaches in the respective studies are discussed in chronological order – within each subsection in the respective chapters. The subordination of the studies to the three major scholarly literatures may be disputable, suggesting that this work does not go beyond the existing boundaries of a simple description of the international research. However, this subordination is not due to a purely geographical categorisation. As demonstrated in this book, the Western, Japanese and Chinese literatures have more or less developed separately, with little regard – in most cases – to each other other's output. The separate development of Timurid–Ming research in the three scholarly literatures could not be grasped if one arranges the respective studies primarily according to subjects, theories and approaches. Therefore, the aforementioned subordination seems to be useful in order to accomplish two achievements at once: presenting and outlining the development of the Timurid–Ming research in each scholarly literature, while also discussing the theories and approaches in the addressed studies.

The analytical framework used in this work is based on the author's studies at the Department of Sociology, Kyoto University. The sociology of scientific knowledge considers social influences on science, and in doing so, it provides more than general summaries of major research achievements in specific scientific fields usually do. The most well-known representative of this field is Thomas Kuhn, who discussed the problematic issue of scientific paradigm shifts in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Though the sociology of scientific knowledge basically addresses natural sciences rather than social sciences, its major theses can be adapted to the latter as well – though with some caution.[14] Nonetheless, the sociology of scientific knowledge

[13] Chinese and Japanese academia are the two other main scholarly communities, besides that of the West, which have significant achievements within Timurid–Ming Chinese research.

[14] The author's book (2014) published in Japanese under the title *Kyōgō suru kazoku moderu ron* 競合する家族モデル論 [The theory of competing family models] presents an original perspective on the social history of modern family research in Japan, China, Taiwan and Hungary. This book, among other things,

is not an ossified field with a rigid conceptual framework, but allows varieties of set of questions adjusted to the contents of the addressed research subject. *Theory* and *approach*, along with a *thematic typology*, seem to be appropriate – as main analytic viewpoints – for addressing and discussing the content of the respective studies discussed in this book. However, it must be noted that there seems to be no similar study on the social history of international research development in the case of Asian history, and this may give a certain degree of originality to this book.

Here, an explanation about the difference between *theory* and *approach* is in order, since the two concepts are intended to refer to two different aspects of the following analysis. 'Theory' in this study refers in the first place to the 'level of theory building' in terms of in what degree a certain study attempts to put the findings into a theoretical framework in order to describe the Timurid–Ming relationship. However, this theoretical aspect is not intended to refer solely to the 'level of theory building', but also to its 'content', and thus the meaning of the 'theoretical aspect' of the present study is two-fold. However, while the former (level of theory building) will be made clear for each of the discussed studies, the latter (contents) will be addressed only in cases when the level of theory building reaches a certain degree. In contrast, 'approach' in the present study is related to the three aspects of the Timurid–Ming relationship,[15] that is, the cultural, political and economic dimensions of the relationship. In other words, it investigates what approaches are used in the respective studies, and how they contribute to our understanding of the Timurid–Ming relationship.

The reader will find that there is an apparent fluctuation between these two modes in this book. One refers to synchronising the contents of the findings in the three main literatures (scholarly traditions), and the other one pertains to placing the three traditions in the context of academic history – giving the impression that there is more stress on the former than on the latter. The reason why there is an apparently heavier stress on the synchronisation of contents derives from the fact that although the writing of the dissertation upon which this book is based was strongly influenced by the author's sociological studies in Japan, there was no intention to go into deep analyses and discussions about the social history of the three scholarly traditions per se. The primary intention was to synchronise the contents of the various studies and to point out the uncoordinated development of the three major scholarly traditions in the

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discusses in detail the applicability of Thomas Kuhn's thesis of scientific paradigms in the case of social science.

[15] See Chapter One.

Timurid–Ming research. Yet, the reason for discussing certain issues in detail regarding the social history of scholarship in the case of Japan and China directly connects to the development of Timurid–Ming research and the social history of academic research in the two countries. On the other hand, in the case of the Western literature, while it seems difficult to establish a similar direct link between the development of Timurid–Ming research and the social history of Western scholarship, imperialist interests must have affected the development of Western scholarship, which may have implicitly had an influence on Timurid–Ming research too. Nonetheless, it can be argued that a description of the democratisation process of Western scholarship in the second chapter could have made this book somewhat more balanced.

In summary, the purpose of the present book is three-fold: presenting the studies concerning the relationship of the two empires in the Western, Japanese and Chinese scholarly literatures; analysing both the theories and approaches presented in the respective studies, as well as investigating the level of theory building in each case; and, outlining new approaches for further research. In accordance with these purposes, the structure of this book is as follows below.

Since the historical background seems to be indispensable to follow the analyses of studies on the two empires in the three main literatures, Chapter One is devoted to give a historical outline of the Timurids and Ming China from the fourteenth century to the second half of the fifteenth century. In doing so, it provides a glimpse into historical parallels between the two empires built on the moribund ruins of the Chinggisid Empire and aims to inspire further studies on the histories of East and Inner Asia. However, Chapter One is not intended to be a pure description of historical facts, but rather to reveal the main characteristic features of both the internal structures in the two empires and their relationship for over a hundred years from the late fourteenth century. Chapter Two, Three and Four are devoted to presenting and discussing the studies within the Western, Japanese and Chinese literature respectively, whereas Chapter Five makes a general conclusion on the development of the Timurid–Ming research in the three scholarly literatures and outlines new approaches. Within the text there is also a summary of the findings at the end of each chapter. The final chapter presents conclusions regarding the content of the book and presents ideas for new approaches and further future research. It also points out the fact that the significance of Timurid–Ming research goes beyond its own boundaries and into general research of Sino–foreign relations. Finally, Appendix I gives an additional list of several important Chinese sources,

and Appendix II arranges the studies discussed in this book in a thematic table in order to help the reader obtain a general understanding of the main subjects and topics within Timurid–Ming Chinese research.

In conclusion it must be noted that in Chapter One there seems to be a bias in favour of Western scholarship for the historical outline of Timurid–Ming contacts, instead of making use of non-Western (Chinese or Japanese) scholarly works. This apparent bias has the following origins. As for modern Chinese research on Ming history, *The General History of China* 中国通史 (1999) edited by Bai Shouyi 白寿彝, or *The History of Ming (China)* 1–2 明史上下 (2003) written by Nan Bingwen 南炳文 and Tang Gang 汤纲 could have served as a base too. However, since modern Chinese historians focus more or less on merely noting historical facts and data, without going into deep analyses, these works can hardly be compared to those published in the Western literature – such as Edward L. Dreyer's excellent studies (1982, 1988) of the Mongolian influences on early Ming China. The same statement goes for modern Chinese research on the Timurid dynasty as well. As for Japanese research on Ming China, the two works of Danjō Hiroshi 檀上寛 addressing the life of the Hongwu emperor 明の太祖: 朱元璋 (1994) as well as that of the Yongle emperor 永楽帝 (1997) could have been referenced too. As for Japanese research on the Timurid dynasty, Kato Kazuhide 加藤和秀's *The Historical Study of the Timurids* ティームール朝成立史の研究 (1999) discussing the establishment of the Timurid Empire could also have been mentioned in this book, though the study questions about the conditions in the rising Timurid Empire appear to be less elaborate and detailed than in the work of Beatrice F. Manz: *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (1989). Moreover, *The Study of the Timurid Empire's Ruling Stratum* ティムール帝国支配層の研究 (2007) and *The Timurid Empire* ティムール帝国 (2014), both by Kawaguchi Takuji 川口琢司, could have been used for this book, but regrettably, they came to the author's attention too late to include in this volume.

CHAPTER ONE

TWO EMPIRES ON THE MORIBUND RUINS OF THE CHINGGISID DYNASTY

This chapter reviews the histories of the Timurid Empire and Ming China and throws light upon the main aspects of their relationship. A review of the two dynasties is not only useful for a general understanding of the various aspects of their relationship, but also for showing light upon the approaches and standpoints of the researchers of the two empires discussed in the following chapters. In doing so, it also becomes possible to highlight new areas of the relationship that have not been explored yet. This especially goes for the subject of the Timurid–Ming contacts, since, although the histories of the two dynasties have been studied by numerous scholars, the number of those who have a deep understanding of both histories is relatively small. However even among them only a handful of scholars managed to obtain a great knowledge of the relationship of the two dynasties.

The Timurid Empire and Ming China differed from each other in several important aspects such as their cultural and religious orientations, administrative and military structures, etc. Yet, they showed remarkable similarities in their historical conditions. First of all, similarities, or rather coincidences, can be seen in the timing of the births of the two empires, the sequence of prosperity and decline, as well as the sequence of the rulers in relation to the founder, etc. Nonetheless, what becomes more important here is that the two dynasties came into existence on the moribund ruins of the former Chinggisid Empire, and this led them to face a common legitimacy issue, albeit in different ways. The legitimacy problem was greater in the case of the Timurid dynasty. The Chinggisid Empire functioned as a sort of watershed in the history of the nomadic population of Inner Asia, by which it is possible to distinguish a pre-Chinggisid and a post-Chinggisid period.[16] In the post-Chinggisid period,

[16] "A mongol hódítás nemcsak etnikai, hanem mélyreható tudati változásokat is létrehozott. Belső-Ázsia török és mongol népei a mongol uralkodóházak, Dzsingisz kán leszármazottai révén hosszú ideig egy egységes, majd részeiben is összefüggő Belső-Ázsia lakói lettek. A 13. századi mongol hódítások Belső-Ázsia történetében olyan hatalmas mérföldkövet jelentettek, hogy bátran oszthat-

newly emerging empires of nomadic origins had to explain the legal base of their power in relation to their relationship with the former Chinggisid dynasty. In other words, their legal recognition was considered dubious if they failed to prove a certain relationship with the Chinggisid geneology.

Unlike the nomads, the Ming Chinese, however, did not face such a challenge of legitimacy, since they were not a nomadic civilisation deeply affected by the Mongolian world order. It can be assumed that the Ming Chinese did not even need to legitimise their actions against Mongolian rule, since they were being oppressed by an alien people for almost a century. However, overthrowing a regime purely for 'nationalistic' reasons was not considered a legitimate action in pre-modern Confucian China. Nationalism as a Western concept emerged only after the start of modernisation during the nineteenth century.[17] Consequently, the founder of Ming China was forced to find another way to explain the reason for his rise against the Mongols, and this resulted in his unique attitude to the (Mongol) Yuan 元 dynasty, by half accepting it and half denying it. Although the Timurid dynasty and Ming China had a different relationship with the Chinggisid Empire, and therefore they had different reactions and attitudes to it, both were forced to explain their legitimacies by referring to the preceding Chinggisid Empire.

In this chapter, after giving an outline of the histories of the Timurid Empire and early Ming China, and after drawing a parallel between the two histories, a significant section is devoted to address the concrete relationships between the two dynasties. This development can be roughly described as first having an increasingly intensive and prosperous period until about the early fifteenth century, and then a slowly declining one until the disappearance of the Timurid dynasty in the early sixteenth century. This section, however, will be restricted to describing the

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juk e történetet mongol kor előtti és utáni részre" [The Mongol invasion brought about deep changes not only in an ethnic sense, but also in terms of consciousness. The Turkic and Mongolian peoples of Inner Asia, through the (various) Mongolian dynasties, the descendants of Chinggis Khan, became inhabitants of a (first) united, and then a divided yet connected Inner Asia. The Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century meant such a huge milestone that it is possible to divide this history into a pre-Mongolian and a post-Mongolian period] (Vásáry 2003: 25).

[17] According to Zhu Jianrong, "The concepts of nationalism and of nation-states were alien to two thousand years of Chinese history, until the middle of the nineteenth century. Based on the concept of the Middle Kingdom, the Chinese believed that the entire universe was controlled by the Chinese emperor, and different political units and nationalities coexisted under a Sino-centric tributary system" (Zhu 2008: 181).

concrete relationships per se without referring to the theories and approaches of various scholars on the matter. This will be done in the subsequent chapters. Here in this part, questions such as when the relationship between the two empires started, in what forms these relationships were realised, and what characteristic features they held, etc. will be discussed. In accordance with this, a special emphasis will be put on discussing the envoys sent from both the Timurid Empire and Ming China, since these envoys represented the main connecting link between the two dynasties. However, what becomes a more significant question here is what these embassies meant for the Timurids and the Ming.

1.1 The Timurid Empire

The Timurid dynasty, one of the great Asian empires of nomadic origin, emerged in the second half of the fourteenth century. Established on the ruins of the previous Chinggisid Empire, it lasted for over a hundred years in Central Asia.[18] The central formation of the dynasty took place in Transoxiana,[19] the western part of the Chaghatai[20] *Ulus* that had been one of the four separate territories (called *ulus*) granted to Chinggis Khan's four 'main' sons.[21]

The historical conditions that promoted the emergence of this new dynasty in the second half of the fourteenth century are relatively clear. The Chaghatai dynasty that had ruled for a hundred years or so had lost its political power by the middle of the fourteenth century, and then the entire *ulus* began to disintegrate. The trigger for its disintegration, according to Gavin Hambly, was that Tarmashirin, a Chaghatai khan (ruled 1331–1334), converted to Islam, which was not acceptable for the

[18] The Timurid Empire had weakened significantly and lost control over most of its territory in Central Asia by the end of the fifteenth century. Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Babur, a direct (fifth generation) descendant of Timur, managed to reestablish the dynasty in 1526 under a new name (called the Mughal dynasty) on the Indian peninsula. It existed for three centuries up to the middle of the nineteenth century when it was finally abolished by the British Empire.

[19] Also spelled as Transoxania, and known as Māwarannahr in Persian and Arabic sources. Transoxiana means 'what is beyond the (Oxus) river', referred to the Amu Darya river.

[20] Chagatai was the name of Chinggis Khan's second son, who died around 1241.

[21] That is sons by Chinggis Khan's main wife (see Jackson 1999: 13).

tribal chieftains, who claimed that the Chinggisid traditions should remain untouched by Islamic influences.[22] This led to a rebellion against Tarmashirin, who was then removed from power in 1334 at the annual *khurïltay* (assembly of tribal chiefs), and later killed by the Eastern Chagatayid princes. After his deposition, the *ulus* sank into a thirty-year-long period of anarchy. During this time the *amirs* (military leaders) with Chinggisid puppet-khans behind them – at least in Transoxiana – started to fight each other. Shortly after Tarmashirin's removal from power, the *amirs* in Semirechie and Jungaria agreed over reviving the Chinggisid traditions, and separated from the western part (Transoxiana) of the Chaghatai *Ulus* under the name *Moghulistan* (the eastern part of the former Chaghatai *Ulus*).[23] Consequently, Tarmashirin's removal brought about the division of the *ulus* into two parts.[24]

Unlike the newly formed Moghulistan, political consolidation took for a much longer time in Transoxiana. This was rather difficult to achieve because the new political structure forming there after 1334 did not favour attempts to unite the fighting *amirs*.[25] Political consolidation could finally be achieved at the advent of Timur's rise to power in 1370.[26]

[22] See Hambly 1969: 132–133 for details.

[23] Moghulistan (also called Mughalistan or the Moghul Khanate) means 'the country of the Mongols'. It is also often referred to as the Eastern Chagatai Khanate.

[24] The political anarchy in the east consolidated relatively quickly in contrast to the west. Nonetheless, the hope of the *amirs* for reviving Mongolian traditions in the eastern part could not last for long, because Tughluq Temür, the khan of Moghulistan between 1347 and 1363, converted to Islam.

[25] See Manz 1989: 62–65 for details.

[26] The Persian and Arabic form of Timur's name is Tīmūr, while the Turkic form is Temür, meaning 'iron'. Concerning Timur's birthdate, Manz argues that Timur was born either in the 1320s or 1330s (1988: 13–14, 1989: 1). Other scholars (Hambly 1969: 150, Aka 1991: 3, Soucek 2000: 123), however, agree in that he was born in (or around) 1336. According to Ismail Aka, Timur was born on April 9th 1336 in the village of Hoca Ilgar near Kesh (later known as Shahr-i Sabz in Tajik, meaning 'Green City'). Timur's father, Taraghay, was an *amir* of the Barlas tribe, and a devout Muslim (Hambly 1969: 150). This tribe had a Mongol name and ancestry, but it was virtually Turkic, so Timur's native language was Turki. He may have spoken some Persian, but almost certainly no Mongolian (Soucek 2000: 123). In his childhood, Timur, forming a small band of personal followers, started an early career as a livestock thief by robbing travellers (see Manz 1988: 116 and 1989: 15). It was only in 1361 that he started to make efforts to re-unite the western part of the original Chagatai *Ulus*, and it eventually took ten years for Timur to become the *de facto* ruler of Transoxiana. By that time, Timur had already created a huge army under his leadership and gained a strong position among the *amirs* and chieftains.

Beatrice F. Manz (1989), who made a detailed analysis of Timur's rise and rule, argues that the reason why it was difficult for one single person to emerge from among the *amirs* and rule over Transoxiana laid in the fact that the *amirs* took profits from the uncertainty deriving from the lack of a central ruler. This uncertainty helped them maintain military forces, political power, and wealth inside their own hands. The rivalries within the respective tribes became connected with the rivalries for the entire *ulus*. The *amirs* became interested in making alliances with each other, but these pacts never proved to be long-standing. Once an *amir* was about to unite the entire *ulus* and to become the head of all the nomadic tribes found there, the other *amirs* were no longer interested in supporting him, and thus they had no choice but to turn against him. The political culture of this period was based on the notion that whereas there was a need in an ideological sense for a central ruler that could represent the entire *ulus*, it was not desirable for the *amirs* to realise this idea. The removal of Tarmashirin from power in 1334 changed the political identity within Transoxiana so that while the *amirs* felt necessary to maintain the territorial identity by talking about *the need for a central ruler*, they did not support the realisation of a new central power over them. The alliances of the tribes in the Chaghatai *Ulus* were formed not based on a common leadership, but rather on common interests and customs. The tribes were still loyal to the Chaghatayid dynasty from an ideal point of view, by having recourse to its military and administrative system. Basically, in spite of the thirty-year-long anarchy, the *ulus* managed to maintain its original form and structure until the time Timur finally seized power. Therefore, the question here is how it became possible for Timur to seize power and re-unite Transoxiana under such conditions. Here, based on the work of Manz, it is worthy of outlining the process of Timur's rise:

- Timur first had to gain power over his own tribe (the Barlas). In order to do so, he looked for allies outside the tribe. Those who supported him were people related to his family, and also people who accompanied him in his predatory campaigns. The main challenge for Timur was to defeat Ḥājjī Beg, the then leader of the Barlas clan. With the support of people hostile to the Barlas, he finally managed to become the leader of his tribe by 1361.[27]
- The way Timur gained power in his own tribe may not have been very unique, since looking for allies outside one's own tribe was quite a common practice. However, these allies did not last for

[27] See Manz 1989: 62 for details.

long in most cases, since shifting allies was also a common practice among the *amirs*, who considered their own temporary interests more important than creating firm and long-standing alliances. Another reason why ambitious *amirs* were forced to look for supporters outside their own tribes was that the tribes themselves were not really reliable either. The relationship of the respective tribes with their leaders was quite similar to the relationship of the *ulus* with its ruler in the sense that whereas it was relatively easy to seize power, it proved far more difficult to keep it. To find allies outside the *ulus* against hostile *amirs* was also quite a common practice. In doing so, Khorezm, Khorasan and Moghulistan became potential supporters of the fighting *amirs* in Transoxiana. Timur, along with Amīr Ḥusayn, was able to survive in Khorasan, while Transoxiana was under the control of the Moghuls.[28]

- Timur was very successful in defeating the hostile tribes and *amirs* by using his leadership and military abilities, as well as his charismatic personality, becoming the central ruler of the *ulus* by 1370. The main reason for his success, however, may have lied in the fact that there was no other charismatic candidate that the tribes could have supported against him.[29] At the time he seized power, a new age started in the history of the Chaghatai *Ulus*. The army that served as a base of Timur's power continued to consist of the same soldiers of the Chagathai *Ulus* as before Timur's rise, there was however a huge change in the power structure. While it is the tribal chieftains who were in power and had control over both lands and most of the military before, now they had no choice but to give way to the emergence of a new elite. This new elite consisted of Timur's relatives and personal followers. Consequently, the tribes lost much of their power and control over their armies and territories. The tribes that were put under the direct control of Timur's followers remained untouched, but those that were not had to be content with a lower position. One's power was no longer dependent on the strength of his tribe, but on his closeness to Timur himself.[30]
- It took about twelve years for Timur to consolidate his power. In the beginning he had to face the problem that most of his army was still under the direct control of tribal chieftains, and this could have

[28] See *Ibid.*: 63 for details.
[29] See *Ibid.*: 65 for details.
[30] See *Ibid.*: 88 for details.

> endangered his power. Therefore, he attempted to find ways to weaken the *amirs'* power. Firstly, he entrusted people from the Barlas tribe to govern areas that had been ruled by other tribes before. Secondly, he brought in numerous soldiers from territories outside of Transoxiana. Both policies resulted in weakening the position of the tribal chieftains, and by 1380–1381, the re-arrangement of power relations had been completed. Thereafter, there was no remarkable change in the power structure per se. Timur's followers were put into highest military positions, constituting a closed elite circle. Yet, Timur was not secure yet, since he had to maintain the new order, and also had to make sure that the new elite would not turn against him. Therefore, he decided to carry out constant campaigns outside the borders of the *ulus*, which were led by him personally. As a result, Timur spent more time outside the borders of Transoxiana than inside it for the rest of his life. Timur ordered many of his troops to be stationed in the newly conquered areas and appointed army representatives from the whole of the Chagatai *Ulus*. Moreover, Timur frequently changed the governorships, leaving no time for potential allies among the princes that could have formed against him.[31] As for Timur's administrative system, it was neither a systematic one, nor clearly prescribed. Although the two sides, a military and a civilian side, of the administration were separated in theory, there was a lot of overlap in reality. The official career structure in the administration system was not well defined, and jobs were often done by those who theoretically were not in charge of them. Consequently, it is hard to find a clear system within Timur's administrative policy.[32]

Following Manz, it can be said that the ambiguity in Timur's administrative system was beneficial for Timur in that he was able to keep its power under his personal control. By bringing his people into a state of personal dependence of him, Timur managed to prevent the emergence of potential rivals. Therefore, it can be assumed that there might have been a rational reason in his ambiguous administration policy after all. This system seemed to be functioning quite smoothly as long as he was alive.

[31] See *Ibid.*: 88–89 for details.
[32] See *Ibid.*: 125 for details.

On the other hand, Timur was however, according to Hambly,[33] just a *de facto* ruler, who was not officially recognised as a ruler, since the legitimacy of power was based on one's relationship with the Chinggisid dynasty. When Timur took power in Transoxiana in 1370, the *de jure* ruler was Soyurghatmïsh (1370–1388), a Chinggisid Khan, in whose name coins continued to be minted, and this continued in the name of his son, Sulṭān Maḥmūd (1388–1403?).[34] Consequetly, Timur faced the problem of how to legitimise his power. In contrast to Timur, Chinggis Khan's legitimacy was indisputable, because his leadership over the forming Mongolian confederacy was legitimised by the *khurïltay* in 1206. This was the time when he changed his name from Temüjin to Chinggis Khan. Thereafter, whatever Chinggis Khan did, was done by a legitimate ruler who had no need for justification of his deeds.[35]

The Chinggisid Empire had broken into parts and was already on the brink of vanishing by the time of Timur, however it was still strong enough to throw a shadow over those who had ambition to follow it. According to Soucek (2000), the politico-cultural heritage of the Mongols was so powerful that actually no nomadic ruler could feel their rule legitimate, unless they could present a certain relationship with the Chinggisid dynasty. There were basically two ways of how to solve this problem. One was through marriage to someone of Chinggisid origin, and the other one was to rule in the name of a Chinggisid puppet *khan*. Timur managed to strengthen the legitimacy of his power in both ways. He married a princess of the Chinggisid line, while he was also ruling in the name of Chinggisid rulers. Consequently, he was not in the position to call himself a *khan*, but had to rest content with using the title *amir* (meaning 'commander') and *güregen*, the latter meaning 'son-in-law' in Mongolian.[36] This sheds light upon how the newly arisen Ming Chinese court admitted Timur as a sovereign ruler related to the Chinggisid dynasty. However, what becomes interesting concerning Timur's choice for a puppet *khan* in whose name he could rule is that he chose the Ögödeyid line over the Chaghatayid one in 1370.[37]

[33] See Hambly 1969: 150–151 for details.
[34] See *Ibid*.: 151.
[35] The meaning of 'Chinggis' is still unclear, but it may have had the connotation of 'oceanic', or in other word, 'world-embracing' (Soucek 2000: 104).
[36] It must be noted that Timur was called *fuma* 駙馬 in the Chinese historiography, which means 'imperial son-in-law'.
[37] See Soucek 2000: 125. The importance of choosing the Ögödeyid line may have lied in that Ögödey – though he was just the third son – was assigned as the successor of Chinggis Khan.

Another important resource for Timur to justify his rule was Islam. Being the son of a devout Muslim, Timur was not only exposed to Turco–Mongolian cultural influences, but also to Islamic ones. Although these two cultural heritages were not really compatible, Timur succeeded in making a kind of mixed use of the two. On the other hand, it must be noted that whereas the Persian bureaucracy was primarily supposed to deal with civil affairs and the Turco–Mongolian one with military affairs, there was no clear distinction between the two in reality.[38] It seems as if Timur had made use of Islamic and Turco–Mongolian customs in the ways he felt necessary to reinforce his power.[39]

When Timur succeeded in re-uniting the western part of the former Chaghatai *Ulus*, he started to lead aggressive campaigns outside of Transoxiana. He first invaded Khorasan and captured the city of Herat. He then continued his wars of conquest in Mazandaran and western Iran, and finally took Rayy and Sultaniyya. He led numerous wars during the 1380s and 1390s against Luristan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Anatolia, Iran, the Golden Horde, Northern India, the Mamluks of Egypt, and finally he could even defeat the powerful Ottoman army and captured their sultan, Bāyazīd I., in 1402 at today's Ankara. The war against the Ottoman Empire caused some difficulty for Timur, not just because of the fact that the Ottoman army was larger and stronger, but because it was an Islamic country fighting in Christian Europe successfully, so Timur had to find a good excuse to justify his war against it. He finally managed to do so, and defeated the Ottoman army through superior strategy.[40]

Thereafter, Timur started to get prepared for attacking China. It is not known what Timur thought about the possibilities of such a huge plan, but it is known that he took Tayzi Ughlan, a Mongolian prince, with him, who presumably could have become the next ruler of China, provided that Timur succeeded in his plan.[41] This suggests that Timur was determined about realising this plan. However, in order to attack China, he first had to go through Moghulistan lying between Transoxiana and

[38] See Manz 1989: 109 for details.

[39] It is worth noting that during the rule of the Timurid Empire, there was no significant penetration of Turkic nomads from the steppes to the Central Asian sedentary areas. On the other hand, at the same time, Central Asian nomads went through the final stage of their Islamisation (Bregel 1991: 61).

[40] See Smitha 2005 for details.

[41] Kauz 2005: 76.

China, thus he had to ask the ruler of Moghulistan for permission to allow his troops safety passage.[42]

According to John E. Woods, there was a significant change in Timur's thought in 1391. Timur said in his letters to Bāyazīd as well as to the Mamluk sultans, that the legitimate representatives of the Chinggisid heritage were Chaghatai and Ögödei, whereas Möngke and Hülegü were just usurpers. By doing so, Timur managed to legitimise the restoration of the Chinggisid line.[43] This means a kind of justification for attacking China from a Chinggisid point of view. However, Timur was not just a ruler with a Turco–Mongolian heritage, but also an Islamic one, and as such he was also justified to lead a war against a non-Islamic country.[44]

Timur was almost seventy years old when he finally came to the decision to attack China. He died, however, in Utrar (1405) while being on the way, well before he could have encountered Chinese forces. The campaign consequently came to an end.

Prior to his death, Timur had nominated Pīr Muḥammad, one of his grandsons, as his successor.[45] The weakness of Timur's power structure[46] however – as described by Manz (1989) so well – manifested itself soon after his death. Though Pīr Muḥammad, being chosen by Timur personally, had a well-founded reason to inherit the entire empire, he was not without challengers. Timur's followers turned against his will, and Pīr Muḥammad was killed by one of his own generals in 1407. The struggle for the throne went on until 1409 between two decendants of Timur: Khalīl Sulṭān, the son of Mīrānshāh, who managed to capture Samarqand, and Shāhrukh, Timur's fourth son, who was the then governor of Herat in Khorasan. The war finally ended with the victory of Shāhrukh, whose long rule (1409–1447) brought consolidation and a relative peacefulness to the empire. During his rule, Ming China sent several envoys to Shāhrukh. These dispatched embassies made a significant contribution to the legitimisation of Shāhrukh's power.[47] China enjoyed huge respect

[42] In fact, Moghulistan had previously been one of Timur's targets to conquer. After 1370, he attacked Moghulistan five times (Hambly 1969: 133, Manz 1989: 60), but he never succeeded in occupying it and thus restoring the former Chaghatai *Ulus*.

[43] Woods 1990b: 106–109. Also see Kauz 2005: 68.

[44] Kauz 2005: 68.

[45] Pīr Muḥammad was the son of Jahāngīr. Timur had four sons: Jahāngīr, ʿUmar Shaykh, Mīrānshāh and Shāhrukh. The first three predeceased their father.

[46] That is the personal dependence of the entire administrative system on Timur.

[47] On the other hand, Kauz also argues that this worked both ways since the reception of foreign embassies helped the Ming emperors legitimise their power too (*Ibid.*: 23, 38, 91–92).

among the peoples of Central Asia, probably because of its wealth and powerful standing, as well as the goods[48] that were transported along the Silk Road. Consequently, the fact that China sent envoys to Shāhrukh was regarded as a recognition of his power by the Ming Chinese court. Among these envoys, the mission of Fu An 傅安 in 1409 held a special significance, since this was also the year when Shāhrukh eventually started to rule over his father's heritage after defeating his enemies.

The territory that fell into the hands of Shāhrukh included Iran, Khorasan, Khorezm, Fergana and Transoxiana.[49] This however was not only much smaller in scope than the territory Chinggis Khan's descendants could share, but Timur's death also ended the expansion of the Timurid dynasty in a geographical sense. This stands in contrast to the Chinggisid dynasty that continued to expand significantly well after the founder's death in 1226.[50]

Shāhrukh was a devout Muslim, who felt extremely enthusiastic about Iranian culture,[51] and who eventually turned his father's Central Asian empire into an orthodox Islamic sultanate.[52] Shāhrukh moved the capital from Samarqand to Herat, a Khorasanian city, where he had been governor before his father's death.[53] Thereafter, the capital of the Timurid dynasty, with a brief interlude between 1447 and 1449 when Ulugh Beg, a son of Shāhrukh, changed it back to Samarqand, stood in Herat.[54] Consequently, Samarqand lost much of its political significance, and by making Herat the Timurid capital, the centre of the empire became even further from China. This geographical replacement of the capital city however did not affect Timurid–Ming Chinese relations at all – at least not during the time of Shāhrukh and the Yongle 永楽 emperor. On the contrary, a flourishing relationship between the two empires was just beginning.

After Timur's death, the Timurid dynasty took a new shape in several aspects. First of all, it was no longer a dynasty undertaking wars of conquest, but one where more emphasis was put on consolidation and stability, as well as on the arts and science. In other words, civilisation (mainly Islamic civilisation) became more emphasised rather than

[48] Some of these were extremely useful for nomadic people such as tea.
[49] See Soucek 2000: 126.
[50] See *Ibid.*: 126.
[51] See Hambly 1969: 154.
[52] See *Ibid.*: 154.
[53] See Soucek 2000: 126.
[54] See *Ibid.*: 126.

conflict.[55] During the time of Shāhrukh, there was a shift from the Chinggisid heritage and customs towards Islamic ones. Unlike his father, Shāhrukh did not feel it necessary to rule in the name of a Chinggisid puppet *khan*, and was ruling fully in his own right, using the supreme Islamic title of *sultan* instead.[56] He spared no expense to help artists and writers; to build religious buildings such as madrasas, mosques, shrines; and to give religious donations, etc.[57] Shāhrukh had lost the western Iranian territories to the Qaraqoyunlu, a powerful Turcoman confederacy, by the end of his rule, in other parts of his empire, however, he still enjoyed indisputable prestige.[58]

Shāhrukh's death in 1447 remarked the beginning of a new wave of power struggles. Ulugh Beg (1394–1449), Shāhrukh's son, became the new (nominal) ruler, but he was not without rivals. In 1448, he was challenged by his nephew ʿAlā al-Dawla. Although Ulugh Beg managed to defeat him in a battle near Herat, he failed to recognise the achievements of his elder son, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf in the victory, by showing obvious preference for his younger son, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.[59] He even deprived his elder son of the treasury that he had gathered in Herat, although this then turned out to be a fatal decision. Being deeply humiliated, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf successfully attacked his father in Samarqand in 1449, who became a fugitive of his own son. The religious authorities justified ʿAbd al-Laṭīf's deed in capturing his father, deposed Ulugh Beg from power and even ordered his execution.[60] Nonetheless, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf could not enjoy his victory for long. He was murdered by his cousin ʿAbd Allāh, another grandson of Shāhrukh, shortly after Ulugh Beg was executed.[61] ʿAbd Allāh was then overthrown by Abū Saʿīd, a grandson of Mīrānshāh, with the support of the Özbek *khan*, Abū'l Khayr.[62] Abū Saʿīd turned out to be strong enough to maintain his power for more than

[55] See *Ibid.*: 126.
[56] See *Ibid.*: 126.
[57] See Hambly 1969: 154.
[58] See *Ibid.*: 154.
[59] See Soucek 2000: 131.
[60] See *Ibid.*: 131. Ulugh Beg was a patron of science. He built three madrasas, in Bukhara (1417), Samarqand (1420) and Ghijduwan (1433), among which the one in Samarqand became a famous centre for mathematic and astronomical studies (*Ibid.*: 128). It even had an astronomical observatory built in 1428 (*Ibid.*: 128). Ulugh Beg made it possible for the Islamic astronomy to reach higher levels than it had been before. He also paid attention to religious studies, memorising the Quran, writing poems, and composing music.
[61] See Hambly 1969: 154.
[62] See *Ibid.*: 154 and Soucek 2000: 132–133.

a decade (1451–1469), though his power shrank to Transoxiana eventually after Abū al-Qāsim Babur, another great-grandson of Timur, took Khorasan and made Herat his headquarters (1449–1457).[63] After Babur's death in 1457, the territory of the empire was united again (and also for the last time) under the same ruler (Abū Saʿīd).[64] His reign contributed to the second phase of relative stability for the Timurid dynasty in Central Asia.[65]

After Abū Saʿīd's death in 1469, his son, Aḥmad ascended to the throne and ruled in Transoxiana until 1494. He was followed by another son of Abū Saʿīd, Maḥmūd, ruling until 1495, who was then succeeded by his son, 'Alī (1495–1500).[66] Their reigns were assured not by personal political and military skills, but rather by the fact that the Özbeks, Qazaqs, Moghuls and Qalmïqs were busy fighting each other in the north, and also that Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayqara (ruled 1470–1506) in Khorasan, had no intention to attack Transoxiana.[67] Ḥusayn Bayqara was a great-grandson of ʿUmar Shaykh. He admired the arts and science, and in his court there lived scholars, painters, poets and musicians.[68]

In the meantime, however, the Özbeks in the north were becoming more and more powerful under Muḥammad Shaybānī, threatening the last generation of the Timurids. Shaybānī was a grandson of Abū'l Khayr Özbek *khan*, the founder of the Özbek *Ulus* in the mid-fifteenth century, whose Chinggisid lineage went back to Chinggis Khan's grandson, Shiban.[69] He succeeded in occupying more and more territory of the Timurid Empire. The Timurid princes themselves were busier fighting each other than making an alliance against the Özbeks.[70] By 1500, Shaybānī managed to bring all of Transoxiana under his rule, capturing Samarqand, Bukhara and Qarshi.[71] Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Babur, who was a Timurid descendant on his father's[72] side and a Chinggisid on his mother's side, succeeded in re-taking Qarshi and Samarqand, but these

[63] See Soucek 2000: 136.
[64] See *Ibid.*: 136–137.
[65] See Hambly 1969: 155.
[66] See Soucek 2000: 144.
[67] See *Ibid.*: 144.
[68] Among those, Jāmī, a great classical poet of Iran, and Mīr ʿAlī Shīr Navāʾī, who promoted the Chaghatai Turkish to become a literary language, can be mentioned as the most famous (Hambly 1969: 155–156).
[69] The origin of the name Shaybānī goes back to the name Shiban, but its pronounciation was shifted by Muslim historians to 'Shaybānī' (Soucek 2000: 149).
[70] See Hambly 1969: 156.
[71] See *Ibid.*: 157.
[72] ʿUmar Shaykh, a son of Abū Saʿīd.

proved to be only temporary victories.[73] After Shaybānī regained control in Transoxiana, his attention turned to Khorezm, which he eventually attacked in 1505–1506.[74] His attack formed a warning for Ḥusayn Bayqara, however, he died in 1506.[75] Babur, who at that time was in Afghanistan to establish a new principality for himself, was speeding to help the two sons of Ḥusayn Bayqara in Herat, however, he found that Herat did not have the capacity to resist Shaybānī, thus he decided to leave it before the Özbek troops arrived.[76] Shaybānī could take Herat with no difficulties. Babur, who had been dreaming of becoming the ruler of Samarqand, now had no choice but to flee to the east, first getting to Kabul, and then, after defeating the sultan of Delhi, Ibrāhīm Lodī, at the battle of Panipat in 1526, he became the ruler of Northern India, which led to the birth of the Great Moghul Empire of Hindustan.[77] Babur himself died four years later in 1530, but it is eventually him who laid the foundations of a new empire ruled by his descendants until the middle of the nineteenth century.[78]

The history of the Timurids in Central Asia can be divided into (at least) two parts. The first part begins with Timur, the conqueror, who faced two essential problems: to consolidate his power in Transoxiana in a military sense, and to legitimise his realm. In order to reinforce his personal power among his followers, he, on one hand, created an obscure administrative system with a strong level of personal dependence on him, whereas on the other hand, he kept his army in constant conflict. Secondly, in order to legitimise his rule, he found a way to become an accepted ruler in accordance with the Chinggisid traditions, while also making use of Islam. The second part of the Timurid dynasty was the post-Timur era, a time which saw the irresistable spread of Islam – most strikingly seen during the time of Shāhrukh.[79] It led Shāhrukh not needing

[73] See *Ibid.*: 157.
[74] See *Ibid.*: 157.
[75] See *Ibid.*: 157.
[76] See *Ibid.*: 157.
[77] See Soucek 2000: 147.
[78] Nonetheless, Babur's descendants, for more than a hundred years after Babur's death, wished to retake the lost Central Asian territories. The last attempt took place during the 1640s, the time of Shāh Jahān (1627–1659). This, however, turned out to be a disastrous failure, and no Indian Timurid ruler felt courageous enough to make an attempt to reestablish the Timurid rule once again in Central Asia. See Hambly 1969: 160–161 for details.
[79] Mihály Dobrovits points out that in the second half of the fifteenth century, there were two interpretations of political power in existence. One refers to the attempt of Shāhrukh, who tried to strengthen his power through Islam, and therefore, tried

to have recourse to a Chinggisid puppet *khan*, in whose name he would have ruled. No longer were the Timurids a conquering dynasty, but rather a prospering one in the field of the arts and science, bringing tranquility to the people in the empire. However, it also had a disfunctional politico-cultural heritage left by Timur to his descendants. That is to say, the relationship to Timur was so obscure during his lifetime that it led to a disagreement among his descendants, making claims for the throne along with numerous disputes over it throughout the remainder of the Timurid history. This almost brought about the disappearance of the empire from the stage of history in the middle of the fifteenth century, though it managed to survive due to certain historical circumstances. This led to the second golden, or rather silver, period, which was mainly represented by the rule of Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bayqara in Khorasan. This period can even be regarded as the third era of Timurid history.[80] However, the great-grandsons of Timur did not prove to be skillful enough to make allies and resist the Özbek Shaybānī's conquering ambitions, which put Timurid power in Central Asia to an end.

1.2 Ming China

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it may look self-evident from a modern nationalist point of view that the Yuan dynasty of Mongol origin (1279–1368) had to be overturned by Chinese nationals in order to restore the Chinese world order throughout the 'land under Heaven'.[81] Nonetheless, it is difficult to talk about the existence of *Chinese nationalism* in a modern sense at this time, since nationalism did not emerge before the late nineteenth century when China became semi-colonised by Western powers. In pre-modern China foreigners were regarded as something inferior not because they were of different ethnic origins, but because they did not identify with the Chinese cultural world

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to get rid of Mongolian customs. The other interpretation was to keep the Mongolian traditions alive in order to obtain true legitimacy in this way. This latter one was typical of Timur himself, as well as his successors, except for Shāhrukh. Nonetheless apart from the legitimacy problem of the Timurid rulers, Kauz points to that the Mongolian tradition was still present – at least during the first half of the fifteenth century, during the time of Ulugh Beg (2005: 135).

[80] Hambly 1969: 155–156.

[81] This is an ancient Chinese expression (called *tianxia* 天下 in Chinese) meaning the world or China.

order.[82] Thus the reasons that led to a Chinese restoration of power in the country laid in various deteriorating social and military conditions in China from the first half of the fourteenth century.

Frederick W. Mote describes these deteriorating conditions in the following way. After the Mongols under Khubilai Khan's leadership managed to occupy central and southern China during the 1270s, the conquering Mongol army was mainly stationed in the north, close to the capital, while the armies of professional soldiers, were stationed in central and southern China. The latter often had a Mongol or Central Asian commander in charge of supervising them. This kind of arrangement persisted throughout the Yuan dynasty with no significant change. However, the Mongol army started to decline gradually from the end of the thirteenth century. One reason was the poorly administered conditions of the military garrisons. At the same time, the military effectiveness of the imperial guards stationed at the capital started to decline as well. Yuan Chinese society was becoming less safe and more disorderly, leading to a weakening of social norms. Bandits were becoming stronger, and quasi-military forces were being formed in local governments. Weapons started spreading in the countryside after the 1330s, and more and more men became good at understanding arms. Many of these men eventually joined local rebellions, instead of joining governmental military establishments. The rapid spread of weapons throughout the country changed it from being a relatively peaceful society into a more and more militarised one from the 1330s, and this process lasted until about the 1380s when Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (the later Hongwu 洪武 emperor), the first Ming emperor, finally managed to complete the reunification of the country under Chinese rule.[83]

However, just like in the case of Timur, it took a very long time for Zhu Yuanzhang to reunite China under his own leadership. While he was fighting the Mongols, he also needed to compete with rival rebels. Based on Frederick W. Mote's study, the rise of Zhu Yuanzhang is summarised in the following way:

- Zhu Yuanzhang was born in 1328 in a village somewhere in today's Anhui 安徽 province, spending his childhood in great poverty. His parents were fleeing from place to place, escaping from tax-collectors to avoid paying tax, and finally came to the Huai 淮 region. By the 1330s, the Huai area became a kind of

[82] Fairbank 1942: 130.
[83] See Mote 1988: 13–15 for details.

centre of the Red Turban rebellion movement,[84] which managed to attract a lot of people from a population reduced to poverty, by talking about the coming of a better future.[85]

- In 1344, there was a severe epidemic sweeping through the area, which was followed by locust invasion and drought. No one in Zhu Yuanzhang's family, except for one of his brothers and him, survived. He was just sixteen years old at this time. In the same year, he was introduced to a nearby Buddhist monastery as a novice. By doing so, he was actually fulfilling his father's promise to the monastery, which was made when he was just an infant. However, not very long after he moved into the monastry, he was compelled to leave it with all the other novices to find food elsewhere. He returned to the temple in 1347 or 1348. During those years that he spent outside of the temple, he was wandering through the Huai region, and it is very probable that he heard lots of stories about the Red Turban rebellion. It is also possible that it was the time when he became familiar with military skills, and it cannot be excluded that he even served in an army, presumably a Mongol one. After he went back to the monastry, he stayed there until about the age of twenty-four, studying Buddhist scriptures.[86]
- Entering the year that Zhu was about to become twenty-four, the whole central Huai area entered into turbulence, which was mainly caused by the Red Turbans. A district city, not far from Zhu's village, was taken by a group of Red Turbans in 1352. One of the leaders was Guo Zixing 郭子興, who believed in the Maitreya doctrine deeply, saying that a better world was approaching, and who was collecting fighters like himself. The Yuan government did not attempt to retake the city for a while. Instead, they sent poorly organised troops, which eventually plundered and burnt villages and temples, and captured local people who had nothing to do with

[84] The Red Turban rebellion was one of the sectarian movements in Yuan China. It first appeared in the 1330s in Jiangxi 江西 and Hunan 湖南 province and then spread to half of China in ten or so years. It became popular in provinces where people were suffering from famine and epidemics, gathering men and women to burn incense and worship the messianic Buddha Maitreya. However, the Red Turbans did not constitute a united movement, but had several branches with different leaders. It goes without saying that these groups were considered as socially dangerous by the Yuan government and the elite within society. The Red Turban movement finally became divided into two groups: a southern group and a northern group. See Mote 1988: 37–38 for details.

[85] *Ibid.*: 44.

[86] *Ibid.*: 44–45.

the Red Turban movement. Zhu's temple was in the fighting zone, and could not escape being burnt. Zhu, who had fled before the temple was attacked, could only see its ruins. Shortly afterwards, he decided to join the rebels, who had been sending messages to him, under the command of Guo Zixing.[87] This was the moment in his life which changed him from being a simple subject of the Yuan empire into a conscious rebel, and there could be some historical speculation over how the history of the Yuan dynasty would have changed if Zhu's temple had not been burnt by the Mongols.

- In 1353, Guo entrusted him with an independent commission, which marked the beginning of Zhu's independent career.[88] After a series of battles, Zhu managed to take Nanking in 1356, the name of which he changed into Yingtian 應天 ('in response to Heaven').[89] Not long after this, Han Lin'er 韓林児[90] appointed Zhu Yuanzhang to be the leader of Jiangxi 江西 province, and Guo Zixing's son became just a secondary leader. The latter, presumably not satisfied with the decision, hatched an unsuccessful conspiracy, and was executed. From then on, Zhu became the most powerful leader of the northern Red Turbans in the Yangtze [Yangzi 杨子] area,[91] protecting the candidate emperor, Han Lin'er. By doing so, Zhu became one of the leaders who was struggling to obtain ultimate power. It was a turning point in his life again, and he changed from being a religious rebel into a political leader.[92] However, at this time, he was still not the one who was expected to become the emperor. That was Han Lin'er. Although Zhu's advisers suggested to him that he should turn away from the Red Turban movement that aimed at reestablishing the Song 宋 dynasty, he did not listen to them. He continued to use the symbol of the Song dynasty, the Dragon Phoenix, until 1367 when Han Lin'er drowned while crossing the Yangtze river.[93] Thereafter, however, Zhu moved quickly, and the following year, 1368, he decided to

[87] *Ibid.*: 45.
[88] *Ibid.*: 46.
[89] *Ibid.*: 47.
[90] Han Lin'er was declared to be the emperor of an expectedly restored future Song dynasty in 1355 by the northern Red Turbans, taking the reign title of Longfeng 龍鳳, meaning 'Dragon Phoenix' (*Ibid.*: 42).
[91] *Ibid.*: 48.
[92] *Ibid.*: 48.
[93] *Ibid.*: 51.

abandon the symbol of the Dragon Phoenix in order to use a new one to represent his own dynasty, that is the Ming.[94]

- It is a subject of debate of how much Zhu himself believed in the Red Turban religious ideology. However, it can be assumed that he was using those in the Red Turban movement to develop a positive image of him among the common people. He needed them, since he was facing a legitimacy problem within his new realm from several directions. First, he had to explain why it was necessary to overthrow the Mongols; secondly, he had to compete with rival rebels. As for the first point, he never actually denied the legitimacy of Mongol rule in China, but he did stress that it was the time for Mongol rule to end, since they failed to keep the country in peace. This was also close to a Confucian way of justification, saying that if a ruler is not capable to fulfill his duties towards his people 'under Heaven', he must leave. Secondly, while he was fighting his fellow rebels, he was striving to create a positive image of himself among the people, by giving tax exemptions in areas that suffered a lot from war damage, punishing soldiers in his army who were found pillaging, and even honouring the loyalty of his enemies. All these helped him become accepted by both the common people and the elite of the society.[95]

When Zhu Yuanzhang proclaimed himself to be the new emperor of China in 1368, the war with the Mongols in the north was far from being finished. Toghon Temür, the Yuan emperor, was in Dadu 大都 (to the north of today's Peking),[96] and Zhu had to find a way to remove him. After Zhu was declared to be the emperor of a new dynasty, they sent edicts to the adjacent countries, informing them about the establishment of the new dynasty. However, it did not go smoothly in some places such as Korea, which still continued to regard Mongol rule as legitimate for about ten more years.[97] Zhu Yuanzhang, who started to rule under the imperial name Hongwu after his enthronement, however, ordered the compilation of the *Yuanshi* 元史, the official history of the Yuan period, in 1368, which was begun in 1369, and finished the following year.[98] Consequently, the compilation was completed in a year or so, and this

[94] *Ibid.*: 51. Ming means 'radiant', which has Manichean connotations, suggesting that Zhu did not break all relations with sectarian doctrines (*Ibid.*: 51).
[95] *Ibid.*: 50.
[96] Langlois 1988: 108.
[97] *Ibid.*: 111.
[98] *Ibid.*: 116.

shows that Hongwu (Zhu Yuanzhang)[99] intended to close the history of the former dynasty officially and to start his own afresh.[100]

The question here is whether the newly established Ming dynasty could make a break with the 'Mongolian traditions' that had prevailed in the Yuan administration for a century or so, or to be more precise, in what degree it retained such aspects that were typical of the former dynasty's governing style. The question becomes quite relevant if one thinks of the fact that while the future emperor Zhu Yuanzhang and his rebel fellows were fighting the Mongols, they were also exposed to the politico-cultural atmosphere of their age that was characterised by the long Mongol rule. This might have made a peculiar change in the minds of those who had been once the subjects of this dynasty of Mongol origin. As is shown below, the Mongol rule in China did make major changes to the Chinese thought, so much that its effects did not vanish immediately with the collapse of the Yuan dynasty. The most profound effects can be discovered in the attitude to the Confucian way of governing.

Frederick W. Mote (1961) argued that Confucianism must have been the only ideology that could be used for the foundation of the new dynasty. Edward L. Farmer (1995), however, suggested that the ideological spectrum was not so narrow, and that the legitimacy of the new dynasty might have been established on the White Lotus-Maitreya doctrine as well – albeit only after a long time allowing the replacement of the former educated elite with a new one. Nonetheless, Farmer agrees with Mote in that there was an obvious restoration of Confucianism after the establishment of the Ming dynasty. On the orther hand, Edward L. Dreyer, by studying the military origins of early Ming China, came to the conclusion that the restoration of Confucianism did not take place at once, but took a long time.[101]

Dreyer also argues that the history of Ming China can be divided into two parts according to the degree of how much Mongol influences prevailed, and when they started to decline within the imperial administration. Therefore, he distinguishes an early Ming China period, which lasted until 1435, and another period when the Ming court found its way back to its Chinese Confucian origins. Dreyer outlines five

[99] Henceforth, Zhu Yuanzhang will be labelled 'Hongwu', his title as the emperor of China.

[100] An interesting fact concerning the speed of the compilation is that it had to be interrupted for a while until the records about the last Yuan emperor, Toghon Temür, arrived (*Ibid.*: 116).

[101] Interestingly, Farmer (1995) is aware of Dreyer's standpoint (1982), but he does not seem to put an emphasis on it.

aspects in which the Mongol effects can be grasped: military conquest, foreign affairs and foreign trade, the preponderance of military officers over civil officials, official appointment based on heredity, as well as the suspension of civil service examinations.[102] All these challenged the Confucian view of how the world should be governed. The politico-cultural heritage of the Yuan government that had preferred Taoism or Buddhism to Confucianism was immense in making an obstacle for the revival of the Confucian ideas after the Mongol collapse in 1368. Dreyer's arguments about the five aforementioned aspects can be summarised in the following way.

Firstly, Confucianism does not condemn the use of force when it is used to oppress some rebellion or to resist a barbarian invasion, however, it deeply condemns using force in order to absorb new territories, that is wars of conquest. Consequently, Han Wudi 漢武帝 and Sui Yangdi 隨煬帝 were both denounced by Confucian historians for having attempted to conquer territories outside Chinese borders. Two of the early Ming rulers were not exceptions either, since both the Hongwu emperor and his son, Zhu Di 朱棣 (the future Yongle emperor)[103] were men of war – especially the latter, making attempts to enlarge Chinese territories. This was learned from the Mongol way of how to treat the areas near the borderlines of the empire. Nevertheless, it was done against the warnings of their Confucian advisers.

Secondly, as for foreign affairs and foreign trade, according to ancient Confucian views, it was necessary to make other states submit to the Chinese court, and there were several forms for doing so. Nonetheless, trading with them was not an ideal behaviour, since trading itself was not considered moral – regardless of whether it was done with foreigners or among the Chinese themselves. It had a connotation linked to the image of one's greed for financial interests, which contradicted the image of a moral person, *junren* 君人 in Chinese. Therefore, in the ancient Chinese social order, merchants stood at the bottom of a society that referred to a lower status than that of peasants and craftsmen. However, according to Dreyer, in early Ming China, there was no real agreement about this Confucian attitude. Although the Hongwu emperor did make attempts to free China of barbarian influences, his son, the Yongle emperor held quite the opposite attitude to this matter. Under his realm China was about to become a world power stepping outside of its borders. He was following the behaviour of the Mongols, who were apt to build relations

[102] See Dreyer 1982: 2–4 for details.
[103] Henceforth, he will be referred to as the Yongle emperor.

with other peoples in Asia. In contrast to him, his Confucian scholars were of quite a different opinion, and unsuccessful in persuading him.

The third aspect of the Mongol effects on early Ming administration is the dominant position of the military elite over civil officials. As far as it is known, it may be for the first and last time in Chinese history that people in high military ranks would stand above the scholarly stratum. The military itself was regarded as a necessary, but disdainful thing, consequently, it could not enjoy such a morally high position as that of the learned Confucian scholars. However, in early Ming China, military officers were higher in rank and were also better paid than scholarly officials. Military officers held key positions both in the central level and in the countryside. This was partly due to the effect of the former Mongol dynasty in emphasising the role of the military, and partly due to the fact that both Hongwu and Yongle needed to have recourse to military support to assure their success in getting to power.[104] The military played an immense role in the rise of early Ming China, which could be a second reason why scholarly Confucians were put aside for several decades.

The fourth aspect was that the official appointments in the military became hereditary, and this was against Confucian attitudes again. According to Confucianism, officials should be selected through examinations, regardless of the social background of the applicants, based purely on one's personal abilities. Therefore, at least theoretically, the career of official service was open for everyone. As might be concluded from the residual Mongol influences mentioned above, this, however, was different in early Ming China. The first Ming Chinese rulers made most of the military offices hereditary, creating a new class of military nobles standing above scholarly officials. According to Dreyer, Yuan practice stood as a model for the early Ming rulers in making the military offices hereditary. However, one should not forget the fact that Hongwu won his wars against the Mongols by depending on his military forces, so he was not in the position to neglect them. Therefore, he decided to give them advantages even at the expense of the scholarly stratum. It can also be considered that Hongwu himself may have not really trusted the Confucian scholars themselves, since Confucianism as an ideology of state-governing eventually did not give as much space for a ruler to exercise his power as the Mongol rulers had enjoyed by putting Confucian ideas aside.

[104] In the case of the Yongle emperor, his need of the support of the military will be discussed below.

The fifth aspect concerns the civil service examinations. Civil service examinations were suspended by the Mongols, because they were considered to reinforce the Confucian ideology, which was thought to be threatening the freedom of action of the rulers in power. Although it was reestablished in 1384 during Hongwu's time on a permanent basis, it was not done so immediately after his enthronement. This shows his reluctance to have recourse to a Confucian practice that had existed for centuries before the Mongols.

What makes Dreyer's work most fascinating concerning the early Ming administration is that he argues that early Ming China had a very strong military character within political decision-making, which was inspired by the former Yuan dynasty. As Dreyer says, it had a greater resemblance to Turco–Mongolian empires, the Ottomans, and the Mughals, rather than to a native Chinese dynasty.[105] In this respect, one can also add the Timurid dynasty to these as one of those Turco–Mongolian empires, and this fact throws light upon a remarkable parallel between the Timurids and Ming Chinese – at least in their initial stages. The Timurid dynasty and Ming China that were born on the ruins of the former Chinggisid Empire were both influenced by the Mongols – partially in the legitimacy of their empires, and partially in the militarist characteristics in their earlier times.

However, the militaristic behaviour of early Ming China mainly refers to the reigns of Hongwu (1368–1398) and Yongle (1403–1424), who both gained their power through hard fought victories. In contrast, the Jianwen 建文 emperor (1399–1402),[106] a grandson of Hongwu, and the Hongxi 洪熙 emperor (1425), Yongle's son, both had a Confucian education and represented the third generation of the dynasty, and were reluctant to follow this militaristic attitude. However, neither of them could rule long enough to realise their ideas of reviving Confucian scholarly dominance in governance. Nevertheless, the Xuande 宣德 emperor (1426–1435), Hongxi's son, who was the last of the early Ming rulers, attempted to make a balance between the military and scholarly officials throughout his life. Thus it can be pointed out that there were

[105] *Ibid.*: 5.

[106] Hongwu originally intended to appoint one of his sons, Zhu Biao 朱標, as his successor, but since he died before his father in 1392, Hongwu's choice finally fell on Zhu Biao's younger son, Zhu Yunwen 朱允炆, the future Jianwen emperor. However, Jianwen could not rule for long. In order to consolidate his power, Jianwen attempted to destroy the feudal princedoms, beginning first with the weaker ones. He eventually provoked a civil war, in which he was finally defeated by his uncle Zhu Di, the prince of Yan 燕, and the later Yongle emperor.

attempts to restore ancient Confucian privilage in state-governance during the time of early Ming China that could have re-written the history known today. However, due to several circumstances, these attempts turned out to be failures, leaving the militaristic aspects dominant until 1435.[107]

In 1435, the scholarly stratum succeeded in winning dominance over the military elite after the death of Xuande. After his death, a child ascended the throne, who was put under the protection of his mother, the empress, as a regent. This empress listened to the scholarly officials only, which brought about the end of the privilage of the military elite. Since then, military units and military officers were put under the surveillance by the civil administration, and this power structure remained stable throughout the rest of the dynasty. This, of course, had serious effects on foreign relations too, since trading was condemned as a disdainful activity. Trade became possible solely within the framework of tribute missions, as well as at designated market places.[108]

However, it was not only the militaristic features of early Ming China that made this age in the Chinese history so particular, but also the unique historical chance that was given to China to become a genuine world power, stretching much beyond its original borders. The Yongle emperor had intentions to enhance Chinese knowledge on the world and Chinese presence in remote countries. Yongle was eventually about to succeed in doing so, though he failed to realise this in the end. It is interesting to speculate on how the world would look now if the Yongle emperor had succeeded in his ambitions. He did not spare expenses to send large fleets through the South Seas that even reached Africa. These expeditions used up huge expenses that were not only borne by the imperial treasury, but also by the coastal provinces.[109] They were organised by eunuchs,[110] and commanded by the eunuch Zheng He.[111]

[107] *Ibid.*: 8.
[108] *Ibid.*: 6.
[109] Chan 1988: 232.
[110] *Ibid.*: 232.
[111] Chan Hok-lam describes these expeditions in the following way. The number of the crew was incredibly large, including more than 20,000 people, taking luxury items such as embroider, silk, etc., which were meant to be given as gifts to local rulers they would meet on their voyages. These expeditions were not organised for military purposes, but rather for making allies, or to be more precise, these expeditions were supposed to look for treasure for the emperor, therefore, the ships were called treasure ships (*baochuan* 寶船 in Chinese). However treasure was not the only purpose of these expeditions. They were also meant to extend the tributary system, to make relations with new countries and forcing them to

While Zheng He was crossing the South Seas, the Yongle emperor was fighting the Mongols in the north, whose military capacity was still powerful enough for the Chinese not to feel secure. Altogether, he launched five campaigns against the Mongols. These campaigns were partly for punitive purposes, partly in order to secure the northern borderline.[112] The Ming troops at this time were strong enough to fight the Mongols, however, these expeditions did not bring the expected results. Yongle was not able to defeat them, and he could not even maintain the security of the border areas. Mongol raids continued taking place from time to time. Nevertheless, these military expeditions in the north demanded immense financial expenses too, just like Zheng He's expeditions on the seas.

Unlike his hostile attitude towards the Mongols, however, the Yongle emperor decided to use a quite different policy towards the Central Asian powers. He had no intention to engage in wars with them, which might be considered rather strange, since Timur attempted to attack China at the time when Yongle just commenced his rule as the third emperor. It is disputable how much he was aware of the possible severe consequences of Timur's intention to attack China.

Nevertheless, Yongle's death brought about huge changes in China's foreign policy. China turned from being an expanding extrovert empire into a defensive introvert one, abandoning unconsciously the possibility of becoming a world empire by setting foot in countries in different continents. This turn inward, however, could have been expected, since the financial expenditures during Yongle's reign were so enormous that they could not be covered by the tribute missions from foreign countries. On the other hand, the financial deficit may not have been the only reason. The revival of China's traditional Sino-centric world conception

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acknowledge the supremacy of China. These missions were successful in the sense that they managed to extend Ming Chinese influences to remote lands and defend Chinese interests, and to make new countries enter the tributary system. These things resulted in attracting foreign envoys bringing tribute from numerous countries. These expeditions did bring lots of treasure and luxury goods, however, they mainly remained in the possession of the court, with hardly any of them making their way to the market place. Those who came and brought tributes were paid abundantly and were also allowed to sell their goods in the capital. They were paid so much by the court that it finally resulted in financial deficit. The expenditures were higher than the incomes. Yet, this did not bring these expeditions to an end, at least not during the life-time of the Yongle emperor, whose political ambitions proved to be even bigger than the deficit in the economy. See *Ibid.*: 232–236 for details.

[112] See *Ibid.*: 226–229 for details.

after the death of the Yongle emperor (1424) did not favour the continuation of the voyages from an ideological point of view either. According to the traditional Confucian concentric world order, just as the meaning of the Chinese name of the country suggests, 'the Middle Kingdom', starting with the Imperial court, was perceived as being the centre of the whole world 'under Heaven'. The further a region lied from this centre, the less civilised it was considered. Zheng He's voyages reaching Africa did not appear to challenge this ancient world conception. In such a world conception, there was no need to carry out such risky and expensive missions. Nonetheless, the revival of this Confucian worldview affected China's relations with Central Asia too.[113]

After Yongle's death, China turned to a defensive, or perhaps isolationist, policy,[114] and the government started to focus on the border garrisons, especially in the northern areas around the capital.[115] However, due to Yongle's great expenditures on military campaigns, now China had to face a growing shortage in financial terms. Military officers warned the government of such shortcomings concerning frontier defence, however, their warnings were not heeded.[116] There was also a lack of a new strategic thinking, although the frontier garrisons had lost the half of the original number of soldiers by 1438.[117] Along with this, the system of the military colonies (*tuntian* 屯田)[118] at the borderlines, which

[113] According to Kallie Szczepanski, Zheng He's seven marital voyages – the last took place not under Yongle, but under his grandson (the Xuande emperor) in 1430–1433 – were not after the exploration of new territories or in search of trade, but rather "to display Chinese might to all the kingdoms and trade ports of the Indian Ocean world, and to bring back exotic toys and novelties for the emperor". According to Szczepanski, there are three theories of why these voyages were stopped: the conservative Confucianist political turn after the death of the Yongle emperor; the huge financial burden caused by these voyages; and the growing threat to the land borders in the western regions. See: http://asianhistory.about.com/od/china/f/zhenghefaq.htm, accessed on February 12th, 2015.

[114] See Chan 1988: 276–278 and Kauz 2005: 145.

[115] Twitchett & Grimm 1988: 319.

[116] *Ibid.*: 319.

[117] *Ibid.*: 320.

[118] These military colonies were created during the reign of Hongwu, who found it difficult and dangerous to disarm the population after a long process of 'militarisation' in the countryside. Therefore, he decided to establish a hereditary military class of his soldiers, making them settle down in the military colonies. He divided them into two groups: those who had actual military duties, and those who were ordered to cultivate the lands. According to Mark Elvin (1977: 110–111), it can be assumed that about thirty percent of these 'soldiers' in the border areas were ordered to do military duties, while about twenty percent of them inside the coun-

was supposed to support the military, started declining.[119] On one hand, these colonies were exposed to raids from the north, while on the other, the government stopped providing them with the necessary supplies for agriculture such as seed grains and animals, and ordered them to use forced labour instead. Many of these soldier-settlers decided to flee. This phenomenon brought about the weakening of the military defence's effectiveness during the 1430–1440s,[120] and this eventually led to the Tumu 土木 debacle: the successful attack of Esen 也先[121] (the leader of the Oyirat Mongols) on China in 1449, who even managed to capture the Chinese emperor.[122]

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try were ordered to do the same. Their rate might reach fifty percent at the big cities.

[119] Twitchett & Grimm 1988: 320.

[120] *Ibid.*: 319.

[121] The Oyirat Mongols became an undoubtedly dominant force in Mongolia after their leader Toghon defeated the Eastern Mongols' leader, Arughtai, in 1434. Toghon had friendly connections with China, however, this situation changed after his son, Esen, rose to power in 1440. Esen was successful in establishing a strong level of authority along the whole northern Chinese borderline area during the 1440s. See *Ibid.*: 317 for details.

[122] *Ibid.*: 322–325. Esen launched a large-scale attack against China, which had underestimated his military dominance among the Mongols, while overestimating the strength of the Ming forces. The Chinese emperor, Zhengtong 正統 (1436–1449), who was just at the age of twenty-two in that year, was suggested by Wang Zhen 王振 (a eunuch commander) that the emperor himself should lead the Ming forces against the Mongols, which turned out to be a fatal decision. Due to Wang Zhen's ill-considered advice, the whole army was destroyed, and the emperor was captured by the Mongols at a place called Tumu, not so far from Xuanfu 宣府, a large Chinese garrison. Esen probably was not prepared for such a high-level booty as capturing the Chinese emperor. This in fact could have made him take the capital Peking easily. However, he decided to return to where he came from along with the taken emperor, and attempted to force the Chinese court to pay him a ransom for their emperor (*Ibid.*: 325). However in the meantime, the Chinese court made a decision to raise a new emperor to the throne in order to soothe the army and the population. Since Zhengtong's son was still an infant, the choice fell on his younger brother (*Ibid.*: 326). He was chosen to be the new emperor very soon, receiving the name Jingtai 景泰 (1450–1456) as his reign name. Nevertheless, this led to a severe conflict about the legitimacy of power between the two brothers later in the middle of the 1450s when Zhengtong finally managed to return to the Middle Kingdom. He took back the throne in 1457 when Jingtai fell severely ill (*Ibid.*: 338), and then ruled until 1464 under a new reign name called Tianshun 天順. The reason why Esen sent the unfortunate emperor back to Peking is that he had no intentions to occupy China – his army was not large enough to do so. He was content with the profits obtained from the Chinese through trading at the border markets or the return gifts received from the Chinese court at the time of each tribute mission. Basically, the Mongols' real

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that China was not in real danger due to the absence of an enemy strong enough to bring the whole empire to its knees, the capture of the emperor was a great shock to the court. The court had to reconsider its defence policy. The control over the garrisons was extended from the responsibility of the eunuchs to the bureaucracy at the capital, which increased the surveillance of the capital's officers over the garrisons that were put under unified command.[123] During the Chenghua 成化 period (1465–1487), and to some degree in the Hongzhi 弘治 period (1488–1505), the court made an attempt to establish a forceful defensive stance all along the northern borderline, which proved to be effective enough to fight the Mongols in the frontier zone. They also reinforced the Great Wall, building new walls to supplement those already existing.[124] Throughout this period, the Mongols were disunited, covering a huge area from Xinjiang 新疆 to Manchuria. Various kinds of peoples in the north besides the Mongols such as Uighurs, Jurchens, Koreans, as well as Central Asians, etc. sent envoys regularly to China within the framework of the tribute system.[125] The tribute bearers were interested in enlarging the size and frequency of their embassies, since they were treated so well by the Chinese that it was very beneficial economically for them.[126]

The reaction of the Chinese court to the capture of the emperor by Esen in 1449 can be considered as reinforcing the defensive and isolationist policy of China in the northern frontier areas. This policy first came to the foreground after the death of the Yongle emperor. In the second half of the fifteenth century China was not as strong militarily as in the first half of the century and its power could not surpass the Great Walls.[127] Nevertheless thereafter, it became able to resist the raids of tribes from the steppes.

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interest at Esen's time was not territorial occupation, but to maintain economically favourable relations with China. See *Ibid.*: 331.

[123] *Ibid.*: 334.

[124] *Ibid.*: 389. The Great Walls in their present form were completed during the Ming times, the building of which was promoted by Esen's unexpected attack (see Gernet 1990: 403–405 and Kauz 2005: 231).

[125] Twitchett & Grimm 1988: 389–391.

[126] *Ibid.*: 391.

[127] The history of Ming China in the sixteenth century is not covered in the present book, since the power of the Timurid Empire in Central Asia ceased to exist at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

1.3 Historical contacts between the two empires

To trace back the beginning of the Timurid–Ming Chinese contacts, one has to go back to as early as the 1370s – the time when Zhu Yuanzhang, the newly enthroned Hongwu emperor, made attempts to establish connections with foreign states around China. According to the *Mingshi* 明史,[128] Hongwu sent envoys to – among others – the western regions (Xiyu 西域)[129] – albeit without any tangible results. Not surprisingly, Hongwu was eager to make connections with foreign states, since he needed to reinforce the legitimacy of his reign – even though this was supposed to be done by emphasising the supremacy of China. In spite of the remote distances, Hongwu, who had just driven out the Mongols from power in China, might have been concerned about the newly emerging Turco–Mongolian power of Timur, which he may have considered a future potential enemy of China. Nonetheless, this hypothesis cannot be backed up from the relevant documents. Yet, there is no need to exclude the possibility of such an early concern by Ming China about the political situation. The relationship between the Timurids and Ming China might have been more vibrant than one can assume from the surviving sources.[130] Ralph Kauz came to a similar conclusion when discussing the abilities of the Chinese intelligence system, saying that in spite of the great distances, the Chinese seemed to have been informed surprisingly well about events far beyond their borders.[131]

[128] *Mingshi*, Volume (*juan* 券) 332.

[129] That is, the territories lying to the west of China proper.

[130] For instance, the dynastical history of Ming China, the *Mingshi*, was compiled during the eighteenth century, well after the Ming dynasty ceased to exist. Although it contains lots of information on the Western Region, there are several mistakes in these descriptions. Such a mistake concerns Herat, which was transcribed in (at least) two ways into Chinese, one is as Halie 哈烈, while the other one is as Heilou 黑娄. The Ming Chinese officials apparently were aware of the fact that both referred to Herat, however, the compilers in the eighteenth-century Qing 清 era seem to have not known about this any longer, consequently, they treated these two transcriptions as referring to two separate cities.

[131] Kauz 2005: 60–61, 79, 115, 129. On the other hand, it must be noted that the Chinese were not always well informed about the political situation in the west. For instance, the Ming Chinese court sent an embassy to Khiḍr Khwāja Khan in 1402, while not knowing that Khiḍr Khwāja Khan had already died three years

Of course, the hypothesis about Hongwu's possible political concerns in the 1370s about the new Turco–Mongol empire in Central Asia remains as a hypothesis until documents can be found to support it. However, if there was a more vibrant information flow between the peoples of East and Central Asia than what can be demonstrated from the remaining documents, it would be rather strange to see the first Ming emperor as unconcerned about the political development of Central Asia. However even if one is inclined to argue that Hongwu was not so much concerned about Timur in the 1370s, and that Hongwu had no other intentions by sending embassies to Central Asia in the first years of his reign than just to declare his enthronement as China's new emperor, it is still a fact that Timur sent no response to Hongwu throughout the 1370s. It seems to be almost sure that Timur was much less concerned about the birth of a new Chinese dynasty than Hongwu might have been about that of the Timurid Empire. Actually, for the first twenty years or so after the foundation of the two empires, there were no diplomatic contacts between them. Timur was engaged in various campaigns,[132] and therefore, he did not even attempt to make contacts with the Ming Chinese court.

In 1387, however, Timur suddenly sent an embassy to China,[133] bringing two camels and fifteen horses as tribute. This was followed by two other embassies in the next two years, bringing even more horses. These embassies represented the initial contacts from the side of Timur, and eventually totalled eleven tribute missions[134] over the next ten years. The last one came to Nanking in 1397. However, just as these missions began suddenly in the second half of the 1380s, they likewise suddenly came to an end. This was also the time when Timur had become hostile to China, and the former peaceful relations became a thing of the past.[135]

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before (*Ibid.*: 72). These blunders show that the Chinese were not always that well informed about important political events.

[132] See Aka 1991: 7–12 and Manz 1989: 69–71 for details.

[133] By this time, Timur had gone far beyond the initial problems of reinforcing the foundation of his power both inside and outside of Transoxiana, having conquered such territories as Mazandaran, Khorasan and Sistan.

[134] These tribute missions meant a kind of recognition of the Chinese supremacy on the surface, which put Timur into a subordinate position vis-a-vis China. However, it cannot be excluded that these missions were actually carried out for the purpose of spying on China, gathering information about its strength for a possible future attack.

[135] Here, it is worth taking a look at the year of 1388. 1388 was the year when the Chinese army managed to defeat the last serious forces of the Chinggisids in a battle near Buyur Nor (Lake Buyur), taking many captives. Among them, there were also merchants from Central Asia, whom the Chinese thought to be from Samarqand. They were taken first to the Chinese capital and were given permis-

Considering the change in Timur's attitude, the exchange of two letters appears to be a possible explanation. First in 1394, a letter was sent from Timur to the Chinese court, in which he praised the supremacy of China and the Chinese emperor, calling himself just a humble vassal.[136] The problem with this letter is that most scholars at modern times do not regard it as genuine or – at least – honest.[137] It is highly doubtful that Timur would have ever considered himself a vassal of China, thus this letter is assumed by many to be a forgery.[138] However before admitting that it must have been just a forged letter, one should remember the fact that Timur at this time was busy in the west,[139] which must have been making him focus on consolidating his power on the other end of Asia. Consequently, he may not have intended to get into a confrontation with China at this time. On the other hand, however, the tone of the letter may sound too humble for such a successful conqueror as Timur, thus the assumption that it was just a forged letter also cannot be discounted. Forged or not, however, the Chinese court treated it as real, and it must have been to the court's satisfaction, since they decided to dispatch an embassy in 1395 with a reply to Timur.[140] This embassy turned out to be a one way trip for the vast majority of its members. The letter that it was carrying expressed the Chinese court's appreciation for Timur's alleged submission. The letter apparently made Timur furious, and he detained

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sion for trade, but later were returned to Central Asia. As Kauz (2005: 55) argues, the Hongwu emperor became suspicious about them, thinking that these merchants might be spying on China.

[136] The tone of the letter is surprisingly humble, in which he admits the heavenly mandate of the Chinese emperor, and he expresses his happiness about that the Chinese ruler made the roads to China by sweeping away the obstacles in the way by connecting the rest stations together, etc.

[137] Nonetheless, as is shown in the following chapters, there are also scholars who do regard this letter as genuine.

[138] As is demonstrated in the following chapters, there are also assumptions saying that this letter may have been altered by a Chinese official who was in charge of translating it into Chinese, and who might have been afraid of translating the original contents of the letter that may have been much less complimentary to the Chinese court.

[139] Between 1392 and 1394, Timur was leading campaigns in Fars, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Georgia, Baghdad, and then in 1395 he was fighting the Golden Horde – for the second time (see Hambly 1969: 152).

[140] It was led by Fu An 傅安, Liu Wei 劉惟, Guo Ji 郭驥 and Yao Chen 姚臣, accompanied by 1,500 soldiers. Among these envoys, it is Fu An whose name came to be cited the most frequently.

the Chinese envoys, who were not willing to 'kowtow' 叩頭 (*koutou*)[141] and behave as his servants. The people in this embassy – to be more precise, the survivors[142] – could not return to China as long as Timur was alive.[143] In the meantime, since there was no news about this embassy, the Chinese court decided to dispatch another embassy in 1397[144] to find out what happened to its predecessor. This second embassy was detained by Timur too, and it too had no chance to return to China – at least during Timur's lifetime.

As for Timur's change in his attitude to China, one can assume that it was a reaction to the letter sent by the Chinese court in 1395 that must have made Timur become furious about its contents. However, there is also a possibility that Timur actually had had ambitions of attacking China from much earlier, but he had to be patient, waiting for the right moment to turn against China directly. The time the Fu An embassy arrived in Samarqand with the letter, Timur was in the middle of a five-

[141] The way of expressing one's subordinate position to a ruler while greeting him, through doing three kneelings and nine prostrations (Teng and Fairbank 1963: 18), during which the head also touches the floor.

[142] Not many of the original embassy survived during their long years in the Timurid court, with only seventeen of the original 1,500 finally returning home after Timur's death. However what becomes much more interesting here is that there is no report written by Fu An about what he might have seen and heard during those long years, being taken with Timur throughout his empire. This is very curious as China may well have been interested in hearing about Fu An's experiences, which were unique, and therefore, highly valuable. Fu An might have made at least oral reports about his experiences, but as Kauz suggests, many of the oral reports were not recorded, at least not in the *Mingshilu* (2005: 19). Yet, it still remains highly curious why there is no sign of any written report by him. Due to the lack of it, the most valuable Chinese report about Central Asia at the time becomes that of Chen Cheng, which was written only a few years after Fu An was released.

[143] At least, this is the way it is reported in the Chinese sources. Ruy González de Clavijo, a Spanish envoy in Timur's court at that time (see Introduction) reports about the hostile attitude of Timur towards the Chinese envoys, humiliating them by making them sit on the lowest seats. However, Kauz (2005: 66–67) points to another version of the reception of Fu An's embassy that was written by Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī in his work *Ẓafarnāma*. Yazdī reports about Fu An's reception by Timur in just the opposite way. According to his report, Fu An and the others were treated well and then allowed to leave. However, Yazdī's report shows some inconsistency with what happened after that, so it remains a kind of mystery why the Chinese sources (along with that of Clavijo) and Yazdī's report differ from each other so much.

[144] It was led by a certain Chen Dewen 陳德文, about whom there is not much reported in the Chinese sources.

year campaign (1392–1397),[145] and he received the Chinese embassy only late November or early December.[146] If so, the letter brought by the Fu An embassy was not the real reason for Timur's attempt to attack China in 1404–1405.[147]

In 1398, Hongwu died, and Ming China sank into a state of internal conflict for the next three years between the princes and the new Jianwen emperor, a grandson of Hongwu. This ended with the victory of the prince of Yan 燕 (1360–1424), the future Yongle emperor (ruled 1403–1424) in 1402. Given these internal problems, China could not pay enough attention to its lost embassies in Central Asia, and even if they had made attempts to send further embassies, there was not much they could have done for them while Timur was alive. What becomes important here is that Timur's hostile attitude from 1397 onwards and his planned attack on China in 1404–1405 did not lead to a rupture in the relationship between the two empires after all. On the contrary, after Timur's death, the Timurid–Ming contacts not only became stable, but they also flourished for two decades or so. First of all, Khālīl Sulṭān, a grandson of Timur on the line of Mīrānshāh, released the survivors of the two Chinese embassies that had been detained by Timur a decade before, and they returned to Nanking in 1407.

After the change in power in the Timurid Empire,[148] Shāhrukh (1377–1447), who managed to unite the empire under his rule, sent envoys both in 1408 and 1409, and Fu An, who had just returned to Nanking from his long captivity, was ordered by the emperor to go again. Another embassy in 1412 from China to Herat took a letter from the emperor to Shāhrukh, in which the Chinese emperor addressed him as a vassal of China. Yongle's haughty letter did not remain unanswered. Shāhrukh as a Muslim ruler became furious and refused to acknowledge the possibility

[145] See Aka 1991: 17–20 and Manz 1989: 72 for details.

[146] See Kauz 2005: 66.

[147] Timur's plan for attacking China was reported to the Chinese court by a certain Muslim called Daowu 倒兀 according to Chinese sources (*Ibid.*: 76). The so-called 'barbarians' played a significant role in providing China with information about the events beyond its territories. It can be assumed that these informants were mainly not Chinese, but foreigners. Nonetheless, the war between the Jianwen emperor and the (future) Yongle emperor was over well before 1405, and Yongle's power was already stable at the time. This could have promoted information access about Central Asia.

[148] There was only once in the history of the two empires that the Chinese emperor made an attempt to intervene into the internal affairs of the Timurids. Namely, Yongle called upon Shāhrukh to put an end to the war between himself and Khālīl Sulṭān. Shāhrukh eventually seized power only after defeating Khālīl.

of a subordinate relationship with China. Shāhrukh, responding as a 'friend', even went so far as to suggest that the Yongle emperor should convert to Islam. Nonetheless, unlike in the case of Timur in the middle of the 1390s, this interlude did not lead to a pause in the flow of embassies. The two rulers apparently did not intend to go to war, and wished to resume sending embassies to each other. Relations were so vibrant that the embassy sent from China to Herat in 1414 turned out to be the most significant for China, not because of some specific political or commercial achievement, but because of the information given in the two aforementioned reports by Chen Cheng on geography, local products and customs of the places the embassy travelled through. This embassy can be regarded as a sort of counterpart to another embassy coming from Herat, Samarqand and other Timurid cities to China in 1420, in which the aforementioned Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh took part too, and which produced one of the most detailed Muslim sources on China. The accounts by Chen Cheng and Naqqāsh complement each other, since they shed light upon the Timurid–Ming Chinese relationship from different standpoints.[149]

Nonetheless, it must be noted that before the grand embassy to China in 1420 the Chinese emperor sent a letter to Shāhrukh in 1418, in which he treated the Timurid ruler as equal to him. This was a huge change in the tone of the letter sent a few years earlier. Nevertheless, the Timurid embassy of 1420 to China was addressed in the form of a tributary state in Peking, an event which reveals the fact that although the Yongle emperor might have agreed in treating Shāhrukh as an equal ruler in diplomatic letters, in the Chinese capital there was no exception for any foreign embassy in terms of treatment. They were all treated as vassals of China, which was the only way of handling foreign missions – at least on the surface.

During Yongle's time, there were twenty missions from Herat and Samarqand, thirty-two from various Central Asian 'oasis states', thirteen from Turfan and fourty-four from Hami.[150] These embassies brought metal, jade, horses, camels, sheep, lions, leopards, etc. to the Chinese court, which provided them with fine silks, textiles, silver, different kinds of luxury goods, etc.[151]

[149] What makes these accounts particular is that they were written about five-years apart, consequently, they give information on the Chinese and the Timurids from the same period of time.
[150] Chan 1988: 261.
[151] *Ibid.*: 261.

The embassy of 1420 may mark the peak of relations between the two, which started to taking a new form after the Yongle emperor's death due to a series of changes in the internal affairs and foreign policy of China. As Kauz draws attention to in his work, the declining relations are first documented in a critique by a Chinese official about these foreign embassies from the year of 1424, just a short time after Yongle's death. This critique was formulated by a representative official, Huang Ji 黃驥, who put an emphasis on the insufficient levels of tribute, illegal trade, deception, high costs for the administration and the army, as well as burden on the population.[152] Kauz also draws an attention to the rivalry among the Chinese ministries, in which the Ministry of Rites (*libu* 禮部)[153] took a more and more hostile attitude to foreign embassies, while the Ministry of Military Affairs (*bingbu* 兵部) regarded them as important in order to keep the 'barbarians' calm.[154] On the other hand, for the Chinese court itself, these foreign embassies meant a kind of prestige, through which the Chinese supremacy could be preserved – albeit on the surface.[155]

After Yongle's death, the foreign policy of the Chinese court became rather defensive and passive. While foreign missions continued arriving in China, no envoys were sent from China until the time Zhu Qizhen 朱祁鎮 (1427–1464) returned to power in 1457 as the Tianshun 天順 emperor (ruled 1457–1464). He became very cautious with the 'barbarians', and attempted to search for allies.[156] However, in the second

[152] Kauz 2005: 145–146. Whereas the Ministry of Revenue (*hubu* 户部) was in charge of taking care of the foreign envoys in financial terms, the Ministry of Rites was in charge of the reception of the foreign envoys at the border, who were then accompanied along a determined route to the capital (*Ibid.*: 36, 41). These foreign envoys were fed all through their stay in China, which cost a huge amount of money (Serruys 1975: 21, 23). Moreover, the goods that were given by China to these envoys in return to their tribute items were higher in value in many cases (*Ibid.*: 16). Therefore, the critiques by the Ministry of Rites against these foreign missions cannot be traced back solely to a xenophobic hostile attitude, but to very reasonable facts indeed.

[153] In the Chinese sources, one can see a growing dissatisfaction about the worsening quality of the goods brought to the Chinese as tribute. There was a general dissatisfaction among the Chinese officials about animals such as lions and leopards that were thought to be expensive to feed and 'useless' in terms that they generated no profit.

[154] Kauz 2005: 36.

[155] The embassy sent by the Chinese in 1433 turned out to be the last one for more than two decades (*Ibid.*: 172).

[156] He immediately dispatched an embassy to the Timurids in the year of 1457 (*Ibid.*: 212).

half of the century, the foreign policy of the Chinese court mostly remained defensive and passive. It seems that the emperors of Ming China – neglecting the strong opposition by the Ministry of Rites – were willing to accept even 'useless' gifts such as lions and leopards, in order to protect themselves from possible attacks by nomadic tribes.

1.4 Characteristics of the Timurid–Ming relationship

In accordance with the unbalanced foreign policies of the two empires, there are much more materials produced in classical Chinese concerning the relationship of the Timurid dynasty and Ming China than in Persian. Therefore, due to the relatively clearly defined foreign policy of the Chinese court, as well as the preponderance of Chinese sources, the scholars of modern times are forced to address the subject of the relationship of the two empires from a largely Sinological point of view, rather than from a Timurid one.[157] This fact led to the birth of numerous studies focusing on the relationship from the Chinese side rather than from the Timurid one. Thus it seems to be unavoidable to put more stress on the Chinese point of view. Nevertheless this results in finding answers to the question of what the Timurid dynasty, or to be more precise, Central Asia meant for the Chinese. This inclination can be considered valuable for the scholars of fifteenth-century Central Asia, since the judgement of the Timurid dynasty by a foreign state, that is China in the present study, can make contribution to the studies on the Timurid Empire too.

The first striking change after the establishment of Ming China is that whereas the (Mongol) Yuan dynasty had guaranteed free trade with the states outside its borders by abolishing the Chinese institutions that had controlled relations with the 'barbarians', the Ming government re-introduced these institutions by closing the borders and attempting to monopolise foreign trade. This prevented private persons from travelling freely across the borders – at least in theory. This revived practice also restored the former Chinese worldview, in which China was considered to be the centre of civilisation and regarded the states around it as its vassals. At least, this was the official (Confucian) worldview, around which all diplomatic relations were (re)arranged. Consequently, the Timurid Empire was born at the time when China was about to return to its former

[157] See *Ibid.*: 20.

socio-political institutions. Strict Chinese control all along the borders, the monopolisation of foreign affairs by the court creating narrow diplomatic channels with foreign countries, as well as the demand to acknowledge China's supremacy all limited the activities of foreign countries to a great extent and forced them to face China on unequal terms. These limitations were then challenged by the founder of the Timurid Empire through planning to attack China – albeit unsuccessfully. All these limits were in fact part of a well-planned foreign policy, which – although there were contradictions in the interests among the various ministries, as well as between the ministries and the court – represented a certain unity in policy making. The Timurid dynasty was addressed by Ming China within the framework of this foreign policy, against which they had only two choices: acceptance or resistance. In contrast to this, the Timurids did not have a comprehensive foreign policy – not to mention a unified China policy, which was partly due to the lesser degree of agreement within the Timurid polity, and also perhaps to the Timurids' politico-cultural orientation towards Southwest Asia rather than East Asia. Yet, the lack of a China policy among the Timurid rulers did not result in them having no relations with China. On the contrary, they maintained vibrant contacts. However, it is worth noting that the two empires had totally different attitudes to each other: a highly determined foreign policy on the Chinese side, and a much less clear foreign (China) policy on the Timurid side.

The two states both had different attitudes to and impressions of each other. For instance, the embassies coming to China were far less controlled by the Timurid court than vice-versa. This weak control led to several embassies coming to China claiming to have been sent by the Timurid rulers. In other words, there were many embassies that were not real diplomatic embassies, but from Central Asian merchants who wished to trade with China, and who even went so far as to forge documents claiming that they had been sent by a certain Central Asian ruler. For them, the commercial gains from trading with China were so enormous that the number of false diplomatic embassies even increased in the course of time. This was promoted by the weakening of central Timurid power after the death of Ulugh Beg in the middle of the fifteenth century. As for the Timurid rulers, although commercial interests must have been very important too – just like for Central Asian merchants – they also had other motives. For instance, the embassies between 1387 and 1397 must have been significant for Timur in terms of providing him with information on China, while such embassies must have been important for

Shāhrukh to legitimise his rule among the peoples of Central Asia.[158] Nonetheless, it is difficult to discern what attitudes to these embassies the Timurid rulers after Shāhrukh might have had, since the Timurid historical works do not address the relationship with China after the end of the 1420s.

In order to understand the overall diplomatic framework in which China dealt with the foreigners, there is a need to outline the main types of foreign relations. At least four kinds of relationship between China and foreign states can be distinguished.[159] The first one refers to an appointment system (*cefeng tizhi* 册封体制), in which a foreign power adopts a subordinate position with China by accepting the title *waichen* 外臣[160] bestowed by the Chinese ruler. The second one refers to a kind of alliance system (*huimeng tizhi* 会盟体制), which involved alliances created through intermarriage between the Chinese court and foreign dynasties. Although these alliances could have led to stable relationships, they were not dominant throughout Chinese history. The third type refers to a relationship (*chaogong tizhi* 朝贡体制), in which foreign states paid tribute to the Chinese court at regular intervals. This was an official diplomatic relationship, though these foreign rulers were not necessarily regarded as vassals of China. The unequal relationship was not emphasised here – although the supremacy of the Chinese emperor was beyond debate. The fourth kind of relationship (*tongshang guanxi* 通商关系) referred to simple commercial relations, which did not lead to regular diplomatic contacts, unlike in the case of tribute relations mentioned above. The Timurid–Ming relations could be situated somewhere between the third and fourth types. This ambiguity derives from the fact that the third type emphasises political aspects, while the fourth one stresses commercial ones. The relationship with the Timurid dynasty encompassed both political and commercial aspects, but their dominance varied in different periods of time. It is nonetheless possible to assert that the Timurid rulers never became vassals of the Chinese empire in the sense described by the first and second types of relationship listed above.

The official[161] channel was basically realised in two forms. One channel was through embassies, sent from one government to the other

[158] Shāhrukh may also have intended to use these embassies to spread Islam in China. At least, this is what can be assumed from the letter he sent to the Chinese court in 1412 (*Ibid.*: 101–105 and Fletcher 1968: 211).

[159] See Masui 1995.

[160] This term was used by a statesman of himself when addressing statesmen of another state in feudal times (Mathews 1931: 1037).

[161] That is to say, the channels legalised by the Chinese court.

between the two capitals,[162] whereas the other was realised in the frontier zone, more precisely, at the borderlines at designated border markets.[163] Other relations were not officially admitted by the Chinese court. The two kinds of channels differed in the sense that while the foreigners could go for trading at the border markets freely, those who were eventually allowed to enter Chinese territory became limited in number. China controlled the foreigners setting foot on its land so much that the foreign envoys were never left without Chinese surveillance all along the way to the capital. Most of these embassies entering China were so-called tribute-bearers, thus they had largely political aspects, while those at the border markets had principally commercial ones. In a similar way, Chinese 'citizens' were not allowed to leave China without official permission either, and this ban affected (especially) the Chinese merchants negatively.[164] The Chinese court attempted to keep its borders under control in order to cut China off from foreign influences; this practice did not change throughout the fifteenth century. Nevertheless there are signs that reality was seemingly different from this 'ideal' Chinese official situation.[165]

[162] Regarding the road from the border to the capital, one can obtain detailed information from Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh's narrative, which describes not only the route to Peking, but also the staying in the capital (including the meeting with the emperor). This embassy arguably represented the peak of the Timurid–Chinese relations.

[163] See Serruys 1975: 14.

[164] In reality, Chinese merchants are reported to have reached even Aqsu (Kauz 2005: 72), a Central Asian city meaning 'white water' in Turkic that lies at the northern edge of the Tarim Basin.

[165] Although the official Confucian standpoint despised trading on the base of moral issues, China was forced to trade with the 'barbarians' to meet its needs concerning a very specific item of goods: horses. China was not good at raising horses of good quality, and thus it was highly dependent on the nomads supplying it with horses used in battle. Horses were usually bargained for tea, a product that was desired by the nomads, which led to a specific kind of trading called 'tea–horse trading' (*chama maoyi* 茶馬貿易). When Ming China was established, tea–horse trading was taking place in the southwest of China, but after the capital was moved to the north, and trading with the nomads resumed, the centre of the tea–horse trade was put back to the northern areas. The tea–horse trade was under strict control of the Chinese court. There were tea–horse markets in the frontier zone, however not on the Mongol frontier, but in the northwest of Shaanxi 陝西 in three places: Xining 西寧, Hezhou 河州 and Taozhou 洮州. The markets took place once every three years in large quantities. The Chinese bargained tea (as well as salt and textiles) for horses, the most of which were raised in the Qinghai 青海 region. After the Tumu incident in 1449, this trade was suspended for a while, but during the reign of the Tianshun emperor (1457–1464), it resumed.

In summary, there was a remarkable feature of Chinese–foreign relations, namely, that China regarded itself as the centre of the world, and by doing so, it forced foreign states to accept a subordinate position in their relationship with China – tacitly or not. The embassies from foreign states to China always outnumbered those from China to them, and this resulted in a strong bias in the direction of these embassies. In this respect, the relationship between the Timurid dynasty and Ming China was not an exception either.

1.5 Historical parallels and theoretical challenges

Besides obvious differences in the historical and cultural backgrounds of the two empires, there were also remarkable similarities. As mentioned in the Introduction, both dynasties rose from the moribund ruins of the former Chinggisid Empire during the second half of the fourteenth century. To say 'ruins' in the case of the (Mongol) Yuan dynasty in China may sound a little exaggerated, since it was very much alive when Zhu Yuanzhang (the later Hongwu emperor) and his fellow rebels were fighting the Mongols. However, it was not as powerful as the time it was established, and it was not even capable of tackling the deterioration of the social order that started in the 1330s which preceded the collapse of Mongol realm in China before the end of the century. In contrast to this, Timur did not need to fight a strong united Mongol army, since he is assumed to have been born in 1336, two years after the collapse of the united Chaghatai *Ulus*. However, it is a startling fact that the social upheaval and deterioration of the social order in both empires started in the 1330s, which created opportunities for charismatic leaders to grasp power and to rule by establishing new dynasties. From this point of view, maybe it does not seem to be surprising that Timur and Zhu Yuanzhang were men of the same age,[166] but it might be surprising to see that both of them rose to power at almost the same time.[167] Thereafter, their careers

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However, in the last third of the century, the state monopoly over this trade started to weaken. In the 1470s, the horse trade in the border area was carried out gradually by private merchants producing tea. At the end of the fifteenth century, around sixty percent of the tea–horse trade was carried out directly by private Chinese merchants. See Twitchett & Grimm 1988: 318–319 for details.

[166] Zhu Yuanzhang (Hongwu) was only eight years older than Timur.

[167] Zhu Yuanzhang proclaimed himself emperor in 1368, while Timur became the *de facto* ruler in Transoxiana in 1369–70.

deviated in a remarkable way. While Timur continued with his military campaigns outside of Transoxiana – the core hinterland of his later empire, Zhu Yuanzhang as the Hongwu emperor rather focused on consolidating the foundations of his new dynasty. Yet, the two empires still had something in common even after 1370 – that is, the militaristic features of their way of governing, a direct legacy of the Mongols.[168] It is also a startling fact that Hongwu and Timur died only within few years of each other, at around seventy years of age.

Both rulers were also first followed by one of their grandsons, though neither of their successors could survive for more than two to three years. It is hard to predict what direction the Timurid history would have taken if Pīr Muḥammad – a grandson of Timur on the line of Jahāngīr – had not been killed in 1407. However, it can be assumed that on the Chinese side the militaristic features of early Ming China might have come to an end if the Jianwen emperor, who preferred scholarly officials to the military ones, had not been defeated by the prince of Yan, the future Yongle emperor. Nonetheless, both grandsons were replaced by their uncles, sons of the founders of their dynasties, and both of them proved to be rather stable rulers. The early fifteenth century was hallmarked by Shāhrukh in the Timurid Empire, and by the Yongle emperor in Ming China – albeit the former's time in power turned out to be about twenty years longer than that of the latter. In the first half of the fifteenth century, one can also see another similarity in the historical processes of the two empires in terms of deviation from the Mongol heritage in state governance. However, this turning point did not take place at the same time. In the case of the Timurid dynasty, the empire was transformed into a sultanate during the time of Shāhrukh, in which Islamic civilisation started to prevail, helping to bring peace to the empire. This meant a deviation from the militaristic character of the founder's time. In the case of Ming China, however, Yongle was not just a militarist from top to toe, but it was during his time that China had a unique historical chance to extend its cultural borderlines. By doing so, he even surpassed his father's deeds. Nonetheless, after Yongle's death – to be more precise, after 1435 – early Ming China lost its militaristic features by giving privilege to scholarly officials over military officers. Consequently, sooner or later, both the Timurid dynasty and Ming China, which had shared common features in their early times, showed a shift from militaristic features inherited from the Mongols to more peaceful characteristics. Nonetheless, these shifts

[168] As was discussed in Section 1.2 of this chapter, Hongwu and Yongle gave privileges to military officers over the scholarly stratum, which suggests a sort of distrust from their side of Confucian ideas as governing principles.

differed in one dimension from each other, since the Timurid dynasty oriented itself towards Islam,[169] while Ming China found its way back to its Confucian roots.[170]

Most of these parallels in the early histories of the two empires are – although of interest – just mere co-incidences, for instance the fact that the founders of both empires were first followed by one of their grandsons, who were then quickly replaced by their uncles after a couple of years, etc. However, some parallels are a direct result of the common historical experience of the Chinggisid Empire, such as the timing of the formations of these new powers after the weakening of the Chinggisid realm, or the militaristic features of their governments in their early histories. Nonetheless, there is (at least) one thing that deserves more scholarly attention for future studies. That is to say, the ways and procedures of how these newly emerged powers attempted to adjust diverse ideological sources to legitimise their rule and also to create the charactistics of their governance. The Turco–Mongolian heritage combined later with a Turco–Persian orientation towards Islam in the Timurid case, and a revival of Confucianism after several decades of a Mongol style of governance took place in China. Both of these provide great opportunities not only for historical studies on East and Inner Asia, but also for the study of the co-existence and dynamic change of various – and seemingly incompatable – values and beliefs from a wider general comparative perspective. With regard to this, the relationship between

[169] Nevertheless, the Mongol heritage in Central Asia was sustained much longer than in China, which can also be seen in its revival after Shāhrukh. Ulugh Beg – grandson of Timur on the line of Shāhrukh – oriented himself towards the Mongol *yasa* rather than the Islamic *sharī'a*, and during his reign Turco–Mongolian customs were still strong among the population. Moreover, the legitimacy of a ruler according to his relationship with the Chinggisid line remained important along the history of the Timurids. This can also be seen in the case of Babur, the founder of the Great Moghul Empire, who was both of Timurid and Chinggisid origin. However, the eventual restoration of the significance of the Chinggisid geneology in Central Asia took place in the time of the Özbek conqueror, Muḥammad Shaybānī, under whose attacks the Timurids were squeezed out of Central Asia. Consequently, in Central Asia there was no such a sharp turn away from Turco–Mongolian heritage itself, it being a strong local culture, as in the case of China, except for the time of Shāhrukh. What is common to the two empires is the turn away from their militaristic characters during the first half of the fifteenth century.

[170] There is an interesting similarity again that the capitals were changed in both empires during the times of Shāhrukh (from Samarqand to Herat) and Yongle (from Nanking to Peking).

official ideologies and realpolitik behaviour is also of great significance that needs further research here.[171]

Nonetheless, in accordance with the fact that the Chinese foreign policy was much more elaborate than that of the Timurids, there are three aspects for modern scholars to contemplate about the attitude of the Chinese court towards the Timurids. One concerns the matter of prestige, which stood on a Confucian basis, saying that the Chinese ruler as the 'Son of Heaven'[172] was the supreme leader of the entire world, therefore, the leaders of the 'barbarian' countries could be nothing but vassals of China. Another aspect is the military (or rather a political) one – not in an aggressive sense, but rather a defensive sense. China had been facing attacks from neighbouring nomads since ancient times, therefore, it had to address defence matters in its foreign policy effectively. The defence policy itself, however, was not limited to reinforcing the frontier zones and carrying out punative campaigns against the nomads raiding the border areas, but was also realised in China's diplomatic relations: in the forms of tribute missions and imperial embassies. The third aspect of the Chinese foreign policy was a highly commercial one. In spite of all Confucian disdain, China needed certain goods, especially horses of good quality, which it could not obtain without trading with the nomads. Therefore, the keywords in Chinese foreign policy were: prestige, defence and trade. The Chinese attitude to its neighbours was reflected through these three aspects. The question here is how the scholars of modern times have treated these three aspects, that is to say, which aspect have been considered by them normative and dominant – a so-called guiding principal – within Ming Chinese foreign policy towards the Timurid dynasty. This question has been addressed in different ways by different scholars.

[171] See the final chapter of this book.

[172] This is an ancient title (called *tianzi* 天子 in Chinese) that was used by the rulers of China throughout the Chinese history. The name of the title indicates that the post of the ruler was given from the 'Lord on High' (called *shangdi* 上帝 in Chinese), to whom the ruler alone had the right to carry out sacrifices (see Gernet 1990: 54).

CHAPTER TWO

WESTERN RESEARCH ON TIMURID–MING RELATIONS

The present chapter reviews and discusses the theories and approaches found in Western studies concerning the relationship between the Timurid Empire and early Ming China. Only a handful of Western researchers have so far addressed the contacts between the two empires to any degree. Their number looks very small compared to that of the researchers who have studied only one of the two empires. Yet, these few researchers have succeeded in making significant findings. These findings are not only valuable in themselves, but they are worth being placed into a wider context and compared to the results of other historical studies of Central and East Asia too.

A number of studies will be presented and discussed in this chapter. These were selected after a careful consideration of their significance regarding this subject matter. They are divided into three parts from a thematic point of view, each addressing a particular topic. The first pertains to studies that deal with the most important Chinese embassy sent to the Timurid court (arrived in 1414), led by Chen Cheng 陳誠, Li Xian 李暹 and Li Da 李達 – studies that deal with the two accounts[173] of Chen Cheng. Although the level of theory building of these studies is usually low, they are to be regarded as highly important for their academic contributions to the research on Timurid–Ming relations.

Western studies on the account of Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh (henceforth the Naqqāsh account),[174] as a counterpart of the studies on the Chen Cheng accounts, are to be considered to fit the topic of the first part in the present chapter as well. The reason for not addressing them here together with the studies on the Chen Cheng accounts does not lie in a negligence of them, but it goes back to the fact that the Naqqāsh account

[173] That is, the accounts of the *Xiyu fanguozhi* and *Xiyu xingchengji*. These, along with the *Mingshilu*, turned out to be the most significant accounts in the study of the Timurid–Ming historical relations, arousing the interest of modern scholars. See the Introduction of this book.

[174] See the Introduction of this book.

has mainly aroused a linguistic,[175] rather than a historical or anthropological interest in the Western literature.[176]

The second and third part of this chapter explain the development of research studies of the Timurid–Ming relationship in chronological order, from the late eighteenth century to recent times. The second part is divided into two smaller sections. The first part addresses the initial studies and their characteristic features before the appearance of the first related theory in the early twentieth century, whereas the second part discusses the emergence of the tribute theory that seemed to serve as a trigger for the second wave of Timurid–Ming research from the late 1960s. The particular point concerning the tribute theory is that its appearance was not connected to analyses addressing the Timurid–Ming relationship, but rather to studies of Sino–foreign relations during the time of the Qing 清 dynasty, thus this theory, at the first sight, does not seem to fit the subject matter of the present book. However, without discussing the meaning and background of the tribute theory, it would not be possible to understand the development of Western research studies on the Timurid–Ming relationship from the second half of the twentieth century, therefore it is indispensable to make a brief detour here before discussing the Timurid–Ming research from the 1960s.

The third part of this chapter discusses the studies emerging in the latter half of the twentieth century, and can be considered the most significant part of this chapter. During this period of time, remarkable changes took place both at the level of *theory building* and in the *approach* aspect. Nonetheless, though it is still hard to speak about a boom in this research field, it was also in the second half of the twentieth century when there was a rising interest among Western scholars in addressing the Timurid–Ming relations. Finally, the fourth and final part of this chapter provides a summary of the discussions presented and gives a general assessment of the research achievements of Western scholars.

[175] As for Western studies of the Naqqāsh account, see the study of Ildikó Bellér-Hann (1995), which gives a detailed description of various Western editions and translations of this account (such as Quatremère [1843] into French, Rehatsek [1873], Yule [1915] and Maitra [1934] into English), along with describing the areas of debate among Western scholars about the original text, among other things. Also see the Introduction of this book.

[176] Nonetheless, studies on the Naqqāsh account will be addressed in Chapter Three when discussing Japanese research on the Timurid–Ming relationship, since Japanese studies of this account reveal important characteristic features of the relationship of the two empires.

2.1 Studies on the Chen Cheng accounts

Wolfgang Franke calls the two accounts of Chen Cheng the most important sources of Chinese knowledge on Central Asian cities and powers in the early fifteenth century.[177] The significance of these two accounts can be seen in the fact that they were also used as a reference for journeys by Chinese scholars and envoys sent to Central Asia at later years; even when the actual political and cultural conditions in Central Asia had changed so much that the information in the Chen Cheng accounts was barely relevant any longer. Yet, these accounts became widely read among the Chinese scholar-officials. They were incorporated into several official works such as the *Mingshilu*, the most important Ming Chinese source on Sino–foreign relations. These accounts can be regarded as counterparts, or even as forerunners of the Naqqāsh account written just a few years after Chen Cheng had submitted his to the Chinese court. Therefore, it seems to be useful to make a comparative study of the two Chinese accounts and the Naqqāsh account in a separate research study in order to shed light upon the similarities and differences in the style of historical writing typical of the Timurid Empire and Ming China, and also in order to further deepen our knowledge on Central Asia and China at those times. The fact that the dates of the accomplishment of these accounts stand so close to each other also promotes the creation of a comparative study.

What makes the Chen Cheng accounts particular is that although several Chinese envoys were sent to Central Asia, who then presumably must have made reports to the court about what they had seen and heard, no written reports have survived to the present.[178] The majority of these reports were made orally. For instance, in the case of Fu An, who spent twenty-three years in Central Asia during his numerous missions,[179] it is highly curious why he left no written accounts of his experiences. If he had done so, his accounts might have become at least as useful as that of Chen Cheng, or even more, and modern scholars may have paid more attention to him than to Chen Cheng.

[177] See Franke 1968: 215–216.
[178] See the Introduction of this book as well as Section 1.3 in Chapter One.
[179] See Enoki 1977: 228. Also see Section 1.3 in Chapter One and Subsection 3.3.3 in Chapter Three.

The *Xiyu fanguozhi* contains a description of various aspects of a number of Central Asian cities, starting with Herat, the new Timurid capital after Timur's death. Chen Cheng devoted about half of his account to describe this city, in which he addresses its architecture, the everyday life of the local population, such as certain customs and habits, the bazars and public baths, as well as the administration briefly, among other things. This particular attention to Herat is quite understandable not only because Shāhrukh resided here, but also because the Chinese embassy with which Chen Cheng travelled stayed there for about two months, thus he had enough time to deepen his knowledge of the Timurid capital.[180] Moreover, Chen Cheng could move freely in Herat, which also provided him with an opportunity to get familiar with the local conditions.[181] This caused a bias in his account at the expense of other Central Asian cities. In contrast, the *Xiyu xingchengji*, Chen Cheng's other account, is more of a diary on the way to the Timurid capital.

The original accounts were thought to have been lost until 1934 when the original manuscripts were found in the library of a Mr. Li in Tianjin.[182] Three years later, they were reprinted in Peking in a *Shanben congshu* 善本叢書 edition, and thereby his accounts succeeded in avoiding the fate that the original manuscript of Naqqāsh had to bear. Their discoveries made it possible to complete the versions found in the *Mingshilu*, *Mingshi* and other sources, which are much shorter in length than the originals. Although the significance of these accounts was understood immediately, it took five decades until the first, still incomplete, translation finally appeared.

This first translation was accomplished by Morris Rossabi and published in 1983 in *Ming Studies*, making a major contribution to the field. With this first attempt, Rossabi eventually took on a task that should have been done much earlier. However in the translation of the *Xiyu fanguozhi*, Rossabi addressed the part on Herat only, while leaving the *Xiyu xingchengji* completely untranslated. The reason why Rossabi did not feel it necessary to continue his translation about the other cities was that, while he admitted the fact that the Chen Cheng account helps modern scholars gain a better understanding about the reactions of the Chinese scholar-officials and also about the Central Asian cities of that

[180] Unlike in Herat, he spent a week in Samarqand.

[181] This fact makes Chen Cheng's stay in Herat different from that of Naqqāsh in the Chinese capital, where the foreign embassies were always kept under close surveillance in a fear of foreigners spying on China. Consequently, Chen Cheng and Naqqāsh must have experienced each other's capitals in different ways.

[182] See Rossabi 1983b: 49.

time, the latter half of the account about the respective cities was so brief and thin that it was hardly likely to give new valuable information about these cities.[183] Probably, for the very same reason, he did not think important to make a translation of Chen Cheng's diary either, since it contains even less information, in revealing almost nothing, about the Central Asian cities per se.[184]

In recent times, there has been some academic interest in the Chen Cheng accounts in Uzbekistan too. Although strictly geographically, Uzbekistan is not a Western country, therefore it apparently should not be addressed in this chapter, due to its close ties with the Russian scholarship, it may be acceptable to address it here. Natalia Karimova[185] devoted much of her time to the research of Chen Cheng, and the city of Hami, among other things. Karimova's study entitled "Chen Cheng's travels to Samarkand (the 15th century)" was written in order to draw attention to the significance of the Chen Cheng accounts. Karimova gives both brief translations of some of the accounts of the cities reported in the *Xiyu fanguozhi*, and gives brief comments on the historical background of early fifteenth-century Timurid–Ming relations. Karimova does not make clear her standpoint about how the relationship of the two empires should be approached, or what aspects of the relationship could be considered relevant, yet there are two points that make her study particular. The first is that despite her intention to reveal the significance of the two Chen Cheng accounts, she does not make an extended translation of the

[183] *Ibid.*: 49.

[184] Nonetheless, it must be noted that there is a full Russian translation of the *Xiyu fanguozhi* with numerous comments, completed by Boris I. Pankratov (1998), as well as that there is also a full German translation of both the *Xiyu fanguozhi* and *Xiyu xingchengji* completed by Bruno Richtsfeld, who wrote his master thesis on this topic in 1985. The latter is a very detailed and wide-ranging study of the two accounts that deserves full publication. Moreover, recently there is also a complete English translation of the *Xiyu xingchengji* by Sally K. Church (she published her translation only online), as well as a French translation of both accounts by Michel Didier (2012). This international trend sheds light upon the high popularity of the Chen Cheng accounts among Western scholars. Of the four studies, the work of Michel Didier is the most complete: it not only translates the two accounts, but also other works (i.e., poems) of Chen Cheng, and gives a detailed description of his life (for a short biography, see Goodrich & Fang 1976: 144–145).

[185] The author of this book learned directly from Natalia Karimova in 2007 that she was about to submit her dissertation on fifteenth-century Central Asia, but due to some difficulties in communication, it is unknown which specific subject she was working on. Nonetheless, it would be highly desirable to know about the concrete subject as well as the achievements of her main works.

description of Herat, the then Timurid capital. The omission of Herat can be considered unfortunate, however, from a modern Uzbek point of view, Samarqand must be more relevant for the people there than Herat, and this might have motivated Karimova to opt for the title "Chen Cheng's travels to Samarkand (the 15th century)".

The second is of much greater significance. Based on the work of a modern Chinese scholar, Yang Fuxue 杨富学,[186] Karimova states that Chen Cheng's first visit to Central Asia was not in 1414, but much earlier, in 1396. This, however, contradicts our present knowledge about Chen Cheng's first visit. Even the date of 1396 is somewhat dubious. It must refer to the embassy sent in 1396 from the Chinese court to Samarqand, led by Fu An and others, which ended in disastrous conditions. If Chen Cheng had participated in this mission, then he could not have come back to China before 1407, and thus could not have taken the wrong side in the war between the Jianwen emperor and the later Yongle emperor. Consequently, he could not have fallen out of favour after Yongle got to power and had not needed to become so eager to recover his official career.[187] Felicia J. Hecker, who wrote a study on Chen Cheng's career and his missions to Central Asia, mentions that Chen Cheng, who became a *jinshi* 進士[188] in the year of 1394, was sent to the west in 1396, however, he was not sent to Samarqand, but just to the northwestern border in modern Gansu 甘肃 province with a military mission to reinforce guardposts there against the Mongols and Uighurs.[189] Shortly thereafter, according to Hecker, he was sent down to the southern end of China, to modern Guangxi 广西 province.[190] The possibility that Chen Cheng was sent to Samarqand in the year of 1396 can be excluded.

The first study on Chen Cheng, however, was published in the middle of the 1970s, when Rossabi made an attempt to illustrate the significance of Chen's achievements as an envoy, as well as his two accounts with regard to the Sino–foreign affairs in Ming times. Rossabi in his study investigates two Chinese envoys in the early Ming period. One refers to Chen Cheng, and the other one pertains to Ishiha 亦矢哈, an envoy of foreign origin. Rossabi asserts that Chinese envoys, who had a low social status due to an official and universal Confucian disdain of foreign relations throughout Chinese history, were usually not in the position to

[186] See Section 4.1 in Chapter Four.
[187] See the Introduction of this book.
[188] It means 'metropolitan graduate', "a degree or status often compared to the academic doctorate in the modern West" (Hucker 1995: 167).
[189] Also see Wang Jiguang 2004.
[190] Hecker 1993: 87.

lead negotiations on their own, independently of their rulers' precise orders, yet these envoys played an important role in resolving disputes between China and foreign countries, initiated trade with them and obtained vital intelligence reports on other countries. All these activities seemed to be of high value for the emperors in various Chinese dynasties. The number of envoys dispatched to both adjacent and remote countries in early Ming times was especially high, among which not only those missions to the South Seas undertaken by Zheng He[191] were of particular importance, but also those that were sent to Inner Asia. As Rossabi notes, although these missions were not without some official scorn from Chinese scholars, the missions of Ishiha and Chen Cheng must have been considered exceptions, since the accounts of their travels – at least some parts of them – were incorporated into the Ming official records. Due to this special attention by the compilers of the official records, Ishiha[192] and Chen Cheng's achievements did not fade from record.[193]

[191] See the Introduction of this book as well as Section 1.2 in Chapter One.

[192] After Hongwu managed to make the former Mongol governour submit to him in 1387, Chinese attentions turned to the Jurchens in southern Manchuria. Yongle came to the conclusion that there was a great need for the help of the Jurchens in order to reinforce the safety of the northeastern frontier zone. Furthermore, the Yongle emperor sought Jurchen horses, furs, gerfalcons, ginseng, etc., and by 1405, the Jurchens entered into a tribute–trade relationship with the Chinese. In the year of 1409, Yongle, who was making preparations for a campaign in the northeast, sent Ishiha [in Rossabi's paper 'Isiha'] to the 'Wild Jurchens' to reinforce their good relations with China. About Ishiha himself, there is not much written in the Chinese official records. There is no separate chapter of his life, and he is only mentioned in the biography of another eunuch. From the fragmantery sources about him, Rossabi reckons that Ishiha himself was a Jurchen and may have been captured by the Chinese in a battle between the Ming court and the Jurchens in 1395, and that he was a relative of the ruling family of the Wuzhe 兀者 guard (1976: 6–7). Rossabi notes that Ishiha's early missions were quite successful for the Chinese court, arguing that the court not only trusted these foreign envoys at Chinese service, but they were also aware of their value in foreign relations. According to Rossabi, the fact that Ishiha could speak the Jurchen language, and that he was familiar with Jurchen customs must have made contribution to the development of the Ming–Jurchen tribute–trade relationship, which promoted the creation of a peaceful frontier zone – at least in early Ming times. However, after the Yongle emperor died in 1424, the peaceful relationship between the Chinese and the Jurchens went wrong, and this negatively affected Ishiha's last two missions. The last mission took place in 1432 on the occasion of the enthronement of a new Jurchen ruler. The Chinese court decided to send him a seal and to give him a Chinese rank, as well as presents, in order to make official relations with the new ruler. Although Ishiha himself was given an influential position in 1435, the relationship with the Jurchens kept getting worse and worse. The Tumu incident, in which Esen captured the Chinese emperor (see Section 1.2

Rossabi in his study discusses the roles of Ishiha and Chen Cheng in Sino–foreign relations in separate sections, yet he does so in a well-defined theoretical framework. He intends to show through the achievements of these envoys that the general view in modern times[194] can be challenged effectively by pointing at the Sino–foreign relations of the early Ming period. Rossabi's choice for Ishiha and Chen Cheng can be regarded as very fortunate for two reasons. One is that whereas Ishiha's missions to the Jurchens refered to the relations beyond the northeastern borders of China, Chen Cheng's missions were to those in the northwestern frontier zone, along with remote cities in Central Asia. The other point is that while Ishiha was an envoy of 'barbarian' origin, Chen Cheng was a Chinese envoy from top to toe, with a strong Confucian sense of morals, which also shows at certain places in his travel accounts. These two features shed light upon the fact that regardless of whether in relation to the northeastern or the northwestern regions, or whether an envoy was of Chinese or of 'barbarian' origin, the role of envoys was of high significance, which can be well understood by studying the early Ming period.[195]

In the section of his work on Chen Cheng, Rossabi first gives a brief historical background of the relationship of early Ming China and the Timurid Empire. He assumes that although there was eventually no military conflict between Shāhrukh and the Yongle emperor, the worldviews of the two rulers were so different that actually there was a possibility that their relationship would result in great strain.[196]

As for Chen Cheng's life, Rossabi mentions that Chen, after obtaining the degree of *jinshi* in 1394, took to government service, and from that time on, he was given orders from the government that helped him make contact with foreigners and thus become familiar with foreign customs. Rossabi asserts that Chen Cheng was given tasks such as founding guard

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in Chapter One), must have led to growing suspicion within the Chinese court even towards their loyal foreign servants. Ishiha was eventually released from his service by the court after the Tumu incident, but managed to avoid being executed (see Rossabi 1976: 2–15).

[193] See *Ibid.*: 1–2 for details.

[194] That is, the traditional Confucian Chinese world order was so dominant that the political and economic significance of Chinese and foreign envoys was hardly understood by the Chinese court and Confucian officials.

[195] Rossabi's theory is of high value, which will be further discussed in Section 2.3 of this chapter.

[196] *Ibid.*: 17. This note of Rossabi, though it is not discussed in detail, is to be considered important, and it will be addressed again in Section 2.3, when discussing the development of theories and approaches among Western scholars.

units in Anding 安定, Aduan 阿端 and Quxian 曲先 in the northwestern frontier zone.[197] Although Rossabi does not mention the year when Chen Cheng was sent to the northwest, he must refer to the year of 1396 – the disputed year discussed above in Karimova's study. Rossabi also assumes that Chen Cheng could have spoken some foreign languages, though there is no recorded proof of this.[198]

As for the *Xiyu xingchengji*, Chen Cheng's diary, Rossabi claims that there is very little information about the cities Chen Cheng passed through, however, he admits that at certain places, Chen gives some details of what he had seen, heard, or observed, and this can give the reader some glimpses into his journey. Rossabi also draws attention to the difficulties of the journey described in Chen's diary, saying that although Chen's embassy was not attacked by bandits, it suffered from climatic and geographical difficulties, such as going through deserts, and meeting snowstorms.[199] Moreover, Rossabi also assumes that Chen spent about two months in Herat.[200]

In the *Xiyu fanguozhi*, Rossabi focuses on Chen Cheng's observations. For instance, Chen seemed to be highly interested in the economic and commercial aspects of the Timurid empire, such as the bazaars, the currency, the natural resources, etc. Moreover, Rossabi stresses the fact that Chen Cheng was also interested in the animals of the region, since China needed various animals for both its economic benefit and military use, especially horses. Furthermore, Rossabi draws attention to Chen Cheng's Confucian sense of morals, causing him to find that, among other things, there were no ancestral shrines in the city, and was shocked to see the 'ill-behaviour' of women, which was so different from the 'proper' behaviour of Chinese women, and also expressed his disdain for the 'ill-trained' doctors found there. Besides, Chen also gave a description of the religious aspect of life in Herat, such as Ramadan, the Mullahs, dervishes, etc. Rossabi also draws attention to that although Chen Cheng as a Chinese envoy was supposed to meet the Timurid ruler Shāhrukh, he does not write about his supposed meeting(s) with him at all, but only about the ruler's bedroom instead. This is very interesting

[197] *Ibid.*: 18.
[198] *Ibid.*: 18.
[199] It took several months to get from the Chinese capital to the Timurid one, thus the Chen Cheng embassy was exposed to encounter different seasons on their way.
[200] There is nothing written about the length of stay in Herat. Rossabi reckons that if the return trip took the same period of time as the way to Herat, then Chen Cheng must have stayed about two months in the Timurid capital (*Ibid.*: 21).

indeed, as is the fact that there is very little written by Chen Cheng about the administration system of the Timurid capital too.

Nonetheless, what is more strikingly missing from Chen Cheng's accounts is the lack of military intelligence. Rossabi asserts that while Chen in his accounts mainly addresses economic practices and unusual customs, he does not make comments on the military system of the Timurids, in spite of the fact that the Ming court was very wary about things like this which could influence its defences. Rossabi argues that it is hard to believe that the emperor did not order Chen to make a report on any military activity he saw. Therefore, Rossabi reckons that there are only two possible answers to this puzzle. One is that Chen Cheng made only an oral report to the emperor, which was not written down. The other one is that he made a written report, but separately from the *Xiyu fanguozhi*, which may have been held in the Ming archives, but was not incorporated into the official chronicles.[201] In either case, Rossabi argues that there must have been a report from Chen Cheng on the military affairs of the Timurids.

Felicia J. Hecker, in her study about Chen Cheng, wrote a short, yet very informative paper about the life, career and mission of this Chinese diplomat and discussed the particular political conditions of the Timurid–Ming relations at the turn of the fourteenth–fifteenth century. Although she does not discuss much about the politico-cultural and commercial aspects of these relations, she mentions the importance of the legitimacy of power for the Yongle emperor who forged good relationship with the cities in Central Asia. Thus it can be assumed that the Sino–Central Asian embassies of his reign were highly significant for him. According to Hecker, these embassies were useful for Yongle not only for legitimising his power, but also for obtaining military intelligence[202] directly from Central Asian caravans, and the emperor himself also frequently made inquiries about the conditions in the remote western cities.

Hecker's standpoint shows that information-gathering through these embassies was not only important for Timur a generation before, but also for the Yongle emperor during a peak period of Chinese expansion (although one more energetically focused on the oceans in the south than on the northwest). For Yongle, the Mongols were a threat which he could

[201] Rossabi claims that the reason for doing so may have been that the court did not want to make such military information public. These secret documents, if they existed, however, might have been lost due to a lack of copies of them.

[202] However, unlike Rossabi, Hecker does not address the possibility of missing reports on military affairs.

not ignore.[203] The fear of another nomadic invasion must have made him become cautious even with Central Asia.[204] However, this fear never really led to a hostile policy towards Central Asia – rather to the contrary, a more active and friendly approach.

The significance of Hecker's study lies in that it successfully reveals much of the circumstances behind the Chen Cheng accounts. These can be summarised in the following four groups.

First of all, just like Rossabi, Hecker sheds light upon Chen Cheng's Confucian ethical sensibilities,[205] which is well-hidden throughout his accounts as Chen usually uses a rather monotonous style for describing the places he visited. Yet, Chen Cheng's moral sense and personal opinions about what he had seen or heard can be caught at certain places in the text. These personal opinions manifest themselves in negative forms, when Chen Cheng found something rather 'improper' according to his Confucian moral sensibilities. Such kinds of disdainful opinions can be seen when he describes the way the inhabitants of Herat greet each other, a series of 'impolite' behaviours between superiors and inferiors, between men and women, or when seeing young boys wearing richly embroidered robes that should have only been worn by nobles in his opinion. All these apparently got on Chen Cheng's nerves. These personal – albeit negative – opinions break the monotonous tone of the text, giving something particular to Chen Cheng's account.

Secondly, Hecker identifies some of the buildings in Herat described by Chen Cheng, such as the Great Friday Mosque and the great citadel, but the bazaar in Chen Cheng's description cannot be identified with certainty. Hecker assumes that it may refer to the King's Bazaar, south of the citadel. Hecker also mentions that at the time Chen Cheng was visiting the city Herat was just about to be reborn as the new Timurid capital, therefore new buildings had not been built or completed yet. Consequently, Chen Cheng may have seen mainly pre-Timurid buildings made of unfired bricks. At this time, Samarqand was still much more gifted with splendid buildings than Herat.

[203] See Section 1.2 in Chapter One.

[204] Although, after Timur's failed attack on China, the Yongle emperor made no attempt to find a good excuse for going westwards on a punitive campaign, as he did several times against the Mongols in the north, these events may have strengthened his desire to keep an eye on military affairs of his Central Asian neighbours.

[205] Hecker discusses Chen Cheng's Confucian sense of morals in more detail than Rossabi.

Thirdly, Hecker draws attention to the fact that Chen Cheng was very careful to take notes on various Persian words and expressions, such as greetings, titles, currency, names of the days, buildings, etc., written in Chinese characters with quite a high phonetical accuracy. These words may have been considered by Chen Cheng as useful for later envoys. Hecker suggests that behind Chen Cheng's motivation for transcribing these phrases into Chinese there might have been the Yongle emperor's intention to educate a group of scholar-officials who could have replaced the foreigners working in the *Siyiguan* 四夷館[206] and the *Huitongguan* 會同館.[207]

Finally, Chen Cheng's accounts are of high significance in the sense that they reveal – though indirectly – the co-existence of Mongolian and Islamic customs among the local population, by referring to the practice of levirate.[208] Certainly, Chen Cheng was not able to ascertain that what he had seen was the practice of levirate, since he only commented that

> many take their elder or younger sisters as wives or concubines and so form a house of bone and flesh. Even brothers and sisters sharing the same ancestors marry. It is not unusual for the elder brother to marry the younger brother's wife and vice versa.[209]

However, although Islamisation was already under way in the region, which was also promoted by Shāhrukh's preference of Islam over Mongol customs, the spread of Islam among the local population was a different issue. In spite of the fact that Islam had already become almost the dominant religion by the beginning of the fifteenth century in the Timurid Empire, Mongol customs were still alive in the middle of the

[206] The 'Translators Institute'. It was established in 1407. This bureau had several branches, among which the *Huihuiguan* 回回館 (the Muslim Office) was responsible for the correspondence with Central Asia. The officials could not work efficiently, since the level of their language knowledge was not high enough. They also had a bad reputation for corruption. See Kauz (2005: 41–42) and Rossabi (1973: 79). Nonetheless, both Rossabi and Kauz emphasise the significance of this institute at those times.

[207] The 'Interpreters Institute' (Hucker 1995: 263–264). It was established in Nanking during the time of the Hongwu emperor. Later, in 1408, a branch office was opened in Peking during the time of the Yongle emperor (Rossabi 1973: 80).

[208] Levirate marriage is a type of marriage where the brother of a deceased man is expected to marry his brother's widow, and the widow is obliged to marry her deceased husband's brother.

[209] See Rossabi 1983b: 51.

century during the time of Ulugh Beg.[210] Therefore there is no wonder that Chen Cheng's accounts mention some of these existing customs.

Hecker's study, by making a secondary analysis of the contents, helps the Chen Cheng accounts come to life in the sense that a vibrant world opens up behind the monotonous overtone of the texts. This is what makes her study so special in the research on Chen Cheng and his accounts and thus very stimulative for further studies in this direction. This kind of analysis tends – intentionally or unintentionally – to take on anthropological aspects. However, the Chen Cheng accounts have limitations in terms of their content for carrying out completely anthropological research on them. There is no wonder why Hecker focuses on the section of Herat in her study, since this part contains the most abundant information about what Chen Cheng saw, heard and thought, and therefore, this section of the text gives the most useful evidence to explore and identify important elements within Chen Cheng's writing style. However, this kind of analysis should not be limited to the section on Herat only. The latter half of the text about the other visited cities is also worthy of a similar investigation – though these sections are, of course, shorter in length and appear to contain less valuable information, compared to the section of Herat.[211] Thus an anthropological approach, or at least an attempt towards it, is to be regarded as highly desirable in order to describe the world behind these texts.

As for the level of theory building, although Hecker's study is very inspiring for further studies in anthropological directions, Rossabi's aforementioned study on the two Ming envoys stands on a higher level, since it was written as a sort of critical response to the assertions of the tribute theory.

[210] See Section 1.2 in Chapter One. Islamisation in Moghulistan, however, took a slower process, starting at the end of the fourteenth century. See Kauz 2005: 135.

[211] Hecker seems to suggest that Chen Cheng was the leader of the Chinese embassy in 1414. However, Kauz (2005) points to the fact that it could not be him, but was the eunuch Li Da, since it is Li Da's name that stands in the first place in the Chinese records. Chen Cheng seems to be just one of the leaders of this embassy, and not the central one.

2.2 Initial studies and the first theories related to the subject

This section presents and discusses the development of Western research on the Timurid–Ming relationship within the framework of studies on Sino–foreign relations.

2.2.1 Initial studies

The first academic interest in the Timurid–Ming relationship emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century. The first study[212] addressing this subject is that of William Chambers that was published in 1787 in the journal of *Asiatick Miscellany*. The introductory part of its modern edition[213] stresses that although the *Asiatick Miscellany* looked small in terms of academic significance compared to the journal of *Asiatick Researches*, which used to be the official journal of the Asiatick Society of Bengal, the *Asiatick Miscellany* should not be neglected. This statement is highly accurate, as Chambers' paper on the correspondence between the Timurid Empire and Ming China at the very beginning of the fifteenth century reveals a surprisingly early interest in the subject among Western scholars.

Although it is not known what exactly may have stimulated this early academic interest in the West during the latter half of the eighteenth century, Chambers' note is remarkable:

> The ensuing Extracts are made from a work which is not entirely unknown in Europe. M. D'Herbelot makes particular mention of it under the article *Schahrokh*, and expresses a hope of seeing it one day translated by M. Galland; but no such translation has ever appeared.[214]

This note makes clear that the desire for a translation of the available accounts had already been uttered before Chambers completed the first academic paper on the relations of the two empires.

[212] Entitled "An account of embassies and letters that passed between the emperor of China and Sultan Shahrokh, Son of Amir Timur".
[213] Entitled *The European Discovery of India*, for which the studies were selected, as well as the new introduction was written by Michael Franklin.
[214] Chambers 1787: 100.

Chambers made translations of certain letters passed between the Timurid ruler, Shāhrukh, and the Chinese emperor, Yongle, between 1408 and 1419. These letters are to be considered among the most important ones that were sent between the two empires. These letters were extracted from the work entitled *Maṭla‘-i sa‘dayn wa majma‘-i baḥrayn*,[215] compiled by the Timurid court historian ‘Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī.[216] Chambers, however, not only relied on the texts in Samarqandī’s work, but also checked these letters in ‘Ali Yazdī’s *Ẓafarnāma*. He comments that the *Ẓafarnāma* includes all these letters too, except for the first one, in which the Yongle emperor speaks haughtily to Shāhrukh, suggesting to him that he should get on good terms with his nephew Khalīl Sulṭān. Chambers notes that ‘Ali Yazdī may have omitted this letter on purpose from his work, since he was supported by Shāhrukh, thus it would not have looked correct for him to keep this first letter together with the others.[217]

Chambers, in the preface of his paper, first introduces the life of the author of the *Maṭla‘-i sa‘dayn*, that is Samarqandī, and then writes a brief explanation of the historical background – to be more precise, about the two rulers, Shāhrukh and Yongle, with a somewhat more detail on the former. Among other things, Chambers mentions about that Shāhrukh was threatened by Qara Yūsuf,[218] while Yongle “was dreaded on account of some cruelties with which he began his reign”.[219] However, Chambers’ remarks that the letters themselves are of much more significance. He first points to the fact that these letters were written with strong genuine indications within them in terms of both their contents and style. As he comments, the letters sent from Shāhrukh are written in a pure and proper diction, which is appropriate to an emperor admiring the Persian culture, while the letters sent from Yongle seemed to be so strange and awkward in their style that Chambers assumes they must have been translated by a Moghul interpreter. Unfortunately, Chambers does not give concrete

[215] The word *Maṭla* is written erroneously in Chambers’ study as *Malta*.

[216] Although the second part of this work also includes the Naqqāsh account, it is not addressed by Chambers. It is questionable whether he was aware of the existence of this account, the most important source in the Islamic world about early Ming China, or whether, for some unknown reason, Chambers just avoided to address it.

[217] *Ibid.*: 103.

[218] The leader of the tribal confederacy of the Qaraqoyunlu that was later defeated by the Aqqoyunlu.

[219] *Ibid.*: 106. Apparently, Chambers was not aware of Yongle’s concern about the legitimacy of his rule, which the emperor wished to strengthen partly by creating a good relationship with Central Asia.

examples of what exactly he means by "quaint and awkward"[220] here, just as he does not explain why he assumes that the Chinese letters were translated by a Moghul interpreter.[221] Therefore, it is a question whether Chambers was aware of the fact that the Yongle emperor established the *Siyiguan* in the year of 1407, which then employed many Central Asians to teach foreign languages, and who were also in charge of making translations.[222] As was mentioned in Section 2.1 of this chapter, this institute never functioned smoothly since the language knowledge of the 'staff' was not sufficient. Chambers does not mention about the existence of these Chinese bureaus. What he may have meant by a certain 'Moghul interpreter' may refer to the difference of Moghulistan and the Timurid Empire[223] in their cultural orientations – the latter being exposed to the cultural influence of Iran. Consequently, it can be assumed from Chambers' note that a Moghul translator may not have been able to make such sublime translations as someone from the Timurid Empire.

Chambers' apparently trivial note on the "quaint and awkward" style of the Chinese letters and his assumption of the possible existence of a Moghul interpreter shows that Chambers drew careful attention to the stylistic differences of the letters sent from and to the Timurid court. He attempted to figure out the reasons for this by pointing to the Moghuls as a medium in the correspondence between the two empires.

In the rest of his study, he makes no further comments, but just presents the translations. He starts with the extract written in the year of 1408, which mentions the Chinese embassy having come to condole with Shāhrukh on his father's death. The next extract addresses the embassy arriving from China in 1412, which was received solemnly by Shāhrukh. This extract remarks on the meeting of the Chinese envoys being given the 'happiness' of kissing Shāhrukh's hand. However, it is also this embassy that brought the letter of Yongle with an arrogant and haughty overtone, asserting that Shāhrukh's father, Timur, had been obedient to the Ming court, and had never failed to send tribute. As mentioned in Section 1.3 in Chapter One, Shāhrukh sent a reply letter[224] to Yongle, in

[220] *Ibid.*: 103.
[221] *Ibid.*: 104.
[222] Ding Mingjun 丁明俊 is of the opinion that whereas in the beginning translations were carried out by (Sinicised) foreigners, who had been living in China from the late Yuan dynasty or early Ming China, this job was later taken over by Chinese people (2004: 33).
[223] Especially at the time of Shāhrukh.
[224] It was sent both in Arabic and in Persian, with an obviously more Islamic religious overtone in the Arabic version.

which he suggested to the Chinese emperor that he should convert to Islam. The connecting text of the two letters[225] in the *Maṭla‘-i sa‘dayn wa majma‘-i baḥrayn* presents Shāhrukh's reply to Yongle as "a letter of good advice"[226] that comes "from motives of friendship",[227] showing no sign of anger. However, in the Persian version of his letter, Shāhrukh says that "the mutual friendship of fathers creates a relationship between their sons",[228] the meaning of which is unclear. It could refer both to a more or less friendly relationship, thinking of the initial contacts of Timur and Hongwu, or to a hidden threat to Yongle, referring to Timur's intention to attack China. This latter interpretation seems to be more likely. The next embassy from China came in 1417 with a letter, in which Yongle stressed the importance of making an agreement over keeping the roads open for free connections between the two empires.[229] However, the next embassy that brought a letter from Yongle, in which the Chinese emperor addresses Shāhrukh on equal terms, is presented in the *Maṭla‘-i sa‘dayn wa majma‘-i baḥrayn* with a special attention to its different way of writing. Each time it comes to the name of the Timurid ruler, or a sovereign prince, or that of God in the letter, it begins with a new line. This certainly shows an obvious turn away from the earlier haughty attitude of the Chinese court to a highly cordial one.

Although Chambers seems to be contented with giving the first translation of these extracts without going into a deeper description and analysis of their contents, his work and his comments are highly important to the history of the research of the two empires.

After Chambers published his translations and commentaries at the end of the eighteenth century, it took a whole century until Emil Bretschneider published his lengthy work on Sino–Central Asian relations, mainly based on the *Mingshi*. Nonetheless, during this century,

[225] The letter sent first by Yongle and the reply letter of Shāhrukh.
[226] Chambers 1787: 111.
[227] *Ibid.*: 111.
[228] *Ibid.*: 118. "Fathers" referring to Timur and the Hongwu emperor.
[229] In Chambers' translation, it is written as follows: "the subjects and merchants of both kingdoms, might enjoy a free and unrestrained intercourse with each other, and the roads be kept open and unmolested" (*Ibid.*: 119). However, this contradicts the reality of that no Chinese man or woman was allowed to leave Chinese borders without an official permission, especially not merchants, since the government intended to keep foreign relations under its own control. Presumably, the Yongle emperor here was referring to his intention of strengthening the economic interests on bilateral terms. However, this letter was not Yongle's first letter to call for keeping the roads open for a free traffic between the two empires. Yongle's wish to do so was made clear in the letter of 1412 too.

there were also a few other studies related to Sino–Central Asian relations.

First of all, at about the same time with Chambers, Joseph M. Amiot made translations (into French) of accounts of the *Siyiguan* with some explanatory comments. He also gathered some of the letters that were passed from Central Asian cities to the Chinese court, though he did not do more than just collect them.[230] Secondly, three decades or so after Chambers and Amiot, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat spent great efforts to make translations of Khotan[231] from the Chinese dynastic histories, however, he did so without making any analysis. Thirdly, at the end of the nineteenth century, Marie-Clément Imbault-Huart came up with a work on Hami, similar to that of Abel-Rémusat on Khotan. He made translations of the texts concerning Hami, mainly from the Chinese dynastic histories. Although he made abundant commentaries about the contents of the texts, he did not make any attempt to discover Chinese attitudes to foreigners either. Actually, throughout the whole nineteenth century, no scholar in the West succeeded in doing more than collecting sources and making certain translations with a few commentaries at most. Even Bretschneider, whose works are well-known and have been cited frequently by scholars, refrained from the attempt to describe the relationship between China and the outer world, meaning Central Asia in this case. On the other hand, this kind of reluctance from making deep analysis can be well understood if one takes into account that the records that were available for scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were hardly enough to promote theoretical analyses regarding Sino–foreign relations.

Bretschneider's work entitled *Mediæval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources*, was first published in 1888, and re-published in 1910.[232]

[230] Bretschneider assumes that Amiot may have mistakenly concluded that these letters were addressed to the Kangxi 康熙 emperor in early Qing times (Bretschneider 1910, Vol. 2: 149).

[231] Khotan, originally a Buddhist kingdom, was located on the branch of the Silk Road running along the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert in the Tarim Basin.

[232] This is a revised and improved collection of three earlier works, arranged into two volumes: *Notes on Chinese Mediæval Travellers to the West* (1875), *Notices of the Mediæval Geography and History of Central and Western Asia* (1876), as well as *Chinese Intercourse with the Countries of Central and Western Asia during the Fifteenth Century* (1877). It is actually Part Four in the second volume which addresses fourteenth–fifteenth century Sino–Central Asian relations, and thereby, it also refers to the subject of the Timurids and Ming China. It is supposed to be identical with his work mentioned above (1876), however, there are

Bretschneider adds an introduction of twenty pages or so to Part Four, in which he describes the classical Chinese sources he mostly used for his studies. Among these sources, the two most frequently used ones are the *Mingshi* and the *Daming yitongzhi* 大明一統志. Bretschneider regards the *Mingshi*, the official historical work about the Ming dynasty, as the main source, mentioning that at the end of this huge work there are twelve chapters dealing with foreign countries that had intercourse with China during the Ming period. The *Daming yitongzhi*, the other main source for Bretschneider, is the great geography of the Ming Empire, in which important geographical information can be found. Bretschneider used these two works to complement each other, saying that they were compiled from different sources. It is interesting that Bretschneider does not mention the *Mingshilu* as a possible source for studying Sino–foreign relations, despite it becoming to be regarded by scholars in the twentieth century as much more reliable than the *Mingshi*.

Bretschneider in the introduction gives some very brief historical background. Among other things, he mentions about the poems[233] found in the *Yehuobian* 野獲編 – allegedly written by Fu An, who was sent to Timur in 1395. Bretschneider also mentions Chen Cheng, though very briefly. He enumerates the names of the cities that Chen Cheng went through, and asserts that Chen provided information on the geographical conditions, local products and customs of those countries, as well as that Chen produced these accounts in the work entitled *Shixiyuji* 使西域記,[234] the *Record of an Embassy to the Countries in the West*.[235]

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some changes in it due to the fact – as Bretschneider in the preface of the first volume mentions – that during the ten years after having published the three works above, there were new significant explorations of the subject, and thus earlier editions needed to be improved and adjusted to take into account contemporary knowledge. This so-called 'boom' was thanks to the Russian expansion into the region, which helped scholars access sources that had not been available in previous times. However, since many of these new studies were written in Russian, Bretschneider had to employ many Russian articles that had been published in the preceding fifteen years on Central Asia.

[233] The *Xiyou shenglanshi* 西游勝覽詩, meaning 'poems written on curious things seen on a travel to the west'. Bretschneider assumes that these were written by Fu An himself, who was forced by Timur to travel throughout his empire.

[234] This is another name of the work *Xiyu fanguozhi*. As for the 'fate' of the Chen Cheng accounts, see Morris Rossabi 1976: 19.

[235] Bretschneider could not consult Chen Cheng's accounts in their original form and length, which were only discovered in 1934 in Tianjin. Therefore, it took a long time until Wolfgang Franke (1968: 215–216) called the Chen Cheng accounts the most important Chinese sources on fifteenth-century Central Asia. Bretschneider

Bretschneider made a significant contribution by translating and commenting on the information found in the *Mingshi*, the *Daming yitongzhi*, etc., giving a great deal of information on Central Asian cities and peoples, their locations as well as the local products, customs, etc. Bretschneider's academic achievements are highly significant, his translations, despite certain mistakes, are also largely accurate, yet, they need to be read with some caution. It must be noted that he did not translate everything, but rather made summaries, whereas some parts of the texts were completely left untranslated. There are two notes from him in which he refers to these omissions. One note is in his work published in 1876 and says that "our knowledge of the tracts, which come here into consideration, is still so defective, that, being apprehensive of misleading the reader, I generally abstain from venturing any conjectures".[236] The other note is in the *Mediæval Researches* Vol. 2, in which, regarding the history of Turfan, he states that "not wishing to fatigue the reader with a literal translation of the whole article, I have omitted many details destitute of interest".[237] More strikingly, he did not make any attempt to summarise the information gained from his translations into a theoretical framework, not even trying to make a semi-theoretical summary of the relationship of Central Asia and China. As Rossabi asserts in his dissertation of 1970, it seems that Bretschneider intended to draw attention to the importance of these classical Chinese texts only, and that he was content with leaving the task to write interpretive studies to other scholars. Nonetheless, Bretschneider became one of the early scholars who have been most frequently quoted, and who made significant academic contributions to the research of Sino–foreign relations.

The first Western scholar who directly addressed early Timurid–Ming diplomatic contacts was Edgar Blochet in the early twentieth century. Blochet in his work published in 1910 comes to the conclusion that both Timur and Shāhrukh must have been vassals of China, based on the following three arguments. First, the *Mingshi* describes the first two rulers of the Timurid Empire as vassals of China. Second, in Yongle's early letter to Shāhrukh, the Chinese emperor addressed the Timurid ruler on unequal terms. Third, Shāhrukh talked about the "friendship"[238] of his

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could hardly have come to this conclusion, although he might have been aware of their importance, if not their exact content.

[236] Bretschneider 1876–1877: 227.

[237] Bretschneider 1910, Vol. 2: 198.

[238] In Chambers' translation: "The affection and friendship which subsisted between our respective fathers, is revived by this circumstance, as indeed it is proverbial

father (Timur) towards Ming China in his reply letter to Yongle. Blochet even assumes that there was a secret letter sent from the Timurid ruler to Yongle in which he allegedly admits Chinese superiority.[239]

Blochet's standpoint, however, was challenged in later times by other scholars, among whom Joseph F. Fletcher gave a brief but convincing critique of it.[240] Hereby, it is enough to note that after Blochet, the Timurid–Ming research in the West came to a standstill for several decades until it was finally resumed in the late 1960s as a reaction to the tribute theory.

2.2.2 The appearance of the tribute theory

After Blochet had drafted the first theory concerning the relationship of the two empires, it took a long time until the academic interest in the West returned to Timurid–Ming relations again. The trigger for a sudden interest in this subject in the late 1960s was a reaction to the so-called tribute theory. The tribute theory per se was not related to fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian relations, yet it is the reaction to its theoretical framework that promoted further studies on fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian relations – though not in a supportive sense, rather as a critical response to the tribute theory.

The tribute theory – hallmarked by John K. Fairbank, Ssu-yu Teng, Tingfu Tsiang and others – came into existence during the 1940s and de-

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that, 'the mutual friendship of fathers creates a relationship between their sons.'" (1787: 118).

[239] Lucien Bouvat in his work *L'empire Mongol (2ème phase)* of 1927 devotes only a few pages to the Timurid–Ming contacts (Bouvat 1927: 30–31 and 84–87), in which he eventually repeats Blochet's standpoints saying that the Timurids were vassals of China. As he asserts, the Chinese "pour suivant l'ennemi chez lui, les Ming, entre 1370 et 1390, annexèrent à leur empire plusieurs possessions mongoles. Timour dut reconnaître leur suzeraineté: s'en affranchir fut le rêve de toute son existence, et il mourut au moment où il partait, a la tête d'une armée formidable, entreprendre la conquête de la Chine" [Hunting the enemy into his own land, the Ming, between 1370 and 1390, annexed several Mongol territories. Timur had no choice but to recognise their suzerainty. Having dreamt during his whole life to liberate himself from it (=their suzerainty), he finally died at the very moment he was about to lead a formidable army to conquer China] (*Ibid.*: 31). A further important section states: "La mort avait empêché Timour de s'affranchir de la sujétion de la Chine" [Death prevented Timur from liberating himself from the subjection to China] (*Ibid.*: 84).

[240] See this critique below in Section 2.3 on Fletcher's work.

scribed Sino–foreign relations within a general theoretical framework.[241] Fairbank and Teng chose the Qing tributary system as a case study, in which they made a long description of the role of the tributary system within pre-modern China's foreign policy. However, interestingly, an analysis of the general overall aspects of this system do not seem to be the result of their case study on the Qing conditions, but on the contrary, the Qing conditions were interpreted on the basis of the allegedly stable, unchangable and unflexible tribute system that had been functioning under heavy Confucian influence since ancient times. Fairbank and Teng argued that Chinese foreign policy in Qing times – even in the nineteenth century when conflicts with the Europeans were increasing – can be grasped through the embodiment of this unchanging traditional Chinese world order, that is, the tribute system. For their analysis, Fairbank and Teng outlined the following four standpoints:

1. "the tributary system was a natural outgrowth of the cultural preeminence of the early Chinese";
2. "it came to be used by the rulers of China for political ends of self-defence";
3. "in practice it had a very fundamental and important commercial basis";
4. "it served as the medium for Chinese international relations and diplomacy"[242]

[241] The emergence of the tribute theory is the result of a highly interesting combination of pre-war Western (American) and Chinese scholars' research achievements. The main representatives of the tribute theory, John K. Fairbank, Ssu-yu Teng and Tingfu Tsiang, stood in a sort of linear generational connection with each other. First of all, Tsiang, who obtained his Ph.D. in history in the early 1920s at Columbia University, became the mentor of Fairbank at Jinghua University while Fairbank was staying there to do research for his doctoral dissertation. (Fairbank earned his doctoral degree in 1936 at Oxford University.) Thereafter, Fairbank in turn became the academic adviser of Ssu-yu Teng, who obtained his doctoral degree at Harvard. The tribute theory itself culminated in the common work ("On the Ch'ing tributary system" [1941]) of the latter two (Fairbank and Teng). Thus, though the tribute theory involves both pre-war American and Chinese scholars, suggesting that even if these scholars derived from different scholarly traditions, they stood within the Western (American) scholarship. This may not be surprising at all, since it was highly popular for people in pre-war China to go to the West (Europe and America) and study various Western methods in all kinds of academic fields, including historical studies too. Also see Rossabi 1973: 18–26 for details and other proponents of the tribute theory.

[242] Fairbank and Teng 1941: 137.

The first point refers to China's assumed cultural supremacy over its 'barbarian' neighbours. Consequently, from a Chinese point of view to see, all the peoples outside of China were inferior to it, and thus these peoples could become nothing but vassals of the Middle Kingdom. As such, foreign rulers were given seals, titles, as well as the Chinese calendar as symbols of this subordinate position.[243] However, as vassals, they were also supposed to bring tribute to the Chinese ruler at regular times in order to express their loyalty. Therefore, foreigners were forced to communicate with China on Chinese terms, that is, within the framework of the tribute system with a subordinate position. According to Fairbank, this world concept had not vanished by the nineteenth century – on the contrary, it was very much alive among the Qing scholar-officials.

The second point refers to an obvious military defence function of the tribute system, reckoning that the Chinese did not need anything from their neighbours, except for peace. Therefore, the tribute system was understood and used for 'buying peace', the meaning of which can only be understood with the third point together.

The third point refers to commercial interests, though not that of the Chinese, but that of the foreigners. Foreigners, especially nomadic peoples needed things that they could not produce by themselves due to their unsettled lifestyles, thus they attempted to obtain these goods from the Chinese through the tribute system. The tribute system was thereby bilateral. The foreign tribute embassies coming to China were always given gifts from the Chinese court in return, which were very valuable for them. Therefore, there was a kind of commercial interests for nomadic peoples to come and 'trade' with China – albeit the word 'trade' in this case was never used by the Chinese, since it was a disdainful deed according to Confucian traditions.

The fourth element refers to the political aspect of this institution, since Chinese rulers often used these embassies to express their political goals when negotiating with foreign envoys at the capital, or on the contrary, they sent Chinese envoys abroad in order to spy on their enemies or to make new allies.

From the four points drafted by Fairbank and Teng, it can be concluded that the first, second and fourth points refer to Chinese interests, while the third one expresses foreign ones.

As Fairbank and Teng assert, these aspects above have to be understood within a single system, but with different meanings for the

[243] See Section 1.4 in Chapter One.

Chinese and for the foreigners. The moral value of the tribute system was significant for the Chinese, while the material value was important for the foreigners. The possible economic interests for the Chinese in the tribute system is not included in the theoretical basis of Fairbank and Teng, although there seems to be a little allusion in their study for such a possible economic interest, saying that there is an "interesting possibility, which deserves exploration, of an imperial economic interest, – for instance, in the silk export trade".[244] Nevertheless, Fairbank and Teng are of the opinion that such an economic interest for the Chinese could not be considered real, partly because of the traditional Chinese Confucian way of thinking that disdained trade, and partly because of the belief that China was basically self-sufficient, therefore there was no need for products from the 'barbarians'.

As for the second point of the four theoretical standpoints above, namely the one referring to political defence, Tsiang's standpoint seemed to serve as a base. Tsiang argues that the Chinese had no interest in making connections with the foreigners other than making peace with them.[245] Tsiang was against the assumption that China profited from the tribute system in an economic sense, besides 'gaining peace' with the foreigners from it.

Fairbank in a separate study published in 1942, referring to the great marital expeditions of Zheng He, who put out to sea seven times between 1403 and 1433, asserts that the peak of the tribute missions took place during the early Ming period. Fairbank argues that Zheng He was not really exploring terra incognita, but was going along well-known commercial routes. Moreover, Fairbank argues that while the tribute system started to decline after the end of Zheng He's expeditions, trade was still continuing. The reason for this is that it was not that the foreigners in Southeast Asia kept coming to China, but it was, instead, Chinese merchants who started to go to Southeast Asia. These Chinese merchants replaced the previous Arab dominance in trading between China and Southeast Asia, and Fairbank assumes that these Chinese merchants were responsible for the decline of the tribute system in the south of China.[246] However, the appearance of the Europeans from the

[244] *Ibid.*: 141.

[245] As Tsiang asserts, "if relations there had to be, they must be of the suzerain-vassal type, acceptance of which meant to the Chinese acceptance of the Chinese ethic on the part of the barbarian"; as well as "it must not be assumed that the Chinese Court made a profit out of (...) tributes". See Tsiang 1971: 130–131.

[246] That is to say, as Chinese merchants started to sail between China and Southeast Asia more frequently and became gradually dominant in trade activities, people in

sixteenth century, seeking commercial interests, reactivated the traditional tribute system conception. As Fairbank asserts, the Europeans, just like other 'barbarians' in previous times, were fitted into the traditional Chinese institution of the tribute system. According to Fairbank, the Qing government was unprepared against this commercial approach from Western countries. The Chinese court was not even able to distinguish between the Europeans coming from various countries, and they named them in a random way.[247] This is also very surprising, since, as is asserted in another work of Fairbank and Teng,[248] there were people in nineteenth-century China who became very familiar with the personal characteristics of the foreigners through everyday contacts in the Canton region. These people were Chinese linguists, merchants and compradores. However, the court in Peking did not make use of these people to get accurate information about the newly arriving Westerners.

The case study by Fairbank and Teng details the Qing dynasty's reaction to the growing European commercial 'attacks' which recalled the tribute system, suggesting that there had been a stable and unchangable Chinese foreign policy throughout the whole of Chinese history. According to Fairbank, this led to an isolationist policy, in which China intended to reduce its contacts with the foreigners as much as possible. The court attempted to monopolise the contacts with the foreigners through the tribute system, prohibiting them to enter Chinese territory without permission, while Chinese subjects (so to say private 'citizens') were also forbidden to leave Chinese borders without official approval. Even if foreigners were allowed to enter Chinese territory, they could not move freely, and were escorted directly to the capital – although along the road they were taken care of by their Chinese companions by order of the court, covering all the expenses during their time in Chinese territory. Thus, Sino–foreign relations were monopolised by the court for centuries.

However, the question here is whether the case study by Fairbank and Teng on the Qing conditions justifies such a kind of generalisation of the entirety of Chinese history. This question is of high importance from the viewpoint of Timurid–Ming relations during the fifteenth century.

Southeast Asia did not need to come to the Middle Kingdom any longer within the framework of the tribute system.

[247] For instance, the term *folangji* 佛朗機 (in Fairbank's paper 'Fo-lang-chi') meant the Franks originally, which reached China through Arab transmission. When the Portuguese appeared in the south in the sixteenth century, they were called *folangji* too, and the same term was also used for the Spanish after their arrival in the Philippines (see Fairbank 1942: 146).

[248] See Teng and Fairbank 1963: 20.

However before turning to the critiques of the tribute theory, it is useful to address Henry Serruys' works on the subject first. The reason for doing so is two-fold. First, Serruys made lengthy studies on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Sino–foreign (mainly Sino–Mongol) relations, thereby, his studies connect much more closely to the Central Asian Timurid Empire[249] in terms of period and location than the case study of Fairbank and Teng. Second, Serruys devoted careful attention to the tribute system, within which he attempted to describe the relationship of the Chinese and the Mongols.

Serruys devoted two major works[250] to the tribute system, in which he addressed and attempted to interpret the conditions in the northern frontier zone of China. The two works can actually be thought of as one, since, as Serruys asserts, he addresses two different aspects of the same thing, that is, tribute and trade. The reason why he decided to discuss these two aspects in two different studies lies in the fact that Serruys found the matter so huge that it seemed better to him to address them separately. Nonetheless, the two studies overlap at several points and have the same conclusions about the Sino–Mongol relations. Serruys also produced a clear theoretical (background) framework for conceptualising the relationship of the two aspects (tribute and trade), though it must be noted that this is relatively hard to uncover within his work.

In this, Serruys seems to follow the tribute theory described above, but what makes his work particular, or at least different from that of Fairbank, is that he does not use the tribute theory as something taken for granted, instead, he attempts to sustain it by giving examples of policy debates among the Chinese officials over how to handle foreign issues. Serruys takes the position that tribute was mostly a kind of diplomatic

[249] Serruys addresses the Timurid–Ming relationship very briefly. First of all, he casts doubt on the authenticity of the letter of 1394 sent from Timur to Hongwu, in which Timur allegedly, regarding himself as a vassal of China, praises the Chinese court. Serruys asserts that "we know from contemporary sources that Timur had nothing but contempt for the Chinese emperor" (Serruys 1967: 25). Serruys calls Blochet's conclusion into question too, who asserted that both Timur and Shāhrukh must have been vassals of China, and that the Chinese court would not have hesitated to attack them if they had not sent tribute. Serruys reckons that firstly, the Chinese were not in the position to defeat the Mongols in the north – not to mention to carry out a successful military campaign against the remote Samarqand and Herat, secondly, neither Timur nor Shāhrukh found it humiliating to send tribute to the Chinese; "(...) Timur and Shah Rukh (...) along with the Mongols saw in tribute relations with China mainly a profitable business" (*Ibid.*: 26).

[250] Serruys mainly made use of the *Mingshilu*: the day-to-day records of – as he says – plenty of isolated small facts (*Ibid.*: IX).

means through which the Chinese court could control the Sino–Mongol relations. According to him, the threatening presence of the Mongols in the northern frontier zone made the options for the Chinese very simple: tribute and trade, or raids.[251] This meant that the Chinese were constantly facing the dilemma of whether they should categorically end their relationship with the nomads, or whether they should listen to their demands and attempt to satisfy their 'greediness' for Chinese goods. Within the former option, there was always the risk that the weak Ming military along the border would not have been able to stop the Mongols from raiding, while the other option (policy) would have made China lose its face towards the 'barbarians' by showing its weakness. Serruys presents this irresoluteness within China's foreign policy – to be more precise, the shifts within these two kinds of policies – from the latter half of the fifteenth century up to the end of the sixteenth century.[252]

In an analysis of debates among Chinese officials regarding these two policies, Serruys asserts that "it is not easy to assess accurately the results of the horse fairs for Sino-Mongol relations, (...) and evaluate the overall situation and the effects of the restoration of tribute and trade upon both China and Mongolia".[253] He points to the fact that some of the officials understood very well that "border raids were the result of the lack of tribute and trade, and were no valid reason to refuse tribute".[254] Wang Chonggu 王崇古, the governour-general of Xuanfu 宣府, Datong 大同 and Shanxi 山西, emphasised the significance of everyday commodities that the Mongols could buy at the border. He argued that if the Mongols could not receive the demanded goods, it would lead to raids at the

[251] Serruys is of the opinion that in the case of Sino–Mongol relations in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the term 'war' does not seem to be proper, since the Mongols in Ming times did not seek to re-occupy China, but just to get access to both luxurious and ordinary Chinese goods, which they could not produce by themselves due to their nomadic lifestyle. Serruys' note is in accordance with the hesitation of Esen after having captured the Chinese emperor. Esen failed to make use of the turbulence at the Chinese court to attempt to occupy the capital (see Section 1.2 in Chapter One).

[252] Serruys asserts that for unknown reasons, the Mongols started sending less and less tribute missions shortly after 1450, and that by 1500, the relationship between the Chinese and the Mongols (except for the Three (Uriyangkhad) Commanderies [*san wei* 三衛] and the Jurchens) was 'reduced' to border raids. After 1530, the Southern Mongols attempted to renew the tribute relationship with the Chinese, but their attempts were rejected by the Chinese court until 1570–1571 when finally the Mongols managed to reach an agreement and resume sending tribute missions again. See *Ibid.*: 43.

[253] Serruys 1975: 186.

[254] Serruys 1967: 37.

borders, but if they could, it would become possible to maintain a peaceful relationship with them. His argument was listened to by the emperor, and as a result, the tribute relations were reestablished in 1570–1571. This can be considered a contrast to the previous policy that had been taken for about twenty years – in the 1550s it became forbidden even to talk about a possible renewal of the former trade relations.

It can be seen from the above that Wang's message did not consider the potential economic benefits[255] from a possible renewal of the tribute relations with the Mongols, but it clearly referred to defence issues, through which the Chinese court could 'buy peace'. Wang calculated that the expense of the presents given from the Chinese court to the Mongols in return for their tribute gifts would be less costly than spending huge amounts of money on constantly reinforcing the military defence ability at the frontier zone. In this sense, Wang's proposal contained economic aspects too, but purely connected to defence policy, and not for additional economic profits from trading with the Mongols. Eventually, he could hardly have had another choice, since trading was considered so disdainful among the Confucian officials that the reestablishment of tribute relations with the Mongols would not have been possible by only referring to potential economic gains from it. Nonetheless, Wang's proposal was accepted, and tribute relations were reestablished from 1570–1571. This seemed to prove the correctness of Wang's standpoint. Border raids eventually stopped, and the frontier zone, despite some minor incidents, became free of major military activity. It is another point that the Mongols got carried away with Chinese goods and demanded more and more of them. At the same time, there were always Chinese officials who criticised this (defence) policy, saying that the nomads were not reliable partners. These officials constantly made proposals to abandon tribute relations and enhance military effectiveness in the area.[256]

Nonetheless, Serruys pays attention not only to the attitudes of these Chinese officials on a diplomatic level, but also to the everyday life of Sino–Mongol relations. First of all, he gives examples of the conditions at the border and points out that "the prohibition to trade with the Mongols could never be enforced: all along the northern frontier, soldiers in forward positions and watchtowers dealt with the Mongols every day".[257] This was basically due to the fact that the army at the borders was in such

[255] That is to say, the economic profits that the Chinese court could obtain from tribute and trade relations.
[256] See Serruys 1975: 186–191 for details.
[257] *Ibid.*: 80.

bad conditions that the soldiers often decided to 'buy off' the Mongols by trading with them, instead of facing their attacks. Moreover, Chinese soldiers made use of trading with the Mongols to receive things that they could not have obtained through proper military channels. These illegal activities were taking place in spite of the fear of the court that direct contact with the enemy could lead to leaking military secrets – which actually must have happened in reality. The constant warnings of the court against these illegal activities shed light upon the fact that the court must have had little control over the conditions at the border.[258] The same 'impotence' extended to the conditions in the capital too, where the regulation of business transactions and locations[259] remained ineffective. There were numerous reports about secret transactions made on the streets and in private homes. Nevertheless, the Chinese court also gave warnings that trade at the designated places should be carried out at fair prices, and that no one was allowed to insult or provoke the Mongols.[260] The same warnings were given to the soldiers at the border too. Nevertheless, those nomads who managed to enter Chinese soil as tribute-bearers and were accompanied by Chinese officials and soldiers on the long route from the border to the capital, tried to slow down their pace in order to be able to trade along the way to the capital and make more profit. This was the case on their return too, and they also tried to prolong the length of their stays at the capital as well. As Serruys asserts, it is trade that was the most important thing for these nomads during their contact with China. Among these nomads, there were numerous false tribute-bearers, that is to say, people who pretended to come under the name of a nomadic ruler who was claimed to be the vassal of China. In many cases they forged documents in order to enter Chinese territory and make profits from trading. Many of these nomads, when reaching the Chinese border on their return from the Chinese capital, joined a new 'embassy' at the border immediately in order to enter China again. According to Serruys, these nomads, regardless of being rulers or just merchants, pretended to accept the superiority of China, but in reality they had only one purpose in their mind: trade. They needed Chinese goods very much, and the tribute system alone could not satisfy their demands, therefore trade both at the border and at the capital bore great significance for them.

The relation of trade and tribute in Serruys' interpretation can be summarised as the following. For the Mongols in Ming times, tribute and

[258] See *Ibid.*: 72–83 for details.
[259] Referring to the *Huitongguan* mainly.
[260] See *Ibid.*: 47–54 for details.

trade were essential in an economic sense, while this also played an important role in China's defence policy. The former element corresponds to the third point (political defence) in Fairbank's analysis, while the latter pertains to the second point (commercial aspects). However, while Serruys admits that the tribute system provided the Chinese court with diplomatic tools for negotiating with nomadic rulers, he does not mention the prestige of the Chinese court, which was supposed to spread among the various foreign peoples via the tribute system. Serruys may have been aware of this aspect of the tribute system, however, he focuses on political defence first of all in describing Sino–Mongol relations. Likewise, Serruys does not discuss the issue of possible economic interests for the Chinese court in having a tribute–trade relationship with the Mongols either. He only notes that

> the view that Chinese needed nothing is, of course, questionable, and, as we shall see, at all times much was imported from Mongolia even during periods when no contact was officially allowed (...) Mongolia too had something to offer: horses, cattle, meat, wool, hair, hides, etc.[261]

This note of Serruys is of high importance, because it corresponds to the question left open by Fairbank and Teng, that is, the question of the possibility of an imperial economic interest. However, although Serruys addresses this problem, he actually leaves it without further analysis, and he assumes that such an imperial interest may not have been of high importance. His explanation for this is very brief, compared to the total length of his two studies discussing tribute and trade relations. In neglecting to investigate the possibility of potential imperial economic interests, Serruys refers to Lawrence Krader's study (1952). He admits that there is a point in Krader's assertion saying that Sino–foreign relations were not unilateral, but they referred to mutual exchanges to satisfy each other's needs. However, Serruys argues that the goods given by the Chinese as return presents to the Mongols could hardly meet the needs for ordinary goods such as "cotton, foodstuffs, iron kettles, agricultural tools, household implements, etc.", [262] since the return presents of the court for the tribute goods were usually textiles and clothes – luxury items that were good for the tribal chieftains and nobles only. Ordinary goods came from trade at the capital and at the border fairs. Therefore, Serruys concludes that if the tribute ceremonials had been nothing but a form of exchange of goods, there would have been a

[261] *Ibid.*: 15.
[262] *Ibid.*: 16.

much larger scale of goods presented and exchanged at the meetings between the Chinese court and the foreign envoys at the capital.

This neglect of potential imperial economic interests,[263] however, oversimplifies the relations between the Chinese and the foreigners, making the latter[264] appear 'greedy', while the former 'defensive' and intending to find ways to halt the nomadic invasions. This oversimplification makes his studies fit the tribute theory hallmarked by Fairbank and others. Nonetheless, the fact that Serruys attempted to describe the everyday life interactions between the Chinese and the Mongols makes his studies highly important. Instead of just lingering over the highest level of Chinese society, he (also) gives a glimpse into the real conditions of everyday life. Serruys appears to recognise correctly that Sino–foreign relations cannot be understood solely on the base of studying the relations of the Chinese court with the elite of the 'barbarians' alone, and thus he attempted to give a much wider description of these relations. He also points to that the Chinese court was not capable of keeping these relations effectively under its control. This shows that the 'ideal' way of doing things from a Chinese perpective – that is the imperial intentions – was often inconsistent with the actual nature of everyday life within the lower social strata.

2.3 Critiques of the tribute theory

The tribute theory above that describes Sino–foreign relations as stable and unchanging throughout the Chinese history by oversimplifying these relations did not remain unchallenged by other scholars. The tribute theory came to be criticised both because it neglected potential economic imperial interests and because it overemphasised the cultural aspects of the official Confucian worldview. The latter refers to the view that Chinese emperors would never address 'barbarian' rulers on equal terms due to a

[263] Serruys draws attention to Yang Jisheng 楊繼盛, a Chinese official, who was of the opinion that tribute was even worse than trade at the markets, because trade could at least produce some profits, whereas the tribute system brought about economic loss due to the fact that the court always gave the tribute bearers goods of higher value than the value of the goods they received from the foreigners (Serruys 1967: 62). This note seems to have escaped Serruys' attention when developing his standpoint on Sino–Mongol relations. This is rather unfortunate, since Yang's comment refers to the economic aspect of the relations.

[264] Including Timur and Shāhrukh too.

strict Confucian world conception. The proponents of the tribute theory, who viewed China's cultural history along with other aspects as something difficult to change, were of the opinion that the Chinese emperors communicated with the outer-world within the framework of a ruler–vassal relationship, which excluded the possibility of addressing 'barbarian' rulers as equal sovereigns. This view, however, was successfully challenged, and the studies on Timurid–Ming relations became particularly significant in this debate.

It was Joseph F. Fletcher who first challenged the politico-cultural aspect of the tribute theory successfully when discussing fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian relations – though he himself never asserted that he was disproving the tribute theory as such.[265]

Fletcher addresses the contents of the two (aforementioned) letters of the Yongle emperor sent to Shāhrukh during the 1410s (one is the letter of 1412, and the other is the letter sent to the Timurid ruler in 1418).[266] The strikingly different overtones of the two letters did not escape Fletcher's attention. The letter of 1412 conveys a strong message from Yongle to Shāhrukh, in which Yongle poses himself as superior to the Timurid ruler, and consequently treats him as a Chinese vassal. Yongle's haughty letter did not remain unanswered. Shāhrukh, as a 'friend', suggested to him that the Yongle emperor should convert to Islam. This contradiction between the two rulers could have led to serious consequences, yet neither of them seemed to be interested in military clashes. The contacts did not break, and embassies continued to be dispatched. Yongle's letter of

[265] Fletcher had a very unique relationship with the tribute theory, which should be explained. First of all, Fletcher published a study on the Ming and Qing conditions in a book entitled *The Chinese World Order – Traditional China's Foreign Relations* edited by John K. Fairbank. This edition was devoted to investigate through various studies the question of how the Chinese world order (described in the tribute theory) as an ideal normative pattern influenced events in reality. Although the studies included in this edition mainly focus on the conditions in the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), Fletcher does not limit his study solely to Qing times, but he also discusses fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian contacts. Though his findings about fifteenth-century Timurid–Ming contacts (that will be addressed below in this section) actually challenge the tribute theory, Fairbank in the preface called *A Preliminary Framework* mentions Fletcher's findings very briefly, without going into deeper discussion about their significance. Apparently, Fletcher himself did not intend to challenge the tribute theory either – at least not 'officially'. However, since Fletcher's findings obviously go against the tribute theory, his study must be regarded as a critique of the standpoint of the proponents of this theory.

[266] Both letters were addressed in Section 2.2 of this chapter when discussing Chambers' study.

1418 to Shāhrukh, however, had a surprisingly different overtone, in which he addressed the Timurid ruler as a sovereign on equal terms with the Chinese emperor. Fletcher points to that this was not just against the Confucian tradition, which did not allow to treat foreign rulers as equal with China, but the contrast of the two letters also expressed a sudden change in Yongle's attitude. Fletcher asserts that it gives "a rare glimpse of the discrepancy between myth and reality in traditional Chinese foreign relations".[267] The Yongle emperor eventually acted against Confucian tradition when treating Shāhrukh, the ruler of a remote empire, as equal to him.

The question here is why the Yongle emperor acted like this. It becomes clear from the letters that Yongle intended to keep the roads between the two empires open and safe in order to promote commercial contacts, consequently, it must have been the commercial profits which motivated Yongle to act against Confucian traditions. At least, this is what Fletcher apparently attempts to suggest.[268] Fletcher also draws attention to the quick change in Yongle's attitude between the years 1412 and 1418, which he regards as a sign of flexibility in Yongle's foreign policy. This kind of flexibility also goes against Confucian tradition.

However, the fact that the Yongle emperor did not treat the envoys from Central Asia in 1420–1421 – the so-called Nāqqash embassy – as envoys of an equal ruler, shows that Yongle intended – or at least needed – to 'save his face' before the court, showing that he is the ultimate superior ruler of all 'under Heaven'. This contradiction between the overtone of the letter sent to Shāhrukh in 1418 and the reception and treatment of Shāhrukh's envoys two years later highlights a certain apparent inconsistency in Yongle's behaviour. Fletcher calls this a "double standard":[269] Yongle treated Shāhrukh from a distance as an equal ruler, but he rejected doing so within Chinese borders.

After Yongle's death, the relations between the two empires took on a new shape. As Fletcher asserts, Chinese contacts with Central Asia were gradually becoming "just" tributary, catching up with the Confucian worldview of how to treat foreigners properly. Whereas Central Asians kept coming to China, bringing tribute and receiving return presents, al-

[267] Fletcher 1968: 212.

[268] Nonetheless, the action of the Yongle emperor against Confucian traditions can be easily understood from that early Ming China had strong residual influences from the period of Mongol rule. Confucian ideas were pushed into the background, and Hongwu and Yongle could enjoy much greater power in decision making than the Ming rulers at later times. See Section 1.2 in Chapter One.

[269] *Ibid.*: 216.

most no Chinese embassies were dispatched to Central Asia any longer. This led to a Chinese withdrawal from initiating contact with the Timurids.

Fletcher comes to the conclusion that the attitudes of Hongwu and Yongle to foreigners are not to be viewed as something particular or isolated in the history of China, but as something that naturally appeared during the time when China was strong militarily and economically, and which disappeared as China started to weaken in the second half of the fifteenth century. Fletcher also stresses that this process was taking place "within the context of the same institutions and imperial claims",[270] and that "it does not reflect a change of doctrine or an abdication of the emperor's world supremacy".[271]

Fletcher's study on the flexibility of the Chinese emperor's foreign policy in early Ming times, along with other small examples from Qing times, goes against the tribute theory, according to which such a kind of flexibility was hardly expected from the emperor. Fletcher's standpoint reveals the reality behind the ideal Confucian way of doing things, and this makes his study similar to that of Serruys who explored the real conditions of the everyday life of Chinese soldiers in the frontier zone, as well as the Chinese and foreign merchants' behaviour against imperial regulations at the capital, etc. Serruys and Fletcher both made significant contributions to pointing out that reality was different from what the Chinese scholar-officials wrote about, or, at least, from what they hoped to be real. It is another issue that Serruys and Fletcher did so in completely different ways – not to mention the fact that whereas Serruys appears to

[270] *Ibid.*: 217. Nonetheless, Fletcher seems to neglect the fact that early Ming China, during which the Chinese emperor enjoyed great power up to 1435, *was* different due to its Mongol heritage from later times (see Section 1.2 in Chapter One).

[271] *Ibid.*: 217. Fletcher also gives examples of other Chinese emperors who treated foreign rulers as equal: for instance, the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor who conceded the political equality of the Kokandian ruler, or in the case of Manchu envoys who carried out the 'kowtow' (see Section 1.3 of Chapter One) in Moscow (1731) and in Saint Petersburg (1732), or for example in the case of the Russo–Manchu Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1689. What Fletcher here may refer to as "no abdication from the emperor's world supremacy" meant that Chinese rulers did not intend to treat foreign rulers as equal permanently. The fact that they did so sometimes was just a pretence in order to obtain something that was needed to please them. However, Fletcher stresses that these phenomena were not exceptional at all, but something that could be treated as an organic part of the Chinese emperors' foreign policy.

continue being one of the proponents of the tribute theory, Fletcher apparently attempts to challenge it after all.[272]

Moreover, Fletcher also touches upon the question of a potential imperial interest in commercial gains too, however, his standpoint about the subject remains a bit obscure rather than obvious. He asserts that "for Central Asia, relations with China meant trade; for China, the basis of trade was tribute".[273] However, he leaves the question open as to what commercial gains exactly China could obtain from the tribute system. He only points to the fact that these relations were rather complex, mixing prestige, military intelligence and the profits of trade within them,[274] and that the Chinese court was very much in need of Central Asian commodities, especially horses – at least in the early fifteenth century. Moreover, Fletcher also asserts that it was an open secret in the Chinese court, involving the emperor himself, that these Central Asian missions were after nothing but trade, yet "the Chinese authorities were happy to be deceived".[275] It was not possible to reveal the real characteristic feature of these tribute missions, since it would have led to a weakening of the imperial prestige. Trade was carried out by foreigners, but it was kept under imperial control within the tribute system, making these foreign envoys pretend to accept the superiority of China.

[272] There is another common standpoint between Serruys and Fletcher. Both of them disagree with Blochet in arguing that Timur and Shāhrukh were vassals of China. Nonetheless, Fletcher seems to give more arguments against Blochet's theory than Serruys. This may go back to the point that Serruys' study is not about the Timurid–Ming contacts per se. Fletcher contests Blochet's standpoint in the following way. First of all, Fletcher argues that "Blochet's basic error is his failure to see the Ming letters in their total context" (*Ibid.*: 354). For instance, Blochet does not seem to recognise the change of the tone of Yongle's letters sent to Shāhrukh in later times (1418) in which he attempts to treat the Timurid ruler as equal. Secondly, the fact that Shāhrukh spoke about the 'friendship' of his father to the Hongwu emperor must have been a sort of hidden (ironic) threat to Yongle rather than a reference to some honest friendship between the founders of the two empires, as Blochet would suggest. Thirdly, Fletcher also calls Blochet's assumption about the existence of a hypothetical letter sent from Shāhrukh to the Yongle emperor into question in which the Timurid ruler would have allegedly acknowledged China's superiority (*Ibid.*: 354). In sum, according to Fletcher, Blochet's arguments are too weak to 'prove' that the Timurid rulers considered themselves to be vassals of China.

[273] *Ibid.*: 209.

[274] As well as "other motives, which are still very much open to speculation" (*Ibid.*: 207.)

[275] *Ibid.*: 208.

Fletcher does not really discuss these commercial aspects of relations in detail, since it does not appear to be the main goal of his study. Nonetheless, his note of "for China, the basis of trade was tribute" means a kind of deviation from the standpoint of the hard central tribute theory, by referring to Chinese commercial interests in their contacts with the foreigners, however unfortunately, this remains undiscussed in detail.[276]

As for the economic aspect of the relations, it is Morris Rossabi who has made the most elaborate contribution. He devotes his whole dissertation to investigate this question, in which he first gives an outline of previous critiques on the negligence of potential imperial commercial profits. First of all, Rossabi refers to the study of Lo Jung-pang, who disagrees with the assumption that tribute and trade were not profitable economically for the court. He challenges the assertion that China needed no foreign goods, and that China was economically self-sufficient. Lo makes a difference between the conditions in early Ming China and those from the middle of the fifteenth century. He argues that in early Ming times, when China was strong both militarily and economically, the currency it used as a return gift to the foreigners was mainly paper money rather than silver and gold. However, this situation changed from the second half of the fifteenth century, when China started to weaken, paying with silver or gold, while receiving goods of lower quality. Joseph M. Amiot draws attention to the fact that some embassies asked for certain specific items of goods in return for their tribute gifts, which referred to a sort of trade, as well as that the Chinese court was eventually quite aware of the intentions of the foreigners. Likewise, Wolfram Eberhard strongly disagrees with the view which makes the foreigners look rapacious and greedy for Chinese goods, asserting that the Chinese themselves were greedy for 'barbarian' goods, herds and horses. Eberhard also draws attention to the point that the classical Chinese records used by modern scholars were written by scholar-officials disdaining commerce, and that this fact seems to have escaped the attention of the proponents of the tribute theory.[277]

[276] As for the third standpoint of Fairbank and Teng, Fletcher only refers to the assertion which says that it would be interesting to investigate some potential imperial economic interest in the trade with the 'barbarians'. However, Fletcher does not really go into a deeper analysis, and he devotes more notes to Tsiang's standpoint, who excluded any kind of possible commercial gain for the Chinese court from trading with the foreigners. Fletcher's untimely death in 1984 at the age of fifty, unfortunately, deprived him of further success in this field. He left several unfinished studies behind him, and one can only guess what other new findings he could have achieved if he had not passed away so early.

[277] Rossabi 1973: 34–37.

These critiques appear to have inspired Rossabi to carry out a long analysis on Sino–Central Asian economic relations in the fifteenth century, and his study became the first systematic investigation of the subject. Rossabi's dissertation in 1970 is to be regarded as a remarkable milestone both in the research of fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian contacts and in paradigmatic shifts in approaches to the study on Sino–foreign relations.

Rossabi in his dissertation continued to work on what Fletcher had started to do in his study two years earlier, though in a totally different aspect.[278] Hereby, Rossabi can be considered the most productive scholar in describing and revealing Sino–Central Asian relations in Ming times, providing a new theoretical approach by challenging the tribute theory successfully. Nonetheless, among Rossabi's work it is his dissertation that may be considered to be his most important work, because it appears to have taken up the theoretical standpoint on Sino–foreign contacts used in Rossabi's later studies.[279]

Rossabi's whole dissertation is devoted to refute the standpoint of the tribute theory suggesting that the contacts with the 'barbarians' produced no commercial gains for China, and that these contacts were rather irksome. Rossabi decided to investigate this standpoint by studying China's relations with Central Asia and Hami in the fifteenth century. The reason why he decided to address Hami and Central Asia together lies in the following two facts: first, Hami, which every embassy and caravan had to go through, was the "funnel"[280] of Sino–Central Asian contacts, and second, Hami did not lie far away from the Chinese border, which the Ming court attempted to keep under strong control throughout the century. Hami was then not just a city through which envoys were coming and

[278] From the acknowledgments in Rossabi's dissertation, it turns out that both Fletcher and Serruys provided him with some necessary sources. Nonetheless, it must be noted that Rossabi in his dissertation (*Ibid.*: 24) disagrees with Fletcher saying that "Rulers of the petty oasis states on Ming China's Central Asian periphery gladly complied with the tributary formalities. Tribute missions were a lucrative business, and there was always the hope (usually unfounded) that Ming overlordship would carry with it some degree of protection as well" (Fletcher 1968: 208). Rossabi's disagreement suggests that Fletcher should be regarded as one of the proponents of the tribute theory. Yet, Fletcher's aforementioned remarkable standpoint concerning the gap between the ideal way of ruling and realpolitik behaviour suggests that he was (at least) not completely following all the tenets of the tribute theory.

[279] The author of this book managed to obtain a copy of Rossabi's dissertation through Kyoto University Library.

[280] *Ibid.*: 13.

going, but it also provided the Chinese court with vital information on the political conditions in Central Asia.[281] Rossabi points out that the Chinese court had surprisingly accurate information on Central Asian conditions, training Chinese experts on these regions, and that the Chinese *did* obtain useful and necessary items of goods from the foreigners. This challenges the 'traditional' view that the Chinese did not have commercial interests in their relationship with the foreigners. Rossabi points to that even in the second half of the century, when the official Chinese standpoint changed to reducing these foreign contacts as much as possible, Chinese merchants, eunuchs and local officials evaded the regulations and continued to pursue trade with Central Asia.[282]

Rossabi outlines his findings in thirteen points to show the inadequateness of the tribute theory. These points are briefly presented below:[283]

1. The early Ming emperors initiated contacts with Hami and Central Asia, and dispatched embassies,[284] even to remote cities, in order to stimulate these cities to send tribute. Yongle pursued trade for horses both on the northwestern and northeastern borders. Three succeeding emperors after Yongle followed him in doing so too, up to the attack of Esen in 1449.[285]
2. The Chinese did not use trade merely as a means of political control. It was very rare that the Chinese court decided to stop trading at the border in order to control the nomads.[286]
3. It is an incorrect view that the Chinese did not obtain useful goods from such interactions. The tribute embassies brought horses, camels, animal pelts, jade, Mohammedan blue, sal ammoniac,[287] knives, etc., which were very valuable items to the court. As for

[281] Military intelligence was a vital issue in Sino–foreign relations during Ming times. See Section 1.3 in Chapter One.

[282] Rossabi mainly follows chronological order in his dissertation, but he devotes separate chapters to describe the tribute theory and its early critiques, the economic relations between China and Central Asia, as well as the characteristic features of the tea–horse trade between the Chinese and the nomads.

[283] *Ibid.*: 322–326.

[284] Especially Yongle.

[285] With the phrase 'early Ming China', Rossabi appears to refer to the period up to 1449 (the time of Esen's attack) and not up to 1435, as Dreyer suggests, whereafter the Mongol heritage of the early Ming times disappears sharply.

[286] At this point, Rossabi quotes T. C. Lin (1936), who asserted that the economic dependence of the people at the border areas was a well-known fact in the Chinese court, which attempted to make an effective use of it.

[287] It is a rare mineral that is composed of ammonium chloride.

animals, lions, leopards, elephants, etc., which were not considered truly useful items were brought only rarely and always together with other essential goods.

4. The tribute system itself *was* a kind of trade, in which the goods exchanged were agreeable to both parties.[288]
5. It was possible for the Chinese court to maintain a favourable balance in trade with the foreigners in early Ming China, when the economy was strong. The court had access to paper money, tea, as well as silk and satin fabrics at relatively cheap prices, and it was not burdensome for the court to offer them as 'return presents' to the tribute-bearers. This favourable balance in trade started to fade only in the second half of the century, when the Ming economy was already weakening.
6. Monopolising contacts with the foreigners[289] secured profits for the Chinese court. It is questionable that the Chinese would not have been after profit in early Ming times.
7. The court disdained commerce in public, but in reality it seemed to be eager for certain items. Chinese officials who spoke against trading with the nomads from the second half of the century did so not because of some Confucian sense of morals, but because of a desire to warn against unfavourable trade.[290]
8. The government was contemptuous of its own merchants, but it did not hesitate to make use of them when it was necessary. For instance, in the case when the government was not able to transport tea to the horse fairs at the northwestern border, it asked for the help of Chinese merchants. This is also a sign that the Chinese court regarded trade as highly important, and they even gave some concession to Chinese merchants in return for their help. Nonetheless, there are reports about illegal contacts between Chinese and foreign merchants too, which could not have been carried out without the involvement of governmental officials

[288] At this point, Rossabi's standpoint is to be regarded as a different conclusion from that of Serruys, who refuted Krader's standpoint referring to a mutual exchange within the tribute system.

[289] That is to say, not permitting Chinese merchants to trade with foreigners freely.

[290] It is interesting to compare Rossabi's standpoint with the Chinese official Yang Jisheng's text addressed in Serruys' study. Yang, in the sixteenth century, warned that the tribute system itself was worse than the trade at the border fairs, since, whereas the latter was at least profitable, the former was not. As mentioned in Subsection 2.2.2 of this chapter, Yang's assertion seems to have escaped Serruys' attention when describing the attitudes of the Chinese officials in general.

behind the scenes.[291]

9. Various groups such as merchants, eunuchs and local officials pursued trade actively. They did not seem to be disdainful of it. Instead, they appeared to increase commercial contacts with Central Asia. Therefore, it is not clear why they did not attempt to unite and change the traditional disdain of commerce.
10. Hami was of great importance both politically and economically. Besides military intelligence, it also provided the Chinese court with horses.
11. Yongle's treatment of Shāhrukh as an equal ruler raises the question whether other Ming rulers behaved like Yongle.[292]
12. In sum, economic motives played important role in China's foreign policy, and this challenges the view of an isolationist policy asserted in the tribute theory.
13. Finally, the Chinese court was well-informed about the political and economic conditions in Central Asia. Such information came from Chinese envoys, the people of Hami, local officials and perhaps even Chinese merchants who traded with Central Asian people.

The outline above highlights that Rossabi does not criticise the tribute theory by re-investigating the conditions in the Qing times, but he, by choosing fifteenth-century Sino–Central Asian relations as his case study, refutes its generalisation for the whole Chinese history. Consequently, Rossabi uses a different stage of East Asian history to disprove the assertions of the tribute theory. Nonetheless, Rossabi admits that the tribute theory seems to be correct in showing the traditional Chinese view of Sino–foreign contacts, but he argues that there was an obvious difference between the ideal form and real conditions. As he says: "China's eagerness to trade with other nations, though simultaneously masked by contempt for this commerce, must be considered in any study of Chinese foreign affairs, particularly during the Ming".[293] Rossabi's assertion, however, also raises the question of whether the tribute theory

[291] As was pointed to in Serruys' study in Subsection 2.2.2 of this chapter, these illegal contacts reveal the real conditions, in which the government was not capable of keeping the foreign contacts under their total control.
[292] This point obviously refers to Fletcher's study.
[293] *Ibid.*: 326.

could be challenged on the field it was born, that is through a re-investigation of the Qing conditions.[294]

Rossabi in a separate paper focused on Ming China's relations with Hami[295] exclusively, in which he re-asserts that China's policy toward Hami challenges the traditional view that China intended to restrict its contacts with foreign states. He points out that China kept Hami under strong control during the fifteenth century, which started to weaken only towards the end of the century due to the worsening financial and military conditions of Ming China. The Ming court attempted both to use Hami as a buffer zone against foreign attacks and to protect the trade routes to the west. Furthermore, the court was also eager to educate experts on Central Asian conditions such as Chen Cheng in early Ming times, as well as Ma Wensheng 馬文升 and Xu Jin 許進 at the end of the century. There were trained specialists in the various languages spoken in Hami at the *Siyiguan* and the *Huitongguan*. Rossabi's last point in this paper is of high importance. He asserts that "Ming policy toward Hami reveals a realism about the 'Other,' which must, in part, derive from the *realpolitik* of the Mongol era".[296] This assertion shows that the Mongol influence in

[294] Rossabi's dissertation of 1970 was followed by an edition of eleven separate studies, each study written by a different author, which also aimed at revealing the inaccurateness of the tribute theory. This book that was a result of a conference held in 1978 was edited by Rossabi and published in 1983. This conference was a sort of response to the book edited by Fairbank and published in 1968 (*The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*). As was mentioned in Subsection 2.2.2 of this chapter, the Fairbank volume contains studies focusing on Sino–foreign relations during the time of the Qing dynasty. Rossabi's edition challenges the views in the Fairbank volume, however, not by choosing fifteenth-century conditions, but mainly the time of the Song dynasty instead. The reason for choosing Song times lies in that the Rossabi edition intended to seek a historical stage when the power of China and its foreign neighbours were rather equal. As the title – *China Among Equals* – of the Rossabi volume suggests, China became so weak by the time of the Southern Song period (1127–1279) that its position can be regarded as equal to its neighbours. Rossabi seems to assume that the behaviour pattern of a country in a situation where it is so powerful that no neighbouring country can actually threaten its military or economic power must be different from when these neighbouring threats are real. Rossabi also intended to edit a book of studies to address China's behaviour over a period of time when China's power was not far above that of its neighbours. The traditional Chinese tribute system referred to a normative ideology of inequality, which, however, must have been challenged when China was unable to address its neighbours from an outmost superior position.

[295] It is an oasis city from ancient times. Other names are Qumul or Qomul in Uighur.

[296] See Rossabi 1997: 97.

the early Ming times did not completely fade away after 1435, not even after 1449, but it continued to be present up to the end of the fifteenth century.

What makes the studies of Fletcher and Rossabi particular is that both of them turn to Sino–Central Asian relations in the fifteenth century – a historical stage that appears to be highly remarkable and significant in the studies of Sino–foreign contacts.

After Fletcher and Rossabi, two further studies on the Timurid–Ming relations appeared in the Western literature. One was the study of Charlotte von Verschuer in 1981, and the other one was the study of Ralph Kauz. Of the two studies, it is the latter which devotes a book-length research to this subject, and which is of the highest importance to the research on Timurid–Ming relations. In contrast, Verschuer's paper appears to be a brief outline of the early Timurid–Ming contacts rather than a systematic study of the subject.

Verschuer's paper is to be regarded as a kind of miscellaneous study with a brief outline of the tributary and commercial aspects of the early Timurid–Ming period.[297] She addresses the characteristic features of the tribute system in general, as well as the particular characteristics of early Ming China's relationship with Timur. She mentions the political significance of the tribute system from the viewpoint of military defence in order to 'buy peace' from the 'barbarians', while on the other hand, she also mentions the imperial interest in commercial contacts with foreigners. Although, Verschuer seems to be correct to refer to different aspects of the relations, she does not go into a deeper analysis of how these aspects are related to each other. She seems to be contented with showing that although foreign rulers were treated within the tribute system as vassals of China, there were two exceptions over this general rule in early Ming times: Japan and Timur's empire.[298] Verschuer also gives a list of the embassies from 1387 to 1420 sent between Samarqand, Herat, Beshbaliq and China, and also makes translations from the *Taizu shilu* 太祖實録 and the *Mingshi*[299] about these embassies.

[297] Verschuer consulted the works of not only Western scholars, but also some Japanese and Chinese researchers. She makes a parallel between these works, with regard to Timur's presumable attitude to China. However, she only devotes two brief notes to this.

[298] Verschuer reckons that the embassies sent from Central Asia to China at the end of the fourteenth century may have been just fake tribute embassies that were led by Central Asian merchants (1981: 64).

[299] Verschuer also gives a translation of the biography of Fu An in the *Mingshi*.

Ralph Kauz gives a rather new approach to the research of the Timurid–Ming relationship. He devotes a whole book to the subject and suggests that the two empires eventually had a great possibility to form a political constellation in the early fifteenth century – though this, of course, did not come to pass in the end. Kauz intended to explore the reasons why the close initial contacts between the two empires came to grief finally. His book basically follows a chronological order of the historical process of the two empires, with two supplementary chapters on Central Asian people in Chinese service and immigrants from Samarqand to China. However, the basic questions he intended to find answers to centred on: who were the main actors in decision making, to what degree were the foreign policies within the two empires united, and what factors determined the development of their foreign policies.[300]

Kauz's intention to address the possible formation of a strong degree of political constellation between the two empires[301] does not refer to the time of the late fourteenth century, the time of Timur and Hongwu, but to the period between the death of Timur in 1405 and the death of Yongle in 1424. It is Shāhrukh on the Timurid side and the Yongle emperor on the Chinese side in whose (overlapping) reigns the two empires had the possibility of forming a strong political constellation. Kauz argues that despite the slight clash caused by the letter of 1412 by Yongle and the reply letter by Shāhrukh, the contacts proved to be so fruitful and strong, both politically and commercially,[302] that it resulted in "a form of political coexistence that might as well be called almost modern and even an ally partnership between the two state formations",[303] even though – as Kauz asserts – they cannot be studied with modern political methods within the context of nation-states. The pragmatical flexibility of the two rulers[304] promoted the development of strong bilateral connections. Kauz argues that if the development of the initial strong contacts could have kept going on in the form of a political constellation, it could have led to

[300] Kauz uses the *Mingshilu* as the main source for his study.

[301] As he says, "zwischen der 'Mittelmacht' Timuridenreich und der 'Grossmacht' Ming-Reich" [between the 'middle power' Timurid Empire and the 'great power' Ming Empire] (Kauz 2005: 1).

[302] Kauz claims that these political and commercial contacts were reciprocal (*Ibid*.: 10). This shows that Kauz is inclined to deny the standpoint of the tribute theory saying that the Chinese were never after commercial gains.

[303] Originally "eine fast schon modern zu nennende Form politischer Koexistenz und sogar Bündnispartnerschaft zwischen beiden 'Staatsgebilden'" (*Ibid.*: 5).

[304] That is to say, the fact that both rulers were able to put aside ideologies – Islam in the case of Shāhrukh, and Confucianism in the case of Yongle – in order to realise their realpolitik purposes.

a concerted confrontation of the ambitious European states by the Timurids and Ming China. However, the change in the internal affairs in Ming China after Yongle's death caused a turn away from the initial 'expansive' Chinese foreign policy, and this promoted the decline in Timurid–Ming relations. As Kauz asserts, there was only one political attempt from the Chinese side to seek an alliance with the Timurids in the second half of the fifteenth century. It was in 1457 when the emperor, once captured by Esen in 1449, tried to reinforce China's defensive strength by making allies – albeit unsuccessfully in the end.[305]

Kauz also points to the complexity of Timurid–Ming relations, by referring to their commercial, political, military and cultural aspects. Kauz argues that these aspects were eventually present in Chinese history, but one of them was always dominant over a certain period of time. Roughly, it seems as if it is the political aspect which was dominant up to the middle of the fifteenth century in the case of the Timurid–Ming contacts, whereas commercial aspects seem more important from the second half of the century on. The cultural angle was always just a secondary phenomenon accompanying the political and commercial aspects.[306] Taking a closer look, however, Kauz points to the fact that at the time of the founders of the two empires, the legitimacy of their rule was an essential issue for both Timur and Hongwu, and that they tried to find a potential supporter in the other.[307] Furthermore, Kauz also argues that the embassies sent from Timur to China were based on political interests, i.e., finding out the internal conditions of China (spying), rather than for commercial gain. The Yongle emperor, however, was interested in finding allies against the Mongols, therefore he was eager to initiate contacts with the Timurids. Besides this political motivation, commercial interest was another important factor.[308] Nonetheless, Shāhrukh, for whom the Mongols were a potential theoretical enemy rather than a real one, appeared to lay more emphasis on the commercial aspect of the contacts with the Chinese, alongside some presumable cultural interests

[305] See Section 1.2 in Chapter One.

[306] This seems to be the reason why Kauz refers to politics and commerce in the title of his book.

[307] That is to say, Timur attempted to legitimise his power by making good contacts with China, while Hongwu, facing a similar problem, tried to find supporters even in remote lands through the tribute system in order to reinforce his position. It led to a kind of partnership, at least in the beginning. It was certainly without a mutual recognition as equal, and it is also highly possible that neither of these two rulers were aware of the other's concern about his own legitimacy.

[308] However, it is not easy to decide which of the two aspects were more significant for Yongle after all.

too.[309] After Yongle's death, however, the political aspect of the Timurid–Ming relations faded away on the Chinese side, except for the unsuccessful Chinese embassy of 1457. The Chinese court took a rather defensive policy instead of following Yongle's former active foreign policy. The reason for this shift in policy was partly due to the huge economic extravagance during Yongle's time, and partly due to the Tumu incident in 1449.[310] This led to a rather one-sided relationship: Central Asian embassies kept coming to China with the disguised yet obvious intention for trade. The Chinese envoys that had played a significant role as mediators in the first half of the fifteenth century disappeared from the second half of the century, and only Central Asian merchants remained as mediators of these contacts. The rulers in both empires could enjoy less and less power in decision making, and this was even more obvious in the case of the Timurid Empire due to a high degree of decentralisation of power.[311] This decentralisation in the Timurid Empire was accelerated by the political events and disunity following Ulugh Beg's death. On the Chinese side,[312] the emperors after Yongle could no longer enjoy the same degree of power in political decision making as Hongwu and Yongle could.

[309] Here, Kauz may refer to the idea that although Shāhrukh, just like Yongle, was flexible enough to put aside ideological dogmas for political gains, he was also a devoted Muslim in the end, who may have intended to spread Islam not just to the east towards China, but also within China's borders. In order to do so, it seemed to be necessary to maintain a good relationship with China that allowed him to send dervishes with the embassies coming from Central Asia. Nonetheless, it is not known how much influence this might have made on the spread of Islam.

[310] Nonetheless, as for the change in China's foreign policy, one should also not forget about the fact that after 1435 there was a Confucian revival (see Section 1.2 in Chapter One).

[311] "Bei den Timuriden sind vor allem die Provinzgouverneure, Prinzen und Emire von Bedeutung, die teilweise eine von der 'Zentrale' in Herat fast unabhängigen Außenpolitik und in noch höherem Maße unabhängigen Außenhandel betrieben" [In the case of the Timurids, the province governours, princes and *amirs* were of importance, they partly pursued a foreign policy almost independent of the 'centre' in Herat, as well as, to an even greater extent, independent foreign trade] (*Ibid.*: 250).

[312] Although it was the emperor and the court that made the final decision: "Immerhin gab es für die Eunuchen und Beamten zahlreiche Mittel – Berichte, Eingaben und natürlich vertrauliche Beratungen –, um diesen Entscheidungsprozeß zu beeinflussen" [nonetheless, there were numerous means for the eunuchs and officials – reports, submissions and of course confidential consultations – to influence this decision making process] (*Ibid.*: 251).

Nonetheless, as for the reasons for the break in the development of the initial vibrant contacts, Kauz's comment at the end of his work[313] is to be regarded as highly important. He asserts that internal problems within the two empires hindered the development and continuity of the initial contacts, and that specific structures within both empires, such as the lack of an independent stratum of merchants, etc., limited the potential deepening of the relationship.[314] Here, Kauz must refer to the lack of independent merchants in China, since there was no similar problem on the Timurid side. China kept its merchants under strict control, even though there were reports about illicit contacts between Chinese and foreign merchants. Kauz's noteworthy comment sheds light upon the possibility of a presumably totally different development of Sino–foreign relations, the outcome of which is however hard to envisage.[315]

Kauz's academic contribution to the research of the Timurid–Ming relationship is enormous. He carried out a book-length systematic analysis on the matter, focusing on the Timurid Empire in Central Asia. At this point, Rossabi's work is different from that of Kauz, since although Rossabi himself discusses the Timurid Empire too, his main focus is to disprove the tribute theory, by choosing Central Asia and Hami as a case study.

2.4 Summary and general assessment

Western studies related to Sino–Timurid relations can be divided into those addressing Timurid–Ming relations directly, and those contributing to the research of the two empires in an indirect way.

Works that deal directly with Timurid–Ming contacts are not many in number. In chronological order, the first work is the translation of Persian

[313] See *Ibid.*: 258.

[314] That is, the potential within the interactions between the two empires in the early days.

[315] There are two other important notes in Kauz's work that have to be mentioned. One is that although neither the remaining Chinese texts nor the Timurid sources are sufficient in details, it can be assumed that both the Timurids and Ming China were well informed about each other's internal conditions (*Ibid.*: 251–252.). The other refers to the fact that although China chose a defensive policy in the second half of the fifteenth century, it still remained tolerant towards foreign envoys, some of whom were even accepted and employed in the *Jinyiwei* 錦衣衛 (Imperial Bodyguard), where they could be put under close control (*Ibid.*: 255).

texts undertaken by William Chambers,[316] who also gave a brief explanation of the Timurid–Ming historical background. Although he did not create any theoretical standpoint, these initial translations made him the first published Western scholar working on the study of the Timurids and Ming China. The first Western scholar to describe Timurid–Ming Chinese diplomatic contacts was Edgar Blochet,[317] who argued that both Timur and Shāhrukh considered themselves vassals of China. Although Blochet's theory was challenged later, Western studies of Timurid–Ming Chinese relations were interrupted for half a century after him. Lucien Bouvat devoted only a few pages to Timurid–Ming contacts, in which he eventually repeated Blochet's standpoint saying that the Timurids were vassals of China.[318]

In the 1960s, Joseph F. Fletcher[319] addressed the subject again and immediately drew attention to the significance of studying Timurid–Ming relations within their wider context. His was a case study, in which he – by using a politico-cultural approach – pointed out the flexibility of the Chinese emperors' realpolitik-type decisions, and thus he appears to refute the tribute theory proposed by John K. Fairbank and others. Fletcher's study displays a certain level of theory building, though he makes no attempt to use his findings in the construction of a (more) elaborate theoretical framework.

Morris Rossabi's dissertation[320] challenges the tribute theory more directly and also in a much more elaborate way than Fletcher does, and proposes a revolutionary new theory in the field of Sino–foreign relations. In doing so, Rossabi uses a primarily economic approach. Rossabi's whole dissertation is devoted to refuting the standpoint of the tribute theory, which states that contacts with the 'barbarians' produced no commercial gains for China, and that these contacts were rather irksome. This challenged the 'traditional' view that the Chinese did not have commercial interests in their contacts with foreign people.

After Fletcher and Rossabi, there are two more Western studies that directly address Timurid–Ming relations, written by Charlotte von Verschuer and by Ralph Kauz respectively. Verschuer's work[321] is a broad study including a brief description of Sino–foreign relations, a list of the embassies between 1387 and 1420, as well as translations of some

[316] Chambers 1787.
[317] Blochet 1910.
[318] Bouvat 1927: 30–31 and 84–87.
[319] Fletcher 1968.
[320] Rossabi 1973 [1970].
[321] Verschuer 1981.

Chinese texts about these embassies. Using a politico-cultural approach, Verschuer argues that during early Ming times, among China's neighbours only Japan and the Timurid Empire could not be regarded as vassals of China. Nonetheless, she does so by briefly consulting previous studies rather than carrying out a detailed analysis.

Ralph Kauz[322] also addresses the Timurid–Ming relations through a politico-economic approach, but with a somewhat greater emphasis on politics. This may be explained by the fact that Kauz does not wish to challenge the tribute theory per se. Instead, he appears to accept that the economic aspects of Timurid–Ming interaction were reciprocal. Kauz points to the complexity of Timurid–Ming relations, paying equal attention to the commercial, political (military), as well as cultural aspects. He argues that these aspects always coexisted, but one of them was usually more dominant than the other two at different periods of time. Roughly speaking, it is the political aspect that had been dominant up to the middle of the fifteenth century, when it came to be replaced by the commercial aspect. Kauz argues that the cultural aspect was always of secondary importance, behind politics and commerce.[323]

As for the level of theory building of these studies, the works of Rossabi and Kauz can be considered the most elaborate.

As for the studies on Chen Cheng and his travel accounts, the works of Rossabi[324] and Felicia Hecker[325] are of particular significance. Rossabi's work on two Ming envoys is devoted to refuting the tribute theory, thus the level of theory building goes beyond a simple description. As for Hecker, although she does not go into a deep theoretical analysis, she gives a careful discussion of the Chen Cheng accounts, which provides inspiration for further studies employing anthropological approaches.[326]

Finally, Emil Bretschneider[327] and Henry Serruys[328] have also made significant contributions to the understanding of Timurid–Ming relations – albeit in different ways. Bretschneider made numerous translations from Chinese official texts on Central Asian cities and customs, though he never attempted to analyse his findings in a theoretical framework. On the other hand, although Serruys can be considered one of the proponents

[322] Kauz 2005.
[323] *Ibid.*: 2, 6.
[324] Rossabi 1976 and 1983b.
[325] Hecker 1993.
[326] For further studies about Chen Cheng, see Richtsfeld 1985, Pankratov 1998, Karimova 2003, Sally K. Church 2010 and Michel Didier 2012.
[327] Bretschneider 1876–1877 and 1910.
[328] Serruys 1967 and 1975.

of the tribute theory, he emphasised the discrepancy between the ideal way of ruling and everyday reality. Serruys' approach appears to be more anthropological, making it similar to that of Hecker.

In short, the studies of Timurid–Ming historical relations in the Western literature, regardless of their small number, reveal significant aspects of these relations. Among other things, they suggest that the study of this topic should be situated in the wider context of Sino–Central Asian (Sino–foreign) relations, both in terms of period and geographical space.

CHAPTER THREE

JAPANESE RESEARCH ON TIMURID–MING RELATIONS

This chapter discusses Japanese language studies on Timurid–Ming relations and makes clear their significance and academic contribution to the research on Timurid–Ming historical contacts. From a thematic point of view, the studies for review in this chapter can be divided into three groups. First, there are two studies that address solely Timurid–Ming relations directly, while another – though it mainly discusses Timur – touches upon Timur's war plan against China. Second, there are four studies dealing with either the travel accounts of Chen Cheng or that of Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh, and another addressing the life of Fu An.[329] Finally, there are two further studies that are considered to be significant within the research on Timurid–Ming relations, although they are not directly connected to this subject matter. These two studies address the relationship of the Timurids with the Chinggisid dynasty and give a glimpse into Japanese academic standpoints concerning Timurid–Chinggisid relations.

Strictly speaking, there are seven papers written by Japanese scholars on Timurid–Ming relations, and very surprisingly, the majority of these papers were completed before World War II. This not only shows an early Japanese scholarly interest in Timurid–Ming research, but also throws light upon its early decline, well before a similar interest arose in the West. This early Japanese academic interest and its decline are in fact strongly connected with the development of Japanese academic research on Central Asia in the twentieth century. Therefore, it is useful to touch upon the development of Japanese research on (Islamic) Central Asia briefly, before starting to review the studies mentioned above. This brief detour is followed by a short description of Timurid research in Japan and

[329] Fu An was the representative of the mission sent by the Chinese court to Timur in the year of 1395, which was then said to be detained later by Timur. See Section 1.3 in Chapter One.

its characteristic features. The studies detailed above are addressed after this.[330]

In accordance with this, the present chapter is divided into five parts. The first part is devoted to a general description of the academic background of Japanese research on Central Asia in a broad sense, as well as Timurid research in Japan in a narrow sense. The individual studies on Timurid–Ming relations are addressed in the second, third and fourth parts. The second part addresses studies dealing with Timurid–Ming relations directly. The third part is divided into three further sections and discussies studies on three different envoys (Chen Cheng, Naqqāsh and Fu An). In the fourth part, three studies on the Timurid–Chinggisid relationship are addressed, whereas the fifth part summarises the Japanese scholarly achievements discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Research on Central Asia and the Timurid dynasty

The following section discusses the development of Japanese research on Central Asia as well as on the Timurid dynasty in two separate subsections.

[330] There is also another reason why it can be considered necessary to give a short outline of this academic development. That is to say, although Japanese scholars have produced a huge number of studies on Asia in various fields, including Central Asia, they, except for a few translations into international languages, tended to publish their research results in Japanese. Hattori Shirō 服部四郎 wrote about this problem as early as in the mid-1970s in the following way: "Inasmuch as Japanese scholars specialized in the subjects of Asia usually write only in Japanese, the written form of which is extremely difficult for foreigners to learn, the Oriental studies in Japan are almost unknown to the Western world" (Hattori 1975: 187). Although this situation started to change slowly after the 1980s, Mano Eiji 間野英二, a prominent representative of Japanese research on Central Asia, asserts that "(Japanese) researchers must utilize the collected materials and attempt to write papers in an internationally acceptable language" (Mano 2002: 43). There seems to be various reasons why Japanese scholars did not attempt to publish their scholarly achievements in foreign languages – a phenomenon that deserves a profound research. In recent years, however, there is a tendency of Japanese scholars publishing in foreign languages too.

3.1.1 Japanese research on Central Asia

Takasaki Jikidō 高崎直道's review on Central Asian research in Japan gives a glimpse into the development of Japanese academic interest in this subject matter. Takasaki briefly outlines the development of Central Asian research until the early twentieth century and points to the fact that in Japan there had been no real interest in Central Asia before the nineteenth century, and especially not before modernisation began in Japan during the Meiji period (1868–1912). According to Takasaki, the first signs for a general rise of interest in the region appeared after the first opium war in China, which aroused a high level of political concern among Japanese leaders at those times. After modernisation had become a key slogan in the second half of the century, Japanese scholars started to study the history, geography and culture of Central Asia with academic methods introduced from Western scholarship. Miyake Yonekichi 三宅米吉 at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century argued that the roots of Japanese culture should be searched for in Central Asia.[331] Miyake's argument – albeit not a dominant standpoint at those times – may have inspired the remarkable motivation behind what became an active research focus on Central Asia.

Enoki Kazuo 榎一雄 (1981) divides the studies on Central Asia published in the Meiji period into two categories. One refers to those that deal with current conditions, whereas the other refers to historical studies. The former can be divided into two sub-categories. The first group includes studies using both classical Chinese works and Western studies. In the second category, there are surveys and studies carried out on the spot in Central Asia, for example those of Nishi Tokujirō 西徳二郎, Fukushima Masayasu 福島正安, Hino Tsuyoshi 日野強, Enomoto Takeaki 榎本武揚 and Ōtani Kōzui 大谷光瑞. Enoki argues that all of these expeditions were closely connected to observing the political situation in continental Asia in order to take effective countermeasures against Russian and British expansion. Ōtani himself wished to find possible ways to build a new Asia under Japanese leadership, and this increased British interest in his journeys, arousing their suspicions that Ōtani was after military intelligence. Nonetheless, as can be concluded from Enoki's review, the early historical studies on Central Asia came into existence not as a result of such political interests, but because of academic interests.[332]

[331] See Enoki 1981: 114.

[332] For instance, Nishi Tokujirō published an academic work titled *Chū-Ajia kiji* (Accounts on Central Asia), whereas Miyake Yonekichi (mentioned above)

Enoki also points to that whereas Japanese scholars up to World War Two mainly used classical Chinese texts to study the Western Region (Xiyu), this situation changed after the war, when studies mainly focused on source materials written by Central Asian natives.[333]

Along with an increasing interest among Japanese scholars in using Central Asian sources from the 1970s, Shinmen Yasushi 新免康 in the early 1990s called for improvements in Central Asian research in Japan. First of all, he concluded that there were only a few studies on Central Asia that used nonhistorical approaches. Fields such as cultural anthropolgy, literature, linguistics, religious study, etc. had not been utilised sufficiently, therefore he claimed that "the research outside of the field of history lags frightfully behind for a number of reasons".[334] Moreover, he drew attention to the fact that the system for international information exchange and mutual use of source materials among the international scholarship was still in its infancy, and thus stressed the significance of creating a common international database that could be used easily by scholars to deepen interpersonal relationships and to improve academic communication.

Mano Eiji 間野英二 (2002) provides an even more detailed outline and critique of the development of Japanese research on Central Asia. He asserts that the turning point in the 1970s for using original Central Asian documents rather than classical Chinese ones can be connected to Japan's post-war student movement. A heavy criticism appeared during the student movement which stated that "Inner Asian studies should focus on Inner Asian materials".[335] According to Mano, the dominant focus on historical contacts was a result of the dependence on Chinese sources

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stressed the possibility of a Central Asian origin of Japanese culture (Miyake 1915: 28).

[333] Enoki's statement about the dominance of studies on source materials, however, needs to be corrected in the sense that the use of source materials different from Chinese ones did not mean an abrupt change after the war, but a rather slow shift. Moreover, the expansion of language knowledge of Japanese scholars regarding Central Asian languages did not take place before the 1970s and 1980s, and this questions the dominant use of Central Asian over Chinese source materials before the 1970s (see Mano 2002 and Kubo 2003).

[334] Shinmen 1993: 58. According to Shinmen, studies aiming to explore Central Asia's socio-economic conditions are very scarce and insufficient. Nevertheless, Shinmen, in a separate section of the same paper, also reported about studies that were done in the field of sociology, such as the studies on Central Asian societies by Hori Sunao 堀直 and Sanada Yasushi 真田安. They used the methodology of urban studies as well as the network theory. These works can be regarded as different from the traditional historical approach.

[335] Mano 2002: 37.

within Inner Asian studies. However, the economic development in Japan from the 1960s, as well as the fact that it became possible to carry out research studies using original materials found in Inner Asia helped bring about a new direction in these studies. With the improving research conditions, the international research network became gradually broader, and the number of young scholars started to increase. As a result, various periods and regions which had not been studied before started to be investigated from the 1970s. However, there are two points here, as Mano asserts, that deserve attention and improvement.

One concerns the question of academic over-specialisation, that is to say, researchers tending to focus on their own research fields in a narrow sense, and thus creating an obstacle to comprehensive studies of Central Asia. Mano argues that this tendency is still continuing due to the fact that the number of source languages increased so much that scholars have difficulties in studying materials from fields different from their own. Mano draws attention to the need for the writing of a comprehensive history in a "legitimate discipline" in order to find out "what is coherent in Inner Asian history"[336] and to understand the position of Inner Asia, both in world history and in present times.[337] The second problem according to Mano refers to that Japanese scholars have 'over-collected' materials from abroad, that is to say, there are a plenty of materials that are (just) 'collected' not 'studied', and thus, it may seem useful to slow down the speed of collection and to undertake diligent analyses of those already collected.

Finally, Mano also stresses the need to enhance contemporary Japanese research at the international level, by pointing out that studies that

[336] *Ibid.*: 42.

[337] Nonetheless, Mano not only points to the need for the comprehensive study on Inner Asia, but he himself made attempts to go in this direction too, by looking at the north–south interrelationship between nomadic ('north') and settled peoples ('south') in the history of Central Asia. According to Mano, despite the obvious differences in lifestyle between nomadic and settled peoples, they constantly held close and mutually complementary codependent – though in a politico-cultural sense often subordinate – relationship (see Mano 1977 for details). Mano asserts that the theory of this north–south interrelationship refers to pre-modern conditions only, before the decline of nomadic societies took place. Therefore, he suggests that a new comprehensive history should be undertaken. Nonetheless, it must be noted that this 'north–south interrelationship' appears as a kind of counter-standpoint to that of Mori Masao 護雅夫, who stressed the east–west relationship of Central Asian peoples through the corridor (the Silk Road) of Central Asia. Also see Shinmen 1993: 44 for details.

are only known and recognised in Japan can no longer be considered significant.

3.1.2 Research studies on the Timurid dynasty in Japan

Japanese research on Central Asia was dominated by the use of Chinese sources up to the 1970s. The question here is when exactly Japanese research on the Timurid Empire came into existence and how it developed thereafter.

Mano Eiji asserts that Inner Asian studies in Japan up to the 1970s can be firstly characterised by their reliance on Chinese documents such as the *Zhengshi* 正史,[338] as well as descriptions and information related to Inner Asia in travelogues. Secondly, Inner Asian studies in Japan for a long time focused on specific periods and regions which could provide numerous Chinese sources about Inner Asian relations such as those up to the Tang 唐, Liao 遼, Jin 金 and Yuan dynasty, as well as the early Qing dynasty. Thereby, "periods where China and Inner Asian contacts are relatively minimal such as Inner Asia in the fifteenth century under the empire of Timur"[339] were left beyond attention. Nonetheless, although no major studies were produced in Japan about fifteenth-century Inner Asia *per se* up to the 1970s, it must be noted that the unique (political and economic) relationship between China and the Timurid Empire in the early fifteenth century raised the level of academic interest within the Japanese scholarship – even though to a limited degree – at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Kubo Kazuyuki 久保一之 points out, it is surprising to see that during the time of a dominant usage of Chinese primary sources for the research of Central Asia, there were also scholars such as Fukazawa Keikichi 深沢鏸吉 and Haneda Tōru 羽田亨, who both searched for sources other than those of Chinese origin.[340] More surprisingly, both of these scholars wrote studies concerning the Timurid Empire as well. Thus, although the use of Chinese materials used to be dominant, there were also scholars who attempted to find other sources than the Chinese ones, and this led to the beginning of Timurid research in Japan as early as in the 1910s.

[338] The Twenty Four Official Histories of China.
[339] Mano 2002: 35.
[340] Nonetheless, as Kubo asserts, Fukazawa and Haneda did not have access to the Turkic and Persian original texts, so they had to use Western translations instead.

Hans Robert Roemer and Andō Shirō 安藤志郎 give an outline of the Japanese research of the Timurids in a joint work (1989) and provide a roughly two-page-long description of the content of each of the selected studies. Their work is very significant, since this was the first attempt to summarise Japanese academic achievements regarding research on the Timurid dynasty. They list thirty papers[341] at the beginning of their work, fifteen of which are introduced in detail. They limit their comments to studies that deal with Timur and his descendants, as well as their activities in Central Asia and Asia Minor. Their purpose with this work was to give a general but targeted review of the Japanese studies on the subject in a well-defined dimension. On the other hand, they did not aim to provide systematic analyses of these achievements. They argue that the need to give an outline of these Japanese studies lies in the fact that although it is not rare that the studies of Japanese scholars are translated into foreign languages, this is not true in the case of works in the field of Timurid research. Therefore, Roemer and Andō undertook this task to fill in this gap. Roemer and Andō note that the specific feature of Japanese research on Central Asia lies in its east–west perspective ("Blickrichtung"), an attribute which is the polar opposite to the west–east viewing direction of Western research.[342] This comment is highly significant.[343]

[341] Published between 1910 and 1988.

[342] As Roemer and Andō suggest, "Diese Tendenz verraten schon die ersten Zentral– und Vorderasien gewidmeten Arbeiten, geographisch und vielleicht auch politisch orientierte Reiseberichte des 19. Jahrhunderts, gewissermaßen Vorläufer der späteren philologisch–historisch ausgerichteten Untersuchungen. Ihr ost–westliches bestimmtes Gepräge is unverkennbar. Man findet diesen Trend ebenso in den am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts einsetzenden turkologischen Studien, in denen er sich indessen noch mit einer weiteren Eigentümlichkeit verbindet, nämlich mit dem Zurückgehen auf die Angaben der chinesischen Quellen" [This trend can already be seen in the first works devoted to Central and Southwest Asia, geographically and perhaps also politically oriented nineteenth-century travel stories, to some extent forerunners of later philological–historical oriented studies. Its east–west oriented characteristic is unmistakable. One can also find the same trend in Turkological studies emerging at the beginning of the twentieth century, which meanwhile was also joined to another characteristic, namely, the tracing back to information from Chinese sources] (1989: 90).

[343] The 'east–west' directionality of the Japanese scholarship argued by Hans Robert Roemer and Andō Shirō, as a contrast to the 'west–east' orientation of the Western scholarship, is also worthy being in detailed discussion within the wider 'Orientalism' discourse triggered by Edward Said. However, since Said's post-colonial theory (referring to Orientalism) has been strongly criticised by scholars such as Stanley Kurtz, Bernard Lewis, and Robert Irwin (especially by the latter,

Nonetheless, though the work of Roemer and Andō is extremely important, there are two points that must be mentioned. One is that the list in their work does not seem complete,[344] probably due to the reduction to a well-defined field for the purpose of their work.[345] Secondly, there have been several new works published in the field of the Timurid research since 1988, therefore, naturally Roemer and Andō's work is incomplete.

The boom in the Timurid research is reported also in the review of the aforementioned Shinmen Yasushi. He states that there has been "a growing popularity in the study of the Timurid".[346] This is also supported by the statement of Kubo Kazuyuki, who asserts that "the research on the Mongol and Timurid period has almost reached the international level".[347] These studies, among other things, address Timur's geneology, his military and diplomatic achievements, the emirs' activities in the Timurid Empire, the relationship of the Timurids and the Chinggisids, certain institutional aspects of the Timurid dynasty, the capital Herat, and other subjects.

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who wrote a monograph denying Said's 'Orientalism'), such a discussion would rather divert the reader's attention from the primary goal of this book. Regrettably, Roemer and Andō themselves do not provide detailed description on the 'east–west/west–east' parallel of the Japanese and Western scholarship either that could serve as a base for further discussion within the problematic context of Orientalism and Imperialism.

[344] That is to say, it does not seem to list all the studies concerning Timurid research in Japan.

[345] As for the study of the Timurid–Ming relationship, they mention the study of Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定 on the Naqqāsh embassy to China (1947), however, they do not mention the study of Mitsui Takayuki 満井隆行, who also made a study of the Naqqāsh embassy (1937). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that among the fifteen studies of the thirty in total that are introduced in detail, there is only one paper that is related to the subject matter of this book, that is the paper of Haneda published in 1912.

[346] Shinmen 1993: 43.

[347] Kubo 2003: 139. Kubo also mentions that after World War II, research on Islamic Central Asia stagnated for more than a decade, which is well reflected in the Japanese research of the Timurids too, since almost nothing was published on this subject during that time.

3.2 Japanese studies on the Timurid–Ming relationship

Stemming from the aforementioned development of Japanese research on the Timurid dynasty, it may not be surprising to see why there was an early interest in Timurid–Ming relations in Japan well before the rise of academic interest in the West in the late 1960s. The rise of early Japanese interest and its post-war decline may lie in the east–west orientation of the development of Japanese scholarship, contrary to that in the West. It is also remarkable that the second study in chronological order of the Timurid research in Japan, by Haneda Tōru, addresses the Timurid–Ming relationship.

Two years after Fukazawa Keikichi published his study about Babur, the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India, Haneda published a paper in 1912 regarding the relationship between Timur and Yongle. In 1913, he wrote another paper devoted to the life of Timur himself, and in this study Haneda touched upon the Timur–Yongle relationship again. These two studies[348] show that Haneda felt very interested in this subject, and that he was eager to draw attention in Japan to both Timur's life and his relationship with China. It is also interesting that he published his paper about the relationship between the two emperors somewhat earlier than his work on Timur's life. The reason why he became so interested in this subject may lie in that Timur's war plan against China seemed to stimulate Haneda's fantasy, saying that "if we give Timur a few more years to live, a captivating period of major turmoil may have occurred in the history of East Asia".[349] Nonetheless, Haneda was not interested in attempting to describe what may have happened if Timur had been able to fight the Chinese, but he rather attempted to grasp the reasons that led Timur to come up with a war plan against China. In doing so, Haneda touches upon the question of Timur's relationship with both the Chinggisid dynasty and Islam, Timur's personal characteristics, as well as the embassy of Fu An sent by the Chinese emperor, Hongwu, in 1395, as well as other matters.

[348] Not to mention that these studies were published close to each other in time.

[349] Haneda 1913: 189. Another reason for drawing attention to Timur's life is that, as is written in the preface of the same study, Central Asia lies at a great distance from Japan, and to introduce Timur's life briefly to Japanese scholars does not appear to be an easy task.

The title of the study published in 1912 is "Timur and the Yongle emperor: Timur's plan to conquer China". In the preface of this work, Haneda makes clear that although this event is well-known in world history, there had been no real study made in this subject before. As he says, although the ruling periods of Timur and Yongle overlapped for only two to three years, this brief time is to be considered a specific distinct period.

Haneda starts his quest for the historical reasons that led to Timur's war plan from 1387 when Timur sent the first tribute embassy to the Chinese court until the time he detained the Fu An embassy. Haneda asserts that Timur's attitude to China changed during the time he was sending tribute, thus it can be assumed that Haneda regarded the detainment of the Fu An embassy as a result of the process of Timur's changing attitude rather than as the moment, as well as the reason, for this change. Apparently, Haneda is not aware of the letter exchange between the two rulers[350] that seemed to be the trigger of Timur's decision to detain the Fu An embassy and to stop sending tribute to the Chinese court. Despite the absence of this important information, Haneda attempts to explain the changing attitude of Timur partly by his Islamic faith and by his relationship with the Chinggisid dynasty. According to Haneda, both of these must have pushed Timur to take a hostile attitude against China, and it was only a matter of time before Timur took the opportunity to attack. Haneda argues that Timur eventually intended to attack China as early as 1396, and he held a grand discussion about which country to attack first in the name of Islam: India or China – though the result of this discussion is not known.[351] According to Haneda, what can be known is that Timur as early as 1396 started to gather soldiers in his empire for a major attack,[352] which must have led him to the detain of the Fu An embassy. According to Haneda, Timur's intention to attack China was hindered by Pīr Muḥammad, who asked for the help of his grandfather, Timur, while fighting in Northern India. Thereafter, Timur became busy at the western end of Asia. Due to the actions of his son, Mīrānshāh, there was a rebellion in Iran, which Timur intended to suppress himself. This was also the time when Timur learned about the death of Hongwu.

Haneda mentions the travel account of Ruy González de Clavijo, in which one can find further proof of Timur's hostile attitude towards China, through him having ordered the Chinese envoys to take the lowest

[350] The letter allegedly written by Timur to Hongwu, as well as Hongwu's response to him, addressing Timur as a vassal of China (see Section 1.3 in Chapter One).
[351] Haneda refers to the work *Tuzak-i Timuri* in his argument above.
[352] Here, Haneda refers to the *Ẓafarnāma*.

seat, below other envoys.[353] According to Haneda, although Clavijo could not possibly understand much about the relationship of the two empires, his accounts can be regarded as reliable.

Haneda describes the careful way Timur prepared his attack on China until he finally decided to launch it. He also mentions that there is little known about the reaction of the Chinese court to Timur's attack. He asserts that the only thing that can be said for sure regarding the Chinese reaction is that the emperor ordered Song Sheng 宋晟 to prepare for the attack.

In summary, Haneda in this study talks mainly about Timur rather than Timur and Yongle together. This suggests that the subtitle related to Timur's war plans is more focused upon than the relationship between the two rulers. Nonetheless, there is not much to say about the relationship between Timur and Yongle indeed.

Haneda's other study published in 1913 is entitled "Timur the Great King". This title is misleading, since neither was Timur a king, nor did Haneda himself say that Timur was such. The reason for giving this title to his paper may lie in the fact that, according to Haneda, some historians call Timur a great king. Unfortunately, Haneda does not make clear who these historians are.[354] Another reason for this may be a kind of respect from Haneda to Timur, whom he also calls a hero.[355] This rhetorical expression may be responsible for the somewhat misleading title.[356]

This study is much easier to read than the former one in the sense that the study of 1913 contains well-distinguished sections (or chapters), while the study of 1912 lacks any form of subdivision. Haneda first gives a short preface about the choice of subject discussed above. In the second part, he introduces Timur's genealogy based on the *Tuzak-i Timuri*,[357] saying that Timur was a descendent of Chagatai Khan's minister (Qarachar Noyan), and this became useful for Timur to legitimise his rule over Transoxiana. In the third section, Haneda gives an outline of the historical background of Transoxiana. For the fourth and fifth sections, he describes the way Timur became the ruler of Transoxiana by 1370. In the sixth part, Haneda writes briefly about Timur's achievements, such as the fact that Samarqand was blooming and famous under his rule, as well as about

[353] See Section 1.3 in Chapter One.
[354] *Ibid.*: 191.
[355] Just as he also calls Yongle a hero.
[356] In fact, Haneda says that "Timur never called himself a king, or as it is called in Turkic and Mongolian, a *khan*" (*Ibid.*: 187).
[357] The autobiography of Timur, which is a record of his life from the age of seven to his death.

Timur's name (meaning 'iron') and his titles. In the seventh part, Haneda writes about Timur's war plan against China. In the eighth and ninth part, he gives a description of Timur's personal character,[358] whereas in the tenth and eleventh part, Haneda describes the relationship between Timur and Chinggis Khan, as well as Timur's religious belief. These two aspects are strongly related to each other. Finally, in the twelfth part, Haneda points to the significance of the Timurid dynasty within the history of Turkic peoples.

As can be seen from above, Haneda attempted to give a rather general description of Timur from various aspects of his life. Among the subjects Haneda discusses, strictly speaking, it is the seventh, tenth and eleventh parts that can be considered related to the subject of this book. Nonetheless, the content of the seventh part about the war plan against China is more or less the same as that of the study published in 1912. Here, Haneda stresses again that Timur actually intended to attack China as early as 1397, but his plan was hindered by a series of proclaims in other regions of his empire. He also describes the cautious way Timur got prepared for his march against China. The tenth and eleventh part, however, explores something new about Haneda's evaluation of Timur's attitude to China through his analysis of Timur's Islamic belief and his relationship with Chinggis Khan. Haneda makes clear that Mongol traditions and Islamic belief co-existed in Timur's time, and this raises the question to what degree Timur can be regarded as a devout Muslim after all. Haneda asserts that although Timur in the remaining source materials is described as a devout Muslim, it is not easy to assert that he was really such. Haneda argues that Chinggis Khan must have stood as a model for Timur, wishing to restore the Mongol Empire. In accordance with this, the Islamic belief may have been just a tool for Timur to move the people of his empire to launch a war against an infidel country like China.[359] Haneda says that

[358] Here Haneda draws attention to the point that Timur was not just a talented albeit cruel person, and a determined and steadfast ruler in his decisions, but also a sensitive man, who was able to express his pain over having lost his mother and his son Jahāngīr, etc. Moreover, he was not just an ambitious conqueror destroying numerous cities, but also a civilised ruler, who was able to *build* too. As Haneda asserts, Timur was so versatile, showing so many different aspects of his personality that it is rather difficult to characterise him with one word.

[359] Haneda writes about that the *yasa* (Mongol law code) was still used and consulted in Timur's time, which may have hurt the feelings of many Muslims among the people.

> I would like to pay attention to (the question of) how Timur used Islam. In order to unify Islamic people, it goes without saying that it is necessary to take on Islamic belief and use it for protection of those people, which fact did not escape the attention of Timur either (…) He (Timur) used this religion without any regret.[360]

Behind this description, Haneda seems to suggest that Timur had a sort of opportunistic character.

In summary, although Haneda does not seem to know about the exchange of letters between Timur and Hongwu in the middle of the 1390s, his two studies, by making a (much) more detailed study addressing the Timurid–Ming contacts than that of Edgar Blochet in 1910, not only gave great service to the Japanese scholarship, but can also be regarded as internationally significant.

About a quarter of a century after Haneda made his pioneering work and laid the foundations for further research, Murakami Masatsugu 村上正二 took upon the task to write a more general view of the relationship between the Timurids and Ming China. Murakami's article is more elaborate than that of Haneda and provides more information about the subject. However, just like Haneda's paper, it also attempts to reveal some aspects of this relationship rather than giving a firm conclusion.[361] Yet, there are remarkable places in his article that help the reader understand Murakami's standpoint regarding Timurid–Ming relations. Moreover, Murakami goes beyond the scope of the time period addressed by Haneda in 1912, since he not only wrote about the events between 1387 and 1405, but also the time immediately after the establishment of the Ming Empire in 1368, and on throughout the fifteenth century.[362] Consequently, Murakami's paper embraces a much longer period of time than that of Haneda.

Murakami divides his article into three parts. In the first one, he describes the period between 1368 and the year of Timur's death (1405). He first writes about the fact that the route to Central Asia was not easy to travel through for more than a decade due to the fighting between the newly established Ming Empire and the remnants of the (Mongol) Yuan army. According to Murakami, Ming China took an isolationist policy, but due to Confucian ideology, China also needed to send envoys at the same time to proclaim Chinese legitimacy to rule over the world 'under

[360] *Ibid.*: 192.
[361] As Murakami stresses in the preface, this is not a study (with a strong conclusion), but rather a general overview of the subject.
[362] Nonetheless the time after Yongle's death is described briefly.

Heaven'.[363] Moreover, Murakami asserts that Timur was a devout Muslim, who established a Muslim empire, but for whom Chinggis Khan stood as a model too. He does not raise the question of Timur's possibly opportunistic attitude towards Islam. Instead, he writes about Timur's wars in Inner Asia, along with the first embassy sent to China at the end of the 1380s. He also mentions the letter allegedly sent by Timur in the middle of the 1390s to the Chinese emperor, and Murakami concludes – based on Timur's attitude to China later – that it could not have been sent from Timur himself. By doing so, Murakami added important information to that already discussed about the early Timurid–Ming relationship, which was missing from Haneda's work. Moreover, Murakami even asserts that Timur from the very beginning may not have been interested in trading with China, but rather in getting prepared for a possible attack against it.

Nonetheless, Murakami makes a remarkable mistake over the relationship between Timur and Moghulistan. He asserts that Timur's campaigns against Moghulistan were so successful that the latter eventually had to take a subordinate position, becoming a kind of vassal of Timur. Murakami assumes that Kuan Che 寬徹 (an envoy sent from China in 1391) was detained by the ruler of Beshbaliq under Timur's order. Murakami concludes this from that as Fu An was detained by Timur in Samarqand too, the two events were connected, assuming that a subordinate relationship existed between Timur and the Moghuls.[364]

In the second part of his article, Murakami mentions briefly both Chen Cheng's three successful missions to Central Asia (among which the first was the most significant one), and the embassy from Shāhrukh in 1419. Murakami describes the relationship after Timur's death in the following way:

> As for the relationship between the Timurid dynasty during the time of Shāhrukh and Ming China under Yongle's reign, lots of embassies were sent by each to the other, and the relationship was developing smoothly due to the peaceful and friendly attitude of Shāhrukh and the empire-building policy of Yongle.[365]

[363] Murakami did not touch upon the possible aspects of a strong Mongolian heritage in early Ming times. For him, early Ming China seemed to be an abrupt return to Confucian values and a sharp rejection of the former (Mongol) Yuan dynasty.

[364] However, there are two things that Murakami seems to have misinterpreted here. One is that Timur did not succeed in making Moghulistan a vassal, and secondly, Kuan Che was not sent to Samarqand, but just to Beshbaliq.

[365] Murakami 1938: 53.

As for the period after Yongle's death, the relationship with Central Asia became gradually burdensome for the Chinese, although they continued providing abundant gifts in return to the tribute received from Central Asia. Murakami points to the fact that the tribute–gift relationship was not just a formality that had to be done due to China's Confucian foreign policy, but had commercial advantages too. These commercial advantages, however, were only unilateral, that is to say, the tribute–gift contacts were profitable for the Timurids, but not for the Chinese. As Murakami says,

> it [the tribute–gift contact] was not on behalf of getting commercial gains for the Ming Chinese court, (…) but it was enough for the Chinese to keep the 'barbarians' under control by showing the prestige of their own country (China) with an arrogant attitude.[366]

In the final part of his study, Murakami asserts that the aspects of the Timurid–Ming relationship were mainly political in the beginning, but then gradually turned into a commercial relationship favouring (primarily) the nomads, in which Central Asian merchants played an increasingly significant role.

By touching upon the commercial and political aspects of the Timurid–Ming relationship, Murakami achieved more than Haneda. Haneda was more interested in exploring the reasons for Timur's war plan against China rather than giving a general conclusion about the relationship of the two empires. Murakami's standpoint seems to be similar to that of the so-called tribute theory later in the 1940s. Unfortunately, it is not possible to know whether Murakami consulted the studies of John K. Fairbank, Tingfu Tsiang and others on this subject, since there is no reference in his article to their works. Yet, Murakami's work is to be placed into the context of the tribute theory. The remarkable point here is that whereas Fairbank chose the Qing dynasty as a case study, Murakami chose the Timurid–Ming relationship. In other words, Murakami's article preceded the rise of Western academic interest in this subject, well before Joseph F. Fletcher and Morris Rossabi wrote their first critiques in this matter.

[366] *Ibid.*: 55.

3.3 Japanese research on Chinese and Timurid envoys

Besides the three studies on the relationship of the Timurid and Chinese empires above, Japanese scholars in the early twentieth century turned their attention to the travel accounts of Chen Cheng on the Chinese side, as well as to that of Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh on the Timurid side, and produced two papers on each. This interest in the two envoys' accounts seems to be embedded into the context of the research of Haneda and Murakami, and this sheds light upon a more general interest within the Japanese scholarship of the times. Moreover, well after World War II, the study of Fu An in the late 1970s also points to the continuance of this interest, though this study seems to be a kind of exception with regards to the timing of its publication.

3.3.1 Two studies about Chen Cheng

There are two studies addressing Chen Cheng and his travel notes. One was written by Kanda Kiichirō 神田喜一郎 and published in 1927, and the other one was written by Mitsui Takayuki 満井隆行 and was published in 1938.

Kanda attempts to give a general view of Chen Cheng's life and his travel account, and in doing so, Kanda also points to some doubtful elements within the Chinese sources, as well as in Bretschneider's work (*Mediæval Researches*). First of all, he asserts that the data about Chen Cheng's life in the sources does not provide a detailed picture due to the lack of a biography. Yet, Kanda managed to gather information from other Chinese sources, mainly from the *Mingshi*. He makes clear that the *Ji'anfu zhi* 吉安府志[367] was wrong in saying that Chen Cheng had been appointed as an Assistant Administration Commissioner of Guangdong 廣東 before he started his career in the Western Region in the service of the Chinese court. Kanda points out that Chen Cheng's promotion to this title took place right after his second mission to Central Asia. He also proves that the chapter on Tibet in the *Mingshi* is not correct in saying that Chen Cheng was also sent there. Kanda shows that the person who was sent to Tibet was a certain Deng Cheng 鄧誠, whose family name

[367] That being the *Report of Ji'an Prefecture*.

was written incorrectly by the compilers of the *Mingshi* in the eighteenth century as Chen 陳, probably due to taking Deng Cheng as Chen Cheng. Kanda also asserts that it was a Chinese habit to escort the embassies from Central Asia by Chinese envoys back to their homelands, just as it was in the case of Chen Cheng's embassy. That is to say, the purpose of the mission to Central Asia in 1414, in which Chen Cheng also took part, was nothing but to accompany the Timurid embassy back to Herat. Moreover, he also points out that Chen Cheng was not the leader of that embassy, but held a secondary position to Li Da.

Kanda also payed attention to the places that the Chen Cheng embassy went through, and raised the question whether the places listed in the Bukhara chapter in the *Mingshi* were complete. He argued that three more places must be added to the seventeen places listed in the Bukhara chapter: Shiraz, Andegan and Kashgar. Kanda makes clear that Emil Bretschneider in his work (*Mediæval Researches*) lists those places in the very same order as is done in the Bukhara chapter, therefore Kanda concludes that Bretschneider simply copied the list from the chapter into his book.[368] This conclusion may be correct. However, Kanda seems to be wrong in assuming that Bretschneider aimed at making an order of the visited places. There is no reference in Bretschneider's work for this. Bretschneider only lists these visited places, without intending to make a precise order for them. Moreover, as for Shiraz, Kanda seems to be wrong again, since Chen Cheng did indeed go through a place called Shiraz, however it was not the same Shiraz as Kanda thought, but the name of another place close to Samarqand.[369]

The fact that Kanda focused on places that were visited by Chen Cheng is not surprising, since one should not forget about that the original account of Chen Cheng had not been found before 1934 in the library of a Mr. Li in Tianjin. Kanda was aware of the lack of this original account, saying that "until the original book is found, there is nothing to do but to consult the texts of the *Yehuobian* 野獲編[370] and the *Shilu* 實録".[371] Moreover, by referring to the assessment of the surviving texts of Chen Cheng's accounts in the *Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書,[372] Kanda argues

[368] Bretschneider 1910, Vol. 2: 147.
[369] See Mitsui below.
[370] This work (1619) contains different notes in both historical and political issues up to the late Wanli 萬歷 period in Ming times. See Franke 1968: 26 and 102 for details.
[371] Kanda 1927: 83.
[372] The Imperial Catalogue.

that Chinese scholars in Qing times were not really aware of the significance of the Chen Cheng accounts.

Mitsui Takayuki in his study of 1938 addresses the same subject as Kanda, however, he focuses on the places visited by Chen Cheng, his route to Herat, etc., rather than other aspects. Therefore his work is more limited in its scope than that of Kanda. Nonetheless, there are at least three points in his study that are similar to, or even identical with, that of Kanda. Firstly, Mitsui asserts that the purpose of the Chen Cheng embassy in 1414 was only to escort the Timurid tribute-bearers back to Herat, which was a usual custom at those times. Nonetheless, Mitsui adds that the purpose of this embassy was not to go and search for the whereabouts of the former Chinese emperor, Jianwen, after he was defeated in the war with the (future) Yongle emperor.[373] This statement cannot be found in Kanda's work. Secondly, Mitsui refers to the work of Bretschneider too, by raising the very same question about the order of the places Chen Cheng visited. Mitsui suffers a similar misunderstanding about Bretschneider's intention to Kanda's, assuming that Bretschneider intended to list those places in the order Chen Cheng visited them.[374] Thirdly, by referring to the *Sikuquanshu*, Mitsui at the end of his study also notes that the Chinese scholars in Qing times did not have an accurate knowledge of the Chen Cheng mission. Nonetheless, Mitsui here refers to a different statement[375] found in the *Sikuquanshu*, which misjudges the geographical distance Chen Cheng took from the Chinese border.[376]

Mitsui raises four questions about the sequence of the places visited in order to correct Bretschneider's alleged mistake. These questions refer to Yanze 鹽澤 (Lopnor), Yanghikend and Sairam, the way from Shāhrukhiyya to Samarqand, and the route after Samarqand. Mitsui also gives a list of the sequence of the places the Chen Cheng embassy went through, which eventually reflects the route of the embassy much more accurately. Mitsui points out that the embassy did go through Shiraz, as it was suggested by Kanda, however, Mitsui also makes clear that Shiraz

[373] See Section 1.2 and Section 1.3 in Chapter One.

[374] As mentioned above, this assumption does not seem to be correct.

[375] Different from the one cited by Kanda, which referred to the underestimation of Qing scholars of the contents of the Chen Cheng account.

[376] According to the statement found by Mitsui in the *Sikuquanshu*, Chen Cheng did not get further from the Jiayuguan 嘉峪關 (the gate to the Western Region) than one or two thousand Chinese miles (*li* 里). If so, this distance is too short indeed. (The length of one Chinese mile varied considerably throughout the Chinese history, but it is generally understood to be about one-third of an Imperial mile or about 500 meters in Ming times. Michel Didier suggests 400 meters [2012: 15].)

here is not the city in Iran, but it is just a small village near Samarqand.[377] Moreover, Mitsui also points out that the Chen Cheng embassy went through the Iron Gate,[378] and in doing so, he also deciphered two missing characters in Chen Cheng's accounts.[379] However, it is interesting that Mitsui apparently did not know that Chen Cheng's original accounts had been discovered only four years before he published his paper in 1938. Mitsui does not mention this great discovery at all in this work.

3.3.2 Two studies about the Naqqāsh account

Mitsui Takayuki (as mentioned above) not only dealt with the Chen Cheng embassy, but also wrote a paper on the Naqqāsh account. This paper was published a year before the aforementioned study. These two studies show Mitsui's strong interest in the subject.

Mitsui entitles the paper of 1937 "About Shādi Khwāja's mission to the Ming court" after the leader of this embassy.[380] He starts his paper from the point in time when the Timurid embassy got close to the Chinese borders and encountered Chinese officials.[381] Mitsui's paper is to be considered important in two regards. First, he attempts to identify the meaning of certain Chinese words in the Naqqāsh account, and second, he reveals his standpoint on the Timurid–Chinese relationship.

Among other things, Mitsui questions Henry Yule's translation of the word 'Daji' in the Naqqāsh account as 'daren' 大人.[382] Mitsui, although he does not exclude the possibility of such an interpretation, suggests that 'Daji' might refer to the Chinese word 'tongshi' 通事[383] rather than

[377] Mitsui makes this correction without referring to Kanda's mistake.

[378] It is a defile between Balkh and Samarqand that breaks up the mountains between the Hisar range south and the Amu Darya. The name originates from the belief that in the past there was a real gate supported by iron in the defile.

[379] Mitsui 1938: 607.

[380] Mitsui does not reveal what source material he used for his study. He only mentions Étienne M. Quatremère's French translation, as well as Yule's English version based on Quatremère's work. It can be assumed that Mitsui could not consult the original text, but used one of either of these translations, possibly the latter (Yule).

[381] That is to say, he does not address the whole account, but just the part in which the embassy finally got into contact with the Chinese. Mitsui intended to describe the Timurid–Chinese relationship based on Naqqāsh's travel account in this study.

[382] Meaning 'great man' in Chinese, which used to be a greeting form for noble persons in ancient China.

[383] Meaning 'interpreter clerk' (Hucker 1995: 555).

'daren'. Mitsui makes this conclusion from the contents of the job of the Daji described in the Naqqāsh account.[384] As for the meaning of the word 'Dangchi', Mitsui gives two possible solutions. One is 'tongzhi' 同知,[385] while the other one is 'qianshi' 僉事.[386] Moreover, Mitsui also points out that Yule mistakenly referred the location of the Persian word 'Karaul' to both the Jiayu 嘉峪 Pass and the Yumen 玉門 Pass at the same time.[387] Finally, Mitsui asserts that Yule was wrong in identifying the word 'Sejnin' with 'siren' 寺人,[388] assuming that this word must refer to 'sheren' 舍人.[389]

Beyond the linguistic discussion above, Mitsui gives the following description of the Timurid–Chinese relationship at the beginning of his paper. Firstly, he refers to the letter of 1412 from Yongle to Shāhrukh, in which Yongle expresses his wish to keep the roads open between the two countries on behalf of commercial interests.[390] As Mitsui writes,

> it can be concluded that since gaining profits from the trade with China was an essential desire of Central Asian countries, Yongle's 'free tradism'[391] gave them a splendid opportunity (to do so).[392]

The phrase of 'free tradism' is a little misleading. In its first reading, it seems to refer to Yongle's intention for mutual profits from the tribute–gift contacts with Central Asia, or even unrestricted trade. However, this is not what Mitsui may mean by 'free tradism' here. Although Mitsui does not explain exactly what he means by this phrase, it can be concluded that 'free tradism' refers to a one-sided relationship: commercial benefits for the Central Asians, but not for the Chinese. As Mitsui asserts,

> the harmful (aspects) of western traffic were (two-fold): one was the (danger of) leaking secrets of information on defense, (while) the other one was the excessive economic burden of Ming (Chinese) people.[393]

Mitsui stresses that the Chinese were aware of these harmful aspects. Unfortunately Mitsui does not pay more attention to this 'free tradism' based

[384] As for 'Li-daji', Mitsui assumes that it may refer to the Chinese high official Li Da, but in the cases of 'Dah-daji' and 'Jan-daji', Mitsui was not able to discern to whom these two names might refer.
[385] Meaning 'associate administrator' (*Ibid.*: 553).
[386] Meaning 'senior assistant' or 'secretary to a board' (Mathews 1931: 126).
[387] It refers to the Jiayu Pass.
[388] Meaning 'eunuch' (Hucker 1995: 449).
[389] Meaning 'houseman' (*Ibid.*: 417).
[390] Mitsui uses Chambers' English translation of this letter here.
[391] In the original paper this is written as *jiyū bōekishugi* 自由貿易主義.
[392] Mitsui 1937: 33.
[393] *Ibid.*: 34.

on the letter of 1412, and does not attempt to give a new interpretation to the Timurid–Chinese contacts. Apparently, he is contented with placing this 'free tradism' into the context of Confucianism, assuming that Yongle just intended to use 'free trade' as a tool to keep Central Asian nomads from attacking China. By doing so, Mitsui shares a similar standpoint with the aforementioned Murakami Masatsugu, whose article on the Timurid–Ming relationship was published in the same year as that of Mitsui.

Moreover, Mitsui asserts that the Naqqāsh account is an important source on the relationship between the two empires, however, unfortunately, he fails to tell us exactly what can be learned from the Naqqāsh account. Nonetheless, he points out that a lot of Central Asian merchants pretended to be envoys sent by Central Asian rulers in order to enter Chinese territories for commercial profits, as well as the fact that there were numerous Central Asian people in Chinese service, whose diplomatic role should not be underestimated in early Ming times.

A decade later, Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定 (1947) addressed the Naqqāsh account again. Although he does not reveal his standpoint about the Timurid–Chinese relationship in general, he points out some new aspects of the relationship that had not been discussed before. Firstly, he makes clear that although Hongwu and Yongle had several features in common such as both being 'cruel' rulers, the two differed in their foreign policies. While Hongwu basically followed an isolationist policy, Yongle gave up his father's policy and opened the gates of China to the outer world. Miyazaki argues that by doing so, Yongle not only turned away from his father's standpoint, but he eventually returned to the ruling policy of the former Yuan dynasty. He points to that both Timur and Yongle were inheritors of the Mongol Empire, and it was just a matter of time before the two rulers turned against each other. Nonetheless, Miyazaki did not intend to discuss the expectable conflict between Timur and Yongle, since – as he said – Haneda had already examined this issue in his paper of 1912.[394] Therefore, Miyazaki intended to look at the period after Timur's death. Miyazaki points to that while Central Asian nomads were eager to obtain their desired Chinese goods, Yongle sent envoys to Central Asia in order to get information about that region, and by doing

[394] Nonetheless, Miyazaki makes two short comments about Timur. Firstly, Timur did not build a bridge over the Oxus in order to prevent the craftsmen taken from other regions escaping. Secondly, although Samarqand was flourishing under Timur, he preferred living in a tent outside the city rather than inside it, a habit which sheds light upon his nomadic personal character.

so, the Chinese court managed to become familiar with the conditions in Central Asia.

Miyazaki uses the Naqqāsh account as an indispensable source on Timurid–Chinese relations, in which he draws attention to that although the Naqqāsh embassy was treated well by the Chinese, contradictions between the two empires came to the surface when it came to greeting the Chinese emperor. Miyazaki points to the problematic 'kowtow'[395] here, the performance of which was refused by the Naqqāsh embassy. They did not carry out the complete 'kowtow', that is, they did not touch the floor with their foreheads. As Miyazaki writes, "Yongle, seeing the embassy of Shāhrukh not to carry out a full 'kowtow', was not rude to blame them for this".[396] However, when Yongle happened to fall from the horse that was brought to him as a gift from Shāhrukh, he ordered the punishment of the Naqqāsh embassy. Miyazaki assumes that the real reason for Yongle's anger and intention to punish the embassy was related to the lack of the full 'kowtow' after all.[397]

Furthermore, Miyazaki draws attention to the long time (five months) that the Naqqāsh embassy spent in Peking. He finds it curious why the embassy did not return to Central Asia for such a long time, which cannot be explained by saying that they were waiting for the end of winter, since winter did not last so long. Miyazaki assumes that the reason for this was either to get information about the conditions inside China, or a personal desire for commercial profits from trading with local Chinese merchants. It was not only Peking where the Naqqāsh embassy spent a longer time than seemed to be necessary, they also spent two months in Ganzhou 甘州 and one month in Suzhou 宿州. Miyazaki points to that the Chinese were financially in charge of treating the foreign embassies well, who, therefore, did not have any economic burden during their stay in China.[398]

[395] The meaning of 'kowtow' is explained in Section 1.3 of Chapter One.

[396] Miyazaki 1947: 46.

[397] The embassy finally managed to escape punishment by saying that the horse used to belong to Timur himself. Mitsui and Miyazaki both point to this event and state that it is impossible that the horse belonged to Timur because of the long years having passed since Timur's death. Miyazaki, however, assumes that to say that the horse used to belong to Timur must have been an acceptable excuse for Yongle.

[398] See Subsection 2.2.2 in Chapter Two. Miyazaki's standpoint precedes that of Henry Serruys by twenty years, who also describes in a similar way the stay of these foreign embassies.

3.3.3 Fu An's missions to Central Asia

In the 1970s, Enoki Kazuo continued the pre-war trend detailed above, by addressing Fu An's life, his missions to Central Asia, and making clear some important points about him. Although Enoki does not reveal his standpoint about the Timurid–Ming relationship, he mentions briefly in the preface of his study that in early Ming China,

> several missions were sent to Central Asia to establish friendly relations with, as well as to investigate the movements of, countries in this part of the world which had long been independent from the Yüan.[399]

The first of these missions was that of Zongle 宗泐 to Tibet and Nepal, the second was that of Kuan Che to Beshbaliq,[400] and the third was that of Fu An[401] to Samarqand.[402] Enoki asserts that as for the Kuan Che embassy, Bretschneider translated the texts in the *Mingshi* with commentaries, to which there is almost nothing to add. Enoki, who had previously written an article about Zongle, thus turned his attention to Fu An, and argued that there were three points that needed to be corrected in Bretschneider's approximately two-page-long description in the work *Mediæval Researches*.[403] Firstly, Enoki makes clear that the source of the text Bretschneider made use of could not be Book Nine, but the *Supplement*, Book Four of the *Yehuobian*. This inconsistency may be due to the fact that the edition which Bretschneider made reference to is actually not known. Secondly, Bretschneider seems to be careless in referring to Fu An as An or An Zhidao 志道, since the correct name is either Fu An or Fu Zhidao,[404] whereas a mixture of An and Zhidao as An Zhidao is not correct at all.[405] Thirdly, Enoki corrects Bretschneider's statement about

[399] Enoki 1977: 219.

[400] Enoki argues that Kuan Che was not sent to Samarqand originally, but just to Beshbaliq in 1391, and was then detained by the ruler there. By doing so, Enoki corrects the *Guangxu Xiangfuxian zhi* 光緒祥符縣志, which asserts that Fu An was actually sent to Samarqand in place of Kuan Che, who was stopped and kept in custody in Beshbaliq and therefore could not fulfill his alleged mission to the Timurid capital.

[401] Enoki questions Rossabi's assumption that Fu An served as an interpreter.

[402] Enoki assumes that it may have been the embassy of Chen Dewen that the Spanish ambassador Clavijo saw in the early fifteenth century in Timur's court, the members of which Timur humiliated by ordering them to take a lower seat than other envoys.

[403] Bretschneider 1910, Vol. 2: 144–145.

[404] This is another name of Fu An.

[405] Enoki argues that Bretschneider seems to be careless in the case of Chen Cheng too, in not referring to the *Yehuobian* which gives a short form of Chen Cheng's

the authorship of the *Xiyou shenglanshi* 西游勝覧詩. Bretschneider had asserted that it was written by Fu An, however, Enoki pointed out that it was just a collection of poems written by Fu An's friends.[406]

As for the missions of Fu An, Enoki makes clear the following points. First, the Hongwu emperor was looking for people who were willing to undertake missions to foreign countries, and Fu An was among the applicants who were eventually accepted. Second, Enoki argues that Fu An had six missions to Central Asia in total, among which the first turned out to be a thirteen-year-long absence from China due to Timur's detention of the Fu An embassy.[407] The other five missions were of 'normal' lengths, that is to say, usually two years away from China, of which the last took place in 1415–1416. Enoki here stresses that there was no seventh mission of Fu An to Central Asia, by referring to the incorrect statement of the *Mingshiqie* 明史竊,[408] the author of which miscalculated the sum of the years that Fu An spent in Central Asia. According to Enoki's calculation, Fu An spent twenty-three years in Central Asia altogether, while the *Mingshiqie* mentions twenty-two years. Enoki argues that this difference comes from the miscalculation of the author of the *Mingshiqie*, who must have thought that Fu An spent another nine years in Central Asia from 1415 when he was sent to Beshbaliq, and who presumably neglected Fu An's second, third, fourth and fifth mission.

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account. Instead, Bretschneider only refers to the *Mingshi* and the *Huangming dazhengji* 皇明大政紀.

[406] Enoki also mentions that this kind of mistake was made by not only Bretschneider, but also Kōda Rohan 幸田露伴 in his historical novel entitled *Unmei* 運命 (Fate), first published in 1919.

[407] By referring to the return to Samarqand of Central Asian merchants captured in the battle of 1388 by the Chinese (see Section 1.3 in Chapter One), Enoki argues that the Fu An embassy was actually not the first mission to Timur, but the second. However, it is questionable whether the return of those merchants to Central Asia can be regarded as the first official mission from the Chinese court to Timur. Consequently, this should not be viewed as such, since no signs for official contact building can be seen from the Chinese side this time.

[408] The work (1634) is a history of the Ming period through to the early Wanli period. See Franke 1968: 47 for details.

3.4 The relationship of the Chinggisid and Timurid dynasties

As was made clear above, there was a remarkable level of interest within pre-war Japanese academia on Timurid–Ming relations, however, this started fading after World War Two. With the decline of the dominance of using Chinese source materials, the subject of interest shifted from Central Asian–Chinese relations to purely Central Asian studies. As a result of this shift, scholars in Japan attempted to grasp and interpret the Timurid dynasty's relationship with the Chinggisid dynasty rather than with China. As was shown above, such attempts were made in pre-war Japan too, but the focus was mainly on the Timurid relationship with China. Below are two studies published in the 1990s that address the relationship between the Timurid and Chinggisid dynasties. Although this subject does not belong directly to the main focus of this book, they are worth being briefly addressed here.

Of these two studies, the first one was published in 1992, written by Mano Eiji, who apparently published the largest number of papers concerning the Timurids in Japan. The title of his study is "Chinggis Khan and Timur: their similarities and differences".[409] Mano starts his article with the (common) saying: "Chinggis Khan was destructive, while Timur was constructive". Although Mano is not sure about the origin of this saying, he argues that there must be something true to it. As for similarities, Mano refers to three major points. First, both Chinggis and Timur were of Mongol origin. In the case of Chinggis, this is obvious. As for Timur, Mano asserts that Timur was a descendent of Qarachar Noyan, who was a chieftain of the Barlas tribe, and who followed Chagatai Khan to Central Asia.[410]

Secondly, Chinggis Khan and Timur were both nomads, creating nomadic empires that were based on their charismatic personalities at the centre, therefore, unsurprisingly, their empires started to decline after

[409] Mano 1992: 148.

[410] Mano notes that Timur was aware of his Mongol origins, but never asserted that he was a Chinggisid descendent. Timur's refusal to use the title *khan* and his use of Chagatayid puppet *khans* in whose names he could rule, as well as the fact that he attempted to increase his connection to the Chinggisid dynasty by marriage, all show that he did not consider himself a descendent of Chinggis Khan.

their deaths.[411] Third, both rulers were cruel and brutal. Timur, for instance, killed between 90,000 and 100,000 people in Bagdad, 70,000 people in Isfahan, and 100,000 in India, while he also tortured people in Damascus, and built a tower from the heads of his beheaded enemies in Herat. In addition, both of them forcefully took numerous craftsmen, scholars, etc. from their homelands.

Besides these similarities, the two rulers differed from each other in the following two ways. First, they differed in how much they could understand the life and culture of the sedentary population. As Mano asserts, Chinggis Khan was a typical nomad in the sense that he did not really know much about the life of the settled people. There was not much opportunity for him to learn about these cities. The commercial caravans from China or Western Asia were not enough in number to make him know them deeply. However, this was different in the case of Timur, who spent his childhood near the city of Kesh. Timur's generation was different from the generation coming with Chagatai together to Central Asia a hundred years before. Though they were of Mongol origin, Timur's generation had abandoned Shamanism for Islam, they adopted a Turkic language, and they had an easy access to, and could learn about, the life and culture of Central Asian cities. Timur must have understood the economic and cultural significance of these cities that made him take an attitude to the sedentary population different from that of Chinggis Khan.

Secondly, while Chinggis Khan, due to his poor knowledge of the life of settled people, must have viewed these cities as places for looting only, Timur was rather constructive. Timur was cruel to those who opposed to him, however, he also paid attention to construction. Under his rule, cities such as Samarqand and Kesh experienced a flourishing period of construction. The reason for this constructive attitude was not only due to his understanding of urban life, but because he was also a Muslim ruler.

By comparing the two rulers, Mano concludes that the nomadic peoples' attitudes and behaviours may differ from each other according to their understanding about the life and culture of the sedentary population. Therefore, to make a comparison of the nomadic people living on the steppes and those who live near urban settlements is essential within the

[411] It must be added that while this was obvious in the case of Timur, after whose death the territory of the empire became smaller and smaller, in the case of Chinggis Khan, territorial expansion continued after his death, and the process of empire building certainly did not stop.

research of the history of nomads/semi-nomads like Chinggis and Timur, respectively.[412]

In 1996, Kawaguchi Takuji 川口琢司 published an interesting paper about the marital relationship of the Chinggisid and Timurid dynasties. He asserts that although there had been pioneers within this subject such as Vasily V. Barthold, Mano Eiji, John E. Woods, etc., no scholar had paid exclusive attention to this before. Kawaguchi investigated this relationship from the following three points. Firstly, he discussed the marital relations between the Chagatai *amirs* and the Chinggisid dynasty, secondly the Timurid dynasty with the Chinggisid dynasty, and finally the succession problems after Timur's death. He gave the following conclusion to this research. During the period of war among the Chagatai *amirs* in the middle of the fourteenth century, women from the Tarmashirin, Yisun Timur, and Gazan lineage married into tribes such as the Barlas, the Jalail, etc. At this time, there was only one marriage between the Timurids and the Chagatayids, that is, the marriage between Jahāngīr, Timur's first son, and Ruqayya.[413] However, after Timur seized power, the number of marriages between the Timurids and Chagatayids increased. Nonetheless, Timur did not just arrange marriages with the Chagatayids, but also with the Ögödey and Jöchi lines. In the majority of these marriages, Timurid men married Chinggisid women, while there was only one counter-example in which a Timurid woman married a Chinggisid man. All the four sons of Timur married Chinggisid women, thus the Timurid dynasty became related with the Chinggisids through many connections on the maternal side. This interwoven relationship between the two dynasties reached its peak during the time of Ulugh Beg, who married not only women from each of the Chagatay, Ögödey and Jöchi lineages, but also the daughters of Muḥammad Sulṭān and Khalīl Sulṭān. Consequently, Ulugh Beg managed to complete the process of these marital relations starting at the time Timur seized power over Transoxiana.

In the study of these marital relations above, Kawaguchi intends to show that Timur wanted to reinforce his power not only through conquest, but also marriages with the Chinggisid lines, and that this practice

[412] Although Mano does not reveal his theoretical standpoint within the research on Central Asia here, it can be assumed that his article above can be embedded into his grand theory on the north–south orientation of Central Asia, as opposed to Mori Masao's east–west orientation theory.

[413] Kawaguchi 1996: 18.

was continued by his successors too.[414] This active marriage policy with the Chinggisids raises the question how Mongol heritage and the new belief, Islam, could co-exist not only in an institutional sense, but also in the minds of the members of the Timurid dynasty. Horikawa Tōru 堀川徹, in his study published in 2000, argues that the political success of Timur was partly due to the fact that he could make use of Islam successfully. Although he was a Muslim, according to Horikawa, he was not a devout Muslim at all, but rather he used Islam as a political and religious tool for being able to rule over the population in his empire, the majority of which was Muslim.[415]

3.5 Summary and general assessment

As stated above, Japanese research on Timurid–Ming relations started somewhat earlier than in the West.[416] These works included articles on the aforementioned travel accounts by Chen Cheng, as well as studies on the account by Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh. Japanese researchers paid attention to these relationships much more intently in pre-war times than Western scholars, which, if pursued, could have led to fruitful results in theory building concerning Sino–Central Asian history. However, Japanese academic interest turned away from this subject after World War II. This is partly due to the fact that the proficiency of Japanese scholars in Central Asian languages started to improve from the 1970s, which resulted in a shift of interest to pre-modern Central Asian states themselves, and much less on their historical relations with China.[417] This shift, how-

[414] Kawaguchi describes this process in a very detailed way, but since it has little to do with the main theme of the present book, it is not introduced here in detail.

[415] Horikawa 2000: 222. Horikawa wrote a sixty-page-long study of the Chinggisid and Timurid empires in 2000, however, unfortunately, instead of making a systematic comparison between the two empires, he contended with discussing these two dynasties separately, without clarifying their relationship.

[416] Unless one considers William Chambers' translations (1787) as well as Edgar Blochet's brief discussion (1910) as the first ones.

[417] Another interesting feature of this shift in research interests is that some scholars, such as Haneda Tōru (1912 and 1913), Mitsui Takayuki (1937 and 1938) and Miyazaki Ichisada (1947) started making use of non-Chinese sources (European translations of Turkic and Persian original texts), which contrasted with the general focus on classical Chinese materials (Kubo 2003). Therefore, it can be asserted that Timurid–Ming research in Japan was rooted partly in an early interest

ever, is quite understandable if one takes a look at the student movement in post-war Japan, in which the demand for doing research on Central Asia using Central Asian sources instead of using Chinese materials was gradually growing. This growing demand apparently brought about the aforementioned change in this research field. It is also an interesting question of how much Mano Eiji's theoretical standpoint (the north–south orientation in the history of Central Asia) may have been both a result and a cause of this change at the same time. Nevertheless, putting a stress on the north–south orientation of Central Asian conditions would probably slow down research studies on the relationship between Central Asia and China, which would rather require a presumed east–west orientation.[418]

At the level of theory building, as well as the various approaches, pre-war Japanese historiography made a good start well before researchers in the West started paying attention to the specific features of Timurid–Ming relations. These first attempts to develop a higher level of analysis[419] (in terms of theory building) concerning the Timurid–Ming relationship can be observed in the works by Mitsui Takayuki[420] and Murakami Masatsugu.[421] Both of them attempted to describe the features of Timurid–Ming relations by pointing to their political and commercial

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in non-Chinese texts. The subjects of Haneda, Mitsui and Miyazaki, etc., however, fitted well into the primary academic interest in Chinese-related matters in pre-war Japan.

[418] Besides the factors that were mentioned in this book concerning the reasons for the turn away from post-war Japanese scholarship from classical Chinese sources towards Central Asian materials, *democratisation* played an important role in this turn away too. It can be considered that democratisation pertained to the change in scholarly attitude, meaning that languages that had been left beyond academic attention earlier (due to an imperialistic attitude of pre-war Japan toward Central Asian peoples) should be studied in the future. Japan's new political orientation towards America must also have served as a connected reason for the turn away from classical Chinese sources. Thus modernisation pertaining to the democratisation of the socio-political environment (and also to Japan's successful economic development) in post-war Japan contributed a lot to this change in scholarly attitude. Moreover, all this was accompanied by a growing public interest in Japan concerning the question of what is (and was) beyond China and Korea. The public interest in Central Asia derived from a general interest in the Silk Road in post-war Japan.

[419] 'Higher' here refers to the attempts to grasp the content and meaning of these relationships, instead of just reporting the existence of related Chinese and non-Chinese sources, or making translations of those classical texts, as was the case of Chambers and Bretschneider.

[420] Mitsui 1937 and 1938.

[421] Murakami 1938.

aspects. Murakami recognised that these early Timurid–Ming contacts were largely of political significance, while after Yongle's death, they became increasingly commercial. The fact that neither Mitsui nor Murakami attributed significance to commercial profits in the Chinese court's attitude to Central Asian nomads renders their theoretical standpoint similar to the tribute theory advanced by Fairbank and others, which excluded commercial interests on the Chinese side due to their Confucian disdain of trade. However, it is unclear to what extent the tribute theory might have influenced Mitsui and Murakami, since they make no reference to the works of Fairbank, Teng, Tsiang or others. Nonetheless, twenty-five years prior to Mitsui and Murakami, Haneda Tōru[422] had already written about the relationship between Timur and the Chinese court, and thus became one of the first scholars ever to address this subject. Haneda's significance lies in this fact, though he only focused on the question of what motivated Timur to attack China, instead of focusing on the broader characteristic features of Timurid–Ming contacts. However, it would be somewhat unfair to blame Haneda for this omission, since none of the scholars in the West had attempted to do (almost) any more than merely translating the sources which preceded his work. The interpretation of these contacts in an overall sense became the subject of later studies.

[422] Haneda 1912 and 1913.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHINESE RESEARCH ON TIMURID–MING RELATIONS

Among the three main academic literatures, Chinese scholars[423] have produced the most studies on Timurid–Ming relations. This may not be surprising, since Timurid–Ming contacts were a direct part of China's history. However, most of these studies have been published since the 1980s, and especially from the 1990s, which shows that the subject of the Timurids and Ming China was not central within Chinese academic studies in most of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, it does not mean that Chinese research on Timurid–Ming contacts started in the 1980s. The first study was published in the late 1930s right after the full texts of the Chen Cheng accounts were found in Tianjin in 1934. The finding of these accounts appears to be the trigger for the launch of modern Chinese research on this period. This points to a different origin from the roots of Japanese scholarly interest, which was at the same time interwoven with political interests in Central Asia during the Meiji era. Nonetheless, it is also different from the 'boom'[424] in Western studies, which was triggered by the reaction to the tribute theory.[425]

After a promising start for Chinese research between the 1930s and 1950s, there seems to have been no studies produced on Timurid–Ming contacts in the 1960s and 1970s. This was a break of more than twenty years in this research field. This break was, however, embedded in the general decline of social studies, along with the social turbulence, at those times. Nonetheless, in the new era (from 1979) hallmarked by Deng Xiaoping 邓小平's reforms, Chinese research on Timurid–Ming contacts

[423] 'Chinese scholars' here refers to the Chinese scholars of modern times.

[424] 'Boom' here does not refer to the number of Western studies, but to the production of studies with a high level of theoretical engagement (see Morris Rossabi, Joseph F. Fletcher and Ralph Kauz), instead of 'merely' the production of translations with some remarks, as William Chambers and Emil Bretschneider did.

[425] See Morris Rossabi, and also Joseph F. Fletcher. Fletcher was not 'attacking' the tribute theory directly, yet his study on the Timurid–Ming Chinese contacts implicitly has contrary implications for the tribute theory. See Section 2.3 in Chapter Two.

resumed, and the first study in this new era was published in 1980. Since that time, Chinese scholars have produced more studies than Western and Japanese scholars together.

Chinese studies can be divided into two main subject areas. The first one refers to the accounts of Chen Cheng and his life, as well as the experiences of other Chinese envoys, whereas the other pertains directly to Timurid–Ming contacts. Therefore, in accordance with this, Chinese studies are addressed here in two different sections. Moreover, just like in the previous chapters, the level of theory building of Chinese studies, together with the approaches used in them, is also discussed.

In this chapter, a range of studies[426] are addressed which mainly cover Chinese research on the Timurids and Ming China.[427] These studies are to be considered broadly representative of Chinese research on this subject. Nonetheless it must be noted that studies which are less known can be discovered from time to time. This may be due to the fact that since the 1990s, Chinese research on the contacts between the Timurids and China has been enjoying a certain renaissance. Besides an obvious scholarly interest in the subject, it may also have some indirect connection with the current political interest in Central Asian countries[428] – an interest that manifests itself in the (popular) image of China having a 'traditionally friendly and peaceful' relationship with Central Asia. It may also be worth noting that what could be seen a century ago in the case of Japan may be taking place in China today. That is to say, a political interest in Central Asia may also be promoting scholarly activity at least in an indirect way.[429]

[426] Including those on the Chen Cheng accounts.

[427] Unfortunately, the author of this book could not consult some studies like that of Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜, who examined the Chinese envoys sent to the Timurid Empire before Chen Cheng. Also see Section 4.2 in the present chapter. Nonetheless it must be noted that *The China Knowledge Resource Integrated Database* 中国知网 provides excellent online access to Chinese studies on this subject.

[428] As for contemporary Chinese political interest in Central Asia, see *Zhongguo yu Zhongya* 中国与中亚 (China and Central Asia) authored by Xue Jundu 薛君度 and Xing Guangcheng 邢广程.

[429] Chinese works on Central Asia both in modern and pre-modern times are usually discussed within the framework of the so-called Western Region (the Xiyu 西域 in Chinese). However, as Yu Taishan 余太山, the editor of the *Xiyu tongshi* 西域通史 (General History of the Western Region) notes, the geographical concept of the Xiyu is used in two different meanings. One refers to a broader meaning including all Central Asia, while the other refers to a narrower meaning, that is to Xinjiang 新疆 (Eastern Turkestan). The Chinese researchers appear to have been mainly interested in the history of Xinjiang only rather than in the general history of Central Asia. This is quite understandable, since the history of China proper

The present chapter is divided into three major parts. The first one addresses the studies focused on Chen Cheng as well as some related subjects, the second one discusses the studies of Timurid–Ming contacts, whereas the last part gives a summary and general assessment of the studies in this chapter.

4.1 Studies on the Chen Cheng accounts and Chen Cheng's life

Just as in the case of Western and Japanese research, the frequent embassies between the two empires in the early fifteenth century did not escape the attention of Chinese scholars. However, they tend to pay a remarkable attention to the work and life of Chen Cheng – much more so than to any other envoy like Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh. Therefore, although the significance of the Naqqāsh account is not smaller than that of the Chen Cheng accounts, there appears a strong inclination towards Chen Cheng in the Chinese research. Nonetheless, this inclination is quite understandable, since Chen Cheng as a Chinese envoy may be considered more interesting than Naqqāsh as a foreign envoy. Another reason for the preference for Chen Cheng must be the fact that Chinese scholars can consult classical Chinese texts much more easily than Persian or Turkic ones. They attempt to contribute to the international research on fifteenth-century Central Asian–Chinese relations by interpreting and re-interpreting classical Chinese texts, and drawing attention to incorrect elements within these texts.[430] There is no doubt that Chinese scholars

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has been interwoven with that of Xinjiang due to geographical proximity. Therefore, the relationship between China and the Timurids has not really drawn major attention from Chinese scholars until very recently. Before the so-called 'boom' in the studies of this subject in the 1980–2000s, the attention paid to fifteenth-century Timurid–Ming contacts had been very limited.

[430] Regrettably, there are numerous errors in the Ming Chinese texts that must be recognised and corrected. Zhang Wende 张文德 points out obvious errors in two smaller sections of the Xiyu (Western Region) chapter in the *Mingshi*. Both sections refer to the relationship between the two empires; therefore, they bear a significant role for the research on the subject. One concerns the Samarqand section (Zhang 2000), while the other refers to Herat (Zhang 2001). In the latter, Zhang discusses the interesting problem of having two sections on Herat in the *Mingshi* under two different names (Halie and Heilou), with them being treated as two different cities. At first sight, it seems to be an error of the compilers of the *Mingshi* in the Qing period. However, Zhang points out that this error was not made by the compilers themselves, but in two former works, the *Huangming siyikao* 皇明四夷

have a great advantage in carrying out this important work in order to gain a better understanding of the contents of the related Chinese texts and their significance for Timurid–Ming relations.[431]

The series of Chinese studies on Chen Cheng and his accounts actually starts in the 1980s, which is remarkable, since almost nothing had been done before these years in spite of the fact that the Chen Cheng accounts were found as early as the 1930s. There have been at least nine studies published since the 1980s. Among these nine studies, there are two dealing with the accounts themselves, publishing them with commentaries and punctuation to aid the readers' understanding. There are four other studies addressing Chen Cheng's life and career, as well as his historical significance, two others address his poems, and finally, one on Li Xian, who accompanied Chen Cheng to Central Asia (and therefore is also related to Chen Cheng). This series of the Chinese studies starts with this latter study on Li Xian written by Lu Shen 鲁深 in 1983 with a critique on an error made by Xie Guozhen 謝国楨 in his postscripts of the Chen

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考 and the *Mingshilu*. Zhang argues that the two transcriptions of the name Herat as Halie and Heilou in the *Mingshilu* may be due to the fact that the translators working in two different bureaus (the *Gaochangguan* 高昌館 and *Huihuiguan* 回回館) transcribed the name of Herat in different ways, thereby they caused confusion in later times – albeit unintentionally. Furthermore, Zhang argues that the description of Heilou in the *Huangming siyikao* as a close area to Turfan may lie in the fact that envoys from Herat had to go through Turfan on their way to China, and therefore they may have frequently arrived at the Chinese borders together with envoys from Turfan. Nonetheless, this confusion may also have been deepened by the fact that – as Zhang assumes – Chinese officials at the borders, who must have known the foreign envoys and merchants, were presumably corrupt and in cahoots with the foreigners, who forged their identities so that they could cross the Chinese border again and again.

[431] The fact that Chinese scholars made use of their advantage in reading classical Chinese texts, while barely using original Persian texts can also be seen in that the two Chinese translations of the Naqqāsh account were made not from Persian, but from English translations. One was made by Zhang Xinglang 张星烺, who translated the version of the Naqqāsh account found in the work of 'Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī, the *Maṭla'-i sa'dayn wa majma'-i baḥrayn*, from Henry Yule's English translation, and published it with other texts together in the *Zhongxi jiaotong shiliao huibian* 中西交通史料汇编 (1978, Vol. 4). The other was translated by He Gaoji 何高济, who translated the Naqqāsh account from the version found in Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū's work, the *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*, from the English translation by K. M. Maitra. This reliance on others' translations can result in the carrying over of mistakes made by the original translator. For example, He Gaoji points out the fact that Zhang Xinglang – based on Yule's translation – concluded erroneously that Prince Baysunqur himself also took part in the mission. Baysunqur was represented by Naqqāsh in the mission, and was entrusted by Baysunqur with taking notes of the journey to China.

Cheng accounts in the 1930s.[432] Lu Shen draws attention to the fact that Xie Guozhen in the postscripts stated incorrectly that the names of Li Xian and Li Da referred to the same person.[433] As Lu Shen says, Xie admitted his mistake in the 1960s, but he was still denying that there would have been any sign of Li Xian in the *Mingshilu*, the most important source of Ming Chinese texts about Central Asia. Lu Shen asserts that this statement was another mistake made by Xie, and that these two mistakes together are serious for a Chinese scholar who is well-trained in Ming history. Along with this critique, Lu Shen gives a short summary of Li Xian's life and career. Furthermore, Lu Shen also asserts that both Chen Cheng and Li Xian were well-educated intellectuals, and that their accounts, the *Xiyu xingchengji* and the *Xiyu fanguozhi* became the source for other Chinese texts in later times when refering to conditions in Central Asia.[434] Finally, Lu Shen argues that the official purpose of the embassy of Chen Cheng in 1414 on the surface was just to escort the Timurid envoys back to Central Asia, whereas its real purpose was to enhance the authority of China, and also to urge Central Asian cities to bring tribute, and by doing so, also make them acknowledge China as a superior state. In summary, Lu Shen concludes that the purpose of all missions in which Chen Cheng and Li Xian took part in was to promote friendly relationship, commercial contacts, as well as cultural exchange between Central Asian cities and China. Thus Lu Shen asserts that

> the historical achievements of these envoys not only deserve our respect and attention to cherish their memory, but they also help deepen our spirit of patriotism and internationalism (in modern times), and it makes us feel proud of having such remarkable envoys and travellers in our country.[435]

As is shown below, this kind of rhetoric praising the embassy, especially Chen Cheng himself, is quite common in Chinese studies.

Tian Weijiang 田卫疆 in his study (1984) writes about Chen Cheng's historical significance in a similar rhetorical style. He asserts that alt-

[432] Xie wrote a postscript on the Chen Cheng accounts after they were found in Tianjin in 1934 and published three years later.

[433] Li Da was the actual leader of the embassy, while Li Xian accompanied it with Chen Cheng and others (see Kauz 2005: 107).

[434] Lu Shen actually concludes (probably not correctly) that Chen Cheng and Li Xian wrote these accounts together. As is shown below, the author of these accounts seems to be Chen Cheng alone, while Li Xian may have taken part in its writing, but he was probably not the author of them. The reason why Lu Shen refers to these two envoys as the authors of the two accounts must lie in the fact that the names of both envoys are shown at the beginning of the two accounts.

[435] Lu Shen 1983: 35.

hough Chen Cheng did not receive enough attention and acknowledgement during his life, his historical achievements were huge. Tian comments on this in the following way at the end of his study:

> The achievements of the Chen Cheng embassy to Central Asia are obvious (...) Without considering his own safety (...) Chen Cheng brought an advanced economy and culture to Central Asia, expressed the kind regards of the Chinese people to the people of the Western Region (Xiyu), and promoted political, economic and cultural exchange between the two regions, while he himself was also welcomed by local people; these all had a strong influence on the people there [Central Asia] (...) Chen Cheng not only helped the people in Ming China deepen their knowledge on the Western Region, but also our knowledge in modern times, which provided valuable documents for us to study the natural and social history of Central Asia (...) Nonetheless one cannot help but point to the fact that Chen Cheng, as a feudal official, held a prejudice towards the minorities in the border area – these can be seen faintly in his writings, and therefore, we have to criticise him for this dross. However, we also have to admit that Chen Cheng did contribute to the development of a friendly relationship between the people of Ming China and the Western Region. Therefore, he was an outstanding diplomat, traveller and a scholar of local records.[436]

Tian Weijiang does not only discuss Chen's historical significance. He also asserts that the tribute–gift exchange between Central Asia and China in reality was nothing but an exchange of products at equal prices, that is to say, horses from Central Asia to China, and a huge amount of Chinese silk to Central Asia. Tian's standpoint seems to be close to that of Rossabi, who challenged the tribute–gift theory of Fairbank and others, by arguing that the Chinese did have commercial interests with Central Asia. However, unfortunately, Tian's assertion, unlike that of Rossabi, is not based on the results of detailed economic analysis, but he makes his conclusion from the high frequency of the embassies between the two regions as reported in the *Mingshi*. Tian does not even make reference to Rossabi's work on this subject – presumably, not being aware of the existence of Rossabi's work due to the difficulty in accessing works by foreign researchers in 1980s China. Such a lack of references to the works of foreign literature can be seen in the studies of other Chinese scholars too.

Besides, commenting on the importance of the Chen Cheng accounts, Tian points to the question of the Islamisation in Central Asia. The Chen Cheng accounts give various kinds of information about Islamic customs and habits, etc. Tian argues that the information found in the accounts

[436] Tian 1984: 49. Calling Chen Cheng a feudal official must have been a typical rhetorical phrase in the 1980s.

shows that while Islamisation was in process, it had not yet become dominant at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

Xue Zongzheng 薛宗正 in his study (1985) asserts that the Chinese envoys were not really remembered (i.e., recorded) by the Chinese court. However, Chen Cheng was a kind of exception, though even he himself was not rewarded properly for his missions to Central Asia. Furthermore, he asserts that it is relatively easy to reconstruct Chen Cheng's life. Like other Chinese scholars, Xue actually continues to give praise to Chen Cheng, and he even seems to be the most active in talking him up as a hero. Unlike Tian Weijiang, Xue argues that although Chen Cheng was a feudal official, he hardly disdained nomadic peoples and he wrote about the conditions in Central Asia in a rather objective way in his accounts. For Xue, Chen Cheng is a hero, who reconnected China and Central Asia. His missions were different from those by other envoys in the Han 漢 and Tang 唐 times in that Chen's missions were rather simple and peaceful. He made use of the traditional prestige of China in Central Asia, the mutual commercial interests, and the traditionally friendly relationship with the peoples there. Although this friendly relationship had been previously broken by Timur, Chen Cheng managed to restore it, according to Xue.

To say that Chen Cheng restored the broken relationship with Central Asia must be a rhetorical expression rather than a real fact. The improvement of the relations was primarily due to the peace-seeking attitudes of Yongle and Shāhrukh, and Chen Cheng as an envoy did contribute to this improving relationship. However, it was probably not solely due to him that the contacts between the two empires became peaceful again. Xue appears to attribute too much significance to Chen Cheng's participation in Timurid–Ming contacts, presumably because of his two accounts. This is not the only point that needs to be corrected in Xue's study. There are three more things that must be noted. First of all, Xue mentions only two missions by Chen Cheng to Central Asia, saying that whereas the first mission turned out to be very successful, the second one was not to the satisfaction of the Yongle emperor. This is obviously not correct. Chen Cheng was sent there four times altogether during Yongle's time, although he was recalled the last time while on his way to Herat. Secondly, Xue seemed to have referred to Xie Guozhen's postscripts on the two accounts in asserting that Li Xian was the same person as Li Da. He seemingly did not consult the study of Lu Shen, who had written about this problem just two years before, since there is no reference to him. Finally, on the question of whether Chen Cheng passed through Khotan and Beshbaliq, Xue is of the opinion that Chen went

through neither of these cities. As is shown below, Chen Cheng must have gone through (at least) Beshbaliq. Regrettably, Xue's study appears to give more emphasis on describing Chen as a patriot, a Chinese hero, rather than being accurate about the historical facts.

Li Jiang 李江 in his study (1996) reconsiders Xue Zongzheng's standpoint about whether Chen Cheng visited Khotan and Beshbaliq. Li argues that Xue's standpoint about Khotan must be correct, i.e., Chen Cheng did not go through this city. However, in the case of Beshbaliq, Xue must be wrong. As Li Jiang asserts, the fact that Chen Cheng passed through Beshbaliq can be seen from his poems very obviously. According to Li, these poems also refer to the friendly relationship between the peoples of China and Central Asia. However, Li does not differ from Tian and Xue in the rhetoric way to describe Chen Cheng:

> Chen Cheng, as a friendly envoy of the Chinese government and people, expressed peaceful regards to the peoples of the Western Region (Xiyu), and actively contributed to the promotion of mutual understanding and friendship, as well as to cultural exchange and commercial activities. The historical achievements of Chen Cheng must be known and affirmed.[437]

Li also asserts that the research on Zheng He's seven naval missions had pushed the research on Chen Cheng into the background. Besides, Li claims that the purpose of Chen's missions was not only to promote friendly relationship, but also to produce accounts of the conditions of Central Asia. It is a question whether Li hereby means that the Chinese emperor ordered Chen to take notes about what he saw and heared on his journey to Central Asia, since there is no sign that making accounts was ordered by the emperor, or any high-level official. It seems more plausible that these accounts were written by Chen Cheng on his own initiative, without any imperial order.[438] This may connect to the fact that Chen Cheng had been removed for a while from official duties due to taking the wrong side during the war between the Jianwen emperor and the (future) Yongle emperor before he was reinstated.[439] He probably intended to reinforce his position by giving detailed accounts of the Central Asian conditions for the Chinese court. Moreover, as for the authorship of the accounts, Li Jiang says that Li Xian and Li Da can be excluded. Li Jiang argues that Li Da was not educated enough to be able to write such accounts, whereas as for Li Xian, there is no reference to the *Xiyu fanguozhi* and *Xiyu xingchengji* in Li Xian's works. Besides, according to Li Jiang, Chen Cheng notes in the *Fengshi Xiyu fumingshu* 奉使西域复命疏 that the two accounts were written by himself.

[437] Li 1996: 88.
[438] Hecker 1993: 88.
[439] See the Introduction of this book.

In 2000, Ma Junqi 马骏骐 published a study in which he attempted to evaluate the significance of the *Xiyu xingchengji*. He first argues that there have been only a few research studies on the accounts, and then he gives an outline of the way Chen Cheng went on to Herat. However, Ma does not seem to add significantly new findings to those discussed above. He asserts that the Chen Cheng accounts are the only Ming Chinese source that describes the geographical features, socio-economic aspects, and the religious life of Central Asian cities. He also mentions Xie Guozhen's error in taking Li Da for Li Xian. However, this error had been revealed much earlier than when Ma mentioned it. As for the authorship of the accounts, Ma asserts that there has been no agreement on this question among Chinese scholars yet, however, he himself agrees with those who believe that the author must be Chen Cheng alone, while Li Xian's name next to that of Chen Cheng is nothing but a formality – partly because Li Xian was superior to Chen Cheng in the official ranking, and partly because Chen Cheng and Li Xian must have been on good terms during their mission to Central Asia.

Yang Fuxue 杨富学[440] in his study (1995) draws attention to ninety-two newly discovered poems[441] of Chen Cheng. As Yang asserts, this large amount of poems on the Western Region was very rare to see not only in Ming times, but also throughout the successive Chinese dynasties. As Yang says, Chen Cheng must have been enchanted by the world at the frontier zone so much that he decided to express his feelings through the form of verse. Since there are very few editions of these poems, it is very rare to see them. They cannot be found in general poem collections, and thus they have gained no recognised position in the history of Chinese poetry. It is only recently that Chen Cheng's poems started to draw scholarly attention, after they were finally discovered a few years ago.[442] Yang in his study also gives a short explanation about these poems.

In 1996, Duan Hairong 段海蓉 also published a study on the poems. First of all, like other Chinese researchers, Duan points to that although the compilers of the *Mingshi* did not devote a separate chapter for Chen, his historical achievements are of great significance. This is partly because Chen Cheng as an envoy and diplomat embodied Chinese foreign policy in early Ming times, and partly because of the accounts and poems he left to posterity. Based on Chen Cheng's poems, Duan describes him as a strong-minded patriot, who had to go through various kinds of hardship: the long and dangerous road to Herat and back, very cold weather, and missing home and friends. Despite these privations

[440] Also see Section 2.1 in Chapter Two.

[441] These poems were collected and published in book form under the title *Xiyu wanghui jixing shi* 西域往回紀行詩 (meaning 'poems on the journey to the Western Region').

[442] Yang Fuxue does not make clear when these poems were found.

Chen Cheng is praised as one who was able to resist the temptation of the richness in the cities he went through. Duan also seemingly idealises Chen Cheng as a national hero.

In 1987, the two accounts were published in a punctuated form with some commentaries, in a collection of classical Chinese texts. The chief editor of the collection was Yang Jianxin 杨建新. The preface written to the two accounts is very short. It states in the preface that

> in the 1950s, the committee for arranging classical Chinese texts decided to publish the *Xiyu xingchengji* and the *Xiyu fanguozhi* (together with other classical texts) (...) However, due to a ten-year-long (social) turbulence, it could not be published, therefore there has been no edition of a carefully checked and corrected version of the two accounts, but only re-printings of them with introductory prefaces.[443]

Moreover, the preface mentions the mistake of Xie Guozhen taking Li Da for Li Xian and its effects on other scholars such as Deng Yanlin 鄧衍林, and also gives a very short description of Chen Cheng's life. Altogether, it does not give much information about the background of the texts or Chen Cheng himself – apparently, this was not the purpose of the editor.

In 1991, the Chen Cheng accounts were published in a punctuated form with commentaries again.[444] Wang Jiguang 王继光 wrote a lengthy summary of Chen Cheng's life and career, as well as copies of his two accounts, which combined constitute the longest study of those on Chen Cheng. Wang makes clear that Chen Cheng was first sent to the frontier zone in the 1390s, but not to Samarqand. Chen Cheng's second mission to the west was in 1414, when he produced the two accounts. The third visit was six months after he came back to China from the second mission. His fourth trip was in 1420, while the last was right before the death of Yongle. When Yongle died, the new emperor Hongxi decided to limit the contacts with the outer world, and Chen had to cease his mission to Central Asia. According to Wang, just like other Chinese researchers, there is no doubt that Chen managed to strengthen Sino–foreign relations and promoted cultural exchanges between China and Central Asia, and that this makes Chen Cheng gain his historical significance, alongside the content of his two accounts. Wang argues that while the *Mingshi* and the *Mingshilu* do not present the whole texts of the accounts, and that there was very little information about the process of Islamisation in them, the Chen Cheng accounts (the *Xiyu fanguozhi* above all) give abundant

[443] Yang Jianxin 1987: 260.

[444] The punctuation and commentaries were made by Zhou Liankuan 周连宽, while Wang Jiguang wrote a long preface to it. Zhang Wende argues that Zhou's work on the texts seems to be the most outstanding (2006: [Preface 导言] 6).

information of the Islamisation of Central Asia.[445] As Wang suggests, based on the Chen Cheng accounts, Islam had deeply penetrated into the life of the people of Herat by the beginning of the fifteenth century.[446] Wang suggests that it would be highly useful to compare the section on Herat with that of Huozhou 火州 and Turfan in which one can read about Buddhist temples, in order to understand the degree of Islamisation at that time.[447] Moreover, Wang's information about the various editions of the two accounts helps the reader understand the differences among these editions. Wang also states that the Shanben 善本 edition of the National Beiping Library is the most complete version of Chen Cheng's work.

Among the studies discussed above, it is only Tian Weijiang who attempted to say something more about the Timurid–Ming contacts than just discussing Chen Cheng's life and his accounts. Tian's standpoint on mutual commercial interests between the two empires is close to that of Rossabi, though regrettably, it is not based on a detailed analysis, but rather a simple conjecture, by making reference to the import of horses to China and the export of silk to Central Asia. Nonetheless, it is not surprising that among the studies on Chen Cheng and his accounts one can hardly find reference to the Timurid–Ming contacts; it is not the main interest of these studies. One has to turn to other studies that address these contacts directly in order to figure out the various standpoints of Chinese scholars on this subject.

4.2 Chinese studies on Timurid–Ming contacts

As mentioned earlier, modern Chinese studies of Timurid–Ming relations started in the 1930s, and then after a long break in the 1960s and 1970s, continued from the 1980s. Before turning to these studies, it needs to be made clear that the research on Timurid–Ming contacts is still marginal in

[445] On the other hand, it must be noted that Mongol customs were still being practiced at the same time (see Section 1.1 in Chapter One).

[446] Also see Section 2.1 in Chapter Two.

[447] As for Timur himself, Wang refers to Barthold in saying that he actually intended to conquer the whole world, referring to Timur's statement that the world was not big enough to have two rulers in it. Wang concludes from this wildly arrogant statement, along with Timur's attempted campaign, that Timur's tribute for the preceding ten years was in order to deceive China and to spy on its conditions. Wang argues that Timur probably had no good intentions towards China, right from the very beginning.

the study of Chinese history, which can be seen clearly in the various editions of the general history of China. These editions usually mention Timurid–Ming contacts very briefly and sometimes not even correctly. The *Zhongguo tongshi* 中国通史 (The general history of China) published in 1999 devotes only three pages to Timurid–Ming contacts, and even among these there are inaccurate statements. First of all, it mentions the letter sent from Timur to Hongwu in 1394 without any comments on the question of its authenticity. The writer of this section seems to accept Timur's letter as authentic.[448] Secondly, it asserts that there were not only diplomatic contacts between the two empires, but private commercial contacts were frequent too. However, this is not quite correct. It is true that it was possible for private Chinese merchants to trade with the nomads at the border fairs and the capital's markets, but their activities were highly limited by the Chinese court, not to mention the fact that they were not allowed to leave Chinese territory. It is a fact that Chinese merchants could get as far as Aqsu,[449] but it was actually illegal for them to do so. The writer of this section on the Timurid–Ming relationship oversimplifies these contacts, giving the reader the impression that private contacts between Chinese civilians and the nomads were legally allowed. Moreover, the writer argues that though horse meant certain commercial benefits for the Chinese, as a whole the commercial contacts were very disadvantageous for the Chinese. This standpoint stands close to that of Fairbank and Teng (1941). The writer of the Timurid–Ming section in the *Zhongguo tongshi* therefore merely gives a brief summary on the subject, without almost any reference to the works of other scholars. This is rather unfortunate, since Chinese scholars have produced interesting studies on Timurid–Ming contacts since the 1930s. The section below gives a detailed discussion of the main Chinese academic studies in this subject.[450]

[448] Nonetheless it must be mentioned that Ma Junqi, who devoted a whole study (1996) to investigating Timur's letter of 1394, concluded that the tone of the letter, on one hand, might have been 'upgraded' (by adding excessive compliments) on the Hami post road in order to maintain the dignity of the Middle Kingdom, whereas, on the other hand, the letter also reflected the mere formalities generally adopted in the tribute submission of foreign countries to China.

[449] See Section 1.3 in Chapter One.

[450] It must be noted that Pan Yongyong 潘勇勇 (2014a) briefly summarised the international research of the Timurid–Ming contacts. Pan, however, does not mention important works both in the Chinese and non-Chinese literature. For instance, the work of Ralph Kauz is not mentioned at all. However, there are a few works introduced by Pan Yongyong to which the author of the present book could not have access. These are the following. First, He Yan 和垄 (1986) investigated the early contacts between the Timurids and Ming China, Chen Cheng's missions

Shao Xunzheng 邵循正 seems to be the first scholar addressing early Timurid–Ming relations in a study published in 1936. First of all, Shao questions the research by Western scholars such as Chambers, Bretschneider and Blochet, by pointing to that none of these researchers consulted Chinese and Persian texts together. As Shao argues, Chambers and Blochet did not consult Chinese texts,[451] only Persian ones, while Bretschneider consulted Chinese texts only. Therefore, Shao decided to use both sources to check and correct the shortcomings of Western scholars. First of all, Shao calls the sincerity of Timur's letter sent to Hongwu in the 1390s into question, arguing that Timur's flattering address to the Chinese emperor is nothing but a formality, and it has nothing to do with Timur's real feelings and intentions. Nonetheless, Shao does not doubt the authenticity of the letter, thus he does not mention the possibility that this letter may have been forged. Instead, Shao pays attention to the different tones of Yongle's two letters to Shāhrukh (the letters of 1412 and 1418). In the former, Yongle treats Shāhrukh as his vassal, while in the latter, Yongle uses a quite friendly and apparently equal tone to Shāhrukh.[452] Shao argues that the reasons for such a change in the tone is mainly due to the fact that Shāhrukh had been sending tributes to China continuously, as well as that Yongle needed horses for his campaign against the Mongols in the north. Nonetheless, the most interesting point of Shao's study is that he concludes:

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to the Western Region, as well as the Timurid envoys sent to China during the time of Shāhrukh, and concluded that except for the short period between 1395 and 1407, when the Fu An embassy was detained, the two empires maintained friendly and peaceful commercial contacts up to the early sixteenth century. Second, Cheng Shuning 程舒宁 (1986) discussed in detail the development of the contacts between the two empires in different historical periods, and concluded that by 1529 the Ming court had made the decision to completely give up the active foreign policy represented by the Hongwu and Yongle emperors, by closing the borders and rejecting the submission of tribute. Third, Shen Dingping 沈定平 (1992) also addressed Timurid–Ming contacts, and concluded that initial arrogant and haughty attitudes turned into mutual respect and friendship that added new vitality to the blooming of the traditional trade relations on the Silk Road. Moreover, Shen also argued that both the political and economic contacts of the two empires were mutually beneficial and equal, and reached their peak during the time of the Yongle emperor. Finally, Liu Zhuo 刘卓 (2006) argued that Shāhrukh and the Ming emperors maintained friendly relationships, both dynasties viewed commerce as very important, and that it flourished not only between the two courts, but also among common people.

[451] As Shao says, Blochet could read Chinese, yet he did not consult the *Mingshi*.

[452] See Section 1.3 in Chapter One.

> Yongle did not just chase the Mongols in the north, attempting to restore old China, but he must also have secretly followed the Yuan dynasty to become the centre of the Mongol Empire. Yongle built a new capital called Yanjing (an old name of Beijing), in fact on the location of the original Mongol capital, Dadu. For the countries in the Xiyu, the movement of the capital made the Yongle emperor look like a ruler following Mongolian traditions, the psychological significance of which cannot be neglected. Therefore, numerous works on the history of the Xiyu misinterpret the Ming dynasty, taking it for the descendants of the Mongols.[453] It is the task of ethnographers and historians to find out the origin of and the reasons for this legend, which cannot be the task of the present study. Nonetheless, this legend helps us understand why the countries of the Xiyu today regard Ming China as a dynasty following Chinggisid orthodoxy.[454]

Shao's note is very important. It stands close to Edward L. Dreyer's position several decades later, who pointed out the Mongol features of the early Ming dynasty.[455] It is interesting that Shao as a Chinese scholar had already paid attention to the question of possible Mongol features of early Ming Empire well before Western scholars started to deal with this question, even though Shao does not describe this feature in detail. As Shao asserts above, he intended to leave this question to future scholars. Shao's study can be considered a highly interesting and important step to draw the attention of Chinese scholars to the subject in the 1930s – although it took ten years for the next study to follow it.

Chen Shoushi 陈守实 published a study on Timurid–Ming contacts in 1947, which can be considered a miscellaneous summary of several aspects of these relations. First of all, he argued that there were plenty of Chinese and Western[456] sources on the Timurid history, which have not been arranged properly according to their historical significance yet. One can only perceive the superficial points of the travel notes of those (Ming) times. Besides, Chen argues that Chinese sources on the frontier zone in Ming times usually come from uneducated people, creating perfunctory official reports, and talking about every imaginable issue. Thereby, Chen takes a critical attitude to these Chinese sources. Moreover, among other things, Chen writes about subjects such as Timur's title, and also about two alleged Chinese princesses who were Timur's wives, etc., but what becomes significant in his study is that he does not believe in the authenticity of Timur's letter sent to Hongwu in

[453] Shao does not make clear which books his statement here refers to.
[454] Shao 1985: 97–98.
[455] See Section 1.2 in Chapter One.
[456] Hereby, Chen seems to refer to both Persian and other Western sources such as that of Ruy González de Clavijo.

the middle of the 1390s. Chen argues that the Chinese emperor, Hongwu, praised the respectful and polite tone of the letter received from Timur that actually went through several hands on the Hami post road, not noticing Timur's original intention. Chen also denies Lucien Bouvat's standpoint that Timur was China's vassal. Chen argues that Timur's intention towards China was not sincere from the beginning, which can also be seen in that he detained the Chinese envoys in the late 1390s.[457] As for Ming China's policy towards the Timurids, Chen asserts that while Hongwu attempted to divide the allies of the Mongols in the north and in the Islamic Western Region through diplomatic channels, by providing them with Chinese goods such as silk, Yongle made use of the Ming military to fight the Mongols in the north. Moreover, like Shao Xunzheng above, Chen also pays attention to the fact that Yongle moved the capital to Dadu, and in doing so, Yongle eventually followed the Yuan dynasty in becoming the centre of the Mongol Empire. As Chen asserts, Yongle's decision to move the capital was not without reasons, however, Chen unfortunately does not make clear what those reasons may have been. Chen's attention to this question may rely on Shao's study, though there is no reference to him. Finally, there is one more important thing in Chen's study. He argues that commercial contacts between the Timurids and Ming China were not a kind of simple market trade, because the value of horses imported from Central Asia were not equal to that of the goods given by China to the nomads. Regrettably, Chen does not make clear whether the Chinese were simply applying a defense policy by giving goods of high value to the nomads, or if they had other reasons for doing so.

Ten years after Chen Shoushi published this study, Chen Shengxi 陈生玺 chose Timurid–Ming contacts as the subject of his study, in which he challenged the standpoint of Xiang Da 向達 about a presumed relation between Zheng He's first naval expedition and Timur's hostile attitude to China in the early fifteenth century. Xiang Da in an analysis of the motivations behind Zheng He's naval expeditions suggests that the first expedition may have been set up in order to deter Timur from a possible attack against China. As Chen Shengxi points out, although it was nothing but Xiang Da's conjecture, it had an influence on other Chinese scholars such as Shang Yue 尚钺, who took Xiang's interpretation for granted.[458] Chen Shengxi in his study reveals that Xiang's conjecture has

[457] See Section 1.3 in Chapter One.

[458] Shang Yue edited a volume entitled *Zhongguo lishi gangyao* 中国历史纲要 (An outline of Chinese history), published in 1954, in which Xiang Da's assumption mentioned above found great resonance.

nothing to do with reality. Chen argues that although one can call Timur's sincerity to China into question right from the beginning, the contacts were normal, and Timur considered himself a vassal of China – at least on the surface. As Chen claims, neither of the two parties had real intentions to attack the other, and thus there was no need for the Chinese court to find ways to deter Timur from attacking China.[459] According to Chen, Xiang Da's conjecture called the peaceful contacts between the Timurids and Ming China into question and exaggerated the sudden change in Timur's attitude to China at the very end of their relationship in 1404–1405. Chen's denial of Xiang Da's theory relies on the following points. Firstly, Chen points to the timing problem, that is, Timur died in early 1405, the year that the first Zheng He expedition took place, not to mention that marital expeditions did not stop with Timur's death, but continued until 1433. Secondly, there is also a geographical inconsistency between the route taken by the Zheng He expedition and the geographical boundaries of the Timurid Empire. According to Xiang, the Zheng He expedition was supposed to display its strength in the hinterland of Timur's empire, that is Iran, which the Zheng He expedition did indeed reach, however, the expedition went further to Africa and other places that had nothing to do with Timur. Moreover, Chen also doubts that the Chinese would have had concrete information about the whereabouts of the hinterland of Timur's empire. Thirdly, Chen also draws attention towards the fact that neither Xiang nor Shang used concrete evidence to argue that the Zheng He expedition was directed towards Timur, thus the standpoint of Xiang and Shang is nothing but conjecture without any concrete argument. Chen Shengxi argues that the launch of the Zheng He expedition was due to the improving economic conditions in the early fifteenth century rather than any political motivation against Timur. As for early Timurid–Ming contacts, Chen argues that these contacts were basically peaceful, especially after Timur's death, however, Chen hardly says anything more about the contacts themselves than this. The purpose of his study was to disprove the standpoint of Xiang Da and Shang Yue after all.

After Chen Shengxi's study, there was a long break in Timurid–Ming research until 1980, when Zhao Lisheng 赵俪生 decided to publish a paper about the subject. However, Zhao did not focus his paper on the Timurid–Ming contacts directly, but he attempted to describe the relationship between China and Central Asia as a whole in early Ming

[459] Nonetheless, it must be noted that according to Chen, the detainment of Kuan Che in Beshbaliq was due to the fact that Beshbaliq was being drawn towards Timur.

China. First of all, Zhao points to the fact that since there were plenty of wars in the Western Region with various peoples believing in different religions, it was just not possible to unite this huge area – in contrast to the time of the first Chinese emperor, Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇帝. Zhao mentions Beshbaliq, Samarqand and Herat as cities with which China had good relations. He argues that Beshbaliq looked for an ally in the Chinese court and asked for their help due to fear of Timur taking military action against them. Beshbaliq even received a seal, a hat and a belt from China, as symbols of a subordinate relationship. Thereby, according to Zhao, Beshbaliq became a sort of vassal of China. Zhao's standpoint is just the opposite of that of Chen Shengxi, who assumes that Beshbaliq was actually on the side of Timur, since it detained Kuan Che, the envoy sent by China. The difference in their opinions lies in that Chen and Zhao pay attention to different aspects of Beshbaliq–Chinese contacts – a contradiction, which relies on the buffer-zone character of Beshbaliq, lying as it did just between the two empires. Zhao argues that China maintained good relationship with Central Asian cities both economically, politically and militarily.[460] By militarily, Zhao refers to Hami as the closest city to China, and thereby the one having the closest relationship with it. Of course, it was not really possible to orchestrate military cooperation between the Timurids and Ming China due to the long distances between them. Furthermore, Zhao also argues that the formation of mutual political and military contacts between China and Central Asia were based on their commercial contacts first, however, regrettably, Zhao does not really explain how this process took place.

As for the 'golden age' of Central Asian–Chinese contacts in early Ming times,[461] Zhao argues that Yongle, who despite being a feudal ruler did not have prejudice against the nomads – i.e., to choose a modern phrase, was not discriminative towards other (non-Chinese) peoples. Yongle was an enlightened ruler, who often ordered the release of men and women captured in his campaigns against the Mongols, and who also

[460] Although Timur's intended attack on China does not refer to this peaceful relationship, Zhao does not devote much attention to this question. Zhao argues that the Chinese received news about Timur's plans in time, and thus they could prepare for it.

[461] Zhao also points to the fact that in reality there were plenty of illegal things taking place in the everyday life. For example, Chinese border officers and soldiers sometimes helped Central Asian merchants get through the borders, bought horses and sold weapons or other luxurious goods secretly outside the border, whereas Central Asian merchants bought poor Chinese women and took them home. However, according to Zhao, these phenomena did not become dominant due to strong (state) control.

employed Mongols in his service. Although Yongle and his father, Hongwu, fought the Mongols, they, especially Yongle, did not feel disdain for them at all. He intended to maintain good relationships with all the peoples along the border. Furthermore, Zhao argued that all the Central Asian cities were in a subordinate position to China, including the Timurid Empire too. Zhao's conclusion is based on Yongle's letter of 1412 to Shāhrukh, in which Yongle attempted to intervene into the internal problems of the Timurid Empire by suggesting that Shāhrukh should make peace with his nephew Khalīl. Regrettably, Zhao does not pay similar attention to Yongle's letter sent to Shāhrukh in 1418, in which he addresses the Timurid ruler as an equal partner.

According to Zhao, the contacts between the two empires started declining after Yongle's death, reaching their lowest point at the end of the sixteenth century, and not recovering before the beginning of the Qing dynasty in the seventeenth century.

In 1985, the aforementioned Ma Junqi addressed The Timurid–Ming contacts. Besides classical Chinese sources such as *Mingshi* and *Mingshu* 明書, Ma also made reference to the accounts of Ruy González de Clavijo and Johannes Schiltberger, as well as to the work of Lucien Bouvat. Ma, after Bouvat, was of the opinion that Timur's empire was a vassal state of China, and that Timur's dream was to separate himself from this relationship. Moreover, Ma also argued that the people of the two empires could trade freely. This, however, could not be true since trade with the 'barbarians' for Chinese merchants was largely prohibited, except at some designated places.[462]

In 1989, Wang Xingya 王兴亚 actually repeated Ma Junqi's standpoint in saying that Timur was a vassal of China, who wanted to break away from this relationship. Moreover, Wang also asserted that the contacts between the two empires contributed to the development of economic and cultural exchange between the people of the two countries, and that this then helped to enhance the international reputation of the Ming dynasty, and also to maintain and develop the unification and construction of a multi-ethnic state.

In 1990, Feng Xishi 冯锡时 in his study, drew attention to the *Jinling Wenshi jiapu* 金陵温氏家譜, which is the family tree of a Mr. Wen Houhua 温厚华 from Xinjiang University. According to this family tree, one of Wen Houhua's ancestors, called Wen-er-li 温尔里, was a man from Samarqand, who was sent to the Chinese capital (Nanking) by Timur in 1388, where he was detained by Hongwu. The reason why

[462] See Subsection 2.2.2 in Chapter Two.

Hongwu decided to make him stay was that when Hongwu took Nanking twenty years earlier, after chasing the Mongols out, he found Arabic and Persian texts left behind by the Mongols. Among these, there were also texts on astronomy and calendars which no one in Hongwu's court was able to read. Therefore, Hongwu was very happy to see that among the people sent by Timur from Samarqand, there were also scholars who were able to read those texts. Hongwu asked them to stay in Nanking and help him understand these texts. Wen-er-li was one of them. According to Feng, the fact that Muslim astronomers were employed in the Chinese court throughout the 260-year-long Ming history must root in Hongwu's decision in the early Ming years. Feng argues that the reason for doing so not only relies on the traditionally friendly contacts between Central Asians and the Chinese, but also on the real contact between the two empires at those times.

Liu Guofang 刘国防 in his study (1992) addresses the Ming Chinese court's control over Central Asia, first starting with the military garrisons at the Chinese border, then addressing the cities in Moghulistan, and then finally the Timurid Empire. Liu uses the concept of 'national conflict', as well as the Marxist concept of 'class conflict' to describe the reasons for the great Chinese peasant movements against the Yuan Mongol rulers in the thirteenth century, and points out that the Xiyu was a highly important region for the newly established Ming dynasty so as to maintain good relations with Central Asian cities in order to be able to fight the remnants of the Mongols in the north. Hongwu and Yongle created garrisons at the Chinese border that could enjoy much more freedom than those inside the country. These were often led by non-Chinese tribes. Among these garrisons, it is Hami that was the most significant, a so-called defense wall of China, which not only sent tribute to the court, but also provided military help, as well as information on Central Asian conditions. The ruler of Hami even received the Chinese title *zhongshunwang* 忠顺王,[463] which signified a subordinate vassal relationship with China. Liu argues that the closeness of the relationship with Central Asian cities was in direct proportion with their distance from China, therefore the contacts with the Timurids could not be of high significance, but rather limited to tribute-bearing missions.[464] Liu denies that there would have been any economically significant contacts

[463] Meaning 'loyal and obedient king'.

[464] Liu argues that Khotan and Kashgar sent tributes less frequently than other cities closer to China due to their geographical proximity to the Timurid Empire, which must have exercised control over them. Timur limited the freedom of the cities subordinate to him to make frequent contacts with China.

between the Chinese and the Timurids. According to him, this was due to the fact that the Timurids were not a vassal of China. Nonetheless, Liu also argues that the subordinate relationship with China in the case of other Central Asian cities promoted close economic and cultural contacts, which took place in the form of tribute-gifts, as well as trade at the (capital and border) markets.[465] Moreover, Liu also argues that these economic and cultural contacts promoted 'political integration'[466] between China and the Xiyu, a connection which became stronger in Qing times when China moved further towards uniting Xinjiang (the Uygur Autonomous Region today) with China proper. This all laid the foundation of the unification of the (various) peoples of China (*Zhonghua minzu* 中华民族) at later times. However, regrettably, Liu does not really make clear what exactly he means by a political integration here. Probably, he refers to the relatively friendly contacts both in the fifteenth century and during the time of the Qing dynasty, but he seems to forget about both Timur's intended attack in 1405 and the Tumu incident in 1449, when Esen captured the Chinese emperor.[467] The latter even promoted a general distrust among the Chinese court and officials towards the nomads in the north. Nonetheless, Liu's standpoint seems to be close to that of Ralph Kauz, who also focused on the formation of a possible political constellation between the Chinese court and the Timurids, even though Liu does not mean the Timurids here as the subject of such a possible grouping due to their distance from China, and he refers to the nomads living closer to China. Yet, Liu's focus on the alleged political integration between China and the Xiyu appears to be unique among the studies of Chinese scholars.[468]

Zhu Xinguang 朱新光 in his study (1996) addresses the Timurid–Ming contacts directly, asserting that there are still only a few studies on these contacts. Zhu makes an outline of the main features of these contacts from the beginning to the time they started fading, and then

[465] As for these Chinese-controlled markets, Liu asserts that these markets were rather marginal, and could not go through significant changes throughout the fifteenth century. Moreover, just like other scholars, Liu also points to the fact that illegal activities were quite common between the Chinese and Central Asian nomads at the border, as well as that there were many Central Asian merchants who pretended to be sent by a certain Central Asian ruler so as to bring tribute to China in order to gain commercial profits.

[466] In Chinese "zhengzhi shang de tongyi" 政治上的统一 (Liu 1992: 44).

[467] See Section 1.2 and 1.3 in Chapter One.

[468] As was shown above, other scholars talk about the 'traditional' generally friendly relationship between China and Central Asia, however, none of them talk about a political integration between them.

attempts to distinguish significant phases in their historical evolution. First, Zhu argues that Timur's letter sent to Hongwu in the 1390s must be authentic and sincere in its contents for the following two reasons. Firstly, Timur must have been afraid of Ming China's power – at least in the beginning, therefore, he intended to maintain good relationship with it, and by doing so, he also attempted to hinder the formation of a possible alliance between China and other Central Asian cities against him. Secondly, Timur was eagerly after Chinese goods of good quality, thus he intended to keep the commercial routes open. Zhu argues that Timur's attempted campaign against China was not a plan from the very beginning of his military and political career, but the result of his numerous victories throughout Asia. According to Zhu, these military successes must have gone to the head of Timur for him to decide to attack China. However, after Timur's unsuccessful attack, the relationship became normal again, and according to Zhu, Shāhrukh became a vassal of China. Zhu refers his standpoint to the early letter (1412) sent by Yongle to Shāhrukh in which Yongle asks him to end the war with Khalīl Sulṭān. Apparently, Zhu does not take Yongle's other letter sent to Shāhrukh in 1418 into account, in which Yongle treated him as an equal ruler.

After a successful period in the early fifteenth century during the time of Yongle, relations started to decline, which, according to Zhu, was primarily due to the growing significance of naval routes. As a result, inland routes were no longer important. This standpoint stands closer to that of Fairbank (1942), who pointed to the connection between the declining inland routes and strengthening naval routes in the history of Sino–foreign relations – although there is no reference to Fairbank in Zhu's study. Finally at the end of his study, Zhu distinguishes the following three phases within Timurid–Ming relations. The first one starts with a good relationship, when Timur considered himself a vassal of China. The second one refers to the time when Timur decided to attack China, thereby the relations went awry. After this unsuccessful attack, the contacts became normal again, leading to a highly successful period. Zhu does not take the slowly declining period after Yongle's death into account. Instead, he focuses on the early Ming contacts only. Altogether, apart from Timur's plan against China, Zhu argues that the relationship was good throughout the early Ming times.

Gao Yongjiu 高永久 in 1999 took a similar standpoint to Zhu Xinguang, arguing that Timur's letter to Shāhrukh must be authentic and sincere in its contents, because Timur intended to maintain a good economic relationship with China for his campaigns in other regions.

Nonetheless, Gao may not be aware of Zhu's study, since he argues that there are still many things concerning Timurid–Ming contacts that must be made clear, and the question of the authenticity of Timur's letter is one of these disputed questions. Gao is correct in saying this. However, the fact that he does not make reference to Zhu's study is regrettable. Moreover, Gao also points to the question of when the early contacts started. He questions Chen Shoushi's standpoint which claimed that the first contact must have taken place in 1388 when Central Asian merchants captured at Buyur Nor (Lake Buyur) were sent by Hongwu back to Samarqand. Gao argues instead that the first contact took place in 1387 when the first Timurid embassy was sent to China. This is correct, although not a new discovery, because both foreign and Chinese researchers had already pointed this out.

What is really original in Gao's study is his treatment of the Fu An embassy. Gao argues that the Fu An embassy sent by Hongwu in 1395 was not detained by Timur at all, thus Fu An and the other envoys were actually free to go home. Gao refers to Zhang Xinglang's research[469] which pointed to the difference between the *Mingshi* and the *Ẓafarnāma* concerning the Fu An embassy. According to Zhang, while the *Mingshi* writes about the detainment of the Fu An embassy, there is no such reference to them in the *Ẓafarnāma*. By focusing on Zhang's finding, Gao takes the *Ẓafarnāma* as correct, and calls the contents of the *Mingshi* into question. Moreover, Gao also points to Clavijo's accounts, which report about the humiliating seat change.[470] He also argues that since this seat change had not happened before Clavijo arrived in Timur's court in the first years of the fifteenth century, it means that Timur must have been treating the members of the Fu An embassy as respected guests before.[471] Furthermore, Gao assumes that the fact that Fu An was taken by Timur to show him around in his huge empire must also have been the result of Timur's respect, and not some display of his force to deter China from humiliating him. Therefore, Gao concludes that the theory of the detention of the Fu An embassy must be wrong. Gao attempts to find the reasons why Fu An and the others did not return to China in time. He argues that these mainly lie in the political conditions of the Xiyu at those

[469] Zhang 1978, Vol. 5: 198–199.

[470] Ordering the Chinese envoys to take seats lower than that of the Spanish envoy. See Section 1.3 in Chapter One.

[471] Gao here must be wrong in saying that there was no other Chinese embassy in Timur's court at the time of Clavijo's arrival. The Chen Dewen embassy sent in 1397 by Hongwu to Timur to inquire about the Fu An embassy could not return to China either. See Section 1.3 in Chapter One.

times, that is, Moghulistan was hindering traffic on the roads between China and the Timurid Empire. According to Gao, Moghulistan was doing so because of its fear of another attack from the Timurids.

Gao's argument about the Fu An embassy is very unique. Gao's rejection of the detention of the Fu An embassy is based on the assumption that Timur was actually maintaining a friendly relationship with China until 1404. Yet, unfortunately, Gao leaves the question open as to why Timur suddenly turned against China in 1404.

In 2004, the aforementioned Wang Jiguang published a study in which he addressed the career of Chen Cheng as the most important envoy and looked at early Timurid–Ming contacts alongside this. First of all, Wang argued that our knowledge about the frequency, dates, as well as the activities of Chen Cheng's missions to Central Asia are somewhat chaotic, therefore he devotes some space to clarifying these in his study.[472] By doing so, Wang refers to a newly discovered Chen Cheng account,[473] which clarifies some obscure points concerning his missions. They are the following:

- The first mission: from the third month to the ninth month in 1396 to the Sari Uyghurs to establish the garrison called Anding.[474]
- The second mission: from the ninth month in 1413[475] to the tenth month in 1415 to escort some Central Asian envoys back home and to present gifts to local rulers. The destination of his mission was Herat.[476]
- The third mission: from the sixth month in 1416 to the fourth month in 1418, the purpose of their mission was the same as in the second one.[477]
- The fourth mission: from the tenth month in 1418 to the eleventh month in 1420, the purpose of the mission was the same as in the

[472] Wang actually returns to the question raised by himself in the preface of the edition of the Chen Cheng accounts in 1991, and attempts to give correct answers to those questions.

[473] The *Liguan shiji* 歷官事迹.

[474] Wang gives the dates (months) according to the classical Chinese calendar, as they are written in the sources, without identifying them within the Western calendar. The months in the Chinese calendar are one or two months behind the Western one.

[475] This is not the date of the start of his mission, but the date of the receipt of Yongle's order.

[476] His famous accounts were written in relation to this mission. Wang assumes that Li Xian may have helped him with writing them.

[477] Wang notes that the frequent missions between the two empires were partly due to the achievements of Chen Cheng.

second and third ones.

- The fifth mission: from the fourth month to the eleventh month in 1424, which suddenly came to an end with Yongle's death. Chen Cheng was called back while on his way to Central Asia.

Wang's work above is highly important to the researchers on Chen Cheng, since Wang's study is the first one to fully clarify the sequence of Chen Cheng's missions and his career.

As for the Timurid–Ming contacts, Wang attempted to give a full-scale description, however unfortunately, his study does not add new perspectives to the studies discussed above. What may be important here about his study is that though Wang does not call the authenticity of Timur's letter to Hongwu into question, he argues that Timur was a vassal of China only on the surface, and in reality was just deceiving China, spying on it, and eagerly after abundant commercial profit. The fact that Timur detained the Fu An embassy is also a sign of his improper behaviour. Wang apparently is either not aware of Gao Yongjiu's rejection of the detention, or he just simply does not take it into consideration. Moreover, Wang at the end of his study points to that the roads between China and Central Asia were first hindered by wars at the end of the Yuan dynasty, then they were opened again, and Sino–Central Asian contacts could develop without mishap at the beginning of the fifteenth century. This led to the last prosperous period of the Silk Road. As Wang asserts, the Chen Cheng missions made significant contributions to strengthening Sino–foreign relations and promoting cultural exchange between China and the Xiyu.

Finally, Zhang Wende's dissertation completed in 2001, and published in 2006, gives the most wide-ranging and systematic research into the Timurid–Ming contacts in Chinese.[478] Since Rossabi's dissertation (1970) mainly focuses on Hami[479] and Central Asia in general rather than the Timurid dynasty itself, Zhang's dissertation could be counted as the first genuinely full-scale study on the subject not only in China, but also in the world. Nonetheless, it must be noted that Ralph Kauz addresses the same subject in his book published in 2005 too.[480] The two studies are,

[478] It is interesting to see that Wang Jiguang above does not mention Zhang's dissertation at all. The question remains open whether the reason for this is that Zhang had not yet published his dissertation at the time.

[479] Morris Rossabi calls Hami 'the funnel for Central Asian trade' in his dissertation (1973: 13).

[480] The two scholars know about each other's work, as becomes clear from the prefaces of the two works.

however, quite different in their main goals. Though both focus on the *Mingshilu* as the main source[481] for studying Timurid–Ming contacts and even touch upon similar subjects at times, such as the question of how the Chinese treated Central Asians who decided to settle down in China, Kauz's study, among other things, addresses the formation of a possible political constellation between the Timurids and Ming China, whereas Zhang's dissertation appears to be much more modest in its final goal. Although Zhang asserts at the beginning of his dissertation that his study is the most systematic one, it seems to be a wide-ranging miscellaneous study rather than one focusing on a high level of theory building. He touches upon various aspects of the contacts instead of raising a theoretical question and attempting to give a clear answer to it.[482]

In the preface, Zhang summarises the main points of his research in the following way:

- First, he says that Chinese sources on the Timurid–Ming contacts at the end of the Ming dynasty and the beginning of the Qing dynasty are mainly based on two sources, that is, the Chen Cheng accounts and the *Mingshilu*.
- He describes the development of the contacts in three phases: a beginning phase (1387–1405), a renewal and development phase (1407–1449), and finally a declining phase (1450–1506).

[481] Kauz also frequently makes use of Persian texts (mostly the work of Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū), while Zhang mainly uses Chinese texts.

[482] Zhang divides his dissertation into seven chapters, which he increased to eight in the published edition by dividing the original sixth chapter into two parts. In the first chapter, he discusses both Chinese and non-Chinese sources, but eventually focuses on the Chinese ones. In the second chapter, he addresses Ming China's policy towards the Timurids that can be divided into three phases. In the third chapter, Zhang addresses Chinese envoys sent to Central Asia, pointing out that none of these envoys, except for Chen Cheng and Chen Dewen, may have been well-educated. He also makes clear that the leaders of these embassies were usually eunuchs and high or middle-level officials, while the rest of the missions consisted of low-level officials. Zhang assumes that most of these officials must have had difficulties in maintaining their dignity and noble bearing during their missions. The fourth chapter is about the Timurid missions. Zhang argues that the Timurid envoys usually had higher social positions. The fifth chapter is about the tributes and rewards, while the sixth is about diplomatic rituals. The seventh chapter is about the language used between the two empires. Here Zhang points out that whereas Persian played the main role as a diplomatic language, Turkish and Mongolian might have been used as well. The eighth chapter discusses the arrangements of the immigrants from the Timurid Empire to China. Zhang argues that these people, who were usually settled by the Chinese in Peking, Nanking and Ganzhou, became an important part of the Hui 回 Muslim community during the Ming era.

Additionally, he also points out that the prospering and declining periods of the two empires coincide.

- Zhang suggests that the contacts between the Timurids and Ming China were mainly economic and commercial, which was especially important for the Timurids whose missions outnumbered the Chinese embassies. There were seventy-eight missions from the Timurid Empire, although only twenty from China.
- Zhang also discusses the diplomatic rituals of the two empires.
- Finally, he touches upon the way the Chinese treated Central Asian people who intended to settle in China.

Among the five points above, the first three appear to be the most important ones. Firstly, the fact that Chinese sources in the late Ming and early Qing times rely on either the Chen Cheng accounts or the *Mingshilu* helps one estimate the value of the Chinese sources. Secondly, Zhang's division of the historical process into three phases described above relies on the following points. Zhang argues that apart from the last years of Timur's life when he decided to attack China, Timurid–Ming contacts were rather peaceful and friendly. He suggests that Timur turned against China, because he became too powerful, and finally turned his attention to China as a place to conquer.[483] This must have led to the detention of the Fu An embassy in the late 1390s too. Zhang argues that the contacts between the two empires could be restored easily after Timur's death due to the commercial contacts having developed in Timur's time before he attempted to attack China, and that this led to a prosperous period for the two empires. As for the second turning point, Zhang points to the Tumu incident in 1449 when the Chinese emperor was captured by Esen. Thirdly, Zhang argues that the Timurid–Ming contacts were first of all commercial ones, a fact which can also be seen in the rapid restoration of the contacts after Timur's death. Moreover, Zhang argues that these commercial contacts were mutually profitable. However, here although Zhang speaks about mutually profitable contacts, he mainly refers to the Timurids, whose missions to China outnumbered that of the Chinese to Central Asia, and based on calculations that the value of the return gifts from the Chinese for the tribute goods brought by the Timurids was much higher. According to Zhang, this was because the actual economic centre was China, and not the Timurid Empire. However, it is regrettable that

[483] Zhang notes that although the Chinese court learned about Timur's war plan and ordered Song Sheng to get prepared for it at the border only after Timur's death, this lateness cannot be considered 'late' according to the slow information transfer of those times. Zhang actually argues that the Chinese reaction was quite fast.

Zhang apparently did or could not consult Rossabi's dissertation, since Rossabi pointed out the significance of the commercial interests in the case of the Chinese court as early as 1970.

Nonetheless, Zhang's dissertation is to be considered very important in the research on the Timurid–Ming contacts, which deserves a future translation into English for the broader international non-Chinese scholarship. It contains abundant information on the contacts between the two empires, which can serve as a useful tool for further research studies on Sino–foreign relations.[484]

4.3 Summary and general assessment

As for the Chinese scholarship on Timurid–Ming contacts, two contradictions can be noted. First, Chinese researchers have produced more studies both directly on Timurid–Ming contacts, as well as on the Chen Cheng accounts (and Chen Cheng himself), than the researchers in the West and Japan together. Among them, the study of Zhang Wende[485] is the most significant, and constitutes the most comprehensive Chinese work on Ti-

[484] Besides the studies discussed in this section, there are also other studies that address Timurid–Ming contacts, though they contribute little new knowledge in this matter. For instance, Jiang Yifan 姜伊凡 (2001) briefly describes the historical relations between the two empires, by mainly making reference to the accounts of Clavijo and Schiltberger, as well as to the study of Lucien Bouvat, and that of Morris Rossabi on the two Ming envoys. Ding Mingjun (2004) does not address directly the relationship between the Timurids and Ming China, rather focusing on Central Asian muslims in general. Ding concludes that the tribute–gift relations with the 'barbarians' was not beneficial for the Chinese court at all, and in fact led to the exhaustion of the public purse. On the other hand, Ding's study gives a detailed description on the Hami garrison, the *Huitongguan*, *Siyiguan* and *Huihuiguan* (see Subsection 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 in Chapter Two), etc. In contrast to Ding, Xing Lihai 邢利海 (2009) argues that the Timurid–Ming contacts were not just political, but also economic contacts which were beneficial for both parties. Xing also argues that China, rather than the Timurid Empire, was the real centre of commerce at the time. Finally, Pan Yongyong (2014b) also addressed the economic contacts and argued that they were mutually beneficial – though only for the elite and rich merchants of the two empires. In doing so, Pan refers to the social exchange theory and employs three different models of tribute and trade: a 'mutually beneficial' model, a 'redistributive model', and a 'market exchange' model.

[485] Zhang 2006.

murid–Ming contacts. This overall trend is not surprising, since the Timurid–Ming contacts are part of Chinese history. However, it is remarkable that modern research in China had not focused on this subject before the 1980s, and that most of the studies have been published in the past thirty years. On the other hand, although Chinese scholars have been the most productive in terms of the number of studies, the theoretical level of these studies is relatively low. This can also partly be seen in the paucity of references made to studies by both foreign scholars and other Chinese researchers. This suggests that there may not have been enough communication among Chinese scholars, or if there had been, it is not made obvious. This can also be observed in the various interpretations of the (dubious) authenticity of Timur's letter sent to the Hongwu emperor in 1394 and his questionable relationship to China,[486] as well as in relation to the unclear relationship between the Central Asian city Beshbalik and China. Nonetheless, there is a general agreement among Chinese scholars about Chen Cheng's role in the relationship of the two empires, suggesting that Chen Cheng was a strong-minded patriot and a real hero, whose historical significance is often described by solemn rhetoric. As for the characteristics of Timurid–Ming relations, most Chinese scholars agree that China and the Timurid Empire maintained mutually profitable commercial contacts. Unfortunately, these conclusions do not rely on careful analyses as in the case of Rossabi's study, but rather on conjecture. Apparently, scholars in China have not consulted Western studies (such as Fairbank or Rossabi) on this question.[487] It seems that a couple of Chinese scholars publishing before the 1980s, such as Shao Xunzheng (1936 [1985]) and Chen Shoushi (1947), put more emphasis on consulting Western works than the new generation of historians from the 1980s has done.[488] It is also regrettable that while Shao and Chen drew attention to the Mongol

[486] Including the question whether Timur was a vassal of China or not.

[487] There seem to be (at least) three scholars who have different opinions about the economic relationship between the two empires: Chen Shoushi (1947), Liu Guofang (1992) and Ding Mingjun (2004).

[488] While the two Chinese scholars before the 1980s referred to the studies of Western scholars such as William Chambers, Emil Bretschneider, Edgar Blochet, etc., after the 1980s it seems to be the works of Vasily V. Barthold, and also that of Lucien Bouvat, that Chinese scholars made most reference to. This seems to be partly a result of the general decline of studies in social sciences in the 1960s and 1970s, and partly due to the fact that references to the Western literature had been very limited in number – with the notable exception of Zhang Wende's dissertation (2001), who made the first wide-ranging and systematic study of the Timurid–Ming Chinese contacts. Nonetheless, in recent years there also seems to be a slight tendency of referring to the studies of Western scholars.

heritage of early Ming China – well before Edward L. Dreyer[489] addressed this important question in the West – Chinese scholars from the 1980s have neglected this subject.

In sum, Chinese scholars' significant contribution to the research of Timurid–Ming contacts consists primarily in correcting and commenting on classical Chinese sources (such as in the case of Zhang Wende) as well as clarifying the dates and contents of the Chen Cheng missions (such as in the case of Wang Jiguang). The next logical step for Chinese historiography seems to be the coordination of their results in order to enhance the theoretical level of their studies on this subject.

[489] Dreyer 1982 and 1988.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This, the final chapter, first summarises the main aspects of modern academic debates, as well as the main points in the development of international research, regarding the relationship of the Timurid Empire and Ming China. Second, it outlines possible future trends and shows that the research of Timurid–Ming contacts has not come to an end, and has the potential to provide a treasury of information for further research on Sino–Central Asian history. In doing so, it also sheds light upon ideologies and realities regarding frontiers and boundaries, as well as the potential of academic approaches such as the cultural historical perspective within studies of Sino–Central Asian relations.

5.1 Theories and approaches

The contacts between the Timurids and Ming China had a great impact on both sides. This impact may have been felt more strongly by the peoples of Central Asia than by the inhabitants of China. This assumption is based on the fact that the people in inland China could hardly have had contact with Central Asian nomads, while the peoples of Central Asia, along the Silk Road, were more directly exposed to Chinese influences through an active flow of Chinese goods that they were eager to acquire. One can also see a certain bias towards Sinology in international research on Timurid–Ming contacts due to the fact that classical Chinese sources cover a longer time span than Persian ones – even though most of the Chinese sources can be traced back to two main sources: the Chen Cheng accounts and the *Mingshilu*. This imbalance within the primary sources probably derives from the fact that the Timurid Empire could never really display a precisely defined foreign policy,[490] while China had been ruled

[490] Not even at the time of Timur when the Timurid Empire was the most united. After Timur's death, the various Central Asian cities enjoyed relatively large amounts of freedom that hindered the Timurid rulers in developing a united and

through a well-defined administrative system for centuries. In addition, China had always felt threatened by the 'barbarians' on its frontiers, and this fear in the fifteenth century must have been stronger than usual due to the psychological after-effects of the fall of the (Mongol) Yuan dynasty in the late fourteenth century. It is therefore no surprise that the Ming court paid special attention not only to the northern borderlands to which the Mongols had to withdraw, but also to the northwestern region where a new Mongol dynasty emerged at around the same time when the Ming dynasty was founded.

Modern academic debate has focused on three aspects of Chinese foreign policy:

1. China's traditional Confucian superiority over non-Confucian 'barbarians', with China – more precisely the Chinese capital – in the centre of the world; this prestigious position did not allow the emperor to treat the rulers of other regions as equals;
2. the Chinese fear of a military conquest by the 'barbarians', which led to a general concern regarding the defence of China;
3. economic interests in the form of tribute and trade with the 'barbarians', which ideologically contradict the Confucian teaching of looking down upon commerce as an inferior disdainful activity.

The first one refers to the Confucian concept of prestige, which stated that the Chinese ruler as the Son of Heaven was the supreme leader of the world, thus the leaders of the surrounding 'barbarian' countries could be nothing but mere vassals of China. Another aspect pertains to a military (or rather political) standpoint – not necessarily in a conquering sense, but rather in a defensive one – which made a great impact on the formation of both geographical frontiers and diplomatic relations. The third aspect of Chinese foreign policy refers to commercial needs. In spite of all Confucian disdain, the country needed certain goods, especially horses of good quality which it could not obtain without trading with the nomads. Thus, China's attitude to her neighbours was shaped by these three considerations: cultural (*prestige*), political (*defence*) and commercial (*trade*). The question is how modern scholars have treated these aspects, or in other words, which aspect has been considered by them as normative and dominant when considering Ming China's foreign policy with regard to the Timurids. Western, Japanese and Chinese scholarship typically emphasises one of these three – cultural, political (military) and economic – aspects in describing the contacts between the two empires.

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comprehensive China policy.

The development of Timurid–Ming scholarship can be summarised as follows. International research started with William Chambers' translations from Persian into English in the late eighteenth century, although he did not attempt to explain the features of these contacts in detail. Translations with or without commentaries were typical of Western research up to the late nineteenth century, including the work of Emil Bretschneider, whose translations are of great significance, however he also failed to discuss in detail the nature of the Chinese contacts with Central Asia. The first researcher that engaged in such an analysis was Edgar Blochet in the early twentieth century, who argued that the Timurids (including Timur himself) considered themselves vassals of Ming China. Thereafter, there was a long interruption in Timurid–Ming research in the West. Instead, it was the Japanese scholarship that took over the torch from Western researchers – though neither Western nor Japanese scholars were aware of this handover. It is Haneda Tōru who first addressed Timurid–Ming contacts in 1912, and his efforts were followed by other Japanese scholars during the pre-war period. Unfortunately, these efforts basically came to an end after World War II. Active scholarly interest in the subject in pre-war Japan was embedded in the political interest in Central Asia at those times. It was further fostered by the fact that pre-war Japanese scholars were much better at reading classical Chinese texts than Central Asian ones. However, from the 1970s, Japanese scholars became more and more familiar with Central Asian languages, which may have contributed to their shift of interest from Timurid–Ming contacts to the Timurid dynasty itself. Thus, the first promising initiatives in pre-war Japan were (almost) not followed up after World War II. On the other hand, from the 1960s, Western scholars turned their attention back to Timurid–Ming contacts again – displaying a surprisingly high level of theory building, as if Western scholarship had jumped from 'merely' making translations to developing elaborate theories. However, this development within Western scholars did not build on the work of their pre-war Japanese antecedents. Joseph F. Fletcher's study[491] and Morris Rossabi's dissertation in the late 1960s and early 1970s are to be considered primarily as a reaction to the tribute theory articulated by Fairbank and others. Although Fletcher and Rossabi called the tribute theory into question from different aspects, both studies were motivated by disproving the role played by Confucianism in real life. Ralph Kauz accepted these new findings and attempted a new approach by shedding light upon the possibility of a political

[491] Though Fletcher himself did not say that his purpose was to disprove it, his findings indicate an opposite standpoint to that of the tribute theory (see Section 2.3 in Chapter Two).

constellation between the two empires – even though it was never realised. It seems as if Western research of Timurid–Ming relations had taken back the torch from the first Japanese studies, although again without being aware of this.

The first modern Chinese studies appeared almost at the same time as those in Japan, and also produced promising results. Shao Xunzheng's work was a good start, and made reference to the work of Western researchers – such as Chambers, Bretschneider and Blochet – pointing out their weaknesses. Moreover, the discussion by Shao Xunzheng and Chen Shoushi of the Mongol legacy of early Ming China was also of great significance. This, however, was not followed by other Chinese scholars. The long interruption in the Timurid–Ming research in the 1960–70s seems to have cut Chinese scholarship off from international research trends, therefore it is not surprising to see the Russian Vasily V. Barthold, along with Lucien Bouvat, as almost the only foreign reference in Chinese studies published during the 1980s and 1990s.[492] Consequently, although Chinese scholars have produced numerous studies on Timurid–Ming contacts, the theoretical level of these studies can be regarded as relatively low.[493] Zhang Wende's work[494] is an exception, since he attempted to summarise and discuss Timurid–Ming contacts in their complexity. By doing so, Zhang did more than any other Chinese researcher had done before.

Based on the analysis above, the development of international research on Timurid–Ming contacts in the three major scholarly traditions has proceeded in a somewhat uncoordinated way, which can be summarised in the following chronological order:

- First, one can see initial translations with commentaries on both Persian and Chinese sources in Western languages between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries, along with the appearance of the first study addressing Timurid–Ming Chinese diplomatic contacts directly by Edgar Blochet in the early twentieth century. Thereafter, there was a break for more than half a century in Western scholarship.
- This was followed by a 'boom' of studies addressing the subject directly in pre-war Japan, while China also started to show a certain academic interest in the subject at the same time. After the

[492] In recent years, one can see some improvement in terms of the level of consultation of studies by foreign researchers such as Morris Rossabi, etc.

[493] To enhance the level of theory building Chinese research on the Timurids and Ming China needs more active consultation of foreign research on the subject.

[494] Zhang 2006.

1950s, there was a sharp decline in the Timurid–Ming research in both Japan and China – albeit for different reasons.

- The initial Japanese research was followed by Western studies with a high degree of theory building from the late 1960s, although this continuation in the West did not directly build upon the research by Japanese (as well as Chinese) scholars – but was instead a reaction to the tribute theory advanced by Fairbank and others.
- From the 1980s on, one can see a revival of Chinese interest in the research on the Timurid–Ming relationship, having produced numerous studies on the subject, albeit with a generally low level of theory building. Meanwhile, Japanese scholarship still awaits a second wave that could serve as a direct or indirect continuance of the first promising studies in pre-war Japan.

Regarding the theoretical sophistication of all the Western, Japanese and Chinese studies, there are several works that meet high standards: first and foremost the works of Morris Rossabi and Ralph Kauz, closely followed by Fletcher's study. Zhang Wende describes Timurid–Ming contacts from various aspects, which gives his research a more general character. In the Japanese literature, the studies by Mitsui Takayuki and Murakami Masatsugu show a certain degree of theory building. As for most of the Chinese studies, despite the numerous valuable works collecting and commenting on classical Chinese sources, the level of theory building remains rather low. Finally, the initial translations with commentaries before the twentieth century published in the West include no relevant theory building whatsoever.

5.2 Ideologies and realities of frontiers and boundaries

Regardless of the somewhat uncoordinated character of the international research, the studies in the three main literatures addressing the features of Timurid–Ming relations can be divided into two basic groups. One includes those that take a so-called 'traditional' academic standpoint stressing the paramount ideology of Confucian prestige. In doing so, these studies usually reject the importance of Chinese commercial interests in China's international relations. Likewise, such a standpoint cannot accept the possibility that the Chinese emperor would choose a policy different from the expectations expressed in the Confucian doctrines. The studies belonging to the other group either call this 'traditional' scholarly

standpoint into question, as do Fletcher and Rossabi, or, as in the case of most Chinese studies, they accept that mutual commercial profit played a role, and present the Yongle emperor – the most active emperor in foreign policy during the Ming times – as a ruler who treated the peoples of Central Asia properly.[495] In other words, the studies in the former group address Timurid–Ming contacts within the 'traditional' scholarly interpretation of the Chinese court's attitude to its neighbours, while the studies in the other group use the research of Timurid–Ming relations in order to challenge this 'traditional' interpretation. Therefore, the significance of Timurid–Ming research goes beyond the scope of investigating these contacts in isolation, and it has much to add to the scholarly interpretation of the general history of Chinese–foreign relations. The early Ming period is a unique era both in Chinese history and in the history of Sino–foreign contacts. Rossabi shows the significance of commercial interests for the Chinese court, while Fletcher disproves the former assumption that China – more precisely the Chinese emperor – would ever pursue a policy diverging from Confucian expectations. Therefore, the main significance of the Timurid–Ming research lies in the uniqueness of this period, which can promote further studies on the subject in showing more such discrepancies between reality and ideology. Future studies need to formulate clear questions concerning the actual conditions of Sino–Central Asian relations in order to recognise 'lived reality' behind the ideological veil.[496] In line with this, two studies are introduced below which show what directions can be considered useful for future research. Neither of

[495] However, there is a sharp difference between Chinese studies and those of Rossabi (and also Fletcher in a sense) in doing so. Chinese researchers do not attempt to disprove the tribute theory per se in pointing out the mutual commercial profits between China and Central Asian nomads. The reason for this may lie in that the tribute theory – due to the long isolation of Chinese scholarship from international research trends after the 1950s – seems to have failed to become a reference point in China. The general inclination towards the 'theory' of mutual commercial profit in the Chinese research is mainly due to a more or less superficial look at the classical Chinese texts rather than to any careful analysis of the 'exchange of goods' between China and Central Asia. Moreover, the 'heroic' description of Chen Cheng, as well as the depiction of Yongle as an open-minded ruler treating the 'barbarians' properly is due to the solemnly rhetorical tone of these studies rather than any deep analysis.

[496] Here, there is no need to disagree with those stressing the significant role of Confucian ideology in Chinese policy in dealing with the neighbouring 'barbarians'. However, it is necessary to stress that reality was never a mere reflection of ideological thoughts, but that realpolitik did always play an important role by putting aside ideological presumptions whenever it was necessary.

these studies addresses the subject of Timurid–Ming Chinese contacts directly, though both could be connected to it.

The first is a large-scale study by Alastair Iain Johnston,[497] who in his book entitled *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* questions the relationship of ideal and real behaviours in state affairs – more precisely, foreign policies – in general. Johnston takes Ming China's foreign policy as a case study and argues that if there is a kind of cultural determinative factor in foreign policies in general, then its existence could possibly be easier to discover in China than elsewhere. Johnston here refers to Confucian ideology which traditionally puts emphasis on defensive policy over offensive policy. Johnston then takes early Ming China as his case study, since this was a unique era in Chinese history in which the Chinese court had to follow an appropriate policy in order to deal with the Mongols in the north, who still represented a threat to China's newly regained freedom. Johnston argues that the defensive attitude of traditional Confucian ideology was challenged during the early Ming times. Johnston then distinguishes two kinds of Chinese strategic culture: one refering to a symbolic or 'idealised set' of assumptions (Confucian ideas), while the other one pertains to an 'operational set' which had a significant influence on strategic decisions during Ming times. He argues that the symbolic set is mainly independent of the pragmatic decision mechanism which dominated governing strategy, and seems to refer rather to a habitual discourse. A habitual discourse is to be used to justify one's behaviour in culturally acceptable terms. The operational set – or as Johnston calls it, 'parabellum' or 'hard realpolitik' strategic culture – refers to the standpoint which stresses the preference of using force to eliminate potential security threats. In his case study of early Ming China, Johnston finds that the Chinese often took an offensive rather than a defensive strategy,[498] contradicting the Confucian stress on defence; thereby he argues that although there is a Chinese strategic culture, its main components are not necessarily unique at all. Johnston asserts that there may be fewer national differences in strategic culture than those who believe in the existence of a culturally dependent strategy would otherwise suggest.

Johnston's findings point to the flexibility[499] of Chinese foreign policy during the early Ming period. This flexibility can also be seen in Fletch-

[497] Johnston 1995.

[498] Such as the five campaigns by the Yongle emperor against the Mongols.

[499] Flexibility here refers to Johnston's conclusion that the Chinese rulers did deviate from Confucian dogma in handling the Mongols in the north. Johnston's conclusion reinforces Edward L. Dreyer's study of the Mongol character of

er's study, which pointed to the Yongle emperor's letter sent to Shāhrukh in 1418 in which he addressed the Timurid ruler as an equal. Yongle's offensive policy towards the Mongols in the north, as well as his equal treatment of Shāhrukh in order to maintain good relations in the north-western region could both be considered to be the results of such a hard realpolitik decision, contradicting Confucian expectations. The findings of Fletcher and Johnston thus reveal the discrepancy between ideology and real behaviour in early Ming times, calling into question the reified 'almighty' influence of Confucian ideology on real practice.[500] Therefore, it can be argued that future studies should remain focused on clarifying the relationship between ideological expectations and real conditions both in the history of Timurid–Ming Chinese contacts in a narrower context, as well as within the general history of Chinese–foreign relations. By doing so, the features of the Chinese–Central Asian contact formation can be understood better – at least at the official (diplomatic) state level.

The stress here is on the 'official state-level contacts', since this is not the only aspect which can be used to describe Chinese–Central Asian relations. There is another aspect which exists independently from or (at least) parallel to the official contacts: that is, the aspect of everyday life. Although these accounts are sometimes touched upon within the Chinese scholarship on Timurid–Ming contacts, they have not yet been sufficiently elaborated. Most of the studies focus on official diplomatic contacts in order to discern the main features of contacts on the state level, while the story of common people remains marginal. In contemporary scholarship such as cultural anthropology and cultural history, these different narratives are often considered as representing different perspectives, suggesting that there are many different ways of telling the same story, justifying the existence of numerous subjective narratives instead of single dominant 'objective' or 'master' narrative. By using the concept of narrative, it can be argued that future studies should pay more attention to the narrative of everyday contacts in order to reveal how different they are from

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Chinese rule in the early Ming era (see Section 1.2 in Chapter One).

[500] A study of the development of Chinese vernacular (Rajkai 2003) also draws attention to the Confucian disdain towards fiction for being 'untrue stories', which hindered the development of novels for centuries. However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the writing of fiction became highly popular among Chinese intellectuals – although they usually did so without revealing their identities. The trick of how to justify a fictitious story was usually to say that the story had been heard from someone who could 'testify' its 'reality'. By doing so, fictitious stories were justified by making them look like originally *true* stories. This is another example of how the paramount ideology of Confucianism was evaded in reality.

the official ones. By doing so, one can not only reveal these differences, but also shed light upon the Timurid side of the Timurid–Chinese relationship, which has so far been discussed much less than the Chinese side. The fact that the Timurid side has received less attention is due to the fact that studies on Timurid–Ming contacts mainly focus on official relations which are more thoroughly described in official sources – dominantly so on the Chinese side – than everyday contacts. There is very little information about the Timurid rulers' China policy, and therefore it is harder to study. However, focusing on narratives of everyday life behind the Timurid–Ming contacts may reveal more about these contacts on the Timurid side too.

By taking the northern frontier zone of the Song Chinese dynasty and the Kitan dynasty in the tenth to twelfth century as a case study, Furumatsu Takashi 古松崇志,[501] a Japanese researcher of China and Central Asia, points out this sharp discrepancy between diplomatic relations and everyday life. First, Furumatsu points out that academic research on the frontier zone has generally focused on the development from zonal frontiers to linear boundaries in the West, while modern research has by and large neglected pre-modern Eurasian conditions. As Furumatsu asserts, it is mainly the Chinese Great Wall that has received scholarly attention so far. Furumatsu draws attention to that the neglect of the frontier zone is especially remarkable in Chinese studies due to an overemphasis on Confucian state ideology by modern scholarship, according to which there was no border 'under Heaven'.[502] The Confucian world conception of having no borders has dominated modern studies until very recently. Furumatsu argues that, although this attitude is changing, case studies on the frontier zone of China that aim to reveal 'reality' are still very rare. Furumatsu attempts to draw scholarly attention to this problem by taking the tenth to twelfth-century northern Chinese frontier zone as a case study. First of all, he points to the agreement between the Chinese and Kitan rulers to normalise their relationship through a set of regulations in a framework that was called the Chanyuan 澶淵 system. In doing so, he aims to disprove the former common academic belief suggesting that such negotiations between Chinese and non-Chinese could not be a reality. Secondly, he points out that despite this official agreement the reality at the frontier zone was just the opposite of the one suggested by official regulations. Neither the Chinese nor the Kitans were capable of controlling the frontier zone effectively. Both governments attempted to keep

[501] Furumatsu 2007.

[502] This refers to the Son of Heaven (the Chinese emperor), who was assumed to have sovereignty over the entire world.

lands and people apart, not allowing free traffic across the border and carrying out theoretically strict border management system. However, their border management in reality remained very weak, and there was therefore a relative freedom of traffic in terms of people, goods and information across the border area. Smuggling was also a very common phenomenon in the frontier zone.[503]

Similar phenomena can also be found during the Ming times. There are reports on spying, smuggling and bribe being paid in the frontier zone, as well as of Central Asian people buying Chinese women and children and taking them out of the country. Chinese merchants also seemingly crossed the border illegally, and sometimes even got as far as Aqsu.[504] There are also reports of Chinese soldiers guarding the border who engaged in trade with the nomads along the border – in many cases doing so because of the poorly functioning supply system from the middle of the fifteenth century, or simply in order to 'buy peace' from Mongol tribes who would have attacked them otherwise.[505] The reality at the frontier zone was obviously different from the version depicted in the official sources. This reality is a different story or narrative which should be studied as carefully as the official contacts. However, although the world of everyday life is often touched upon in modern studies, the research of this world has remained marginal compared to research dealing with official diplomatic contacts. The phenomena described above are usually mentioned briefly without going into deeper analyses in most sources. Henry Serruys' studies can be considered an exception, since he attempted to reveal everyday contacts between the nomads and the people of Ming China.[506] Likewise, Felicia Hecker's work on the Chen Cheng accounts and her attempts to discover Chen Cheng's personality and his subjective impressions in Herat as a Chinese envoy also point to possible future research trends – that is to say, a cultural historical perspective.

[503] For instance, as Furumatsu asserts, from the middle of the eleventh century, the grain supply for Song Chinese troops at the frontier zone often came from the northern Kitan areas; or to take another example, Song officers also frequently bought horses secretly from the Kitans and took them into Chinese territory. There were also cases in which private Kitan lands were sold to the Chinese, and vice-versa, and at the times of great famine, Chinese and Kitan people sought help in each other's lands.

[504] See Kauz 2005: 72.

[505] See Subsection 2.2.2 and Section 2.3 in Chapter Two.

[506] Serruys also explores the discrepancy between the Chinese court's desire to keep Sino–foreign relations under strict control and the actual life within the lower social strata at the border and market-places.

5.3 Future trends

In Timurid–Ming research, as well as in the research of the general history of Chinese–foreign contacts, studies written from an economic or political perspective have been dominant, along with a cultural approach stressing the role of the paramount ideology of Confucianism missing the realpolitik of China. However, in view of the achievements of Rossabi, Fletcher and Kauz, it can be argued that future research trends should try to focus on everyday life by making use of a cultural anthropological approach in order to show what these contacts may have actually meant for Chinese and non-Chinese peoples, how these contacts may have changed, and whether the fifteenth century was a unique period in everyday contacts – just as it was in the official contacts. In doing so, researchers should also turn their attention to sources different from the *official* ones. As early as 1979, Ildikó Ecsedy, in her study on the contacts between Chinese and nomads in pre-Islamic times, drew attention to the other side of the contacts – the stories of common people, lone travellers, merchants, refugees and others. She argued that these stories must be sought in tales or other kinds of folklore, which may differ from the official stories. Ecsedy's advice should be followed in future research, adding that not only tales or other kinds of folklore, but also any kinds of written documents such as the complaints of local officers about the conditions in the border area should be studied in order to reconstruct the reality of everyday contact and find out the meaning of these contacts for the participants – in a cultural anthropological manner. In doing so, the research of Timurid–Ming contacts will continue to evolve. Such research could reveal not only the discrepancy between ideologies and realities concerning frontiers and boundaries[507] and the characteristics of the institutional framework outlined by the Ming government through official regulations, but also the way common people – through their everyday life practices –

[507] First, one can see a discrepancy between the Confucian ideology manifesting 'borderlessness' – in reference to the fact that the Chinese emperor (the Son of Heaven) ruled the whole world 'under Heaven' – and the political reality in the form of concrete geographical borders. Second, one can see another discrepancy too that pertains to the gap between the desired strict border control in China's defence policy and everyday life around the border areas in terms of smuggling, human traffic (people smuggling), etc., which contradicts the ideal of a strict border control.

reacted to this institutional framework imposed on them from above. Thus, given its specific historical characteristic feature, the research of Timurid–Ming contacts has not yet come to an end, and further studies on these contacts would improve our general understanding of the frontiers and boundaries on China's margins with regard to the discrepancies between ideology and reality.

APPENDIX I.

CLASSICAL CHINESE SOURCES

The list below is an English summary of the classical Chinese sources concerning Timurid–Ming Chinese contacts, based on the work of Zhang Wende (2006):[1]

- *Guochao xianzhenglu* 国朝獻徵録. This is the most important collection of eminent people's biographies between the beginning of the dynasty and the early Wanli period. It was produced in 1616. It includes descriptions of Fu An, as well as places such as Hami, etc.
- *Huangchao zhongzhou renwuzhi* 皇朝中州人物志. This work was accomplished by 1555, and contains biographies of famous people living in Henan province in the first one hundred years of the Ming dynasty. There is also a description of Fu An's life within it.
- *Huangming siyikao* 皇明四夷考. This is a work in which the Ming Chinese described elements of their relations with the outer world. The preface was written in 1564.
- *Huangming xiangxulu* 皇明象胥録. This work was produced by Mao Ruizheng 茅瑞徵 in 1629. In this work, one can find descriptions about Samarqand, Herat and many other places, many of which are extracts from the *Huangming siyikao*.
- *Libu zhigao* 禮部志稿. This book contains administrative and ceremonial regulations, imperial edicts and memoirs, compiled by the Ministry of Rites in 1620. Due to the descriptions of audiences of the emperor and rewards to embassies bringing tribute, one can find useful information within it on the envoys from Central Asia too.
- *Ming huidian* 明會典. This work describes the institutions, decrees and regulations in Ming China. It was compiled three times, and its final form was completed in 1587. It includes numerous records

[1] See the first chapter in Zhang's book for details. Some items were completed according to the notes of Wolfgang Franke in *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History*. It must be noted that the list above does not include all kinds of Chinese sources, but mainly those that are to be considered the most important ones in the subject.

concerning tribute embassies from the Timurid Empire.

- *Mingshi* 明史. This work, which is the dynastical official history of the Ming era, was completed during the first half of the eighteenth century in the Qing era. Its materials were mainly taken from the *Mingshilu*, archives, official reports, etc. There is a separate part in this work titled 'Xiyu' (the Western Region). However, many of the materials in it were taken from the *Huangming siyikao*, the *Mingshilu* and others.
- *Mingshilu* 明實録. This work appears to be the most important source for studying the Ming China's foreign contacts. It was compiled on the base of imperial edicts, orders, official reports, archives and other historical writings. Its contents are very detailed concerning historical events, therefore, it is highly useful for scholars researching politics, economy, military affairs, culture, etc. in Ming China. As for studying Ming China's foreign relations with Central Asia, one has to look at the section about the Xiyu (the Western Region). Unfortunately, since the compilers were not really familiar with the conditions in Central Asia, there are some mistakes in the text, such as mixing up places and dates, persons, and incidents. However, these mistakes occur in specific cases only. What seems to be a bigger problem is that it is difficult to establish whether the events described in the *Mingshilu* (such as the imperial orders on sending embassies to Central Asia) did actually happen in reality, or whether these just remained as orders which were not carried out. Nevertheless, the *Mingshilu* can be regarded as the most complete one among all the sources discussed here.
- *Ming wuzhi xuanbu* 明武職選簿. This volume is mainly about military officials serving at border garrisons. There was a time (especially during the Zhengtong and Tianshun eras) when many people from the Timurid Empire came to submit to the Chinese authorities, who then were put into garrisons in Peking, Nanking, Gansu, etc. It is usually not easy to find their traces in Chinese records, and even in the *Ming wuzhi xuanbu*, yet it does contain some information on this subject.
- *Shuyu zhouzilu* 殊域周咨録. This work that was completed by Yan Congjian 严从简 in 1574 is a comprehensive treatise on foreign countries and their relations with China. Among others, its significance for the Timurids lies in its descriptions of the reactions of Chinese officials to embassies bringing lions from Central Asian cities such as Samarqand, etc. However, unfortunately, one can find mistakes in it in certain places.

- *Taikangxian zhi* 太康縣志. This is a description of Taikang prefecture, in which one can find a brief biography of Fu An, among others.
- *Wanli yehuobian* 萬歷野獲編. This document is mainly about historical, political and institutional affairs in the late Wanli period. It contains personal experiences of Chinese officials such as Chen Cheng and Fu An, reflecting the opinions of Chinese officials about the Timurid dynasty.
- *Xianbinlu* 咸賓録. This is another work on foreign countries, peoples, and their relations with China, accomplished by Luo Yuejiong 羅曰褧 in the sixteenth century.
- *Xiyou shenglanshi* 西游勝覧詩. This is a collection of poems, which was allegedly written and compiled by Fu An, a Chinese envoy dispatched to Timur in the end of the fourteenth century. Unfortunately, it has not survived to the present day.
- *Xiyu fanguozhi* 西域番国志 and *Xiyu xingchengji* 西域行成記. Both of these accounts were made by the Chinese envoy Chen Cheng who was sent to Central Asia between 1414 and 1415. The first account is a description of Central Asian cities through the eyes of this Chinese official. Among the cities, the description about Herat takes the half of the script. The *Xiyu fanguozhi* can be regarded as the Chinese counterpart of the Persian Ghiyāth al-Dīn's work written a few years later. The *Xiyu xingchengji* is a diary by Chen Cheng about the road from China to Herat, with the names of places and the lengths of time the embassy stayed at each place detailed in the text.

The four works below are modern compilations and editions of certain Ming Chinese materials:

- *Mingdai Hami Tulufan ziliao huibian* 明代哈密吐鲁番资料汇编. This work was compiled by Chen Gaohua 陈高华 and published in 1984. He collected materials about Turfan and Hami from thirty-five books and arranged them in chronological order.
- *Mingshilu leizuan: shewai shiliao juan* 明实录类纂: 涉外史料卷. This work was published in 1991, and compiled by Li Guoxiang 李国祥, Wang Yude 王玉德, etc. It contains materials about all the countries in the *Mingshilu*, arranged in chronological order. Among them, it is the chapters on Afganistan, Iran and Central Asia which mainly concern the Timurid Empire.
- *Mingshilu: Wala ziliao zhaibian* 明实录: 瓦剌资料摘编. This

work is about the materials in the *Mingshilu* concerning the Oyirats. Since there was a close relationship between the Timurid and the Oyirats, this work is very useful for researchers working on the Timurid dynasty and Ming China. It was compiled, edited, and commented on by Bai Cuiqin 白翠琴. It was published in 1982.

- *Mingshilu: Xinjiang ziliao jilu* 明实录: 新疆资料辑录. This work is about the materials in the *Mingshilu* concerning Xinjiang. It was compiled and edited by Tian Weijiang 田卫疆 and published in 1983.

APPENDIX II.

THEMATIC TABLE

The table below arranges the studies of Western, Japanese and Chinese researchers of Timurid–Ming contacts (as well as related subjects) from a thematic point of view:

the Chen Cheng accounts:	Sally K. Church; Michel Didier; Natalia Karimova; Boris I. Pankratov; Bruno Richtsfeld; Morris Rossabi; Yang Jianxin; Zhou Liankuan
Chen Cheng:	Emil Bretschneider; Michel Didier; Felicia Hecker; Morris Rossabi; Kanda Kiichirō; Mitsui Takayuki; Duan Hairong; Li Jiang; Ma Junqi; Tian Weijiang; Wang Jiguang; Xue Zongzheng; Yang Fuxue
Fu An:	Emil Bretschneider; Enoki Kazuo
Li Xian:	Lu Shen

the Naqqāsh account:[2]	Ildikó Bellér-Hann; D. M. Dunlop; K. M. Maitra; Étienne Marc Quatremère; Edward Rehatsek; Henry Yule; Mitsui Takayuki; Miyazaki Ichisada; He Gaoji; Zhang Xinglang
Sino–Central Asian relations:	Ding Mingjun; Liu Guofang; Zhao Lisheng
Timurid–Ming diplomatic contacts:	Edgar Blochet; William Chambers; Joseph F. Fletcher; Ralph Kauz; Morris Rossabi; Charlotte von Verschuer; Haneda Tōru; Murakami Masatsugu; Chen Shengxi; Chen Shoushi; Cheng Shuning; Feng Xishi; Gao Yongjiu; He Yan; Jiang Yifan; Liu Guofang; Liu Yingsheng; Liu Zhuo; Ma Junqi; Pan Yongyong; Shao Xunzheng;

[2] Although the Western literature about the Naqqāsh account is not addressed in this book due to its inclination towards a *linguistic* (rather than historical or anthropological) approach, it is worth mentioning its main representatives here. See the study of Ildikó Bellér-Hann (1995) for details.

	Shen Dingping; Wang Jiguang; Wang Xingya; Xing Lihai; Zhang Wende; Zhu Xinguang
the tribute system:	John K. Fairbank; Henry Serruys; Ssu-yu Teng; Tingfu Tsiang

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