

Differences and Reasons for the Records of the Eastern Ocean Line of the Chinese -Japanese Maritime Silk Road in the Tang Dynasty

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Abstract: The Maritime Silk Road represents a significant area of interest within the broader Silk Road system, particularly focusing on the eastern oceanic routes that facilitated exchanges between China and Japan. This maritime corridor was crucial for the transfer of goods, culture, and ideas between the two civilizations. However, the records of this route are different between China and Japan. This paper discusses the records of this route in depth, compares and finds out the differences. From the perspective of historiographical theory, it becomes evident that these differences are not merely factual but are profoundly influenced by societal choices and identity recognition within each culture. Chinese and Japanese historiographical traditions have distinct norms and cultural characteristics that shape their recording and interpretation of historical events. By examining these differences, this study aims to shed light on the historiographical writing practices of both nations, offering insights into how each society views its past and its interactions with others. So as to provide new perspectives for the study of the East China Sea section of the Maritime Silk Road. It emphasizes the importance of considering cultural and societal contexts when interpreting historical records, thereby contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of Sino-Japanese maritime history.

Keywords: maritime silk road, interaction, Buddhism, Jian Zhen

1. Introduction

As research on the Maritime Silk Road relies on historical records, different countries may have varying accounts of the same event on the Silk Road. The route taken by Jianzhen(鑑真) during his eastward journey is an important branch of the Maritime Silk Road during the Tang Dynasty. There are differences between Chinese and Japanese records of this route. This paper uses two historical biographies that document Jianzhen's journey: the Japanese written "*Todaiwajo Toseiden*"(唐大和上東征傳) and the Chinese-written "*Song Gaozheng Zhuan*"(宋高僧傳) as materials to compare the differences in these accounts. Furthermore, it analyzes the complex social reasons behind these differences from the perspectives of economics, culture, and historical anthropology. Although studying a single event like Jianzhen's eastward journey from a micro perspective may have certain peculiarities and limitations, this paper aims to use this perspective to contribute to the understanding of the Maritime Silk Road and Chinese and Japanese exchanges.

2. Differences between Chinese and Japanese records of the Silk Road "East China Sea Route"

In the "*Todaiwajo Toseiden*" described the sixth eastward crossing of Jianzhen as "21st by midday, the first and second two boats arrived in Akonaha island, which is in the south-west of the island of Tanenokuni. December 6 The second boat sent to the Tanenokuni. On the 7th day, arrived in Yaku *gun* island. On the 18th day, the first boat departed from Yaku *gun* island. 19th day On the 20th day, at noon, the second boat arrived at Satsuma-kun, Ata *gun* canton, Satsumanokuni country. 26th day approximately 5am to 7am On the 11th of the first month, the Respected Monk(jianzhen) went to [Da]zaifu, tsukush region. February 1st to Namba On the third day, he traveled to Kawachinokuni On the fourth day, he entered the capital". [1]But in the "*Song Gaozheng Zhuan*" record is just "(they) bought a boat from Guangling present sutra law offshore. It was the sixth month of the second year of Tian Bao.....Stopped at Yuezhou Pu, signed by Fung Shanthey're arriving in Japan one after another". [1]The two countries differ greatly in their accounts of the routes they have traveled. China with two sentences to bring over the route of eastward crossing of Jianzhen, and Japan on the route of eastward crossing of Jianzhen's route for a detailed record; in addition, "*Song Gaozheng Zhuan*" will be the fifth and the sixth description of the mixed description, and carefully read the "*Todaiwajo Toseiden*" can be found in the "*Song Gaozheng Zhuan*" in the description of the "Arrived at an ocean, chun saw the birds gathered in the back of the boat....later [they] moored on an island, and the pool was so clear that people drank sweetly." [2] From the fifth eastward crossing of Jianzhen's sighting "On the seventh year of Tianbao ... one day (they) acrossed the Feinia sea. Bird as big as a man, flying set of boats, boats heavy to be gone, people push by hand, Birds pecking at people's hands tomorrow [After that] (they) meet the pool water, it's cool and sweet, people compete to drink, They're full of water ...". [1] The sixth time was the twelfth years of Tianbao (753 B.C.) Japanese ambassadors such as Fujiwara Qinghe and other people went to the Yan Guang Temple and then they invited Jianzhen to Japan again, five years before and after between those two invitations, and the Chinese record ignored the time difference, by grafting the results of the successful sixth eastward crossing onto the events of the fifth eastward crossing "[After that] (they) meet the pool water, it's cool and sweet, people compete to drink, They're full of water. they're arriving in Japan one after another.....". [2] This record is a straight example. In the Jianzhen eastbound route records, Japan for the eastbound time and place have made a detailed record, while China not only did not make a record of the route of Jianzhen eastbound, and the time and number of times of Jianzhen eastbound is also blurred treatment.

The differing accounts of Jianzhen's eastward journey hold significant importance for cultural exchange between China and Japan. The varied historical records of this event from both countries can mutually corroborate the credibility of the historical events, providing us with a more comprehensive understanding of Jianzhen's journey. Additionally, by comparing the differences in the documents from both countries, we can avoid the partiality and subjectivity of a single perspective, aiding in an objective understanding and analysis of the overall cultural exchange between the two nations. Lastly, the differences in Chinese and Japanese records also reflect the interaction and influence between the cultures of China and Japan at the time. This interaction has had a certain driving effect on the cultural development of both countries.

There are differences in the level of detail between Chinese and Japanese accounts of Jianzhen's eastward journey. These differences are related to cognitive thinking, and the variations in cognition are influenced by factors such as social choices and identity recognition.

2.1. Social choices

Peter Burke once stated, "Neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer. In both cases we are learning to take account of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation and distortion. In both cases this selection, interpretation and distortion is socially conditioned. It is not the work of individuals alone." [3] This suggests that history, to some extent, is a product of selective memory by nations and peoples. Chinese historian Sima Qian mentioned in the "*Preface to the Records of the Grand Historian*" (太史公自序) that the purpose of writing the *shiji* was "to collect and record old stories lost to the world, examine the rise and fall of kings, trace the origins and outcomes, observe flourishing and decline, and analyze the actions of historical figures." [4] This means that the primary focus was to study the patterns of dynastic rise and fall. The *shiji* centers on 12 essential chronicles, with other chapters supporting the main narrative with records of systems, thoughts, and moral standards. By establishing the *shiji* as the first of the Twenty-Four Histories, China intended to set it as a template for future official historiographers. Therefore, Chinese historiography prioritizes investigating dynastic cycles, with the time span of dynasties ranging from decades to centuries, such as the Zhou Dynasty (including the Western Zhou and the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods) lasting 825 years, and the Han Dynasty (including the Western and Eastern Han) lasting 422 years. Even the short-lived Qin Dynasty lasted 14 years. Finding patterns of rise and decline within these lengthy periods and numerous events is a primary task for Chinese historians. Consequently, event selection and maintaining conciseness are fundamental skills for Chinese historians. Furthermore, Sima Qian also mentioned in the "*Preface to the Records of the Grand Historian*" that "to serve the rulers with loyalty and faith, I wrote thirty hereditary houses. To support the righteous and ensure they are not forgotten by time, I wrote seventy biographies." [4] This sets the tone for biographical writing, aiming to establish moral exemplars as the standard for character portrayal. Although the *Gao Seng Zhuan* are not directly related to the rise and fall of dynasties, they also follow the standard of establishing moral exemplars. For example, the *Gao Seng Zhuan* generally depict monks through several aspects, that is, the character's family name and place of origin, the Buddha's origin, the enlightenment (optional, only monks with strong enlightenment ability), the teacher's succession and the initiation, the great achievements of Buddhism and the anecdotes of the gods and monsters, and the deeds of the monks after they passed away. Indicating that these monks possessed the qualities expected of moral exemplars.

In contrast, Japanese historical records, such as the officially compiled *Nihon Shoki*, focus on the deeds of successive emperors, but the accounts are very detailed and often intermixed with myths and legends. For instance, "In that land, there are many firefly-light gods and fly-buzzing evil gods. There are also talking plants." [5]; "At that time, the heavenly deity heard their cries". [5] The narratives include detailed action descriptions and extensive dialogues, such as "Emperor Ojin sat calmly and composedly on his stool."; "Ōtomo no Muraji submitted his request: 'I have heard that during the previous reign, it was not the strength of the city walls that secured the land, but the kinship of the ladies of the inner palace that ensured the continuity of the imperial line.'" [5] The myths and legends not only reinforce royal authority but also have a sense of continuity. Stories with continuity are easier to remember than brief and dull ones; stories with vivid and dramatic elements are more memorable. Thus, detailed action and dialogue descriptions make the stories more lively and memorable, facilitating oral transmission among the common people in an era when books were not widespread. The *Nihon Shoki* was written to be easy to remember, so it needed lively stories to add memorable elements to its otherwise mundane.

2.2. Identity recognition

When historians discuss the reasons for the shift in historical memory, they have provided explanations such as: "Every individual has their own identity, and he or she needs to identify with various groups of which they are members, whether those groups are based on region, nation, ethnicity, race, or formed due to the same profession or experiences".[6] Identity recognition serves as an important function beyond just education, as it not only leads residents to willingly accept the rule of their leaders but also has a lasting influence on future generations. Since modern times, identity recognition has been the foundation for the existence of nation-states. In China, the *Gao Seng Zhuan* continues the basic framework set by Sima Qian for writing about individuals, the character's family name and place of origin, the Buddha's origin, the enlightenment (optional, only monks with strong enlightenment ability), the teacher's succession and the initiation, the great achievements of Buddhism and the anecdotes of the gods and monsters, and the deeds of the monks after they passed away. That framework is similar to the Biographies in *shiji*. The biography of *shiji* follow the rules: Firstly there is a brief introduction to the people which is at the same as *Gao Seng Zhuan*. Secondly it describe some of the huge event of these people, which give the other people some guide about how to make a contribution to the society. Last part is the author's comment about that person, usually use the positive words(except for some bad guys). So it is obvious that *Gao Seng Zhuan* follow Sima Qian's narrative style. The essence of Sima Qian's narrative system is to recognize and uphold the institutional system of the state rulers. Therefore, the overall narrative of the *Gao Seng Zhuan* is similar to the consistent narrative style of the rulers. This indicates that the authors of the *Gao Seng Zhuan* not only recognize themselves as part of the monk community but also as part of the Chinese nation. The same principle applies to Japanese historiography. The *Todaiwajo Toseiden* includes detailed records of specific times and places, as well as detailed dialogues between characters, which closely resemble the writing style of the *Nihon Shoki*. Jianzhen's disciple chose to narrate in a Japanese rather than Chinese style. On one hand, this was to help the Japanese people better understand Jianzhen's eastward journey, and on the other hand, it subtly delineated the boundaries from Chinese historiography. This narrative style, which differs from the Chinese Buddhist narrative but closely aligns with Japanese historical records, indicates Jianzhen's disciple's identity recognition. Clearly, he preferred to narrate Jianzhen's eastward journey from a Japanese perspective rather than using a Chinese framework to recount history. The concept of identity recognition has perhaps influenced the thinking and behavior patterns of people from different countries and ethnic groups more deeply and earlier than its formal introduction as a concept.

3. Conclusion

There is a huge difference between the Chinese and Japanese records of the Eastern Sea Route of the Maritime Silk Road. The article concludes by comparing the Chinese records of the Eastern Sea Route of the Maritime Silk Road that China did not have an exact record of the route, and even ignored the trade routes, while Japan not only recorded the route's paths in detail, but also recorded the time of the route and the people who accompanied the passengers, etc. The difference between the Chinese and Japanese records of the trade is a surface phenomenon, but behind it lies a deeper meaning of the article. The difference between Chinese and Japanese trade records is a superficial phenomenon, the causes of this issue are societal choices and identity recognition. Chinese historiography, influenced by Sima Qian, emphasizes brevity and moral exemplars to understand dynastic cycles, while Japanese historiography uses detailed narratives and mythological elements for memorability and cultural transmission. These variations reflect each society's unique cognitive approaches and identity affiliations. Although the study is based on one person and one event, and there are certain limitations,

but it contributes to the clarification of the specific routes of the East China Sea line of the main Silk Road, and to the understanding of the cultural differences between China and Japan.

References

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