Insular Studies: Tsushima. Island between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan.

Project Course Global History (2017W)
Friedrich Edelmayer
Universität Wien
30.03.2018
# Table of Contents

Table of Contents.................................................................................................................................1  
Abstract..................................................................................................................................................2  
State of Art...............................................................................................................................................4  
Context....................................................................................................................................................5  
A laborious way of finding balance between containing piracy and diplomatic relation. The Choson Korea foreign policy toward Japan..................................................................................................................5  
Japan outside and insight the Sinosphere: connected closed-country.................................................6  
Tsushima, an island navigating politically and socially between Korea and Japan..............................8  
Reference-point and trading partner. Chinas mighty influence on East-Asia.........................................9  
Part 1: Tsushima as the connector between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan. The influence of the Chinese world system on states in East Asia.................................................................11  
Tsushima as a bridge between Tokugawa-Japan and Choson-Korea....................................................12  
Part 2: Focus on Tsushima. How did the Island handle the situation....................................................20  
Part 3 What can we learn from those two aspects?.............................................................................23  
Conclusion............................................................................................................................................27  
Bibliography..........................................................................................................................................28  
Further reading which I read but didn’t quote:...................................................................................29
Abstract.

This paper aims to analyze the specificity of Insular places and Islands. I have chosen an Island called Tsushima which is located between Korea and Japan. This island is large enough for having a little population of settlers but the soil isn’t much fertile: the habitants have therefore to focus on other crafts such as trading. I am especially focusing on the period of Sakoku which is part of the Edo period (1603-1868). After observing the Island from a exterior and an interior perspective, this paper tries to find a method which would permit to have a deeper analysis of islands in general.
How can it be that little dots on the map of an ocean can be relevant in times where there wasn’t Special Economic Zones or fast boats to reach them?

We have to immerse ourselves in a world were everything is different from what we know from our European view. This paper will take us to the island of Tsushima, which is situated between Korea and Japan. Legends say that the first settler, which came from the mainland, set foot on Tsushima before continuing their journey into Japan.

The island Tsushima between Korea and Japan is the bridge for their relationship and the pillar of their diplomacy and trade.

This paper will be giving an insight on how the relationship between Tokugawa Japan and Choson Korea was shaped around Tsushima and then how Tsushima was shaped by this position between those two entities. Since this paper is written for Insular Studies, I will focus especially on the fact how Tsushima has a special position and how generally islands differ from continental spaces.

My question for this paper is therefore: What made Tsushima special and how can we use this information to abstract into a more general vision about islands?
State of Art.

There is a fundamental problem when it comes to Global History: the lack of knowledge for foreign languages. Because I can only speak and read English, German and French, most of the newer literature in Japanese was locked away for me. Indeed, for example there is a researcher based at Nagoya University who specialized in exactly the same subject which I am also doing in this paper. Yet, he only publishes in Japanese, which I cannot read with my little knowledge about this language. Ikeuchi Satoshi has at this moment a research project ongoing about the “Itei-an”, an association of different official and representative that were given the task to organize the trade and diplomacy via Tsushima.

I had the opportunity to talk to one of Mr. Ikeuchi PhD students on his works but since Ikeuchi Satoshi only publishes in Japanese, I couldn’t read any of it. So I come back to the fundamental problem of Global History at the beginning of a scientific career, that most of the time, the researcher didn’t had the opportunity to learn all the languages which are required for his field. “All” is in this case to be taken as “most of the relevant” languages since for example a researcher on the Silk Road would not be able to read all the dialects and languages which are touched by the Silk Road. It’s just too much. In my case, for the exploration of Tsushima, I would have needed deep knowledge on Japanese, Ancient Chinese and Korean to read the literature of fellow scientists, ancient Chinese to be able to understand all the not-Japanese sources.

Since this is my second paper on Insular Studies, I have taken into account what my colleagues of last time had written and this helped me in the creation of my third part. Insular Studies cannot be reduced on one theory or method but rather be seen as a category, which brings with it a variety of tools to interpret islands and recluse places surrounded by water. Especially the works of this semester of Islands as imagined places, described by Lemus Soriano Elmy Grisel or Eggeling Christina, was very mind opening since it showed a whole new degree to what an island represents. Although I may disagree that doing research on fictive islands is still part of history, it is certainly a great example for the projections of ideas onto islands and how they developed (or not) throughout time.

With this in mind, it is more and more easy to draw a line between the established Island Studies by the University of Prince Edward Island and this new concept developed by Friedrich Edelmayer. Whereas the University of Prince Edward Island tries to make Island Studies based on facts and methods, which have been decided upon, Insular Studies gives the researcher more freedom in choosing its subjects and its methods. Of course this creates a corpus that is very large and tends to
expand in any direction, making it even more difficult to define what Insular Studies are. Does this mean that it only have to be related to Islands or Insular Spaces or is there a bigger idea behind which I couldn’t get hold of yet?

Context

For a better understanding of how the relationships between the different countries were at the time we are observing Tsushima, it is important to take a quick look to the history of each of the main actors in this constellation.

Therefore in this part, the history of Korea, Japan, China and Tsushima itself will be treated. To keep this part short, I decided to focus only on the relevant development in the different actors. By this, I mean especially the relationship to Confucianism, the policies with sea trade or warfare and last but not least the image and clinches those actors had from each other.

A laborious way of finding balance between containing piracy and diplomatic relation.
The Choson Korea foreign policy toward Japan.

The history of Korea is of course a prevalent part of the historical context in this work. It is also important to understand the creation of the Choson Dynasty and how it survived this long but also to see what happened on the Korean peninsula to better understand their reaction and their actions towards Japan. It goes without saying that this is also very important for my first part since it will talk about how the island was shaped by its influence. For example, the Wakou who were “pirates” from the 6th century before Christ branded the Japanese seafarer as barbaric and plundering: some of the anti-Japanese policies of China and Korea were then promoted as being against those pirates even though the Wakou had already evolved into a multi-ethnic general term for the sea-robbers in the East-Asian world. Those pirates established their base in Tsushima since it was a perfect spot to attack the coast of Korea. Since Tsushima was part of the Japanese realm, the Korean King asked the Muromachi bakufu1 to bring this piracy epicenter under control. This was also the establishment of diplomatic relationships between the two countries: Japan was sending convoys to the Choson King and the Korean were sending what will be later called Tongsinsa to Tsushima and the Japanese court.

---

1 Muromachi bakufu is the organization of the state during the Muromachi period (1333-1568 AD).
These early contacts between Tsushima, Korea and Japan are very important to understand the major role that Tsushima and therefore the Sō family will later play: during one of the first delegation of Korean passing through the Japanese inner sea, the Korean perceived that the Muromachi bakufu didn’t have the full territory under firm grasp but rather that the local *Daimyos* were in charge of managing their own part of the Japanese territory. In the light of this insight, the Korean decided to put their faith into the lords of Tsushima. Choson Korea made multiple concession to Tsushima, from granting them the right to fish in Korea’s coastal waters up to giving them official post in the administration in order to prevent the resuming of piracy in this area.\(^2\)

Korea also regulated the trade with Tsushima and by its extend with Japan by opening only a few ports where the traders arriving from the island would be obliged to rest in special houses: the *Waegwan*. Those houses were under strict control and permitted to limit and to supervise the connection of the Japanese and the Korean.

One of the main objectives of Korean’s Japan policy was to tackle piracy from its roots and therefore to confine any source of piracy: especially on Tsushima were there wasn’t a lot of food resources, bad harvests meant a strong rise in piracy. Choson Korea therefor agreed to provide Tsushima with rice in exchange of taking up the task to regulate the trade and travel permits. After a short break caused by the Imjin War\(^3\), Tsushima negotiated with Korea in the name of Japan by using forged letters and deceit. Upon discovering this, Tokugawa Iemasu just decided to go with the fraud in order not to destroy the frail post-war relations between the two countries and making therefore Tsushima as the official representative. This was also the beginning of *Tsongsinsa* diplomacy from the Choson government.

Japan outside and insight the Sinosphere: connected closed-country.

The organization of the state in Japan was very unique: it had aspects of an Confucian system with the categorization and social hierarchy of the society but didn’t accept the Chinese emperor as the highest ruler on earth and instead created their own emperor which was at least equal with the Chinese one. Since the Japanese emperor was a descendant of a deity and the representation of the whole country, his power where diminished and almost rendered useless but never was he disposed of. Especially with the end of the Warring State period, the emperor had been stripped from almost every function.


\(^3\) The Japanese Invasion of Korea under Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

Julian Lölkes

Tsushima. Insular Studies.
“Historians today interpret these maritime provisions more as examples of normal statecraft and the extension of Tokugawa control, rather than paranoia or cowering antiforeignism.”

The Sakoku Edicts weren’t a full closing of the borders but more a closing and restriction for the European ideas and traders. The idea of this “closed country” is coined by C. R. Boxer in his work *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650* published in 1951, where Boxer argues that the Tokugawa Japan shut itself off the international streams of trade. Indeed, in his work he writes essentially about the Christian in Japan and how they were ousted by Hideyoshi and later by Tokugawa. He also is mainly a maritime historian with focus on the Netherlands and Portugal and maybe this is the reason for his idea that the position of Japan is based on a “closed country” ideology. Indeed from an European perspective, Nagasaki became the only window for information from the West into the Japanese society.

Instead, Japan decided to trade with Korea, Ryukyu and in some restricted ways with China. Ryukyu was essentially a door to the Chinese market and its trade. Especially when the Manchu overthrew the Ming dynasty in 1644, the Tokugawa Shogun decided to export weapons to Ryukyu where they could have been sold to the Chinese traders. This shows how even with the Sakoku Edicts and in this case the ikoku part, which forbids exporting weapons, the Japanese Bakufu was still interested in the ongoing evolution in China or Korea. Trade is only a way to regulate the interaction with the exterior world for an island.

Indeed the trade is also an important indicator of the relations between countries or even continents. Looking closer at the trade relations between East Asia and Europe, there is a clear pattern which appears over the centuries: most of the time, there are produced goods going from East-Asia to Europe and currency from Europe to East-Asia. This is the prime time of the Silk Road and later on of the East-India companies. This trade reached new highs with the discovery of the silver mines in southern America when the European countries could buy what ever they wanted. Generally, the silk road is perceived as a link between China and Europe, but as a matter of facts, the silk road even reached more or less directly Japan. Many products, which were sold in Europe via China, were produced in Japan.

---

Tsushima, an island navigating politically and socially between Korea and Japan.

Tsushima as a connector between Korea and Japan goes way back in history. During the first century AC, one of the tribe on the Korean peninsula had diplomatic and economic relationship with the Wa of Japan. Tsushima fulfilled an important task to be a sort of intermediate landing for the ships traveling between Japan and Korea.

This economic hub kept going through the period of the Silla dynasty in Korea and gave Tsushima the opportunity to grow as an trading hub.

In the 12th century, Tsushima was more a pirate hub, being the base for the Wakou pirates who attacked the coast of Korea and China. The existence of pirates can be a major indication for trade and wealth but also shows us the limit of state control by both parties (Korea and Japan). If we make a world system schema after Wallenstein of this region, we can see that there are trading connections between the core and the periphery. In this case, Tsushima is the periphery, also at the periphery of the central powers of Japan or Korea. This makes Tsushima a perfect hideout for pirates since they can strike at the core but retreat to its hideout where the retaliation is less probable.

After a major expedition of Korean military on Tsushima in 1419, the problem of the Wakou was diminished and even more after the opening of trading ports for the Japanese Traders in 1425, giving the opportunity for Tsushima to regain its status as a trading connector.

With the end of the Warring State period in Japan, Tsushima and the Sô family reigning over it became the official liaison between the Japanese Bakufu and the court of Korea. As I stated in the part about the Korean history, the Sô family gained high posts in the Korean administration but also the right to issue travel permits for merchants since the trade between Korea and Japan was strongly regulated. This interlacing of relations and manpower created strong ties between Tsushima and Korea: in 1609, the Sô family was charged of diplomatic relations and trade with the Choson government throughout the Edo period. Just to remember, at this time, with the Sakoku Edicts it was prohibited for most Japanese subject to have any interaction with any foreign power, yet Tsushima gained the right to maintain its relationship with Korea and even represent Japan in the name of the Shogun.


Another important point in the historical context is China. A lot of political decisions, trade and culture were influenced by China or the politics in China: the Korea invasion was motivated by the thought of invading China, a lot of import goods were from Chinese origin and finally with the dominance of Confucian based state organization, China took a greater role in the definition of internal politics in its sino-sphere.

China, before the great divergence created by the industrial revolution in Great Britain was the main producer of goods in the world. Most of its craft were exported in the known world via large trading routes established by China. The most known is probably the Silk Road which was a trading route between Europe and China by land and, as its name indicated, was mainly used to transfer silk and luxury goods from China to Europe and silver back to China. The Silk Road enjoyed a great publicity with the tales of Marco Polo but also other trading routes existed with China. For example, the south-Chinese sea was the theater of a large trading route between the southern part of China and India passing through the Strait of Malacca. But in the sea of Japan, the trading situation was different: with the interdiction of private traders, only official tributary missions were allowed to enjoy commerce in this part of the coast of China. This sea ban was called Haijin and was effective during the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing dynasty.

This led to an increase of smuggling, using settlements in the peripheries to avoid the strong governmental control by the Empire. Especially Formosa and Tsushima became the bases of operation of those smugglers and pirates. Those pirates used an old name, Wakou, to distract the Chinese politician and therefore creating even more animosity between China and Japan. Wakou means dwarf pirate and has its origin from around 600 before Christ when Japanese raiders were harassing the coasts of China. The pirates from the Ming period were mainly Chinese but used this name to dissimulate their true identity.

With this in mind, it is easier to understand why the trading or smuggling routes were established alongside the tiny islands between China and Japan: on the one hand, those smugglers didn’t own large ships and on the other hand, the islands of Ryukyu granted them security and enough cover to hide themselves from the Chinese government. The Japanese government, if we can speak about an

government in the time of *Sengoku*, was dependent from those smugglers in order to purchase Chinese goods: since Japan was not in a tributary relationship with China, every trade with China was forbidden for Japanese.\textsuperscript{14}

In the *Sakoku* period, the *Haijin* was partly lifted and some Chinese traders could trade with Japan via Nagasaki and the Ryukyu kingdom.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid p. 294.
Tsushima is a key to understand the place Japan tried to have in the Chinese world system. It is necessary to point out that in East Asia the relationship between states weren’t the same as in Europe. In Europe, with the peace of Westphalia, each state was seen sovereign and equal to each other; meaning that the concept of state was the highest sovereign power and was not inferior or superior to another state. In East Asia, the peace of Westphalia didn’t have much impact on foreign relationships and therefore the Chinese world system continued to exist. This system is closely related to the Mandala system of South East Asia where borders are not seen as a clear demarcation line but rather as a limit of hegemonic sphere. The Chinese world system have also those attributes but with the clear definition of a center which is the Chinese Emperor. The states that are revolving around this center are then categorized in function of their degree of Confucianism. Hence, the states are not all equal to each other since there is a ranking between them. This means that the states were not measured by their economical achievement but rather by their ranking in Confucianism.

In the case of Choson Korea, the state is a direct vassal of the Emperor of China and therefore a part of the Chinese world system. There are regular tributary envoys from Korea to the Chinese Emperor and most of the politics are made in function of the center of this world system. Japan on the other hand didn’t have constant relationships with the Chinese Emperor and didn’t recognize him as the highest sovereign in the world. Therefore Japan was not part of the Chinese world system and seen as inferior to every country of this world system. Yet, Korea and Japan tried to find a middle ground by seeing each other as equals which made trade and relationships possible. Tsushima itself was regarded from the perspective of the Korean as even less confucianized as Japan: it was therefore inferior to Korea in the ranking of this Chinese world system. This position as vassal of Tokugawa Japan and the inferiority to Korea made it possible for the So family on Tsushima to take the position as a connector between those two states. Since there wasn’t any obligation to be more or less part of only one political construct or state entity, Tsushima had the liberty to build connection between itself and the two major forces. Of course, this wasn’t put in place in one day but has to be rather seen as a process over multiple centuries. It is remarkable that Tsushima had the possibility to regain more or less it’s status pre-Imjin. This leaves to believe that
already at the time of Imajin, the relations between Tsushima and Korea were stable. Yet, it also shows which side Tsushima picked ultimately which made it undeniable Japanese. This is probably the reason why the Shogun decided to delegate its foreign policy on the matter of Korea to the Sô family.

**Tsushima as a bridge between Tokugawa-Japan and Choson-Korea.**

As I mentioned in my historical context, the world was, from the point of view of Korea, divided into countries, which had a Confucian system and those who did not. What is remarkable is that the Korean literati made a ranking of the degree of Confucianism. Even though inside the same system, there was a difference between the countries\(^\text{15}\): the Korean made a difference between the Ryukyu Kingdom, a kingdom which was conquered by the Satsuma samurai family, and Japan and Tsushima. The Ryukyu ranked first, being the most confucianized because they had a tributary relation with China, then came Japan and last was Tsushima. With this ranking, Tsushima held also a special place: the Korean literati knowing Tsushima was part of the Japan at this time (so without Ryukyu and Hokkaido) still made a difference between the two.

Tsushima had such a bad rating because it was the base of operation for pirates who raided the Korean coast. To counter this, Korea and Tsushima struck a deal that regulated the trade between them and created the *waegwan*. *Waegwan* is a Korean word for accommodation for dwarfs, referring here to the image of *Wakou* (6th century dwarf pirates from Japan and were raiding China and Korea). With the establishment of a regulated trading route, there was also an intensified cultural exchange between the island and the continent.

Another political point that created differences between Korea and Japan was the way in which Japan would fit in the Confucian System. This system where the emperor of China took the highest rank was not compatible with the idea, that the Japanese Emperor was a deity and therefore the highest rank of the world.\(^\text{16}\) Yet, the Bakufu was a state system inspired by the Chinese state organization and the Confucian thoughts: this made the Japanese look less “barbaric” in the eyes of the Korean kings. This aspect is important in the way formalities and diplomatic missions were treated.

We can see that in the visual representation of the foreign relations of Tokugawa Japan, Korea and Japan are “equal” in their relationship. This is a sort of work-around made by negotiation so that

---


\(^{16}\) Roland P. Toby (1984), p. 34.
none of the two parties were offended.\textsuperscript{17} In that work-around, especially the family of Sô became
the main link between Korea and Japan: The Sô was at the same time a vassal of the Shogun and the
Korean king.\textsuperscript{18} This exception is remarkable since on one hand, the Lord of Tsushima is the vassal
of two kings and on the other hand, it is a clear break with the edicts of \textit{Sakoku}.

The following point is difficult to put in either Cultural exchange or economic exchange since it
happened both at the same time and was more a difference than a similarity: the slave trade.

One of the mistrust of the Japanese \textit{bakufu} towards the European traders and \textit{Padres}\textsuperscript{19} as described
in the \textit{Sakoku} Edicts was the fact that they were a main reason of slave trade in Japan and between
Japan and the East-Asia world. This legislation was of course mainly targeted towards the trade
with Japanese Slave and not slaves from others countries. In times pre-Hideyoshi, the percentage of
slaves in Japanese society in comparison with other East-Asian societies was already low but with
the \textit{Imjin} War the enslavement of Japanese people was even lower. Slaves from other countries were
still sold in Japan, especially in Nagasaki and Hirado by the European traders but after the \textit{Sakoku}
Edicts this decreased also.

This whole defense policy against enslavement of Japanese people makes a huge difference to the
Korean peninsula and the Chinese mainland. In those parts of the East-Asia sphere, enslavement of
their own people, especially peasants and less “free” citizens, was common.\textsuperscript{20} We need to keep this
in mind when observing some of the local law passed by the Tsushima administration.

Indeed, during the \textit{Sakoku} period there was a more or less irregular exchange of diplomats between
Korean and Japan. There were two types: those going to whatever was recognized as the central
power (mainly \textit{Edo} as the headquarter of Tokugawa-Japan) and those going to regional lords
(mainly coastal \textit{Daimyos} in the western Japan area). It is easy to characterize the period before
Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s invasion as one of policies designed to deal with the Japanese center and
after that with the regions when the center was seen as incapable of stopping piracy along the
Korean coast. After Hideyoshi and the \textit{Imjin} war, Korean policies dealt with the \textit{bakufu} to determine
if a re-invasion was in preparation and specifically with Tsushima to gather intelligence and manage
trade. Korean embassies to the center before and after 1592 were the communication embassy
(Korean: Tongsinsa, Japanese: Tsuushinshi) and Korean embassies to Tsushima were the interpreter

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{17} Reinhard Zöllner: Auf verlorenem Posten. Tsushima s Stellung zwischen Japan und Korea.
\textsuperscript{18} George M. McCune: The Exchange of Envoys between Korea and Japan During the Tokugawa Period. In: \textit{The Far
\textsuperscript{19} Usage of the Portuguese name for Christians.
\end{footnote}
embassy. Those embassies that were exchanged between Korea and Tsushima were charged of more common tasks such as organization of trade, problems with the *Waegwan* or the repatriating of shipwreck survivors.

The foremost function of the embassies to Japan for the Koreans was intelligence gathering. Other functions included repatriating Koreans taken to Japan and civilizing a barbarian neighbor. The first three embassies (1607, 1617, and 1624) to meet with the Japanese shogun after Tokugawa Ieyasu and his heirs came to power in 1600 were actually called the "Reply and Prisoner Repatriation Embassy". From 1636, the official and ceremonial function of communicating congratulations on the ascension of a new shogun became true in name and deed, and the Tongsinsa name was applied for the first time after Hideyoshi's invasion: From the 1636 Communication Embassy onwards, the second most important function, a performance to civilize barbarians by proper ritual and propriety, increasingly became the paramount function and this continued until the last embassy in 1811 that only went to Tsushima.\(^{21}\) As I stated before, China and the countries, which were tributary to it, were considered as the paramount of civilization and culture. Korea saw itself at eye level with Japan, yet since Japan wasn’t part of the Sinic world, it was therefore a barbarian state. The *Tongsinsa* were an attempt to move Japan toward “civilization” and into the Sinic world.

In these respective circumstances, the arrival of the Koreans was cause for extensive celebration. The Embassy passage was seen as an opportunity to show pieces of Art or to acquire more knowledge about the Korean peninsula. The *Bakufu* and the *Daimyo* spent vast sums to host the embassies, because the Japanese elite desired to be in touch with this "civilization" in contact with peoples who were thought to be more cultured in the ways of Confucian gentility. By engaging Korea in the same way they thought China and Korea engaged each other, the Japanese asserted their participation and identification with the Confucian world. Since the Tongsinsa was a guest of the state, it had to be accompanied by the Delegation of Tsushima during the whole voyage but also the domains had to pay for all the expenses where the embassy had to pass through. Concern with the embassies was therefore not just an elite activity. As the embassies passed, their presence engaged villagers along the path who had to enable all the logistics for this venture. The embassies engaged coolies who tended horses and transported baggage. Extra taxes to pay for the embassies outraged peasants in the Kanto region. The embassy engaged urbanites as spectators who gawked at passing parades of exotic foreigners. The Korean embassies were the largest and most expensive public events of the Tokugawa period. In their wake were produced copious paintings, records of poetry exchanged, calligraphy, and other mementos.\(^{22}\)

The relationship between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan was multi-layered; they unfold on the diplomatic space, the ideological space, the cultural space and the economic space. The *Tongsinsa* is a good representation of those layers since they are all concentrated in one event.
Tsushima as a economy hub. The case of Silver and merchants on the Island.

Tokugawa Japan was a Confucian organized state. This implies that there was a Confucian society structure and therefore also a certain hierarchy among the occupation classes: the highest rank is the ruling class, the second highest is the bureaucracy, the third is every activity which produces something and the last is the class of merchants.\textsuperscript{23} The reason behind this organization is that the ruling class is of course the most important since they are in charge and they have the power of the country, the bureaucracy class is also very important since they are in charge of executing the directives of the ruling class. The production class is important since they produce something, especially the farmers which produce the goods needed to feed the population. Finally, the last and least class is the merchant class which have the worst position in the Confucian system since they don’t rule, execute or produces anything but simply profit from the lack of certain products in certain regions. They are therefor seen as parasites of the society by the Confucian ideology since they only profit from the misfortune of others.

The general streams of trade were based on silver mined in Japan to be used to buy goods from China via Nagasaki, Tsushima and the Ryukyus. The European just optimized this trading because they had the possibilities to travel with bigger ships between Japan and China. The Dutch had their route from China via Formosa (todays Taiwan) whereas the Portuguese used their outpost in Macao to make the voyage. This can be seen as a part of the more global phenomena of the Silk road.\textsuperscript{24} But Japan had also trading routes with two other partners: The Shimazu family of Satsuma and the Sô family in Tsushima. Satsuma is located at the south end of the Japanese main island and has therefore a tight relationship with the kingdom of the Ryukyu whereas Tsushima is an island located between Japan and Korea and therefor in the middle of the main sea route between Korea and Japan.

It is important to point out that this trade did go hand in hand with diplomatic relationships. The Lord of Tsushima was mainly responsible for this and therefore Tsushima was the first stop of the envoys of the Chosons kings. The main reasons of the high traffic between Japan and the mainland was caused by a loss of confidence in the Chinese fiat money and a strong will to go back to silver minted coins.\textsuperscript{25} Yet China had a trading ban (Haijin) with Japan so the trade had to pass through a proxy: Tsushima or the Ryukyu. In an article written by Tashiro Kazui and Susan

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Guillaume Carré (2009), p. 469.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
To begin with, the relations with Korea have been very important for the Japanese trade. The bulk of this trade was ginseng from Korea and silver from Japan. Yet, the relations between the two countries have been more than irregular. As described in my historical context, during the period of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Japan and Korea were at war and at this time, a lot of misconception and cliché were building against each other. The mistrust and animosity was still high after the end of the war and played a role in the decision of trade contracts. The number of ports open for trade were reduced and generally the relationship cooled down. Yet, with the still strong connection between Tsushima and the Korean court, Tokugawa Ieyasu was able to reopen negotiation and trade.

Korea only accepted Japanese traders in its port at Pusan but as it is a port outside Japan it was therefore in contradiction to the edict which forbade Japanese citizens to leave the country.

Why did the Tokugawa Bakufu accept such an exception? For this, it is important to understand the situation of Tsushima. Reinhard Zöllner explained the reason for this exception in a very simple way: Ginseng was a very important part of the Asian medicine and it didn’t grow in Japan. Indeed, the Bakufu even pressed special silver blocks designated for the trade with Korea, which still had a high percentage of silver even though the mining of silver declined in Japan as described before.

---

28 http://www.ikga.oeaw.ac.at/Events/Reinhard_Zoellner_2017 [23.08.2017].
The Ryukyu Kingdom was the southern connection to China for Japan. It also held a singular position in the organization of the state. Tashiro describes it in the following way: “The Ryukyus were incorporated into the Satsuma domain after a successful conquest by the Shimazu clan early in the seventeenth century. Since the country was simultaneously a vassal state of China and thought of as a foreign country by the Japanese, the Ryukyus were relegated to the unique status of being ruled by two nations at the same time. A diplomatic envoy was dispatched to the Bakufu from the Ryukyus, much like the Korean envoy just described. But in the case of the Ryukyus, a strongly vertical relationship was established, the Chfizan king addressing the shogun as his superior. The Bakufu regarded the Ryuku embassies as tribute missions.”

This trading post was relevant for the Japanese since the Chinese Ming and Qing dynasty had also a Sea Ban (Haijin) at this time that was especially directed against Japan. The Ryukyu became therefore the back door of trade with China since both countries weren’t exporting to a foreign country.

Those connections were also source of an important technological transfer: with the insatiable hunger for silver of China, old mines which had been closed were reopened thanks to new technologies which were brought by those trading routes. For example, one Korean official was accused of transmitting the technology of “cupellation” to disguised Japanese traders in order to render possible the re-opening of mines in Japan.

Yet, even though the scientific trend tends to refute the idea of Japan as a closed country, it was still a period where diplomatic relationships were closely regulated and settled down to a minimum. With this limited exchange and the self-centered policy of the Tokugawa period, there was a great problem inside the Japanese society.

The ideal economic world, strongly influenced by the main categories that I described at the beginning of this part, had a major focus on agrarian optimization. The idea behind was somehow the following: The peasants produce, the merchants are responsible for the logistics and the samurai govern. Yet, such a vision was no longer possible with the beginning of the Sakoku period because the end of the Sengoku Period brought with it a flourishing of craftsmanship and the emerging of new cities. Also, the samurai, which had withdrawn from the land, had become an urban consumer class and had to rely entirely on the service of others. This was even more accentuated by the fact that the samurai and their Daimyos had to upkeep a large delegation in Edo. The political system, which was built to keep a strong hold upon the subjects of the shogun, was the denial of its own economic policy. Of course, this idea of optimization of its agrarian production was bearing its

---

30 Ibid.
31 Guillaume Carré (2009), p. 496.
fruit in the beginning thanks to the introduction of basic knowledge, the double cropping or the improvement of tools. Yet, due to the fact that the land tax was calculated on the production capacity of the land and that the industry and trade was neglected by this economic policy, it resulted in a sort of freezing its own development. Another problem with this policy was that the product upon which traders could speculate was the staple food of the population. Especially the traders of Osaka were able to acquire wealth by buying and holding grains and then selling it for a higher price when there was a demand for it (bad harvest or the date to pay the tax which was collected in rice).\footnote{John Whitney Hall (1971), p. 208.}
Part 2: Focus on Tsushima. How did the Island handle the situation.

After having researched on the possibilities given by Tsushima for the two actors, I am interested in what changed on Tsushima itself under the influence of being in this particular position.

The outcome of the fraud of official documents by the Sô family in order to re-establish diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan was that there was a system of rotation of Buddhist monks on the island in order for the Tokugawa Bakufu to have a system of control upon the diplomatic relationships. This meant that even though the Sô family was monitored, they were at the same time recognize as being the official actor of this diplomatic exchange. With this rotation of monks, called Itei-an, there was also the creation of a Korean language school on Tsushima and a large apparatus of advisors.

But there were even more advantages of the role Tsushima played in Tokugawa-Japan: it had economic advantages granted by the Bakufu, which the Sô family used to ease their way. For example, since there was often exchange of official between Tsushima and Choson Korea, the island became something like the window to Japan for the Korean. It was therefore in the interest of the Shogun to make Tsushima be splendid. In practice this meant loans and special rights for Tsushima. Indeed, Tsushima had the right to get large amount of money through loans at the near-bankrupt Bakufu at better interest rates than at the normal market value. This money was used for presents or to sustain the trade between Korea and Japan. Or, in case of bad harvest, to buy rice from Korea. Why is this important? Normally, a Daimyo on the mainland Japan would need to take a loan at higher interest and buy the grains from markets such as Osaka. But since Tsushima had the possibility to trade with Korea, other means were offered.

Also, in order to keep the trade between Japan and Korea alive even though most of the silver mines in Japan had to close since their resources were exhausted and the minting had a reduction of silver percentage, Tsushima was still provided with special coins rich in silver so that the Korean would still accept them. With the exhausting of the silver mines, the Japanese economy was facing a strong inflation which had a even greater impact on the trade with Korea: the traders of Tsushima were extremely affected by this and when in 1695 the mintage diminished from 80% pure silver to 64%, the quantity of Korean goods in the Japanese marked decreased drastically. Since the bulk of the trade with Korea was Ginseng, a medical root, this decrease in trade didn’t just influence the traders on the island but the whole population in Japan.

In order to compensate the lack of silver, Tsushima acquired the right to have a special share of selected goods from the trade in Nagasaki. Fueling the Korean-Japanese trade with products from the South-East-Asian sphere. For the people on the island this was vital since most of their wealth and well being was dependent from the trade with Korea.

The Sô family acquired great power by having a firm grip upon the ships which could travel to Korea and land in the designated ports (e.g. Pusan). The Sô issued those travel permits after receiving the right from both Japanese and Korean authorities. This made him irreplaceable for both parties. The Tokugawa Bakufu needed this to be able to have foreign interaction with the other East-Asian countries and Choson Korea wanted to keep this position in order to contain the re-emerging of piracy in the Korean strait. The later is shown by the fact that the exchange of tribute between Korea and Tsushima was a little bit in favor for Tsushima and even more, Tsushima had a monopole of the goods coming from Korea that was a very profiting business.  

Those are advantages and differences which were granted to Tsushima by the fact of their special position as an island in-between Korea and Japan. But what about differences on the legal side? Of course, being able to leave the country and to come back without being sentenced to death is a major difference to other Japanese citizens but it was not the only difference in the administration and organization of the island.

Some of the institutional differences are caused by the influence of the Korean administration. The administrators of Tsushima opted sometimes for a change, which was inspired by the Korean organization, and this can be seen mainly in two distinct examples.

Let’s start with the difference in their relations to slave. As I mentioned before, there were less slaves then elsewhere at this time and during the reign of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the enslavement of their own population was reduced to only a few exception where it was used as a major punishment for crimes. I also stated that this differs from the Korean peninsula where enslavement was often used as a form of punishment even for minor crimes. To put it simply, in Tokugawa Japan, as a punishment for crimes, a person could be excluded of the society and therefor loose bonuses such as representation in his caste or he had to do extra work which was given by the lord.  

It is more based on the serf system, which we know from the european Middle-Age. It is not enslavement by definition because only a portion of the liberty and privileges of the prosecuted where cut for a certain time and not the whole as it is in slavery. On Tsushima, the rule for slavery differs from the Japanese standard and is more close to the Korean way of using enslavement as a punishment.

---

Indeed, on the island is was more common to be enslaved for a crime because the administration of Tsushima was more or less connected to the administration of Korea: some of the habits were taken over and brought to the island from the peninsula. 38 This can be explained as James B. Lewis does this in his book “Frontier Contact Between Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan”: “Tsushima, by contrast, practiced slavery from the Muromachi to the early Meiji, and from the early Edo period enslavement became the principal form of punishment. [...] Evidently, some were enslaved for crimes committed at the Waegwan in violation of Korean law.” 39 The criminal who committed a crime in the Waegwan were judged by Japanese official and this practice was later taken over to the island so that enslavement became one of the major punishment on Tsushima, creating a huge quantity of government-slaves.

Another example I want to share about the institutional changes that were inspired by Korean organization was the way in which taxes were calculate. In Japan, taxes were calculated on how much grains were produced on the land and thereafter what the rice taxes should be. This system was only based on grain production and not enough flexible to include other products such as fish and others. On Tsushima, the ground was not fertile and therefore the taxes would be very low by this system. Even more, as I mentioned, the Tokugawa organization of economy was focused on agrarian optimization whereas on Tsushima, the main occupation was linked with the trading business. The administration of Tsushima was therefor forced to adapt their taxation methods in order to have better revenue. The island copied the taxation system of Korea where the production of a certain parcel of land would be translated into a production grade and then into the tax grade. This system was more flexible to a variety of products such as fisheries, trading and so one, making it possible to classify the different businesses into categories and then tax them respectively to their production value. 40 Tsushima is the only place in Japan to adopt such a similar system to the Korean one. This is another clue to be seen as institutional influence from Korea.

38 James B. Lewis (2003), p. 31-32.
39 Ibid. p. 31.
Part 3 What can we learn from those two aspects?

For a better understanding of the singular situation of an island, it is important to regroup many different factors. Most of the time, studies concentrate only on one aspect such as economic, social or political.

For an island, in my opinion, it is necessary to regroup those elements into one function which should help to understand the outcome but also the different influences of each and every element. Yet, it is impossible to keep track of every element and even less possible to put into account all this information. It is therefore important to reduce our input to key elements which should give us the better understanding of how and why certain development took place on an island and why not.

I believe that the most suitable approach for this problematic is the spacial turn because it give the possibility to observe one space or layer as a whole but also to keep track of the interaction between different spaces. I see the spaces as forms with different sizes and different densities: the size may represent the dimension of those elements but the density may give us a clue on the importance.

For example, in todays Europe, the space “religion” may be extensive and in contact with a lot of different spaces such as “traditions”, “architecture” and so on but its density may not be as great as other spaces such as “commodity chain” or “minimum wage” since “religion” isn’t that much important anymore in our daily lives.

Spaces are therefore groups, which are not defined in time, but being able to interact with each other, overlapping or even being part of a bigger space.

The major flaw with this idea however is that by being able to define everything as a space, the element “island” is just another space and not really something which is unique. This uniqueness is only possible by comparing the density of the spaces of an island to those of the continent. For example, the space “sea level rising” will be denser for an island with low altitude than for Nepal since this change won’t affect them directly. The problem with comparison is that by comparing one element to another, inevitably one will become the standard whereas the other is the exception. This is a major obstacle for an objective interpretation. Yet, there will be hardly any way around if we want to determine what is “different” on an island.

Let’s get a grasp on what generally an island has as aspects and which is pretty clear: an island is surrounded by water. For example if we translate this information into spaces, we get three spaces, the space “connection via air”, the space “connection via land” and “connection via water”. If the time frame of our studies is before the invention of any means to travel via the air, the space “connection via air” does not exist. If there is no bridge, which connects the island to something,
then the associated space won’t exist. Therefore the space “connection via water” will be large, meaning it will boarder or overlap with different other spaces, and its density will be also very important.

The further the island is from any other land, the less the space “connection via water” will be large but the density will remain the same since when there was a contact, most of the times it had a huge impact on the native population. This can especially be seen in the diaries of the european “explorers” when they met with indigenous population in the pacific: even though the european contact was only irregular and with no implication for a steady relation between those two spaces, the impact of those contacts was very important for the islanders.

In order to clarify my idea, it is important to make a juxtaposition of the spaces of the island and those of a continental area to see the key differences and therefor why it is relevant for Insular Studies. On a continental location, the space “connection via land” is the main space of connection whereas “connection via water” exists also if the location is near a river or a coast. “Connection via water” and “connection via land” are fundamental different and therefore the implication which comes with this is clear but important. I would argue that “connection via water” needs an certain amount of technological advancement whereas the “connection via land” requires almost no technological precondition: to travel 100 kilometers by land, it is only necessary to have at least two legs whereas to travel 100 kilometers by sea already requires resources, knowledge and technological advancement. Before obtaining this technological advancement, the sea will be a barrier whereas the land is an extension of living space. The “connection via water” and the “connection via land” have therefore different implications and side effects. Therefore I believe that the density of “connection via water” is greater than the density of “connection via land”.

Of course, the usage of the sea as a source of food is also very different from the land. Such examples are numerous and mean that islands and continents may have the same spaces but with a difference in the density.

Another side effect of analyzing islands in this way is that multiple theories that were crafted in western world won’t fit with other preconditions than those in Europe for example. The idea of clear borders as described in the Westphalia System is not applicable on the East-Asian world. Therefore we either need theories which are crafted especially for this topic or region, or need theories which are flexible enough to be applied everywhere.

Specific theories may have a better usage of the information given and therefor provide more satisfactory solutions to the problems which are observed. In in this case indeed, it is foremost important to track down what islands are special about. Therefore, it is relevant to have a theory.
which can be applied at different places and by this, give us the mean of comparing a situation from different geographical locations.

Of course there are different variation of the spacial turn but the idea with the density is an important aspect which can help to understand also more political and economical related tasks. For example, the ideas of the World System Theory by Immanuel Wallenstein can be easily reproduced with the different density: the center will have spaces which are denser than those of the periphery. If we then define spaces of political power it is quite simple to draw a mental picture of the more denser spaces in the “center” of this power whereas the spaces in the periphery are less dens. But maybe there are new powers which have their spaces of power covering the periphery of a core. This is a representation of the Mandala system of influences which is very dominant in the East-Asian part. This system, also called “Eastpfalian” to draw the difference even more to the Westphalian, is not based on the ideas of clear borders for such things as territory, religion and so on. The Eastphalian is more seen as sphere of influence emitting from the different cores.

In the example of Japan, aside from Tsushima, the Ryukyu would be a good case scenario: this kingdom in between Taiwan and Japan was under the rule of the Satsuma family which is a Daimyo family of the Japanese political system. Yet, this Kingdom also paid tribute to China and was therefore a part of the Sinosphere. The Ryukyu were therefore a vassal of two different political entities because it was at the periphery of both.

Tsushima had a similar situation as the part of the ties between Tokugawa Japan and Choson Korea.

After having explained my theoretical standpoint, it is foremost important to apply it to the subject of Tsushima. The two previous parts of this paper are therefore more or less the introduction to this final part. Yet, it is relevant to analyze the subject in such deepness to be able to see differences on a micro level. I think by having the point of view how the island transformed itself and how it shaped the relationship between Japan and Korea gives us a great insight on the different spaces and how they where at this time. This is necessary because only focusing on the external connection would create a lack of knowledge on how this transformation was received. Focusing only on the internal elements of Tsushima would create a sort of isolation of something which is greatly connected with Japan and Korea.

If we break down the information that I wrote in the first and second part of this paper, it will become a little bit clearer what I want to achieve with this method.
Let’s first start to define the different spaces I have described without naming them spaces. Korea had the “culture space” with the Tongsinsa, the “institutional space” with the policy in Tsushima which differs from those in Japan and finally the “economic space” with the trade relations. Of course, those are not the only spaces that were part of Korea. Japan had also those spaces: “culture space” such as the language, “institutional space” with the whole organization of the Bakufu and the allegiance to the Shogun and finally the “economic space” with the economic market that Japan had.

Now, if we see Japan and Korea as two cores, which were emitting those spaces, it is inevitably that some spaces may come into contact or even overlap. Therefor it is important to bring the idea of the density of those spaces into account in order to understand that at the periphery where there is such interaction, which space would be more likely to be followed or incorporated. Tsushima can therefore be seen as such an example of being at the peripheries of those two cores. In some case, the spaces of one core or the other were put forward: in the case of economy, Tsushima was completely dependent on the rice of Korea and their trading potential. The “economic space” of Choson Korea was therefore more dense than the Japanese one on Tsushima.

Yet, Tsushima and their lords, even-though being embedded into the administration of Korea always saw themselves as being Japanese: the “institutional space” of Japan would be more dense than the Korean one but we can see that Korea still had a strong influence. This goes hand in hand with the “culture space”.

But now, this view is not considering the capacity of Tsushima to be also a core for their own spaces. Maybe lesser important spaces and not such a strong core than Tokugawa Japan or Choson Korea but still a core. This became clear when Tsushima had the possibility to do its own foreign policy via fraud or lesser envoys between itself and Korea. Tsushima therefore created its own spaces which are strongly influenced and overlapped by the spaces of Korea and Japan, but their own density varies: the “economic space” for Tsushima was vital which brought with it a adaptation of its “institutional space” (the enslavement and tax policy) which was copied from the Korean space. This is what I tried to put forward when I stated that island or insular places are special since the density of their spaces differs from spaces from the continent.
Conclusion.

After having conducted my research on Tsushima, reviewing its special position and its meaning for the Korean-Japanese relationship, I have come up with this conclusion. Tsushima is an island, which first served as a station between Korea and Japan. As time continues, this position was used and abused to acquire power. After using methods such as fraud, the Sô family of Tsushima had the monopoly upon the trade with Korea and was the representation of the Korean policy of the Edo Bakufu. Korea on the other hand wanted to secure their coastal regions and by this suppress any piracy activity that originated from Japan. Both parties, Korea and Japan, had therefore a large interest in Tsushima and how they could extend their power upon their neighbor. This made the power of Tsushima since it permitted them to grow as a local core, issuing their own policy and making moves toward both parties in order to get more advantages granted.

To get a better understanding of this situation, it is nonetheless important to step away from international relations ideas which are based on an European model such as the Westphalia state system. It is important to reach out for new theories or to remember how statecraft was made before the expansion of the European model.

In order to get a better grasp on what makes an island special, I try to propose a new form of the cultural turn and its method revolving around the idea of non-material spaces. I add the component of density which can vary in function of its reception and their distance between what can be seen as a core and its periphery. I make even the bold proposition that island are special because their assignment of density to certain spaces differs profoundly from spaces on the continent.

This method I propose is not only applicable for islands but for each matters. It incorporates different ideas from relations between elements from around the world, making it not bound to one region or one period. Yet, because it is so universal applicable, the outcome of such a method is less precise than a method which is specialized in a certain portion of the world or a certain period. Maybe it is at first sight a good general approach to break down events and relations but it may be ultimately inferior compared to a specific method in a specific situation.
Bibliography:


Further reading which I read but didn’t quote:


