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Ships, Spatial Interconnections, and the Problematization of Peripheral East Asia in the 1860s

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Abstract

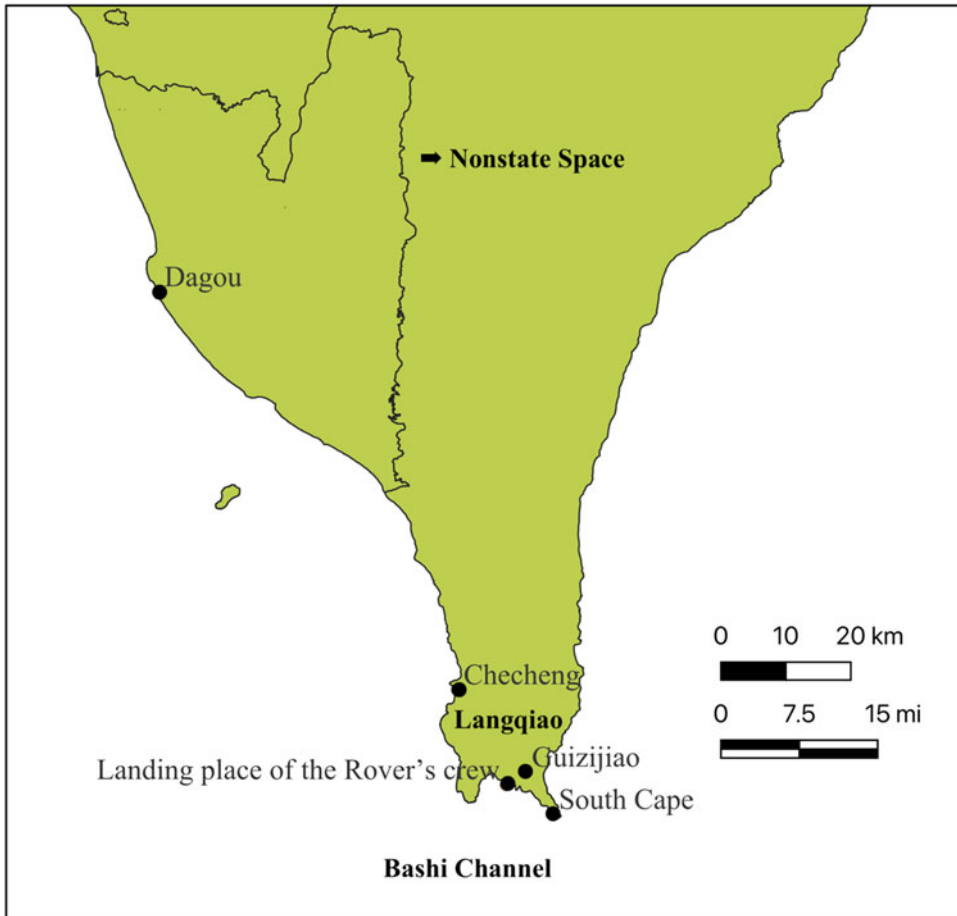
The 1850s and 1860s were a crucial era in the history of East Asia. The opening of treaty ports and advances in information and navigational technologies both generated new commercial opportunities and brought more people and commodities from Europe and America to East Asia. What were the consequences of these political and socioeconomic changes and the resultant spatial interconnections? I argue that spatial interconnections rendered centuries-old nonstate spaces in East Asia increasingly problematic, to the extent of creating international conflicts. To illustrate this, I reconstruct the mutual influence among places constructed by and shown in the lives of the shipwrecked American vessel *Rover* and its crew in East Asian waters. Their activities embodied how transpacific and East Asian communication and commerce, and the growing treaty port community in China, became entangled with how Taiwanese aborigines managed their interaction with the outside world. In this and similar borderland incidents, spatial interconnections between central and peripheral East Asia constructed by ordinary people crossing borders, and the problems arising from such interactions, led to the problematization of peripheries in the 1860s.

Keywords: East Asian periphery; *Rover* Incident; spatial interconnection; Taiwanese aborigine; treaty port

On a Saturday morning in March 1867, the American barque *Rover* departed from Shantou (Swatow) in southern China for Niuzhuang in the north ([map 2](#)).¹ Probably meaning to follow the sea route along the eastern coast of Taiwan (Formosa), the *Rover* foundered off Langqiao at the southern end of the island three days later, on 12 March. After finally landing on the island, most of the survivors were killed by Langqiao aborigines, except for one Chinese crew member, who escaped and reported the incident on 22 March to the British consulate in Dagou (in modern-day Kaohsiung City, [map 1](#)).² Unfortunately, little was accomplished with regard to locating and assisting other possible survivors, despite rescue missions on 26 March and 24 April by British and American naval groups stationed

¹ When contemporaries talked about the treaty port of Niuzhuang, they meant the port of Yingkou. Niuzhuang was the name used in the Treaty of Tianjin, although it was in fact an inland city. Song Yuxiang and Chen Qunyuan, “20 Shiji yilai dongbei chengshi de fazhan jiqi lishi zuoyong,” *Dili yanjiu* 24, no. 1 (January 2005): 89–97; WM. Fred. Mayers and N.B. Dennys, *The Treaty Ports of China and Japan*, ed. N.B. Dennys (London: Trübner, 1867), 538.

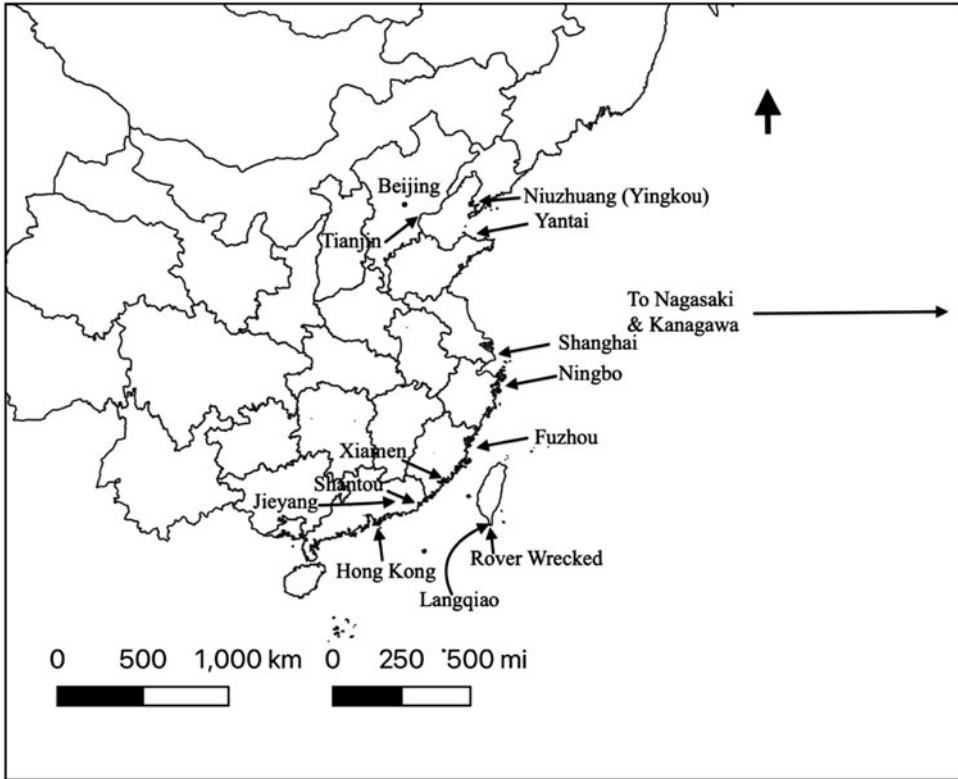
² Robert Eskildsen offers a succinct introduction to the incident. Robert Eskildsen, ed., *Foreign Adventurers and the Aborigines of Southern Taiwan, 1867-1874: Western Sources Related to Japan's 1874 Expedition to Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 2005), 3–6.



Map I. Langqiao and Southern Taiwan.

Source: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, "Taiwan lishi wenhua ditu xitong" (2003), <http://thcts.ascc.net>.

in China, mobilized, respectively, by the British Consul Charles Carroll (at Dagou) and the American Consul Charles W. LeGendre (later, at Xiamen). In addition, the atrocity garnered considerable public attention, as news of the *Rover's* wreck and loss of lives spread to Hong Kong and many treaty ports on the China coast before reaching other Asian countries, Europe, America, and Australia. On 9 April, the Chinese survivor's statement, a crucial source of information, was taken in Shantou by the local American consul. On 13 June, two US Navy vessels attacked Langqiao, but did not achieve a decisive victory. Under pressure from American Consul LeGendre, Qing Brigade General Liu Mingdeng, who was the top military commander in Taiwan, reluctantly embarked on a military expedition on 10 September to inspect Langqiao. Ultimately, however, war did not break out, because on 10 October, LeGendre and Tauketok, the leader of the Langqiao indigenous confederation, signed a treaty in which the aborigines pledged to protect future shipwreck survivors as long as they followed a set of specific rules. The *Rover* incident thus drew to a close. It might have evolved differently if the castaways had landed in the Qing jurisdiction a mere 35 miles (56.3 km) to the west. This was due to the de facto independence of Langqiao, the name for the whole peninsula in the extreme south of Taiwan. The political



Map 2. The Rover's area of activities.

Source: China Historical Geographic Information System, "1820 Layers UTF8 Encoding" (Harvard Dataverse, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/STSKKM>.

situation significantly shaped the castaways' fate and influenced subsequent diplomatic negotiations and military operations.

The 1850s and 1860s were a crucial era in the history of East Asia. The opening of treaty ports and advances in information and navigational technologies both generated new commercial opportunities and brought more people and commodities from Europe and America to East Asia. What were the consequences of these political and socioeconomic changes and the resultant spatial interconnections? I argue that spatial interconnections rendered centuries-old nonstate spaces in East Asia increasingly problematic, to the extent of creating international conflicts.³ To illustrate this, I investigate how Langqiao, a nonstate space on Qing China's Taiwan frontier, developed increasingly close relations with the outside world, evolving into a source of problems. My intervention, however, is not an analysis of high politics. Instead, I reconstruct the mutual influence among places constructed by and shown in the lives of the shipwrecked American vessel *Rover* and its crew in East Asian waters. Their activities embodied how transpacific and East Asian communication and commerce, and the growing treaty port community in China, became

³ According to James C. Scott's definition, "nonstate space . . . points to locations where, owing largely to geographical obstacles, the state has particular difficulty in establishing and maintaining its authority." The term appropriately describes Langqiao's political conditions. Inhabiting such a nonstate space, Langqiao's residents were largely autonomous. James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 13.

entangled with how Taiwanese aborigines managed their interaction with the outside world. In this and similar borderland incidents, spatial interconnections between central and peripheral East Asia constructed by ordinary people crossing borders, and the problems arising from such interactions, led to the problematization of peripheries in the 1860s. This development created the momentum for the political incorporation of peripheries in subsequent years.

The Periphery, East Asia, and the World

The literature on the shipwreck of the *Rover* and the killing of its crew by Taiwanese aborigines in 1867 can be divided into three broad categories. The first studies the incident from the perspective of diplomatic relations and other aspects of high politics.⁴ Produced relatively recently, the second body of literature fully takes into account local contexts and examines the incident's implications for the locals.⁵ The third body of research features a balanced treatment of local, imperial, and international contexts, offering insight into the changes simultaneously occurring on the three levels in the *Rover* incident and subsequent histories.⁶ Adopting the third approach, this article aims to trace individuals who made history at both local and international levels simultaneously. To that end, broad historical trends and their interrelationships with the local need to be examined first.

Commercial expansion in the mid-nineteenth century increased the possibility of confrontations over East Asian peripheries. Following the consolidation of the treaty system and the augmentation of treaty privileges, the mid-century witnessed the expansion of Euro-American commercial interests, especially British ones, to regions beyond the coastal metropolises such as Shanghai and Canton.⁷ At the same time, Chinese merchants

⁴ James Wheeler Davidson, *The Island of Formosa: Historical View from 1430 to 1900* (London: Macmillan, 1903), 115–22; Inō Kanori, *Taiwan wenhuazhi: Quanxin shendingban*, ed. Guoshiguan Taiwan wenxianguan (New Taipei: Dajia chuban, 2017), vol. 3: 406; Sophia Su-fei Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1965), 125–36; George Williams Carrington, *Foreigners in Formosa, 1841-1874* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1977), 152–68; Huang Chia-mu, *Meiguo yu Taiwan: 1874 zhi 1895*, 2nd ed. (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1979), 201–23; David F. Long, "The Diplomat versus the Sailor: Armed Intervention in Taiwan, 1867," in *Naval History: The Seventh Symposium of the U.S. Naval Academy*, ed. William B. Cogar and Patricia Sine (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1988), 107–16; Leonard H. D. Gordon, *Confrontation over Taiwan: Nineteenth-Century China and the Powers* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 56–66; Shih-shan Henry Tsai, *Maritime Taiwan: Historical Encounters with the East and the West* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 117–18.

⁵ Douglas L. Fix, "The Changing Contours of Lived Communities on the Hengchun Peninsula, 1850-1874," in *Guojia yu yuanzhumin: Yatai diqu zuqun lishi yanjiu*, ed. Liwan Hong (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 2009), 233–82; Hane Jirō, "Rōbāgō jiken no kaiketsu katei nitsuite," *Nippon Taiwan gatsukaihou*, no. 10 (May 2008): 75–96; Paul D. Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire: Japan's Rule on Taiwan's "Savage Border," 1874-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018), 56–65.

⁶ Robert Eskildsen, *Transforming Empire in Japan and East Asia: The Taiwan Expedition and the Birth of Japanese Imperialism* (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019), 43–71. To be sure, the scholarship falling into the first two categories does not entirely ignore the local or international contexts. What differentiates the three categories are different research agendas. Furthermore, as always, efforts to categorize research will encounter borderline cases.

⁷ John K. Fairbank, "The Creation of the Treaty System," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank, vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 213–63; the treaty system refers to "the set of privileges secured by foreign powers in treaties negotiated with the Qing" in a series of military conflicts and diplomatic negotiations from 1842 onward. Foreigners were thus allowed to trade and reside in designated treaty ports. Robert A. Bickers and Isabella Jackson, "Law, Land and Power: Treaty Ports and Concessions in Modern China," in *Treaty Ports in Modern China: Law, Land and Power*, ed. Robert A. Bickers and Isabella Jackson (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 1; Takeshi Hamashita, "Tribute and Treaties: Maritime Asia and Treaty Port

also took advantage of newly-opened treaty ports to expand their business operations throughout East Asia.⁸ Against this backdrop, interior and peripheral regions were more directly exposed to intensified external influences. As a result, incidents occurring in these places and involving local people were more likely than ever to evolve into international conflicts with serious consequences for both international and local societies. In this context, China's maritime frontiers, whose politics were once largely determined by its domestic policies, became genuine borderlands, featuring inter-imperial struggles.⁹

Frequently at the core of these international conflicts was the issue of sovereignty, and tension between sovereignty in Euro-American understandings and the existence of political peripheries was a global phenomenon.¹⁰ Although the concept of sovereignty gained currency as a result of imperialism and international law in East Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, the idea was not always put into practice due to distinct local realities. This was not a situation unique to East Asia but common to the rest of the world.¹¹ In other words, the conflict involving autonomous Taiwanese aborigines and nonstate spaces can be considered as a local expression of a worldwide phenomenon of the era. In numerous instances, the world envisioned by international lawyers and scholars succumbed to the reality on the ground. One related phenomenon was that "sovereignty could be held by degrees," a situation that possibly accommodated the practices and institutions of indigenous peoples and polities.¹²

Furthermore, the issue of sovereignty had additional meanings in the East Asian context. The conviction that disputed borders created opportunities for Western imperialism propelled Japan to clarify all its territorial boundaries, systematically and simultaneously.¹³ This process conflicted with China's ambiguous political relationships with Korea, Ryukyu, and Taiwan, manifested in institutions such as the tribute system and the segregation of the frontier from the interior.¹⁴ The urgency of full sovereignty in East Asia explains why incidents involving peripheries could have international consequences.

In these conflicts, sovereignty was not only a political issue but also an economic one. Paul D. Barclay, a historian of Japan, suggests that the reliance on long-distance trade to satisfy basic needs was closely tied to "the global war on legal pluralism," a war that

Networks in the Era of Negotiation, 1800–1900," in *The Resurgence of East Asia: 500, 150 and 50 Year Perspectives*, ed. Giovanni Arrighi and Mark Selden (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2003), 17–50; John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842–1854* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953).

⁸ Takeshi Hamashita, *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Linda Grove and Mark Selden (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2008), 106.

⁹ Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron emphasize the inter-imperial struggle of colonial borderlands. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 815–16.

¹⁰ Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 276–77.

¹¹ Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire*, 15.

¹² Lauren Benton, "From International Law to Imperial Constitutions: The Problem of Quasi-Sovereignty, 1870–1900," *Law and History Review* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 602–3.

¹³ Eskildsen, *Transforming Empire in Japan and East Asia*, 30–38.

¹⁴ The tribute system is "a unified system characterized by region-wide tribute trade relations, with China at the center." This system defines foreign relations and commercial interactions in East Asia and Southeast Asia in the early modern period. Hamashita, *China, East Asia and the Global Economy*, 12; John K. Fairbank and Su-yu Teng, "On the Ch'ing Tributary System," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6, no. 2 (June 1941): 135–246; on segregation, see Joseph Fletcher, "The Heyday of the Ch'ing Order in Mongolia, Sinkiang and Tibet," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank, vol. 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 351; James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759–1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 202.

targeted peripheries where sovereignty was not defined in the modern Euro-American sense. The distinct local settings threatened Euro-American commercial interests, namely the smooth operation of economic activities which entailed production, transportation, and consumption on a global scale. In short, Barclay maintains that it was global trade that brought empires into conflict over political peripheries and precipitated the subjection of this kind of space.¹⁵

Accepting Barclay's economic perspective of political change, I further emphasize the importance of social interactions that occurred when people travelled and migrated, the actors who made global capitalism possible. Through their stories, I demonstrate how the process was shaped by not only structural forces but also real people.¹⁶ It is imperative to look beyond the metropolises to understand this process. The activities of people in the peripheries, on the sea, and beyond were of consequence. These histories were made by various kinds of economic and social connections between peoples and places across East Asia. As the *Rover* case demonstrates, Taiwanese aborigines on the political periphery of East Asia affected the lives of treaty-port residents, even if the two sides had never met.¹⁷ The result could be fatal to some, but it goes beyond changing individual lives.

Centring around the puzzle of why the *Rover* appeared to make a lengthy detour that passed southern Taiwan and ultimately foundered there, Section 1 demonstrates that this region was a critical node in the mid-nineteenth-century transpacific and East Asian navigational networks. For this reason, southern Taiwan and its population were more likely to encounter outsiders when interactions between different parts of East Asia and the two sides of the Pacific coasts became frequent. Against this backdrop, Section 2 traces how the *Rover* and its crew ended up in southern Taiwan, analysing their activities in connection with the broad political and socioeconomic changes during the two decades prior to the incident. The activities of the *Rover* and its crew embody emerging or reinforced spatial interconnections. One of the far-reaching consequences of such interconnections, as Section 3 discusses, was contact and even conflict between outsiders and Taiwanese aborigines, who attempted to make sense of, and tighten security in, this changing world. Their efforts caused political tensions between China and other countries, and in hindsight led to China's attempts to incorporate nonstate spaces and autonomous aborigines.

Southern Taiwan on Transpacific and East Asian Sea Routes

Although it is known that the *Rover* foundered in a region called Langqiao in southern Taiwan, there is limited research connecting either this region or incident to the expanding transpacific and East Asian navigational networks. The Langqiao valley is about 8.5 miles (13.7 km) in length and 1.5 miles (2.4 km) in width, surrounded by mountains and, at its western end, by the sea. To the south of the Langqiao valley is the bay where the *Rover* crew was killed.¹⁸ To the north of the valley was the nearest Qing jurisdiction, but the mountains caused problems for overland transport between the two

¹⁵ Barclay, *Outcasts of Empire*, 16–19; the quote is on page 19.

¹⁶ This approach, in the words of Tonio Andrade, a historian of global history, is global microhistory. Tonio Andrade, "A Chinese Farmer, Two African Boys, and a Warlord: Toward a Global Microhistory," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 4 (December 2010): 573–91.

¹⁷ Researchers have shown the extensive networks that treaty-port residents boasted. See Douglas L. Fix, "The Global Entanglements of a Marginal Man in Treaty Port Xiamen," in *Treaty Ports in Modern China: Law, Land and Power*, ed. Isabella Jackson and Robert Bickers (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 158–78; Peter C. Perdue, "Interlopers, Rogues, or Cosmopolitans? Wu Jianzhang and Early Modern Commercial Networks on the China Coast," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 1, no. 25 (December 2017): 63–83.

¹⁸ Eskildsen, *Foreign Adventurers and the Aborigines of Southern Taiwan, 1867–1874*, 69–77.

areas. On the coast of Langqiao valley was Checheng, the largest Chinese settlement in Langqiao, with an estimated population of 1,500 in the 1860s.

At the time that the *Rover*'s crew was killed, Langqiao had never been permanently controlled by any of Taiwan's successive regimes, whether the Dutch East India Company (1624-1661), the Spanish (1626-1642), the Zhengs (1661-1683), or the Qing (1683-1895). Langqiao aborigines did occasionally nominally surrender to outside political authorities, but they essentially maintained de facto independence.¹⁹ Likewise, the Chinese in Checheng and other settlements were autonomous. Not until 1875, eight years after the *Rover* incident, did the Qing create a jurisdiction to govern Langqiao. Before this, the Qing had excluded from its jurisdictions most areas beyond the island's western coastal plain. The exclusion was formalized in 1722 when the Qing court drew an island-wide boundary, roughly separating the island into eastern and western halves. In principle, Qing subjects were prohibited from entering the east. As for the aborigines in the excluded areas, in most cases the Qing adopted a laissez-faire approach, assuming no responsibility for these "raw aborigines" (*shengfan*).²⁰ Among them were the Langqiao aborigines, whose encounter with the *Rover* crew thus created a complex situation. It was in this narrowly circumscribed political context that the *Rover* tragedy unfolded.

Regarding the *Rover* incident, scholars have discussed much of what happened onshore in Taiwan. In comparison, little has been covered about what occurred in other sites on the many itineraries of the ship. A discussion of these locations is the key to understanding both the mariners and the indigenous peoples involved. More broadly, the connections among these places signify changing relations influenced by contemporary politics and commercial links between various East Asian regions and increased interaction between the three continents surrounding the Pacific.

The *Rover*'s appearance in southern Taiwan may seem puzzling to those unfamiliar with nineteenth-century sailing routes because the shortest route to its destination would not lead through that region of Taiwan. The only details of the tragedy came from a Chinese sailor, Tek-Kuang, the sole survivor. He did not specify exactly where the *Rover* struck a rock and foundered. An anonymous letter sent to the *China Mail* on 30 March 1867 claimed that the location was "evidently the Vele Rete Rocks."²¹ These rocks are at the north end of the Bashi Channel, which separates Taiwan from the Philippines' Batanes Islands. The voyage would have been markedly shorter if the *Rover* had sailed along coastal China, which would have prevented the fatal accident off southern Taiwan. Hence, to understand the larger historical context of the incident, we must examine the decision of its captain, Joseph W. Hunt, to pass southern Taiwan.

Hunt's choice of a route passing southern Taiwan was likely due to navigational considerations. Southern Taiwanese waters were a well-known part of the Pacific maritime transportation routes. In the 1860s, with unprecedented frequency and at various scales

¹⁹ This situation resonates with other Qing frontiers, with populations connecting to the Qing empire to some extent but not fully incorporated. For examples in southwest China, see C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

²⁰ For a full exploration of the boundary policy, see John Robert Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Ka Chih-ming, *Fantoujia: Qingdai Taiwan zuqun zhengzhi yu shufan diquan* (Taipei: Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, 2001).

²¹ The letter was later published by *The London and China Telegraph*. *London and China Telegraph*, 27 May 1867; a copy of this letter was appended to the dispatch of Isaac J. Allen, American consul at Hong Kong, to Secretary of State William H. Seward. "Executive Documents No. 52 American Bark *Rover*," in *Executive Documents Printed by Order of the Senate for the Second Session of the Fortieth Congress of the United States of America, 1867-68*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1868), 9-11.

the island of Taiwan was mapped on many established and emerging shipping routes that connected numerous ports. Published in 1852, the most recent before the *Rover* incident, the sixth edition of *The India Directory*, a popular publication detailing sailing directions, described how to travel from Macao to Australia by passing through southern Taiwanese waters. According to the directory, vessels generally passed the southernmost tip of Taiwan and northern Luzon travelling from Macao to the northwest coast of Australia or the United States. Although not the only route available, this one was generally followed, according to the directory.²² The directory seems credible, given that its author claimed to have had twenty-one years of navigation experience in the oceans between Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. However, the problem with following the aforementioned route to Australia during the northeast monsoon was that vessels could be forced to make an abrupt detour: strong trade winds could force them to go northward and eastward to the area near Hawaii before they could begin sailing southward.

As trade between the East and West expanded, more efficient transpacific sailing routes were being discovered. As late as 1867, the Pacific Mail Steamship Company stated in its publication *A Sketch of the New Route to China and Japan*:

The best route of crossing the North Pacific has yet to be thoroughly determined. Several passages will have to be made before the secret is obtained . . . The longest way round may be the shortest in the end, and answer better than a straight line, but this is yet to be seen.²³

This statement leads to the inference that by the 1860s mariners had been exploring the Pacific and assessing the advantages of each possible route. The search for transpacific routes must have involved learning about the currents and winds around Taiwan, whether from exploration or from local mariners. It was in this phase of Pacific maritime history that the nonstate spaces of Taiwan attracted much publicity and the *Rover* incident took place.²⁴

Furthermore, because southern Taiwanese waters were environmentally unstable, temporary anchorage in the area was often critical. Charles W. LeGendre, the American Consul at Xiamen, urged Chinese authorities to control the southern region of Taiwan because the area was strategically crucial but full of natural dangers to navigation. In LeGendre's words:

The south of the island is one of the most important highways in this part of the world, and, at the same time, it may be said to be the worst spot for the storms and convulsions of nature that any sailor may have to visit in the China seas. . . [Ships might wreck in this area when] turning to the east to catch the currents of the [Pacific] Gulf Stream (Kurosiwo).²⁵

The shore allowed temporary protection from high waves. Robert Swinhoe, the first British consul in Taiwan (at modern-day Tainan, southern Taiwan), noted that vessel

²² An alternative route was also mentioned in the *Directory*. James Horsburgh, *The India Directory*, 6th ed. (London: WM. H. Allen, 1852), vol. 2:532.

²³ Pacific Mail Steamship Company, ed., *A Sketch of the New Route to China and Japan* (San Francisco: Turnbull & Smith, 1867), 95.

²⁴ See also Douglas Fix's excellent article on the production of hydrographic knowledge of Taiwanese waters. Douglas L. Fix, "Charting Formosan Waters: British Surveys of Taiwan's Ports and Seas, 1817-1867," *Hanxue yanjiu* 32, no. 2 (June 2014).

²⁵ Charles William LeGendre, *Reports on Amoy and the Island of Formosa* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1871).

captains found anchoring at the South Cape convenient during bad weather, although attacks by Taiwanese aborigines on ships seeking such shelter added another danger.²⁶

In addition to transpacific navigation, movement by sea within East Asia involved southern Taiwan. Responding to LeGendre's encouragement of Chinese colonization of Taiwan's southern tip, an article in *The Foochow Advertiser*, which also appeared in *The London and China Telegraph* in 1867, justified the decision made by captains to pass the east coast of Taiwan (instead of coastal China) as follows:

During the whole of the north-east monsoon vessels wishing to go from Swatow [Shantou], Amoy [Xiamen], or Taiwan to Foochow [Fuzhou] and the north, go round the South Cape of Formosa ... [to] avoid the very strong [southward] current [when passing through the Taiwan Strait].²⁷

This explains why marine transportation between the northern and southern coasts of China involved a detour to Taiwan. Nevertheless, this navigational choice often required captains to obtain provisions in Langqiao and thus increased the chances of their contact with indigenous people.

In summary, owing to navigational considerations, southern Taiwan was frequented by travellers on transpacific and East Asian sea routes in the mid-nineteenth century. However, while providing anchorage and provision, southern Taiwan posed challenges to travellers due to the uncertainty arising from its nonstate spaces and autonomous aborigines. The distinctive political context of southern Taiwan could thus be a source of international problems when the probability of contact and even conflict increased as a result of the spatial interconnections taking place in East Asia and the Pacific. To illustrate this development concretely, it is helpful to recount the stories of the *Rover* and its crew.

The History of a Vessel and the Interconnections between the Places it Visited

Navigational considerations only explain why the *Rover* passed southern Taiwan, but why this American ship and its crew were in East Asia in the first place remains a puzzle. An investigation will reveal that their activities embody the movement of people who were attracted to East Asia for commercial and other types of opportunities in the mid-century. Their movement, as a result, increased the probability of contact and even conflict between East Asian peripheries and the world.

Why the *Rover* incident took place in southern Taiwan can be linked to the boom in trade in the 1860s following the opening of new treaty ports in China and Japan, a commercial development that increased the frequency of contact between these places and their peoples. The experiences of the passengers and crew of the vessel clearly indicate how the changing East Asian maritime environment had attracted new residents from afar and promoted greater interconnectedness through the circulation of commodities, information, and people. Eventually, the situation had a ripple effect on nonstate spaces and peoples as well.

The ship's story begins in 1849 in New York, where the *Rover* was built by A. Bell. Details of the sailing history of the first ten years of the *Rover* are unknown. It was owned by the W. Nelson and Son company between 1858 and 1862 and commanded by three different captains. The *Rover* was surveyed at least twice: first in New York in

²⁶ Henrietta Harrison, ed., *Natives of Formosa: British Reports of the Taiwan Indigenous People, 1650-1950* (Taipei: Shung Ye Taiwan yuanzhumin bowuguan, 2001), 66.

²⁷ *London and China Telegraph*, 14 October 1867.

January 1859 and later in San Francisco in March 1860.²⁸ The change in location signifies a shift in its geographic area of activity.

The turning point in the *Rover's* history occurred in mid-1860 when the eleven-year-old ship began its specialized use in trade operations within East Asia. Its whereabouts during the half-year after the 1860 survey in San Francisco remain unknown, but the vessel made its first known appearance on the China coast on its way from Hong Kong to Japan's Kanagawa via Shanghai in August 1860.²⁹ In East Asia, the *Rover* was commanded by two successive captains between mid-1860 and March 1862. Under their command, the *Rover* was probably still owned by W. Nelson and Son and chartered by two companies. For these two enterprises, the *Rover* regularly carried commodities between Hong Kong and Shanghai, but also visited Kanagawa and Nagasaki, two Japanese ports. The documented activities of the *Rover* attest to its particular use in trade within East Asia.

At some time in 1862, Joseph W. Hunt from New York, the *Rover's* place of origin, became the new captain of the ship and most likely its owner as well.³⁰ Henceforth, the *Rover's* operations expanded to cover an even larger area as Hunt pursued commercial opportunities in a new era of expanding trade. In an 1863 ship registry, Shanghai was listed as the *Rover's* home port instead of New York, and the vessel was no longer associated with W. Nelson and Son, the company that had owned it between 1858 and 1862.³¹ Under Captain Hunt's command, the *Rover's* major commercial partner became Frazar and Co., a multinational company that had branches in Shanghai, Tianjin, and Nagasaki.³² The *Rover* continued its voyages between southern China and Japan as usual. Nevertheless, Hunt had business with several other companies in later years, and the *Rover* sailed to other destinations, such as Fuzhou in South China and Yantai (Chefoo) in North China, where ports had recently been opened to foreign vessels. Thus, the *Rover* was likely among the earliest visitors to these ports.

The new chapter in the *Rover's* history in East Asia must be placed within the context of the political and socioeconomic history of China and Japan during the 1860s, which featured booming trade within East Asia and frequent interactions among treaty ports. It was a time when many foreigners felt optimistic about amassing their fortunes in China, although their assessment was not always adequate or thorough.³³ In the early nineteenth century, only five treaty ports in central and southern China were available for legal Sino-foreign trade on the China coast. However, as a result of the Second Anglo-Chinese War (1856–1860), China opened eleven new treaty ports for foreign trade, notably some in northern China, and this stimulated trade and communication among ports along the entire China coast. Additionally, Japan's public and private sectors endeavoured to increase exports, such as porcelain, to China during the 1860s.³⁴

²⁸ "Ship Registers (1857-1900)," Mystic Seaport Museum, <https://research.mysticseaport.org/>.

²⁹ *North China Herald*, 1 September, 1860. I reconstruct the detailed activities of the *Rover* based on the shipping intelligence published in this newspaper.

³⁰ "Executive Documents No. 52 American Bark *Rover*," 20.

³¹ "Ship Registers (1857-1900)."

³² *China Directory for 1862* (Hong Kong: A. Shortrede, 1862), 39, 48, 64.

³³ In relation to the optimistic assessment, see the telling conversation between Albert Knight and his contemporaries in the mid-1860s. Shuhua Fan, "The Knight Brothers in Niuzhuang: U.S. Merchants & Foreign Life in a Small Chinese Treaty Port," *The Chinese Historical Review* 27, no. 1 (January 2020): 15; in hindsight, American commerce in China was in steady decline between the mid-1860s and 1880s. Thomas M. Larkin, "The Global American Civil War and Anglo-American Relations in China's Treaty Ports," *The Historical Journal* 66, no. 2 (March 2023): 345.

³⁴ Takahiro Yamamoto, "Privilege and Competition: Tashiroya in the East Asian Treaty Ports, 1860–1895," *Transcultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (February 2017): 84–85.

The *Rover* represented the growth in East Asian shipping conducted by foreign vessels.³⁵ The latest political and economic developments on the China coast also created business opportunities for captains of small- or medium-sized ships such as the *Rover*. In addition, the *Rover*'s planned shipping route indicates the robust trade between northern and southern China in which foreigners had begun to participate directly. With a high tonnage (359 tons),³⁶ the *Rover* was well suited for trade voyages within East Asia, but although it was among the largest vessels conducting such trade operations, it was still too small for long-distance transpacific or Eurasian trade, both of which were usually carried out by large vessels with tonnages ranging from four hundred to several thousand tons.

On its final voyage, the *Rover*'s departure and destination ports, Shantou and Niuzhuang, were both treaty ports newly opened in the 1860s. Shantou was a major coastal trading centre in the 1860s. In April 1867, a month after the *Rover* left Shantou, the port collected the fourth-highest amount of duties among China's treaty ports, which indicates that Shantou was a significant trade location. In addition to numerous other commodities, Shantou imported from northern China bean cakes to be used as fertilizer and therefore had a close commercial relationship with bean-exporting Niuzhuang.³⁷

During this period, the number of vessels frequenting Niuzhuang rose significantly. Foreign ships were a contributing factor to this increase. To illustrate this, only 33 foreign vessels, weighing a total of 11,346 tons, reached Niuzhuang in 1861, but in 1864, 302 such vessels, weighing a cumulative 88,281 tons, visited the port. In other words, in only three years, the number and tonnage of such vessels increased by nine and seven times, respectively.³⁸ The major exports of Niuzhuang were pulse and bean cakes produced in northern China. They were first shipped to Niuzhuang and then to the South where demands for the two commodities were high. In the early 1860s, there was widespread discontent at the import ban on shipping these commodities by foreign vessels to Shanghai. Understandably, foreigners fiercely contested this policy, forcing the Chinese authorities to allow an equal market for foreign and local vessels. The controversy indicated the huge profits in this business and the importance of Niuzhuang in this trade.³⁹

Although there were commercial opportunities for foreign enterprises, in effect, Chinese-managed businesses controlled, for example, much of Shantou's staple trade. According to *The Treaty Ports of China and Japan: A Complete Guide to the Open Ports of Those Countries* (1867): "Owing to the fact that trade is almost entirely in the hands of native or Singapore Chinese, the foreign community is very small" and "[Foreign firms in Shantou] are chiefly occupied in obtaining charters and insurance for Chinese principals." These Chinese-managed businesses exported sugar to northern China in exchange for bean cakes to use as fertilizer in sugar cane cultivation. Bean cakes were exported or re-exported from ports such as Shanghai, Yantai, and Niuzhuang, where the Shantou managers had Chinese agencies. Constituting an integral part of the Chinese commercial network, many medium-sized foreign vessels were employed for the trade, and Captain

³⁵ Notable examples include vessels from the Shanghai Steam Navigation Company and the China Navigation Company. Robert Bickers, *China Bound: John Swire & Sons and Its World, 1816-1980* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), chap. 4.

³⁶ "Ship Registers (1857-1900)."

³⁷ Mayers and Dennys, *The Treaty Ports of China and Japan*, 230-32; *London and China Telegraph*, 8 August 1867. This news article cites in detail the statistics in the Chinese Maritime Customs reports for April 1867. For an overview of trade in northern Guangdong, Shantou included, see Fan Jinmin, "Qingdai Chaozhou shangren jiangnan yanhai maoyi huodong shulue," *Lishi jiaoxue*, no. 741 (April 2016): 3-12.

³⁸ Fei Chi, "Wanqing dongbei shangbu geju bianqian yanjiu," *Shixue jikan* 2007, no. 2 (March 2007): 75-80.

³⁹ *London and China Telegraph*, 13 August 1867.

Hunt's embarking on a journey to Niuzhuang, a port commercially linked to Shantou, would not have been an accident.⁴⁰

Like the history of the *Rover*, the history of Captain Joseph W. Hunt can be read as an example of how China's changing political and commercial conditions attracted investment and people to East Asia. Hundreds, if not thousands, of foreign captains of large and small vessels sailed along the China coast and across East Asia, but few biographies have been found.⁴¹ Some foreign captains, like Hunt, left behind only fragmentary textual traces in newspapers. Hunt was from Port Jefferson in Long Island, New York.⁴² His wife, born Mercy G. Bearnom in 1829, was also from the East Coast of the United States. She once lived near Hoboken, in Hudson County, New Jersey, as evidenced by her purchase of a set of artificial teeth from a doctor in that county.⁴³ Joseph and Mercy were not the only ones from their extended families who journeyed to China. For instance, Mercy's brother-in-law established a firm in Shantou before 1862.⁴⁴ China represented opportunity to such a family.

The *Rover* and Captain Hunt were constantly moving between ports or temporarily staying at one port in preparation for a subsequent journey, but Shantou seemed to have a special meaning for them. For instance, the *Rover* arrived in Shanghai from Yantai in the north on 2 February 1864, and continued its southbound journey to Fuzhou on 13 February. Then on 20 May, it returned from Fuzhou to Shanghai and went on to Yantai on 1 June.⁴⁵ Despite the continual movement, Shantou, where the Hunts had friends, seemed to be their base. A journey in 1865 would support this view. The *Rover* departed from Shanghai in February for Shantou, which was probably a home-ward journey because the trip was not associated with any commercial operations.⁴⁶

Hunt's life might have been typical of many captains of the era. For instance, the captain of the British vessel *Elizabeth* also conducted business between Niuzhuang and Shantou and was an equally unfortunate man. In 1867, the *Elizabeth* departed from Niuzhuang for Shantou, laden with bean cakes and also carrying the captain's family. On 15 July, during a typhoon, the ship foundered approximately 40 miles (65 km) from Shantou. The captain survived, but the lives of his wife and infant child and seven crew members were lost. After being plundered by salvagers on the shore, the remaining crew members were transported in a single junk to Shantou, indicating that the crew of the *Elizabeth* was small.⁴⁷ The *Rover* was highly similar, in terms of operations, to the *Elizabeth* and possibly many other barques. The *Elizabeth* and the *Rover* visited exactly the same ports, sometimes carried the families of their respective captains, and involved only a small crew.⁴⁸ It can be inferred that both vessels were engaged in similar types of business, shipping commodities between northern and southern China, and that the two unfortunate men might have been representatives of the captains of the era, pursuing new business opportunities in the 1860s while facing similar natural, political, and socio-economic challenges.

⁴⁰ Mayers and Dennys, *The Treaty Ports of China and Japan*, 235–40, 543. The quotes are on pages 235 and 237.

⁴¹ For a few captains' biographies, see John T. Grider, "I Espied a Chinaman": Chinese Sailors and the Fracturing of the Nineteenth Century Pacific Maritime Labour Force," *Slavery & Abolition* 31, no. 3 (September 2010): 467–81.

⁴² "Executive Documents No. 52 American Bark Rover," 20.

⁴³ "Executive Documents No. 52 American Bark Rover," 50.

⁴⁴ *China Directory for 1862*, 32.

⁴⁵ *North China Herald*, 1864, *passim*.

⁴⁶ *North China Herald*, 18 February 1865.

⁴⁷ *London and China Telegraph*, 25 October 1867; also 9 October 1867.

⁴⁸ The *Rover* had only fourteen crew members in total.

Among the first foreigners in Shantou, Captain Hunt witnessed the early stage of community formation at the port. Shantou was not open to foreign trade until the early 1860s, and intense local resentment delayed the appearance of foreigners for a few more years. Among the earliest foreign residents were missionaries, the histories of whose missions epitomized the situation of foreigners in those days. According to two directories published in the 1860s, only three missions operated in Shantou: the English Presbyterian Church, the French Roman Catholic Church, and the American Baptist Mission.⁴⁹ In 1860, the first American Baptist Mission pastor started missionary work in Shantou. However, due to safety concerns arising from frequent bloody clan feuds and xenophobia, foreign merchants and missionaries chose to reside on an island five miles (8 km) offshore. Such xenophobic sentiments were partly attributed to the involvement of some foreigners in the inhumane coolie trade in Shantou. As increasing numbers of foreigners relocated to Shantou, attacks on churches occurred. Arriving from the United States in 1863, William Ashmore joined the missionary work in Shantou and spent most of the rest of his life in this port city. He was the interpreter who helped T.C.A. Hinyorts, the American consul at Shantou, interview the *Rover's* sole survivor, Tek-Kuang. Undoubtedly, Ashmore and his colleagues concerned themselves mainly with the conversion of the local Chinese, but they also looked after the spiritual needs of the small foreign population in Shantou. After 1865, the American Baptist Mission began to hold services in English on Sunday afternoons. In subsequent years, an American captain and some other people were baptized.⁵⁰ The American Baptist Mission or another Shantou church may have held the Hunts' wedding ceremony because the couple were married in late 1866, and their wedding was public knowledge, as evidenced by reports about them compiled after the shipwreck.

Because the Hunts were deeply involved in the small foreign community in Shantou, when they went missing, their fate was inquired into and rewards for information on the couple's whereabouts were offered. According to a May 1867 newspaper advertisement, the three sponsors of the reward, all from Shantou, were J. G. Willoby, J. H. L. Botefuhr (Butefuhr), and F. G. Jordon. Both Willoby and Botefuhr contributed US\$1,000 to the reward, while Jordon gave US\$500.⁵¹ Given that the American Consul LeGendre's annual salary was \$3,500 in 1870,⁵² the \$2,500 reward was sizable and demonstrated the determination of the three sponsors and the connection of the Hunts to the people and port in general. Information about Willoby and Botefuhr is found in the directories of China's treaty ports. Both men were based in Shantou. Willoby was one of the seven Shantou pilots listed in an 1868 directory.⁵³ Botefuhr was a blacksmith and shipbuilder. He was likely the owner of Botefuhr & Co. and had resided in Shantou by 1863.⁵⁴ He

⁴⁹ *China Directory for 1863* (Hong Kong: A. Shortrede, 1863), 31; *Chronicle and Directory for China, Japan, and the Philippines for the Year 1868* (Hong Kong: The Daily Press, 1868), 190.

⁵⁰ See a work based on the mission's internal documents: Lida Scott Ashmore, *The South China Mission of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society: A Historical Sketch of Its First Cycle of Sixty Years* (Shanghai: Methodist Publishing House, 1920), 1, 15–34; for local resistance, see Melissa Macauley, *Distant Shores: Colonial Encounters on China's Maritime Frontier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 110.

⁵¹ The advertisement was located by John Shufelt. John Shufelt, "Li Xiande luechuan," trans. Lin Shuchin, *Lishi Taiwan*, no. 6 (November 2013): 61–62; LeGendre once stated that some sponsors were Mrs. Hunt's (instead of the captain's) friends. Maybe the consul meant some of the three men. "Executive Documents No. 52 American Bark Rover," 48.

⁵² Douglas L. Fix makes this comparison. See Charles William LeGendre, *Notes of Travel in Formosa*, ed. Douglas L. Fix and John Shufelt (Tainan: Guoli Taiwan lishi bowuguan, 2012), 256 note 8.

⁵³ *Chronicle and Directory for China, Japan, and the Philippines for the Year 1868*, 190.

⁵⁴ *China Directory for 1863*, 31.

was also Mrs. Hunt's brother-in-law and the one who received the deceased woman's remains, which were delivered to Shantou by LeGendre.⁵⁵

The generous offer may have been a, if not *the*, crucial incentive motivating those who embarked on missions to rescue the Hunts. Among the rescuers, James Horn and William Alexander Pickering were notable for recovering Mrs. Hunt's remains. In fact, in Langqiao at this time, the lives of shipwreck survivors and their remains and belongings were commonly up for sale or exchange.⁵⁶ This profitable "business" certainly brought considerable revenue to members of the indigenous population; it also became a major means of contact numerous people made with the nonstate space.

The treaty-port community in Shantou played an essential part in the histories of the *Rover* and the Hunts. Despite a nomadic career in foreign waters, Captain Hunt was deeply rooted in Shantou's Euro-American community, which escalated the influence of the *Rover* tragedy. One critical reason is that, despite internal divisions, these foreign residents shared interests, including the protection of their interests against Chinese or other political authorities.⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, the treaty-port community was crucial in bringing public attention to the remotely located shipwreck and offered extremely generous rewards for the rescue of the victims. Possibly all these efforts indirectly pressured or motivated American diplomats in China. Treaty-port residents thus influenced events in remote places even though they had never visited those regions. Through the tragedy of the *Rover* and the Hunts, people in treaty ports and nonstate spaces were entangled in subtle ways, collectively shaping the developments of the *Rover* incident.

In summary, the wider historical context of the *Rover* incident was the socioeconomic developments in the mid-century that attracted people and vessels to East Asia. Increased traffic meant that accidents taking place in East Asian peripheries, like the *Rover* incident, were certainly not unthinkable. Furthermore, what accompanied the socioeconomic developments was the growth of foreign communities on the China coast, and this development turned out to be critical in the evolution of the *Rover* incident. Without the efforts of Shantou's treaty-port community, the *Rover* incident would have been forgotten in weeks. After all, the killing of shipwrecked castaways was not new, so it is truly significant for this incident to evolve into a protracted international event.

The Concerns and Responses of Aborigines in a New Era

Just as the changing world was cognizant of the aborigines in Langqiao, these "savages," as they were often portrayed, were aware of the changing world. Accordingly, Langqiao aborigines adopted strategies to cope with the new reality; notable examples include attacking uninvited or uncooperative outsiders, regulating commercial transactions and social interactions, and utilizing social networks and intermediaries. Taken together, these instances, while not unprecedented, do hint at indigenous concerns and responses as spatial interconnections and their consequences were made tangible by, for instance, vessels like the *Rover*.

⁵⁵ "Executive Documents No. 52 American Bark Rover," 48–49; coincidentally, Botefuhr and LeGendre would be on the same ship from Hong Kong to San Francisco in 1870. *Japan Weekly Mail*, 25 June 1870.

⁵⁶ Tseng Ming-te, "Langqiao diqu fanchan jiaoyi tixi yu 1871 nian Liuqiuren yunan shijian," *shiyuan*, no. 29 (September 2017): 137–71.

⁵⁷ Larkin, "The Global American Civil War and Anglo-American Relations in China's Treaty Ports"; Thomas M. Larkin, "The Only Girl in Amoy: Gender and American Patriotism in a Nineteenth-Century Treaty Port," *Gender & History*, forthcoming, 9–13, 18 note 89; notably, the worldviews of merchants and missionaries were often in conflict. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "The Missionary Enterprise and Theories of Imperialism," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 344.

Repeated assaults on ships by the Langqiao aborigines were consistent with the increased appearance of passing or anchoring vessels in southern Taiwanese waters.⁵⁸ Douglas L. Fix documents six such assaults that occurred between 1850 and 1867 and suspects that there were deliberate attempts to resist foreign intrusions.⁵⁹ The aborigines' course of action earned them an unsavoury reputation, for both English and Chinese accounts often present them as cruel "savages."⁶⁰ However, the account of American Consul at Xiamen LeGendre of his 1872 visit to these aborigines sheds light on the indigenous perspective. LeGendre's account mentions a brother of Chief Tauketok:

[He asked] how long it took to go from Southern Formosa to America, and whether many of our [American] vessels passed by their shores. He said that from the high rock at the back of his residence he often saw steamers, but he did not know whether they were friends or foes. He added that it would be gratifying to all the tribes if, when their friends passed by, they would hoist, as I suggested they might, the red flag.⁶¹

This statement by Tauketok's brother exposes the anxieties of the Langqiao aborigines about the frequent passing of vessels. Unlike other contemporary accounts that usually attribute the violent acts of the Langqiao aborigines to their supposed savageness, the words quoted above imply how these aborigines managed to make sense of the changing world, to identify threats, and to find solutions. Consequently, as several pieces of evidence suggest, during the 1860s and 1870s the Langqiao aborigines attempted to keep uninvited strangers out of their territory, and one of their coping strategies was frequent attacks on vessels.

Another coping strategy of the Langqiao aborigines was strictly regulating commercial transactions and social interactions with the rest of the world. The first American representatives who inspected Langqiao shortly after the *Rover* castaways were killed, LeGendre and Captain John C. Febriger, commander of the United States steamer *Ashuelot*, discovered the peculiar manner of Langqiao's export trade. The two Americans found four Chinese outsiders to Langqiao purchasing wood near where the *Rover* incident occurred.⁶² Notably, the Chinese were prohibited from going ashore. The transaction was conducted with the help of local people of mixed race, intermediaries who transported the commodities to the shore. LeGendre and Febriger interrogated the four Chinese separately, which lends credibility to the information they obtained.⁶³ The Chinese stated their belief that they would have been killed if they had gone ashore, and therefore refused to do so when asked by Captain Febriger. In fact, the four Chinese were unfamiliar with the bay and met no aborigines throughout their entire business trip.

A careful analysis of the statements made by the Chinese purchasers sheds light on how Langqiao aborigines conducted business through social networks. More importantly, the Chinese men's words show that the aborigines did not completely isolate themselves

⁵⁸ Hane Jiro speculates about the connection between commercial developments and the increasing cases of shipwrecks in nineteenth-century East Asian waters. Hane Jirō, "Nanjia zhimeng he Liuqiu piaoliumin shahai shijian," in *Kuayu qingnian xuezhe Taiwanshi yanjiu xueji*, ed. Wakabayashi Masahiro and Matsunaga Masayoshi (Taipei: Daoxiang, 2009), 6–7.

⁵⁹ Fix, "The Changing Contours of Lived Communities on the Hengchun Peninsula, 1850–1874," 242.

⁶⁰ *London and China Telegraph*, 27 May 1867; Baojun, ed., *Chouban yiwu shimo Tongzhichao* (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1970), 4732.

⁶¹ LeGendre, *Notes of Travel in Formosa*, 314–15.

⁶² The following paragraphs are based on the four Chinese purchasers' statements. "Executive Documents No. 52 American Bark Rover," 15–16.

⁶³ "Executive Documents No. 52 American Bark Rover," 57.

from the rest of the world but, instead, cautiously designed a method for regulating interactions with strangers. The four Chinese men's safety was secured by a letter, or more precisely a written order to purchase wood from Langqiao. A man called Chiend, who resided in two different places—Taiwan, the prefectural seat of Taiwan, and LunKein (Langqiao?) harbour—placed the order. The dual residency suggests that Chiend conducted trade between the prefectural seat and nonstate spaces such as Langqiao. Entrusted with the task, the four Chinese agents sailed to Langqiao in a rented boat. They then contacted a local Langqiao man named Kau-Soo Moüe, with whom none of them was personally acquainted.

Thanks to connections to local intermediaries like Kau-Soo Moüe, the four Chinese men were able to complete their transaction despite Taiwan's perennial problems of language barriers and ethnic conflicts. They admitted in their statements that they were not even sure about the ethnic background of their contact person from Langqiao. One of them said that he had no idea "if Moüe is a Chinaman or not" but "[Moüe] looks like a Canton man" while two other agents claimed that Moüe was a Cantonese. Very likely all four agents, or at least the majority of them, were Fujianese settlers in Taiwan, so they could not communicate with someone from another major migrant group to the island, namely the Hakka from Canton (Guangdong). One of the agents pointed out that "there are Chinese living here; [but I] cannot correspond with them." Moüe could have been of Hakka descent or an offspring of a local aborigine and a Hakka, as people of mixed race were common in this part of the island. "The half-breed brought the wood to the boat," said another agent. This man's description is consistent with historical sources that show that Hakka and people of mixed race frequently acted as intermediaries between Langqiao aborigines and the outside world. By virtue of the connections to local intermediaries like Moüe, the four Chinese men safely stayed near the locale where the *Rover* castaways had been killed just a month prior to their wood purchase. Indeed, the four men stayed in the bay for more than eight days, awaiting favourable winds for their return. Their journey was not exceptional; as one of them pointed out, "it is customary to get wood here," meaning that what they did was common practice.

To the Langqiao aborigines, the regional and global export markets—products of spatial interconnections—were transformative, and this situation had implications for the place's occasional visitors, including shipwreck survivors. Indigenous society was in some ways restructured because of foreign contact and consequent economic change. The abovementioned timber business reflects the strong demand for valuable forest resources from remote regions of Taiwan. In truth, apart from Hainan Island in South China and the United States, in the 1880s, Taiwan was a major source of timber for China, an empire perceived by contemporaries as a "treeless country."⁶⁴ To meet the huge market demand, the Langqiao aborigines had devised an effective system for the timber transaction discussed earlier. It involved more than 8,377 lb (3,800 kg) of wood, and this large amount was loaded onto the boat in merely three days, a fact that suggests the timber was felled before the arrival of the purchasers and was a well-arranged enterprise. The brisk business could have influenced the Langqiao aborigines' interactions with the outside world. Scholars have inferred that as the Langqiao aborigines accustomed themselves to the market economy, they would begin to expect higher ransoms for castaways. It is argued, therefore, that the latter were killed because these unfortunate lives could not

⁶⁴ "Afforestation in China," *Nature* 32 (April 1889): 593–94; Mark Elvin, a renowned environmental historian of China, concludes that China began to face severe forest crises in many of its regions from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onward. Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 85.

be traded in accordance with indigenous custom. Namely, they were not killed wilfully.⁶⁵ The indigenous and migrant populations of Langqiao could reasonably anticipate huge financial rewards, considering the precedents that occurred prior to the *Rover* incident. One of the settler groups in Langqiao, the Hakka, can be taken as an example here. They were handsomely compensated in the 1850s for rescuing castaways. When Robert Swinhoe, British consul at Taiwan, visited Langqiao in 1864, the Hakka enthusiastically depicted the 1851 visit made by Harry S. Parkes, the British consular officer in Xiamen, who came to thank them for rescuing the crew of the British ship *Larpen* from Langqiao aborigines. Reportedly, Parkes offered the Hakka generous rewards.⁶⁶

Finally, the interplay between the people in southern Taiwan's nonstate spaces and the rest of the world can be read as "regional reconstruction and cultural reinvention," a concept that underscores the dynamic historical process of cultural change.⁶⁷ Although southern Taiwanese aborigines had resisted foreign encroachments before the 1860s, the response of the Langqiao indigenous people in the same decade, for example the coping strategies discussed above, had additional meanings. These instances of cultural reinvention must be interpreted as a response to concurrent "regional reconstruction," or what changed in the macroregion in which the aborigines were being entangled: technological and navigational advancements that connected many places at an unprecedented frequency and scale, war and politics that led to the opening of new treaty ports and the creation of new commercial opportunities, as well as the movement of numerous people and commodities. All of these developments connected southern Taiwan to the Pacific and East Asia and made the insular nonstate space, its people, and their practices and institutions a threat to the outside world.

Conclusion

By reconstructing the larger spatial and historical context within which the *Rover* case evolved, and by investigating the path, crew, and cargo of the ship, I uncover the interconnections among places in East Asian waters that rendered the status quo of nonstate people and spaces a serious problem. The interconnections were embodied in the lives of those on the American barque *Rover*, including its crew, its captain, and his wife. The activities of these individuals illustrate how established and emerging transpacific and East Asian maritime sea routes, and the growing treaty-port community on the China coast, became entangled with southern Taiwanese aborigines, particularly their strategies for regulating interaction with the outside world. Essentially, increased probability and frequency of contact and even conflict between the nonstate spaces and the outside world resulted in deaths, misunderstanding, and indeed serious international difficulties. In fact, shortly after the *Rover* incident, similar problems arising from spatial interconnections led to Qing China's attempts at territorial expansion and administrative extension into Taiwan's nonstate spaces beginning in the 1870s—initiatives which were responses to Japanese territorial ambitions and foreign pressure in general.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Tseng Ming-te, "Langqiao diqu fanchan jiaoyi tixi yu 1871 nian Liuqiuren yunan shijian," 162–63; Hane Jirō, "Nanjia zhimeng he Liuqiuren piaoliumin shahai shijian," 15–23.

⁶⁶ Robert Swinhoe, "Additional Notes on Formosa," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 10, no. 3 (1865): 127; Tseng Ming-te, "Langqiao diqu fanchan jiaoyi tixi yu 1871 nian Liuqiuren yunan shijian," 157–58; Yen, *Taiwan in China's Foreign Relations, 1836-1874*, 51–52.

⁶⁷ Huang Ying-kuei, "Jinchu dong Taiwan: Quyu yanjiu de xingsi," in *Renleixue de shiye* (Taipei: Qunxue, 2006), 149–74.

⁶⁸ For political developments after the 1870s, a topic beyond the scope of this present article, see Kwang-Ching Liu and Richard J. Smith, "The Military Challenge: The North-West and the Coast," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John K. Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu, vol. 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 258–66.

The above narrative contributes to the scholarly understanding of the history of East Asian peripheries in the second half of the nineteenth century. First, this narrative underscores the influence of socioeconomic changes and the resultant processes of spatial interconnections. These two are essential angles for understanding the problems occurring in peripheries and the profound consequences in international relations and China's frontier governance. Second, this narrative uncovers the roles of ordinary people, who were simultaneously the products and the agents of the socioeconomic and spatial changes taking place across East Asia: they were brought into contact and even conflict by larger historical trends, but their adaptations also influenced these processes.⁶⁹ Therefore, their agency must be fully considered in analysis of China's attempts, and those of other countries, to incorporate autonomous peripheries into their territories, a central theme in the global history of the nineteenth century.

Therefore, the *Rover* incident demonstrates that socioeconomic changes, their resulting spatial interconnections, and the participation of ordinary people contributed to international conflicts over political peripheries in nineteenth-century East Asia. By accentuating the role commoners played in connecting autonomous peripheries with the world, the stories of these people and places will be the cornerstone of an integrated East Asian history. This approach, which might be called "international history from below," helps unite international and imperial histories with local histories. With this local dimension, scholars can produce new or revised interpretative frameworks such as the tribute and treaty systems for the purpose of understanding larger historical processes in East Asia.

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⁶⁹ In the second half of the nineteenth century, spatial interconnections were affected by the making and remaking of different types of borders, processes that influenced millions of local people and those who travelled or migrated. Such processes often had implications for international relations. Two fascinating examples of this global phenomenon are the bandits in Sino-Vietnamese borderlands and smugglers in the South China Sea who caused problems for the Dutch and British colonial governments. Bradley Camp Davis, *Imperial Bandits: Outlaws and Rebels in the China-Vietnam Borderlands* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017); Eric Tagliacozzo, "Smuggling in the South China Sea: Alternate Histories of a Nonstate Space in the Late Nineteenth and Late Twentieth Centuries," in *Elusive Pirates, Pervasive Smugglers: Violence and Clandestine Trade in the Greater China Seas*, ed. Robert J. Antony (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 143–54.

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