

## "Maritime prohibition, Piracy, and Coastal Defenses during the Ming Dynasty"

Ming China is generally characterized by its negative attitude towards maritime trade. Starting with the rigorous policies of the Hongwu emperor, China retreated quickly from the international trade scene and sealed off its sea borders. In this respect the contrast with preceding dynasties could not possibly have been sharper. Against the backdrop of this sea ban (*haijin*) Ming administrators and army officials in the coastal areas faced a recurrent problem of harassment by Sino-Japanese and Chinese pirates. The 1550's and 1560's were particularly difficult times for coastal populations due to a considerable increase in violent piratical raids. The purpose of this lecture is to explain the empire's seemingly incomprehensible motivations underpinning the interdiction of any form of private overseas maritime trade, to explore the origins of piracy in the Chinese seas, and to provide an insight into the characteristics and mechanism of border defense during Ming times and, not in the least, the correlations between these factors.