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Séminaire collectif du Centre de  
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Histoire du Japon moderne et contemporain : permanences et ruptures

« Pirates of Fujian and Guangdong and the British Royal Navy: Pirates  
along the Coast of Fujian during the Mid-Nineteenth century »

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Abstract

The Opium War came to an end on July 24, 1842 with the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing. However, during the conflict pirate bands had arisen; they were mainly Fujianese and Cantonese and became a great menace to the trade at the new treaty ports.

Few scholars have been concerned with the problems brought about by the pirates at these treaty ports. Therefore, fewer studies have been conducted on the pirates of the time as compared with pirate groups of the late Ming and early Qing periods such as Wokou (the “Japanese” pirates) and the Zheng family, or pirates during the Jiaqing period.

In this presentation, I aim to fill a gap between studies on pirates in pre-modern (Ming and Qing) and modern history, and further, place the pirates of the mid-19th century within the context of the long-term history of the coastal area. To achieve these aims, first, I explain the process that led to the emergence of pirates during the mid-19th century, from the period of opium trading through the Opium War. Second, I consider the responses of the Qing government and the Royal Navy to the pirates and analyze the consequences of these responses. Third, I analyze the differences between the Fujianese and Cantonese pirates following their suppression by the Royal Navy. Finally, I consider the attempts made by the Qing officials, the British consuls, and the Royal Navy to reconstruct public order in the region.