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ASIA

Asian Expansions

The historical experiences of polity
expansion in Asia

Edited by Geoff Wade

Asian Expansions

Asia as we know it today is the product of a wide range of polity expansions over time. Recognising the territorial expansions of Asian polities large and small through the last several millennia helps rectify the fallacy, long-held and deeply entrenched, that Asian polities have been interested only in the control of populations, not in expanding their command of territory.

In countering this misapprehension, this book suggests that Asian polities have indeed been concerned with territorial control and expansion over time, whether for political or strategic advantage, trade purposes, defence needs, agricultural expansion or increased income through taxation. The book explores the historical experiences of a set of polity expansions within Asia, specifically in East and Southeast Asia, and, by examining the motivations, mechanisms, processes, validations and limitations of these Asian territorial expansions, reveals the diverse avenues by which Asian polities have grown. The chapters draw on these historical examples to highlight the connections between Asian polity expansion and centralised political structures, and this aids in a broader and more comprehensive understanding of Asian political practice, both past and present. Through these chapter studies and the integrative introduction, the book interrogates key concepts such as imperialism and colonialism, and the applicability and relevance of such terminology in Asian contexts, both historical and contemporary. Comparisons and contrasts with European historical expansions are also suggested.

This book will be welcomed by students and scholars of Asian history, as well as by those with an interest in Asian interactions, international relations, polity expansion, Asia–Europe historical comparisons and globalisation.

Geoff Wade is a Visiting Fellow at the Crawford School of Public Policy, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University.

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1 Asian expansions

An introduction

Geoff Wade

Asian polity expansions

It is held, in certain quarters and within particular genres of writing, that the modern world was created essentially through the global expansion of European powers, and by extension that other polities and societies were largely passive subjects of expansion.¹ While no one can reasonably deny the effects that European expansions over the last few centuries have had on the evolution of global structures, the assumption that non-European polities were passive and, by extension, essentially non-expansive is deserving of further dissection and analysis. This volume is intended to explore the historical experiences of polity expansion within Asia, specifically East and Southeast Asia, as an avenue both to illumine Asian pasts and to demonstrate how important have been Asian expansions in the creation of our world today. This book is also intended to provide a schema against which to compare and contrast the expansions of European and other polities and empires.

Asia as we know it today is the product of a vast range of polity expansions over time. Whether we examine the Guptas, Chōlas, Marathas or Mughals in South Asia, the Chinese polities, Nanzhao, the Tibetans, Khitan, Jin, Mongols, Koreans, Japanese or Manchus in East Asia, or the Khmers, Vietnamese, Javanese, Thai or Burmans in Southeast Asia, aspects of the effects of their past polity expansions are still with us today. It would be impossible to fully explore even a small proportion of such expansions in a single work. The vignettes presented within this volume are intended mainly as a stimulus to further investigations of the histories of Asian expansions and to contribute to the positing of some potential models. Limiting itself to East Asia (in the generic sense of the term encompassing both Northeast and Southeast Asia), this collection of studies addresses some of the overall issues of polity expansion, the attendant questions of imperialism and colonialism, and the relevance of such terminology in Asian contexts.

The terms “empire”, “imperialism”, “colony”, “colonialism” and “decolonisation” are terms we use at considerable risk,² and we might indeed add

“polity expansion” to this list. “Polity” is preferred as a referent in the present context to “state”, “empire”, “country” or “chiefdom” precisely because of its breadth and imprecision.³ A political entity, without further definition, obviates the problems William Cummings addresses in this volume in determining what constitutes a “state” or an “empire”. Other contributors to this volume question the “expansion” element of the collocation, with Jacques Leider suggesting that

“Expansion” is part of the terminology of historians that goes easily unquestioned, as its meaning has been conventionalised and is seemingly well understood. But like other supposedly neutral terms, it becomes suspect at a second look because it can mean quite different things to different speakers and audiences. Recalling what Heather Sutherland states regarding other such “contingent devices” of the historian of Southeast Asia, one should emphasise that the term “expansion” serves a specific line of argument but does not simply represent reality.

While pleading guilty to advocating a “specific line of argument”, the editor of this volume has tried to not leave the term unquestioned. The various issues addressed in this book will, I hope, show that the various Asian expansions described in these pages are not simply presented as “a linear process of political, military, economic or social action described and analysed following a strictly chronological order”, a characterisation that Leider sets as a critical target, but instead are examined in terms of the motivations, processes, conditions, mechanisms, limitations, reversals and validations involved in these polity expansions.

How such expansions are rendered and the terminology employed by various traditions and individual scholars are key to how we perceive these political processes. Leider chooses to depict the Burmese policy towards and impact on Arakan in the late eighteenth century as the “politics of integration”, while in Victor Lieberman’s wide-ranging overviews of polity evolution in Southeast Asia and beyond he has often employed the terms “consolidation” and “integration.” In his contribution to this volume, Lieberman employs the term “coalesce”, noting of historical trends in mainland Southeast Asia: “The most obvious was a halting but persistent and accelerating trend during a thousand years for local polities to coalesce into three overarching imperial systems, those of Burma, Siam and Vietnam, each centred in a north–south corridor”, and suggests that this was to constitute a “long-term simplification of the political map.” Lieberman does however play his own devil’s advocate, suggesting that “by taking as its end point the contemporary states of Burma, Thailand and Vietnam, one could argue that this approach essentialises the nation and reads history backwards as a prelude to an inevitable culmination.”⁴ Meanwhile, to the north, scholars within the Chinese tradition frequently employ the

term “opening up” (*kaifa* 開發) to describe the mechanism by which Chinese imperial states expanded into neighbouring areas over time. In some circumstances, these terms imply to readers an almost natural, perhaps inevitable or even desirable process creating the polity schema we observe today.

There is no doubt that the connections between imperial expansion, centralised political structures, and territorial integration are hugely important in understanding both the past and the present, and this volume is intended to illumine the direct and conscious efforts made to expand territorial control by polities at various times across East Asia. This will in turn, it is hoped, aid in understanding some of the overall historical phenomena and processes behind the trends of “consolidation”, “integration”, “coalescing” and “opening up” as cited above. The examples provided do not extend beyond the nineteenth century, and further work will be needed to determine the degree to which the studies herein are relevant to the explanation of Asian polity expansions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

There has long been a trope that Asian polities were not interested in expanding their territory but only in increasing their access to greater population size and thus labour power. Tambiah bluntly states in respect of premodern Southeast Asian polities that “the objectives of warfare were really capture of booty, and, more importantly, prisoners for resettlement in the kingdom.”⁵ Examples of population capture through warfare and resettlement are of course widespread in the historical record.⁶ In her study in this volume, Koizumi Junko notes that the Burmese carried off large numbers of people after sacking Ayutthaya in 1767, and that subsequently Taksin and later the Bangkok rulers were constantly removing defeated populations to places where labour was required. John Whitmore’s study records similar practices by the Cham and Viet. Reid assigns this phenomenon to a shortage of manpower relative to land in Southeast Asia.⁷ This volume, however, suggests that East Asian political leaders were often equally concerned about territorial control and expansion, whether for political or strategic advantage, trade purposes, defence needs, agricultural expansion or increased tax receipts.

The examination of the specific processes of polity expansion in Asia is a nascent endeavour, a point underlined by Momoki Shiro in his study of Vietnamese territorial growth, where he notes that “there have been few detailed studies of the process of expansion.” While over recent decades there has been a growing literature on Chinese imperial expansion, including works by Peter Perdue who has also contributed to this volume, there have been few attempts at comparative perspectives. It is hoped that the present volume will help to initiate such scholarship.

Motivations for polity expansion in Asia

In his study presented in this volume, Perdue goes directly to the nub of the issue when he asks: “Why do empires expand?”⁸ He notes three common responses: (1) the theory of “natural borders”, where polities almost inevitably gradually extend to a “natural border”; (2) the impact of charismatic personalities; and (3) resource shortages. He prefers, however, to see these explanations as excessively simplistic and incomplete, and instead, through examining a range of Chinese (and Manchu) border situations to both the north and the south over a range of dynasties, he offers a more complex and nuanced explanation of how various Chinese expansions came to be. In one conclusion in respect of the Qing, he suggests that “The primary dynamic driving Qing expansion over the long term came from the interactions between Manchus and rival Mongolian tribes in this vast frontier zone.”

The emergence of new regimes following political disintegration⁹ or invasion was indeed, both in China and Southeast Asia, often a trigger for polity expansion in the wake of political stabilisation. In their chapters in this volume, Koizumi looks at the expansion of the Siamese state to the north and northeast under the new regime of Taksin and then under the Chakri rulers from the last half of the eighteenth century, while Leider examines Burmese expansion during the concurrent early Konbaung period, noting:

A new dynasty self-consciously asserted itself by taking control of the plains of the Irrawaddy, pushing back Chinese invasions in the 1760s and conducting repeated wars against neighbouring Siam while controlling rebellious lords at home and reviving ceremonious forms of the Buddhist monarchy. A novel phenomenon in this period was Burma’s interference and territorial expansion to the west and the northwest, towards Arakan and the tiny kingdoms of Northeast India such as Manipur, Jainthia and Assam.

The Ming dynasty in China also provides an appropriate example of a Chinese polity that expanded after coming to power subsequent to Yuan disintegration. Following Zhu Yuanzhang’s establishment of his capital at what is now Nanjing in 1356 and his declaration of himself as the Ming emperor in 1368, he sent his forces throughout China proper, establishing Ming control over those places previously administered as China. But beyond that, he despatched massive forces against polities in what is today Yunnan.¹⁰ This southward expansion of the Ming empire was continued by the Yongle emperor in the early fifteenth century with large expeditions against the polities of Yunnan and Đại Việt, the Chinese state occupying the latter for more than 20 years and the former until today.¹¹

In terms of the Southeast Asian realms, several contributions to this volume suggest motivations for polity expansion. Lieberman proposes that polity expansion derived from domestic strengthening in diverse spheres:

Basically, I argue that foreign contacts joined increases in domestic output, population and local commodification to enhance the power of incipient imperial heartlands at the expense of less favoured districts. So too, by stimulating movements of religious and social reform and by strengthening communications between emergent cores and outlying territories, economic change enhanced each core's cultural authority. As warfare between cohering polities grew in scale and expense, those principalities that would survive were obliged to overhaul their administrations periodically, to magnify their resource base, and to promote capital cultures over provincial traditions. Meanwhile, the very growth of the state had a variety of economic and cultural effects, often unintended, even unobserved, which on balance were also sympathetic to integration.

Lieberman also suggests that population growth was an important factor in many examples of Southeast Asian polity expansion.

Along with new commercial openings ... agrarian extension and intensification between 1400 and 1825 promoted population growth in Burma of about 100 per cent and in Vietnam of over 400 per cent. Siamese growth may have been in the same order of magnitude as in Burma.

A question that presents itself is whether population growth promoted expansions or whether expansions, by newly encompassing (or newly tallying) populations, were reflected as population growth? Possibly both scenarios were so.

Leider offers an example of motivation/validation expressed by the Burmese in respect of the attack on Arakan. While there were indications that Arakan's instability and weakness had already caught the attention of King Sinbyushin (1767–73), Leider notes that it was in the marching orders of 16 October 1784 that we find the formal expression of motivation. The orders stated that "Arakan had not bent in humble submission to the king and that it should be conquered so as to put an end to the country's political anarchy and the sad state of Buddhism (*sasana*).” Leider also suggests that Burmese trade needs may well have been a motivation, with the possession of Arakan opening up a new road towards Bengal and North India, and that the procurement of ongoing sources of rice for war provisions and human labour for royal building projects may also have played a role. In other areas, maritime trade rivalry and the desire to control major ports were key factors in expansion. Whitmore's essay,

which examines Đại Việt's invasion and occupation of Vijaya in Champa in 1471, stresses this element, as does that by Momoki who stresses that "in the economic context, it was important for a mandala or a solar polity to control trade networks. For these reasons, emperors of Đại Cồ Việt and early Đại Việt were eager to attack their southern neighbour, Champa."

Sites of polity expansion in Asia

The issue of motivations for polity expansions slides effortlessly into the question of where such polity expansions occurred. Perdue suggests that while "analysts of imperial expansion, European and Chinese, still generally stress the impulses originating from the central court or metropolitan decision-makers, attributing expansion to a consistent long-term project aiming at specific material gains", we should instead pay more attention to "the contingent dynamics of interaction in frontier zones."¹²

Frontier zones are indeed one of the key areas where polity expansions occur, and the location and geography of such zones (often indeed contributing to their creation as frontiers) does to some degree affect the geography of troop movements, trade routes and cultural flows. But, again, as Perdue notes when examining the evolution of the ideas of Owen Lattimore,¹³ social and political developments can eventually overcome the restrictions of geography. He examines frontier zones by incorporating concepts of cultural difference along with economic imperatives, suggesting new models of the places and forces where expansion was generated. Within this overview, he also examines why China built a continuous Great Wall along its northern border, to prevent the depredations of raiding. In this case, raiding led to the creation of a border marker. In many places, such raiding produced a constantly moving frontier, which sometimes provided a site for longer-term expansion. Whitmore presents the example of the two mandalas of Nagara Champa and Đại Việt which, for 500 years up until the early fifteenth century, contested the territories along their common frontier, fighting over them yet fundamentally accepting each other's continued existence.¹⁴ This equilibrium was shattered in 1471 with Đại Việt's capture of the Cham capital and extension of the Viet polity southwards, creating its thirteenth province.

A further phenomenon observed is that, on occasions, colonial spheres were established, but not coterminously with the expanding polity. An early example is seen in the first millennium of the Common Era when successive Chinese regimes administered both the areas around the Pearl River delta and those around the Red River delta but had no jurisdiction or control over the territory between.¹⁵ Only subsequently did this territory become dominated by and subordinated to Chinese and Vietnamese polities.¹⁶

A more recent example is provided in Momoki's study in this volume, where he notes that "the Nguyễn polity in its early stage (the late sixteenth

century and the seventeenth) was a kind of colonial state that governed various people including the Cham and the Chinese. However, they were gradually Vietnamised (or they Vietnamised themselves) after the eighteenth century.” Here, then, the Nguyễn polity of Đàng Trong centred on what is today central Vietnam, while subordinate to the Later Lê Dynasty and then the Trịnh in northern Vietnam, constituted in effect a colonial polity. It was this Nguyễn polity which expanded during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into Khmer territory, coastal and inland, incorporating the Mekong delta and establishing the new administrative unit of Gia Định.¹⁷ By the late eighteenth century, however, the northern Trịnh forces had defeated the Nguyễn lords and absorbed this colonial polity and all of the territory conquered by the Nguyễn into the overall Vietnamese polity.

But it was not only land frontiers that were transcended in Asian expansions. Certainly the successive maritime states of Southeast Asia, such as Srivijaya, Melaka, Gowa and Aceh, projected their power over maritime space and extended control over overseas territories.¹⁸ Japan also did so in its incorporation of the Ryukyus and northern islands, while Chinese regimes expanded their power over the islands of Hainan and Taiwan. Andrade, in his contribution within these pages, suggests that we might examine aspects of European exceptionalism in the light of the capacity of the Portuguese and Dutch to generally prevail over similar Southeast Asian polities which were focused on the control of maritime space. Military capacities and particularly firearms are of course recognised as a key component of that exceptionalism. In this volume, Koizumi and Momoki both examine the importance of firearms in the expansion of Siam and Đại Việt respectively.¹⁹

Mechanisms and processes of polity expansion in Asia

The mechanisms and processes of polity expansion in Asia, while diverse over time and place, can be broadly divided into two forms: invasion, subjugation and occupation of target polities, followed by formal bureaucratic incorporation, which we will call Mode I; and subjugation through the use or threat of military force, and employment of local proxies to rule and assist in exploitation of the territory subordinated, Mode II. The latter form, as we will see, was often a precursor to the former.

Mode I – Direct incorporation

Ming China’s invasion of Đại Việt from 1406 and the subsequent bureaucratic incorporation of the polity as the new province of Jiaozhi up until 1427, when the Vietnamese drove out the Ming military forces and civil appointees, is a classic example of the first model, and we have the benefit of a very detailed imperial record of the invasion and occupation.²⁰

The Ming invasion and occupation of Đại Việt involved the public validating of the impending expedition in China, followed by the despatch of the military forces. The assistance of local persons familiar with the terrain in the area being invaded was then obtained, and intimidation by slaughter was pursued en route. Captured local leaders were executed or removed, while the population of the area was informed of the moral rectitude of the military action. Chinese military organs and civilian offices were then established. By 1408, two years after the Ming invasion, 472 military and civil Chinese offices had been established in the area now renamed as the “province of Jiaozhi.” Tax and grain levies were then implemented, monopolies over salt and gold and silver mining were established, and useful human resources including diverse types of tradesmen were sent to China. Subsequently, further opportunities for territorial gain were sought.²¹

Cultural evisceration was also pursued. Alex Ong describes how during their occupation of Đại Việt, the Ming sought out and tried to destroy all vestiges of Vietnamese written culture. Secret imperial orders to the Ming military read:

With the exception of Buddhist and Taoist texts, all written and printed materials within Annam are to be burned. These include anything that promotes Vietnamese rites and customs as well as texts used by children, such as those containing the phrase *shang da ren Qiu Yi Ji*. In addition, all stelae from ancient times that are of Chinese origin are to be preserved, but those erected by Vietnamese should all be destroyed. Not even a single character [from the Vietnamese works] is to be preserved.²²

To acculturate the new population, a large number of Confucian schools, Yin-yang schools and medical schools were established within the province. Examinations for the local bureaucracy along the pattern of those of other provinces were formalised in 1411, and Chinese mourning rites and mourning leave were instituted among the officials of Jiaozhi in 1419. Efforts at cultural incorporation thus proceeded alongside the processes of administrative and fiscal incorporation.

The Ming also pursued such practices in regions other than Đại Việt. John Herman²³ has provided a detailed account of the Ming expansion into what is today Guizhou and Yunnan in the late fourteenth century and the early fifteenth. The massive initial military expeditions despatched by the Hongwu and Yongle emperors were followed by the building of a walled city at Guiyang by Ma Hua in the 1380s, while Fu Youde took control of Yunnan and established Ming control there. The province of Guizhou was established in 1413, by which time the Ming military had established 25 garrisons (*suo*) along the main routes. Many of the troops who accompanied these expeditions were settled in these areas to affirm

Chinese control. In the late fourteenth century some 250,000 Ming soldiers were settled throughout Yunnan and Guizhou, with 30,000 more following the creation of Guizhou in 1413, a further 50,000 following the second Luchuan campaign in the 1440s, and 50,000 more in the 1520s. And to feed this huge number of troops, state farms, military farms²⁴ and the commercial operations initiated under the *kaizhong* (開中) system²⁵ had to be employed, further facilitating the inflow of Chinese persons into these regions, which had previously been outside Chinese administration.

Whitmore's study in this volume of Vietnam's incorporation of Champa in the fifteenth century and its rebirth as Đại Việt's nineteenth province reflects many of the practices seen in Chinese invasion, occupation and incorporation of bordering polities:

By the middle of 1471, the former Champa territory of Amaravati had become the Đại Việt province of Quảng-nam and was added to the existing 12 provinces of the northern realm. Just as the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402–24) had brought Đại Việt into the Ming empire as the new province of Jiaozhi after his conquest of 1407, Thánh-tông incorporated this newly conquered territory into Đại Việt.

Through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries, the political and economic coalition of Thuận-hóa and Quảng-nam then served as the foundation for the expansion of the realm farther south – the famed Nam-tiến (Southern Advance).

Leider's study in this volume of Burma's invasion, occupation and incorporation of Arakan in 1785 shows that this also followed the Mode I model of direct incorporation. The military expedition took only 45 days to capture and occupy the Arakan capital of Mrauk-U, and the Burmese royal orders show that an active process of formal bureaucratic incorporation was then set in train.

The Burmese decapitated the kingdom by eliminating its central leadership and its supporting pillars: the spiritual, ceremonial, military and administrative elite. At the same time, they uprooted what was left, after several decades of political infighting, of the embattled institution of Arakanese kingship. In a sense, the Burmese did this even more radically than the British did a hundred years later with the Burmese monarchy.

In turn Burmese population flowed into the new Burmese district, and improved transport infrastructure provided trans-Arakan roads connecting Burma with northern India.

Mode II – Indirect and gradual incorporation

As noted above, Mode II expansion is characterised by subjugation through the use or threat of military force, and employment of local proxies to rule and assist in exploitation of the territory subordinated. This is best illustrated by the various forms of the native office (*tusi* 土司) system implemented by successive Chinese administrations.²⁶

This mode involved, following military action or the threat thereof, the appointment or recognition of a reasonably pliant person, often a member of the traditional ruling family, to administer the polity on the basis of local knowledge and existing loyalties. The emasculation of the original polity often included its division into smaller units. Annual or more regular demands were then imposed upon the recognised ruler, including gold and silver in lieu of tax, tribute requirements of diverse commodities, and provision of troops and corvée labour as required. Eventually, Chinese clerks were appointed to assist the ruler and this often was an initial step towards the incorporation of the polity into the formal administration. The benefits of such a system for a Chinese state were numerous: (1) submission of target polities could often be achieved without the need for huge and extended military expeditions; (2) the dominated area could be ruled through existing administrative systems, which obviated the need for insertion of formal Chinese administrators into the area; (3) revenue in silver or gold could be generated from these polities; (4) the polity could be pressured into supplying troops and corvée labour at little or no cost to the Chinese state.

The Ming Chinese state, in particular, also made great use of the discord – existing or potential – among its neighbours and potential rivals, and pursued efforts to ensure that the polities which ringed it remained as divided as possible. This was often done by forcibly dividing polities which had been militarily dominated or threatened and then appointing or recognising new separate rulers who administered smaller tracts of territory. An excellent example is seen during the Hongwu reign (1368–98), when Si Lunfa of Luchuan/Pingmian (the Mōng Mao polity) in Yunnan sought assistance to regain his territory from chieftains who had rebelled against him. The Chinese state took advantage of restoring him (and his death in 1399 or 1400) to break up Mōng Mao territory into the separate administrations of Luchuan, Mengyang, Mubang, Mengding, Lujiang, Ganyai, Dahou and Wan Dian, all under separate rulers. The areas divided during the Hongwu reign were then incorporated by the later Ming and Qing and today form parts of the PRC province of Yunnan.

The dominated polities were also used by Chinese regimes as tools in further expansion, particularly through the Chinese policy of “using barbarians to attack barbarians” (以夷攻夷). The extent of mercenary employment is shown in a 1438 account, when the Ming court “accepted the offers” by the “native offices” of Mubang and Dahou in Yunnan to deploy 100,000 local troops against Luchuan.

In what was a huge colonising process during the 276-year Ming regime, the Ming state assigned 1608 *tusi* titles, of which 1021 were in Yunnan, Guizhou and Sichuan.²⁷ The Qing (1644–1911) were later to establish further *tusi* in areas such as Qinghai and Gansu as well as in Tibetan areas that had not been part of the Ming state. But the Qing state was not to be content leaving these administrations as semi-autonomous polities. In 1728, the Yongzheng emperor (r. 1722–35) declared:

The native chieftains in Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan and Huguang live in remote areas along our borders and often conduct themselves in despicable ways. Due to the evil nature of the native officials, the people who live under their rule are continually subject to unspeakable cruelties. Thus I have ordered my provincial officials to recommend plans that will abolish the native chieftainships and bring the barbarian population under administrative control.²⁸

What followed was an often bloody incorporation of these areas by force. One of the major figures in this process was E'ertai, a Manchu Bannerman who served from 1726 to 1731 in Guangxi and Guizhou/Yunnan, abolishing half of the native offices through the *gaitu guiliu* (改土歸流) ("change the native, and institute the circulating") reforms, and establishing formal Chinese state administrations in these areas.²⁹ John Herman notes that "The transition from indirect rule to direct rule in Guizhou occurred over a two-hundred-year period between 1500 and 1700, and even in 1700 there were more areas in Guizhou subject to indirect rule than to direct rule."³⁰ The importance of this essentially colonising process in creating what has become the Chinese state of today needs further recognition and research.

It might be said that the Qing also employed a form of the *tusi* system in respect of the Mongols whereby, as Perdue notes, they received noble titles, designated pasture lands, regulated succession processes, and often the prospect of intermarriage with the Qing imperial clan. However, again it was to be bloody military expeditions which ended this system – expansive warfare which Perdue perceives as a tool in the "competitive state-building process."³¹ The process was thus one of expansion rather than containment, taking advantage of divisions among the Mongols, much as the Ming had done on the southern borders.

The Mongols had employed similar techniques in their expansions across Eurasia in the thirteenth century. Following their defeat of the polity of Dali in 1256, for example, the Grand Khan Möngke appointed the defeated Dali king Duan Xingzhi to govern the area under Mongol military supervision, and then made use of the forces of Dali to pursue further expansion. Subsequently, the Yuan administrator Saiyid Ajall Shams al-Din instituted a range of civil administrative organs to further incorporate the region.³²

Mode II expansion was also utilised by various Southeast Asian polities. Vietnam employed the *tusi* system in its expansions, and there were frequent efforts to more formally incorporate the “native office” polities of the Tai-Lao lands into the Vietnamese state. Momoki notes in this volume:

The westward expansion toward the Northwest (Tây Bắc) and Trường Sơn Mountains also began in the late Trần period. In 1479, Lê Thánh Tông launched a major expedition to the “Golden Triangle”, in which the army of Đại Việt marched as far as the territory of Burma. For the Restored Lê Dynasty (1532–1789), which failed to reunify the south, the Tai-Lao chiefs in the Northwest and Trường Sơn Mountains and the kings of Lan Sang were indispensable as members of the Trịnh’s own tributary system. Minh Mạng tried to impose a direct control system upon minorities who had been governed through the “native office” system, but his policy toward Laos was also unsuccessful.

Koizumi also shows that similar methods were being used in the early nineteenth century by the Chakri rulers of Siam, who employed such practices to extend their control eastwards:

More extensive *suai* [taxation] imposition began in the late 1820s and early 1830s, when the Bangkok authorities established a stronger control over the Mekong Basin and Khorat Plateau after suppressing the Chao Anu “rebellion” of Lan Sang Kingdom. *Suai* in silver was first established in 1827 for 11 *muang* (provinces), namely Champasak, Khamthongnoi, Khongchiam, Khamthongyai, Khong, Saphat, Samia Sithandon, Salawan, Chiang Taeng and Saenpang, at the rates of seven or four *baht* per person.³³

The maintenance of domination and control by drawing off silver which could otherwise have been used for self-support by the subordinated polities marked most of the Mode II systems.

Lieberman describes in his study within this volume the gradual formal incorporation of subordinated polities by the dominating polities in mainland Southeast Asia during his third phase of consolidation, which began in the late 1500s or early 1600s and lasted until the late 1700s.

During this cycle, the number of viable states continued to decline, while far-reaching administrative reforms in the western and central mainland strengthened imperial authority. They did this by reducing the ceremonial pretensions and functional autonomy of both hereditary tributaries and appointed provincial governors; by increasing gubernatorial deputies responsible to the capital; by routinising land, census and tax records; and by expanding the population of hereditary servicemen obliged to supply the crown with military or civilian labour.

In many ways this closely resembled the Chinese state's more formal incorporation of *tusi* described above; it was essentially concurrent over the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

Other modes of expansion

William Cummings' study in this volume suggests that the expansion of Gowa in maritime Southeast Asia does not fall neatly into either of the two forms outlined above, although it is far closer to Mode II.

Unlike our conventional image of how empires grow and consolidate power, in premodern Makassar we are not dealing with territorial expansion or administrative incorporation, or even with the demands for tribute and slaves that we read of in the *Gowa Chronicle* regarding some of Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna's conquests. The 1530s war paved the way for marriage connections and strategic alliances. Particularly in Talloq, the result was a vastly expanded pool of important Makassarese with blood ties to Gowa's ruling family. Less celebrated were the communities of Polombangkeng, but nonetheless it too offered a deep pool of manpower and agricultural wealth whose chiefs were now kin of Gowa.... This empire required no imperial bureaucracy to govern territories. The structure of its expansion was fundamentally social rather than administrative or military.... Gowa embarked on no project to station troops, encourage colonists or administratively absorb its vassals into itself.... This empire did not advance through mechanisms of territorial expansion, nor was this the primary goal of the wars of Gowa's rulers.

Yet, despite the reservations, Cummings does accept that territorial expansion took place and that "control over key territory, resources, and pools of manpower were of vital importance."

Cummings' study does show that domination of surrounding polities by Gowa certainly constituted a form of expansion involving military actions which gave rise to increased power over both other lands and peoples. It transcended the perhaps-only-hypothetical Wolterian *mandala*,³⁴ for the expanded polity was created through warfare, even if maintained through social structures. And the "tribute" demands of the Gowa rulers reflected similar demands to those of the bureaucratic societies of mainland Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia. This is depicted in the *Gowa Chronicle*, where Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna "conquered Garassiq, Katingang, Parigi, Siang, Sidenreng. He made vassals of Sanrabone, Jipang, Galesong, Laba. He took *saqbu katti* from Bulukumba, Silayar. He conquered Panaikang, Madalloq, Cempaga." Each vassal subject owed tribute to the ruler of Gowa, and was apparently required to make an annual pilgrimage to Gowa to deliver their payment in a ritual demonstration of subservience and loyalty.

As such, it may be worthwhile re-interrogating Oliver Wolters' depiction of the *mandala* as an "organisation of space" maintained by an accessible mediator skilled in diplomacy, and examining it instead as a political structure underpinned by the use or threat of military force. While Stanley Tambiah's idea that traditional Southeast Asian polities were "centred" or "centre-oriented", rather than formally bounded polities,³⁵ is not really contentious, the king at the centre of these arrangements was much more than the wielder of dharma and the mediator between the human and divine realms. He was the wielder of supreme military power or at least capacity, which Tambiah sees as being exercised only irregularly and mainly to secure prisoners, despite the description of Buddhist rulers that he employed as the title of his most well-known work: *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*.³⁶

Validating polity expansion

While history has its own imperatives, cultures have their own validating mechanisms. The ethical and moral validation of military action against others has been an essential element of polity expansion in Asia, as in most other regions, for millennia. Nearly 4000 years ago, Hammurabi of Babylon conquered the competing city-states in his region and then declared in his now famous laws that he had been afforded divine assistance from the great gods Anu and Enlil "to destroy the evil and the wicked" in order to "afford well-being to the people."³⁷ Some 600 years ago, the Ming emperor Yongle, when being read an inventory of all that had been captured in the Ming army's invasion and occupation of the polity of Đại Việt from 1406, decried the implication that this had been done for political gain:

I am lord of all under Heaven. Why should I act in a warlike manner in order to obtain some land and people! My concern was only that rebellious bandits not go unpunished and that the suffering of the people not go unrelieved.³⁸

Similarly, in the royal order of 26 January 1785 confirming the news of the Burmese military victory against Arakan, the ruler Bodawphaya stated that the ruler of Arakan could not "resist" his "golden glory" (*shwe-bon*) and that the conquest had been easy because of his own superior merit. All of these rulers validated their expansions through claims that their actions were divinely sanctioned and that they were intended to assist the people. Perdue also notes that, in Qing expansion, "the Manchus, however, except in limited cases, did not use the language of extermination and revenge. Their proclaimed goal was not revenge but order." Further, in validating Qing expansion into the Tibetan Kham lands in the late nineteenth century, the rhetoric of frontier security needs and the rectifying of repressive local rule

was invoked,³⁹ another form of rhetorical validation long utilised in Chinese history.

And if ethical and moral validation were not invoked, then disparaging and belittling representation of those against whom expeditions were launched was often necessary. In 1470, when the ruler of Đại Việt, Lê Thánh-tông (r. 1460–97), launched an expedition against Champa, for example, he engaged himself in “denigrating his rivals as beasts and bugs (rabbits and bees, dogs and ants, foxes and silkworms among others).”⁴⁰

Validations were sometimes offered prior to military expeditions against other polities and sometimes *post facto*. On occasions, they were necessary at both times. As Yongle despatched his armies to invade Đại Việt in 1406, he proclaimed 20 reasons why the invasion was necessary.⁴¹ The further *post facto* validations for this invasion and occupation have already been noted above.

There have also been times when religious affiliations were used to validate polity expansion. Leider notes how the Burmese invasion of Arakan was validated, at least in the Burmese historical record, by claims that the Buddhism of Arakan had become corrupted. In fact there is a wide range of examples of Buddhist rulers employing the validating trope of spreading or reforming Buddhism to sanction military expeditions across mainland Southeast Asia. Cummings in this volume also observes how wars of Islamisation featured prominently in the expansion of Sulawesi polities in the early seventeenth century. Three centuries earlier, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa recorded of the northern Sumatran polity of Samudera in 1345 and 1346 that the ruler – one Sultān Al-Malik Al-Zāhir – was “a Shāfi’ī in madhhab and a lover of jurists” who “often fights against and raids the infidels.” It was further noted that “the people of his country are Shāfi’ī who are eager to fight infidels and readily go on campaign with him. They dominate the neighbouring infidels who pay *jizya* to have peace.”⁴² Tomé Pires’s *Suma Oriental*, his unparalleled account of Southeast Asia in the early sixteenth century, further supports this thesis of religion being used in polity expansion with his accounts of the battles between Muslims and others along the northern coast of Java.⁴³

But sometimes the tropes of validation lie much deeper within the culture of the expanding polity. Perdue quotes from a poem by Ji Yun (紀昀 1724–1805) suggesting that Ji saw Chinese frontier expansion as a pacifying, civilising process:

He did not disregard the military force needed to conquer and secure the borders, but he saw conquest over the long term as bringing peace, order and new opportunities for the ambitious settlers and the military colonists in the region.

The *idée fixe* of Chinese expansion as necessarily a pacifying, civilising process permeates very deep within Chinese culture, and indeed to the

very basis of that culture – Chinese language and script. Given the rhetorical structures within which imperial Chinese history was written and by which Chinese expansion was represented,⁴⁴ it is not difficult to observe why those schooled in the Chinese tradition find it hard to imagine a Chinese state aggressing, invading or posing a threat to surrounding polities. Instead, benevolent rulers “punished bandits” (討賊), “pacified” (平定) areas, “soothed” (撫) polities, and “instructed” (諭) recalcitrants, all manifestly desirable actions in maintaining social order. As noted above, Chinese expansion did not involve “invasion”⁴⁵ of bordering polities, but rather the actions of “opening them up” (*kaifa* 開發). Such rhetoric is of course not restricted to Chinese culture, but the huge corpus of Chinese texts available to us and the continuity of Chinese rhetorical practices makes the identification of such Chinese topoi a relatively easy task.

The Vietnamese have their own manner of validating the expansion of the Vietnamese state over time, with the modern rhetoric being that of a “*Nam tiến*” (Southern Advance). Both Nguyen The Anh⁴⁶ and Claudine Ang Tsu Lyn⁴⁷ have provided us with studies of this rhetorical form and its use within modern Viet culture in validating Vietnamese polity expansion. There is much further scope for examining the rhetorical forms by which Asian cultures have attempted to validate to themselves and to others the polity expansions which they or their predecessors have undertaken. The possibilities of comparisons with the many forms of validating rhetoric seen in European expansions are diverse. Further, in comparing Asian validations with those of other traditions, it might be useful to also examine the idea of “manifest destiny”, a key concept in the *a priori* validation of European expansion across the American continent in the nineteenth century.⁴⁸

Limits to polity expansion

Asian polity expansion, like polity expansion anywhere, does not continue without limit. A further possible field of study in examining historical Asian expansions is thus that of the factors which limited or halted polity expansion. Such limits might be broadly divided into geographical, logistical, financial and political.

Geographical limits included deserts, areas above a certain altitude,⁴⁹ large expanses of sea, and, to some degree, jungles and disease-prone areas.⁵⁰ In addition, human-built barriers such as the Great Wall of China affected capacities or intent to expand. But most geographical barriers could eventually, through new technologies or new capacities, be overcome.

Logistical limits varied at different times and in different zones, but Perdue’s observation of Chinese military expeditions to the Central Asian steppes is telling. He notes that from the time of Han Wudi 2000 years ago until the early Qing at the turn of the eighteenth century, no Chinese

military expedition was able to spend more than 90 days in the steppes. “These logistical limits meant that, until the mid-eighteenth century, Chinese dynasties could never completely encompass all the nomadic peoples who roved on their frontier.” Victoria Hui⁵¹ has also examined the logistics of imperial China’s expeditions and, citing the Northern Song scholar Shen Kuo, who estimated that an army of 70,000 fighting troops would require 30,000 labourers to carry military supplies and another 300,000 *corvée* labourers to carry grain, suggests that expeditions at that time could have extended only for about 30 days and proceeded only 640 kilometres. She also notes, and this has been broached above, that military farms and the *kaizhong* system later facilitated expeditions over much longer distances.

Often associated with the logistical restrictions was the capacity to pay for expansionist expeditions, but as Hui notes,⁵² there were, at least in early imperial China and within limits, ways to overcome the rising costs of expansion through both economic expansion and reducing the costs of warfare. The employment of the troops of subordinated polities and the establishment of military farms were but two of the key policies in reducing imperial China’s military costs in polity maintenance and expansion.⁵³

In this volume, Lieberman depicts the breakdown of the new empires of Toungoo Burma and Đại Việt in the mid- and late sixteenth century as being primarily a function of physical overextension, with conquests outstripping the centre’s ability to monitor and control newly assembled territories. A similar vulnerability is described by Momoki in this volume for an earlier Vietnam:

The southward expansion in the fifteenth century brought a new vulnerability to the empire of Đại Việt. Its territory extended too far in the north–south direction. Even the thriving coastal water network was not strong enough to maintain the political unity of the overextended territory. The long and narrow territory also meant that the southern provinces could be easily detached from the northern area by an attack from the mountains in the west, especially in the Thanh Nghệ and Thuận Hóa regions.

Then, of course, there was the conquered populace. We have observed above how the Vietnamese drove the Ming forces out of their new province of Jiaozhi in the late 1420s, re-establishing a Viet polity which is still with us today. Leider, in his study of the Burman occupation and incorporation of Arakan, notes that rebellions and the flight of one-third of the Arakan populace mean that the potential of the occupation was limited “and it weakened the project of Burmese expansion.” James C. Scott has, over several decades, been engaged in the study of state expansion in Southeast Asia and beyond, and examines the correlates – “state evasion”

and “state prevention” through population movement to higher altitudes. His work on “why civilizations can’t climb hills”⁵⁴ is particularly pertinent to the study of limitations to Asian polity expansion.

Comparisons between Asian and European polity expansions

Peter Perdue sets the question as to whether there are fundamental differences between Asian and Western European empires, or between past and present empires, in their expansion, and implies that Asia and Europe are not as different as most people think. Certainly, Lieberman’s studies⁵⁵ have suggested parallels between polity expansions right across Eurasia. He proposes that “the basic trajectories, dynamics and chronologies of integration” were similar across the “protected Eurasian rimlands” – north-western Europe, represented in his discussion by the territories that would become France; northeastern Europe, represented by the future lands of Russia; the Japanese islands; and mainland Southeast Asia.

If we are to follow the historians who suggest that the competitive European state system established in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries generated the process of state-building, military mobilisation and commercial growth that fuelled imperial expansion, Perdue will argue for “plausible similarities between China and Europe during the period of Qing frontier expansion. From the early seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, the Qing empire also engaged in a competitive state-building process as it pushed its borders outwards.”⁵⁶

But whether it was religious motives, material motivations, security issues in the face of other expanding polities, or cultural visions that were the mechanisms – or at least professed inspirations – of European expansions, it might be worthwhile briefly reviewing their evolution.

The age of European expansion across the maritime realms from the late fifteenth century was preceded by the creation of a range of European polities through overland expansion, and much of this expansion had long political and technological roots. Amitav Acharya⁵⁷ sees the archetype of European expansions in the process of Hellenisation from the eighth century BCE and the establishment of Greek “colonies” across the Mediterranean and Asia Minor involving, in various periods, military conquests. The conquests of Alexander in the fourth century BCE are held up as a sign that Greek ideas were being “spread by the sword and empire”, and are seen by Acharya as a primal form of later European expansions. A useful survey of early European expansions up to the Middle Ages (including the Greeks, Gauls, Romans, Germanic groups, the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings) is provided by Axel Kristinsson,⁵⁸ while Timothy Parsons examines later examples of European empires involving “permanent authoritarian rule that consigns a defeated enemy to perpetual subjecthood”.⁵⁹

Roman expansions and the creation of some of the world's largest empires are particularly deserving of a place in the history of European expansions. Roman expansion was similar to Chinese expansion at the other end of Eurasia in terms of the forms of expansion, their military and administrative advantages vis-à-vis those who were the subjects of expansion, and their cultural influence on those dominated. Both of these cultural and political complexes began major expansions in the third century BCE and, while the Roman Empire reached its apogee under Trajan in the first century CE, the Holy Roman Empire (as a rebirth of the Western Roman Empire), was to continue until 1806, only a century before the end of the Qing, the final dynasty of imperial China.

Nigel Pollard⁶⁰ confirms that the Roman army was the key agent of imperial power and the mechanism by which Roman imperial expansion was pursued. A huge range of similarities can be observed in terms of the processes by which the Roman and Chinese armies invaded and occupied territories and how, depending on location, power and circumstance, the imperial administrators decided to pursue direct control through instituting their own administration (Mode I) or ruling through designated members of tribes and groups brought to submission (Mode II). The employment of troops from areas already dominated for the purposes of further military expansion is readily observable in both Roman and imperial China's expansions. This was an aspect of imperial expansion which was to continue into the twentieth century, with British use of Gurkhas and Sikhs in India and other imperial conquests, the Dutch employment of Ambonese in their colonial army, and the French engagement of *tirailleurs tonkinois* and *chasseurs annamites* in Indochina.⁶¹

The role of expansions across large swathes of ocean is seen by some as a marker of European expansion. In his study within this volume, Andrade urges us to see maritime expansion as a major factor distinguishing Asian and Western European expansions.

Although Asianists can point to numerous Asian states that projected their power overseas, from the Ottoman Empire to Ming China, there does seem to be some truth to the proposition that during the early modern period (1450 to 1750) European states were more inclined to seaborne expansion than were Asian states. European empires stretched around the world, consisting primarily of small seaports strung together across the oceans.... More importantly, during the early modern period, there were no analogous Asian sea-empires.

Andrade sees in this a European exceptionalism, drawing on Pearson's suggestion⁶² that polities which derive much of their revenue from maritime commerce act differently from those which draw it from agriculture, and that the Portuguese managed to achieve some degree of control over the Indian Ocean not so much because of superior technology but

because they brought a foreign conception of the politicisation of maritime space. However, we do not need to look far in Southeast Asian history to find polities which derived much of their revenue from taxing maritime trade, while in China the southern Song dynasty funded their military through taxing seaborne trade.

Further, Sebastian Prange's recent study⁶³ of the Indian Ocean questions the overall concept of European exceptionalism and urges "that greater attention should be paid to acknowledging continuities in the conception and use of maritime violence in Asian waters", proposing "the Indian Ocean to have been the site not only of economic rivalry but also of competing *political* claims long before Vasco da Gama's fleet first rounded the Cape." Prange brings to notice the maritime activities of the Cholas and Srivijaya, as well as political control across the seas by polities in the Persian Gulf and by Rasulid Yemen in the thirteenth century. It has been suggested that the Ming voyages led by Zheng He in the early fifteenth century were also involved in a project to command maritime space through control of major trade route ports.⁶⁴ Andrade himself notes the success of the Zheng (Koxinga) regime in Taiwan and that, in 1609, the lord of the southern Japanese province of Satsuma invaded the Ryukyu Islands, with the consent of the shogun, bringing what is today Okinawa within the control of a Japanese polity. It thus appears that maritime expansions or efforts to assume political power over maritime space were not solely a European enterprise.

Separately, British expansion in India and Southeast Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries certainly exhibits many similarities to the *tusi* system practiced by successive Chinese and other Asian states. With victory in the Battle of Plassey (1757), the British demanded compensation for their war expenses and appointed Mir Jafar to replace the defeated Nawab Siraj Ud Daulah. Thus began the British system of appointing rulers of "native states" as agents of their own rule – a key element of British success in dominating the subcontinent. The century from 1757 to 1857 saw "The English East India Company serially annex, or else extend its indirect rule over, each of the Indian states."⁶⁵ The system was remarkably like that of the Ming and Qing *tusi* on the southern Chinese borders.

Unlike many of the other European empires, the British, following their conquest of an indigenous state, often decided not to annex all of its territories. Instead they left part or all of the conquered state under its extant dynasty, albeit under their indirect rule.⁶⁶

This gave rise to the polities known by various descriptors – native states, princely states, feudatory states – in contradistinction to the formal provinces of India (Bengal, Punjab, Bombay and Madras), which were ruled directly by the British. The economic exploitation of the "native offices",

through tribute or subsidy payments or through the manipulation of trade, was one major effect of British rule, and again this mirrored the situation in what was to become southern China.⁶⁷ Similar systems were later imposed by the British in the “native states” of the Malay peninsula.⁶⁸ Tilly describes the polities utilising these systems as “tribute-taking empires”.⁶⁹ And again, like the *gaitu guiliu* under the Qing, after a certain period of indirect rule, the British in India also frequently deposed rulers and imposed direct rule on the former semi-independent polity, allowing the central government direct access to household taxation, mass conscription, censuses and police systems.

And, lastly, in looking at the inter-state systems which existed during Asian and European expansions, and indeed those which exist today, Yang Shaoyun of Berkeley has posed a seminal question: “Why did Asian expansions, though arguably similar to Western expansions and consolidations, not lead to a similar creation of inter-polity practices as in Europe with its multi-party peace treaties and conference diplomacy?”⁷⁰ A range of scholars including John King Fairbank,⁷¹ Wang Gungwu,⁷² Hamashita Takeshi,⁷³ David Kang⁷⁴ and David Shambaugh⁷⁵ argue for the Chinese tribute system as having institutionalised a benevolent if hierarchical inter-state order. An insightful critique of this acceptance of Chinese traditional rhetoric – of the idea that “because of its Confucian culture, China has not behaved aggressively toward others throughout history” – is provided by Wang Yuan-kang.⁷⁶ Contrasting Confucian pacifism with cultural realism and structural realism, Wang examines imperial China’s realpolitik behaviour and concludes that “Ming China’s Confucian culture did not constrain its decisions to use force”, that “structural realism provides a better explanation of Chinese strategic behaviour than Confucian pacifism does”, and that “the presence of the tribute system did not translate into peaceful interstate relations.”⁷⁷ The examples of Chinese violence cited in this volume support Wang Yuan-kang’s conclusions and suggest that the rhetoric of the tribute system concealed an apparatus of coercive power repeatedly exercised by successive Chinese states in expansionist activities against neighbouring polities over more than 2000 years.

Some final thoughts

The above overview and the chapters that follow are intended to provide vignettes of Asian polity expansions over time and to suggest some further avenues for exploration. What should be clear from these vignettes is that Asian polity expansions have been hugely important in the creation of the world we inhabit today. The examples presented in this volume further underline Lieberman’s claim that the widespread idea of regional stasis in parts of Asia is baseless. Many of the expansions described are relatively recent and were concurrent with European expansions. The Vietnamese incorporation of Khmer lands in what is today southern Vietnam, Chinese

incorporation of Taiwan and Xinjiang, and Thai incorporation of areas to the south and north have all occurred within the last 300 years.⁷⁸ And even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we have seen the Chinese incorporation of the Tibetan Kham areas⁷⁹ and Central Tibet, India's take-over of Sikkim, and Indonesia's invasions of Papua and East Timor.

The expansions described also underscore the broad role of externally oriented violence by states in the evolution of Asian polities, contrasting with a widely disseminated trope that Asian societies were less inclined to violence than were European states.⁸⁰ In 1407, in the final victory announcement by the military commanders who had been sent by the Ming emperor Yongle to occupy Đại Việt, it was reported to the emperor that "7 million" of the Vietnamese forces had been killed.⁸¹ While obviously an exaggeration, the fact that military commanders were obliged to maximise kill numbers in their reports suggests that massive violence was an integral element in at least some Asian polity expansions. In Tilly's words: coercion *works*!⁸²

While a volume of this nature can do no more than hint at possible comparisons between Asian polity expansions and those which have taken place in others areas of the globe, it is hoped that the materials contained within will provide useful grist for further comparisons and contrasts. In any such comparison, ideas of "empire" and "colonialism" will undoubtedly be broached and such discussions will likely assess the relevance of these terms to Asian expansions. While "empire" is frequently employed to describe the Chinese, Mongol, Manchu, Vietnamese, Thai, Burmese, Javanese and even Srivijayan extended polities, the use of the term "colonialism" to describe Asian expansions is less common. This term "colonialism" has a variegated history, being used to refer to the settlement of Romans in areas conquered by that empire, to the eastward expansion of the Russian empire, to the expansion of the Ottoman Turk empire, and to the overseas activities of the European powers subsequent to the fifteenth century. The debates over colonialism have, however, now been so tightly linked with the expansion of the European overseas empires that its application to actions by Asian polities appears to be precluded almost by definition. Yet in his 1954 work *China's March Toward the Tropics*,⁸³ Herold Wiens wrote of the "national autonomous regions" instituted by the People's Republic of China post-1949 as being used to "disguise an old colonialism", while Jennifer Holmgren called her study of the Chinese occupation of what is today northern Vietnam *Chinese Colonisation of Northern Vietnam*.⁸⁴ How appropriate is the term in describing some of the expansions described in this volume?

Certainly some Asian expansions were not unlike the eastward push of Russia, described by the Tsarist Prince Chancellor Gorchakov in 1864 as follows:

The situation of Russia, is that of all the civilised states which come into contact with nomads who have no well-established state organisation....

To provide against their raids and their looting, we must subdue them and bring them under strict control. But there are others further away ... consequently we too must proceed further still.... This is what has befallen France in Africa, the United States in America, England in India. We march forward by necessity as much as by ambition.⁸⁵

If we meld T. R. Adam's definition of colonialism as "the political control of an underdeveloped people whose social and economic life is directed by the dominant power"⁸⁶ with Hans Kohn's suggestion that "colonialism is foreign rule imposed upon a people",⁸⁷ and add Michael Doyle's suggestion that colonialism is the process of establishing "a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society",⁸⁸ then indeed most of the Asian expansions described in this volume could be classed as examples of "colonialism."

This then leads us to the issue of how Asian polity expansions are represented in the histories of contemporary Asian states. While some, such as Indonesia, can assign the creation of their state to the expansion of a precursor European power, others take pride in the expansion by which their state was created. Vietnam, for example, regales its citizens with the history of Vietnamese expansion through the Nam Tiến (Southern Advance). Still others, such as the People's Republic of China, hide the history of the polity expansion which created them behind fictitious legitimising historical accounts and maps which represent "historical China" as extending beyond even modern PRC borders. Thus, from at least the early part of the twentieth century, the schema of a multi-ethnic China has been used to depict the violent interactions of the past as simply fractious relations between fraternal Chinese nationalities. Such devices obviate the need to explain Chinese polity expansion.

Contrary to popular and frequently-disseminated opinion within the Chinese state, "China" has not always extended as far as the PRC does today. However, the state-endorsed historical atlases in China, such as the standard set edited by Tan Qixiang,⁸⁹ represent China in all ages as extending west to the Pamirs and north into Siberia, including most of Central Asia and northern areas almost to the Arctic Circle. An excellent example of such historical misrepresentation is brought out by a comparison of the map within the Ming volume of the *Cambridge History of China*,⁹⁰ which shows Ming China extending westwards to Sichuan and Gansu and north to a little beyond Beijing, with the map contained within the Chinese translation of the same work,⁹¹ showing Ming China extending west to the Pamirs and north to Siberia. A further example of such exaggeration can be seen on the "Map of China's National Shame" published in 1938 with the approval of the Republic of China's Ministry of the Interior (see Map 1.1). This shows the areas lost to Western and Japanese imperialism as including Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Burma, Nepal, Afghanistan and Kazakhstan. Such histories and representations obscure

Map 1.1 Map of China's "National Shame", 1938 (source: Published by Dongfang yudi xueshe 東方輿地學社 in Chongqing. Authorised by Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of China. Map courtesy of Kawashima Shin.).

much and conceal the experiences of Chinese state aggression against other polities.⁹² The realities hidden behind the topoi of China's imperial and modern historiography, and of China's relations with its geographical neighbours, need a new interpretation if there is to be recognition that

Chinese polities have in the past been capable of violence against neighbours and have indeed engaged in expansionist aggression against them.

The history of Chinese polity expansion is a nascent discipline and faces obvious political obstacles. However, it is indeed such political obstacles – not solely those in China – which underline the importance of studying the diverse processes by which Asian polities have expanded through time. Only thereby will be able to compare these expansions in a wider global context, regardless of whether we consider that context to be what Lieberman describes in this volume as “long-term forces” favouring “consolidation, however territorially or ethnically open-ended”.

Notes

- 1 In Chapter 11 entitled “Non-European Initiatives and Perceptions” of his study *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415–1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), David Abernethy examines Asian polities (Japan, China, Tibet, Thailand, Persia, Afghanistan) mainly in terms of why these polities did not become part of European empires.
- 2 Abernethy, *Dynamics of Global Dominance*, p. 18.
- 3 If a definition for “polity” is demanded, we could perhaps borrow Tilly’s very broad definition for “states”, being “coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territory”. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Malden, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 1.
- 4 It should be stressed that Lieberman does not see these processes of expansion as having been in any way inevitable, noting in his contribution to this volume: “Not only did most Southeast Asian ethnicities arise late, often after 1400, and not only did such ethnicities remain socially and demographically fluid, but the territorial triumphs of Burma, Siam and Vietnam were all quite contingent.”
- 5 Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, “The Galactic Polity in Southeast Asia”, in *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3, 3 (2013): 503–34. See p. 516.
- 6 For example, see Bryce Beemer, *The Creole City in Mainland Southeast Asia: Slave Gathering, Warfare and Cultural Exchange in Burma, Thailand and Manipur, 18th–19th c.* (PhD dissertation, University of Hawai’i at Manoa, 2013).
- 7 Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680, Volume One: The Lands Below the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 26.
- 8 The question can of course be extended to polities of any nature.
- 9 Which Lieberman sees as regular and somewhat synchronised “generalised political collapses” across the Eurasian rimlands.
- 10 Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett (eds), *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644 – Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Chapters 2 and 3, especially pp. 160–61.
- 11 For details of which see John K. Whitmore, *Việt Nam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming, 1371–1421* (New Haven: Council on Southeast Asian Studies, Yale University, 1985).
- 12 Leo K. Shin has pursued such a methodology in *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- 13 Owen Lattimore (1900–89) was an American scholar who produced seminal studies of the Eurasian frontier of China. His key insights on this frontier can

- be found in *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1940) and in his *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1928–1958* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).
- 14 In his chapter in this volume, Momoki records major Đại Việt expeditions against Champa in 982, 1044, 1069, 1252 and 1312.
 - 15 A reflection of this phenomenon of control over major deltas but not the territory between can be seen, albeit on a smaller scale, in some parts of maritime Southeast Asia where polity power was often constituted by control over coastal river mouths, the only means of access to the interior.
 - 16 A landmark study of this region is presented in Catherine Margaret Churchman, *Between Two Rivers: The Li and Lao Chiefdoms from the Han to the T'ang* (PhD dissertation, Australian National University, 2011).
 - 17 For further details of the Nguyễn polity, see Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).
 - 18 For an overview of Indian Ocean experiences in this sphere, see Sebastian Prange, "The Contested Sea: Regimes of Maritime Violence in the Pre-modern Indian Ocean", *Journal of Early Modern History* 17, 1 (2013): 9–33.
 - 19 For valuable studies of how firearms were key in both Chinese expansion into Đại Việt and Đại Việt's subsequent southwards expansion, see Sun Laichen, "Chinese Gunpowder Technology and Đại Việt", in *Việt Nam: Borderless Histories*, ed. Nhung Tuyet Tran and A. J. S. Reid (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 72–120; and Sun Laichen, "Chinese-style Firearms in Dai Viet (Vietnam): The Archaeological Evidence", *Revista da Cultura* 27 (2008): 38–55.
 - 20 English translations of references to the Ming invasion of Đại Việt in the *Ming shi-lu* (明實錄 – Ming imperial annals) can be accessed at: Geoff Wade (transl.), *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource* (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, 2005), <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/>.
 - 21 Further details of each of these processes can be found in Wade's chapter in this volume.
 - 22 Alexander Ong Eng Ann, "Contextualising the Book-burning Episode during the Ming Invasion and Occupation of Vietnam", in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor*, ed. Geoff Wade and Sun Laichen (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2010), pp. 154–68.
 - 23 John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200–1700* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).
 - 24 For which see Herold J. Wiens, *China's March Toward the Tropics: A Discussion of the Southward Penetration of China's Culture, Peoples, and Political Control in Relation to the Non-Han-Chinese Peoples of South China and in the Perspective of Historical and Cultural Geography* (Hamden, CT: Shoe String Press, 1954), pp. 194–8.
 - 25 The *kaizhong* (開中) system involved selling state-monopoly salt to merchants for grain, which the merchants were required to transport to and provide in newly-acquired regions, generally for the use of expeditionary or defence forces.
 - 26 Useful overviews include Wiens, *China's March Toward the Tropics*, pp. 201–65; and John E. Herman, "The Cant of Conquest: Tusi Offices and China's Political Incorporation of the Southwest Frontier", in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, ed. Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu and Donald S. Sutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 135–70.
 - 27 John E. Herman, "The Mu'ge Kingdom: A Brief History of a Frontier Empire in Southwest China", in *Political Frontiers, Ethnic Boundaries and Human Geographies in Chinese History*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo and Don J. Wyatt (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003), pp. 245–85. See p. 263.

- 28 John E. Herman, "Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System", *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, 1 (1997): 47–74. See p. 47.
- 29 The experiences of Guizhou during this process are detailed in Claudine Lombard-Salmon, *Un exemple d'acculturation chinoise: La province du Gui Zhou au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1972).
- 30 Herman, "The Cant of Conquest", p. 167.
- 31 For which see Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 549. In this – if we are to assign the name "China" to the Qing empire – he differs from R. Bin Wong, who declares that "China was not one of several ambitious and competitive states seeking to order domestic space and expand its international presence at the expense of similar competitors". R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 103.
- 32 John E. Herman, "The Mongol Conquest of Dali: The Failed Second Front", in *Warfare in Inner Asian History (500–1800)*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 295–335. See pp. 304–8.
- 33 Despite this, Koizumi (in this volume) claims that the *suai* collection was not the key element in Siamese territorial expansion:

The revival of Siam as a viable kingdom and its territorial expansion in the Thonburi and early Bangkok periods was made possible not by maritime trade linked with the extensive *suai* collection and the tightened corvée service, as often claimed by existing studies, but by procuring necessary resources mainly through the market using the revenues from commercial activities and tax farming, which were often in the hands of the Chinese.
- 34 For which see O. W. Wolters, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1999), pp. 27–40.
- 35 Tambiah, "The Galactic Polity in Southeast Asia", p. 509.
- 36 S. J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). The degree to which Theravada Buddhism per se was a vector in polity expansion in mainland Southeast Asia remains a key issue for research. Lieberman speaks of a "Theravada world" in mainland Southeast Asia and suggests that literacy and monastic networks were essential elements in polity expansion and consolidation.
- 37 Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, p. 1.
- 38 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 80, 3b–4a (from the *Ming shilu*, the reign annals of the Ming emperors; see <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1268>).
- 39 Xiyu Wang, *China's Last Imperial Frontier: Late Qing's Expansion in Sichuan's Tibetan Borderlands* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), pp. 168–70.
- 40 John Whitmore, "The Fall of Vijaya in 1471: Decline or Competition? Campā in the Fifteenth Century", in *New Scholarship on Campā*, ed. Arlo Griffiths, Andrew Hardy and Geoff Wade (forthcoming).
- 41 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 60.1a–4a. See <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/859>.
- 42 Geoff Wade, "Early Muslim Expansion in Southeast Asia, Eighth to Fifteenth Centuries", in *The New Cambridge History of Islam, Vol. 3: The Eastern Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 366–408. See p. 385.
- 43 Armando Cortesão, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512–15*, 2 vols (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944). See pp. 166–200.

- 44 Geoff Wade, "Some Topoi in Southern Border Historiography during the Ming (and their Modern Relevance)", in *China and Her Neighbours: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy, 10th to 19th Century*, ed. Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), pp. 135–59.
- 45 In fact, even until today, a Chinese polity cannot "invade" (侵略) another polity. The active verb "to invade" is limited to describing the actions of only those outside Chinese culture.
- 46 Nguyen The Anh, "Le Nam tien dans les textes Vietnamiens", in *Les frontières du Vietnam*, ed. P. B. Lafont (Paris: Edition l'Harmattan, 1989), pp. 121–7.
- 47 Claudine Ang Tsu Lyn, *1954–1975 Vietnamese Historiography: Using Regionalism to Study Southern Narratives of Vietnamese History* (MA thesis, National University of Singapore, 2005), pp. 88–117.
- 48 This almost sacred mission of territorial expansion among some nineteenth-century Americans is described in Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: St. Martin's, 2011).
- 49 Joo-Jock Lim, *Territorial Power Domains, Southeast Asia, and China: The Geo-strategy of an Overarching Massif* (Singapore and Ann Arbor: ISEAS/University of Michigan Press, 1984).
- 50 See Yang Bin, "The Zhang on Chinese Southern Frontiers: Disease Constructions, Environmental Changes, and Imperial Colonization", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 84, 2 (Summer 2010): 163–92; and Anthony Reid and Jiang Na, "The Battle of the Microbes: Smallpox, Malaria and Cholera in Southeast Asia", ARI Working Paper no. 62, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (April 2006), www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps06_062.pdf.
- 51 Victoria Tin-bor Hui, "China's Long March to The Periphery: How Peripheral Regions Became Parts of China", paper presented at the Roundtable on the Nature of Political and Spiritual Relations among Asian Leaders and Polities from the 14th to the 18th Centuries, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, 19–21 April 2010.
- 52 Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 79–99.
- 53 Paul Kennedy suggests a European corollary, at least in some instances: "If, however, too large a proportion of the state's resources is diverted from wealth creation and allocated instead to military purposes, then it is likely to lead to a weakening of national power over the long term." See Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. xvi.
- 54 Most fully presented in James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
- 55 Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800–1830 – Volume Two: Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia, and the Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- 56 Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 549.
- 57 Amitav Acharya, *Civilizations in Embrace: The Spread of Ideas and the Transformation of Power – India and Southeast Asia in the Classical Age* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2013), pp. 61–70.
- 58 Axel Kristinsson, *Expansions: Competition and Conquest in Europe since the Bronze Age* (Reykjavik: Reykjavík Akadémían, 2010).
- 59 Timothy Parsons, *The Rule of Empires: Those Who Built Them, Those Who Endured Them, and Why They Always Fall* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 60 Nigel Pollard, "The Roman Army", in *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, ed. David S. Potter (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 206–27.

- 61 For a survey of the use of such forces by colonial armies in Southeast Asia, see Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig (eds), *Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2006).
- 62 M. N. Pearson, "Merchants and States", in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 41–116.
- 63 Prange, "The Contested Sea".
- 64 Geoff Wade, "The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 78, 1 (2005): 37–58.
- 65 Michael H. Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India 1757–1857* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 1.
- 66 Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India*, p. 2.
- 67 And this obviated what Tilly suggests is a necessity of the wielders of coercion to "become involved in extraction of resources, distribution of goods, services and income, and adjudication of disputes". Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 20.
- 68 The best study of this early period of British intervention in the peninsula is Emily Sadka, *The Protected Malay States 1874–1895* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968).
- 69 Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, pp. 21–22.
- 70 Ravi Palat has explored interstate systems in Asia in his "Power Pursuits: Interstate Systems in Asia", *Asian Review of World Histories* 1, 2 (July 2013): 227–63.
- 71 John King Fairbank, "A Preliminary Framework", in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 1–19.
- 72 Wang Gungwu suggests that "The [tributary] system was never used for territorial expansion, only for extending influence and affirming China's interpretation of its central place in the universe". Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia: Myths, Threats and Culture", EAI Occasional Paper No. 13 (Singapore: World Scientific, 1999), p. 32.
- 73 Hamashita Takeshi, "The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia", *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 46 (1988): 7–23.
- 74 David C. Kang, *East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
- 75 "China does not have a significant history of coercive statecraft.... The tribute system may have been hegemonic, but it was not based on coercion or territorial expansionism." David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order", *International Security* 29, 3 (Winter 2004/5): 64–99, p. 95.
- 76 Wang Yuan-kang, *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
- 77 Wang Yuan-kang, *Harmony and War*, pp. 143, 179.
- 78 Wang Gungwu, however, opines that "during the last thousand years, from the eleventh to the twentieth century, China has been on the whole defensive, constrained and inward-looking". See Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia: Myths, Threats and Culture", p. 32.
- 79 Wang Xiyu describes Qing expansion into the Tibetan Kham areas of Sichuan in the late nineteenth century as "episodic escalations of state violence propelled by regional interests, which were distinct from central-level priorities but connected to them in dynamic ways". Wang Xiyu, *China's Last Imperial Frontier: Late Qing's Expansion in Sichuan's Tibetan Borderlands* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 3.
- 80 Amitav Acharya's *Civilizations in Embrace* is but one example of this thesis. The claims are taken to an extreme degree in Giovanni Arrighi's "Reading Hobbes in Beijing: Great Power Politics and the Challenge of a Peaceful Ascent", in

Routledge Handbook of International Political Economy (IPE): IPE as a Global Conversation, ed. Mark Blyth (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 163–79, where he claims (p. 167) that “the East Asian system of national states stood out for the near absence of intra-systemic military competition and extra-systemic geographical expansion”. He associates this (p. 168) with “the absence of any tendency among East Asian states to build *overseas* empires in competition with one another and to engage in an armament race in any way comparable to the European powers”. Palat (“Power Pursuits”, p. 230) meanwhile notes that Ming China, for one example, fought 308 wars during 276 years in power!

81 <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1104>.

82 Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, p. 70.

83 Wiens, *China's March Toward the Tropics*.

84 Jennifer Holmgren, *Chinese Colonisation of Northern Vietnam: Administrative Geography and Political Development in the Tongking Delta, First to Sixth Centuries A.D.* (Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, ANU, 1980).

85 Marc Ferro, *Colonization: A Global History*, translated from the French by K. D. Prithipaul (Quebec: World Heritage Press, 1997), pp. 13–14.

86 T. R. Adam, *Modern Colonialism: Institutions and Policies* (New York: Doubleday and Company), 1955, p. 3.

87 Cited in R. Strausz-Hupe and H. W. Hazard (eds), *The Idea of Colonialism* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, University of Pennsylvania, 1958), p. 11.

88 Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 45.

89 Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國历史地图集 [The Historical Atlas of China] (Beijing: Ditu chubanshe [Cartography Press], 1982–87).

90 F. W. Mote and Denis Twitchett (eds), *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644 – Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

91 Mou Fuli and Cui Ruide (eds) 牟复礼, 崔瑞德编, *Jianqiao Zhongguo Ming dai shi* 剑桥中国明代史 [Cambridge History of China – Ming] (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1992).

92 Wang Gungwu also suggests that

Chinese history does not provide any convincing argument for an expansionist China, except perhaps in some periods when the Han Chinese were themselves conquered by tribal confederations from the north, and this resulted in some of the territories of China's conquerors being incorporated into China.

See Wang Gungwu, “China and Southeast Asia: Myths, Threats and Culture”, p. 34.

2 Why do empires expand?

Peter C. Perdue

Why must the empire's bounds forever stretch?
Nine districts formed the realm of Yao and Shun.
Lê Quý Đôn¹

Autumn grain and spring wheat spread along the furrows
It is green for several hundred miles down to the Crystal River
On the thirty-four military colony fields interspersed like embroidery
Everyone joins in to thresh the millet under the vast blue sky.
Ji Yun²

Thus two eighteenth-century poets, one Chinese and one Vietnamese, expressed very different views on the expansion of Chinese empires. Lê Quý Đôn questions the need for imperial expansion beyond the originally limited domains of ancient times. Ji Yun, writing from Xinjiang, celebrates military conquest which brings peace and prosperity. Both implicitly raise the question: Why do empires expand?

In the eyes of the victors, imperial expansion is perfectly natural. The conquerors win their battles because they have superior force, superior strategic insight, and superior legitimacy. In their accounts of their conquests, the victorious rulers often attribute their success to divine intervention. They gloss over defeats, mistakes, and uncertainties as temporary obstacles on the road to victory.

The victims of empire often see the causes of their defeat in equally simple terms. In their eyes, the conquerors act from greed for power and wealth, and they win simply because of superior force and luck. In their view, the victories are “unnatural”, not determined in advance, but the motivations for expansion are perfectly understandable and not particularly subtle.

Yet when we look more closely, the actual motivations and causes for expansion are often not so clear-cut. Biographers of empire-builders stress their dynamic personalities, leading us to attribute the basic causes of expansion to personal psychology. This very common human interest in stories of conquest reveals some aspects of the truth, but conceals others. Charles Tilly notes:

At least in Western countries, people learn early in life to tell stories in which self-motivating actors firmly located in space and time produce all significant changes in the situation through their own efforts. Actors in narratives need not be rational or efficient, but their own orientations cause their actions.... By-products of social interaction, tacit constraints, unintended consequences, indirect effects, incremental changes, and causal chains mediated by nonhuman environments play little or no part in customary narratives of social life.³

Powerful, highly motivated individuals abound in stories of empire formation, but their rivals usually fade from sight. The losers could have been equally powerful, insightful and inspiring, but they lost because of miscalculations, bad luck, or circumstances beyond their control. Yet the victors rewrite the story to make the outcome look inevitable, a product of Heaven's will.

Pursuit of wealth and power certainly is a strong force for all rulers, but not always the dominant one. Some wars of conquest do not bring great material profit, especially when they bring expansion into remote, unproductive regions. In any case, powerful rulers have many choices about where to direct their aggressive energies: greed alone does not explain why they choose one region, or one enemy, over another.

In this paper, I consider the following questions: What are the major causes of imperial expansion? What specific sites, regions and interests drive decisions to expand? Are there fundamental differences between Asian and Western European empires, or between past and present empires? Can we find any general patterns or rules of thumb common to different imperial expansions?

Many historians tend to obscure the fundamental causes of expansion. We need to dig beneath the official explanations. I do not have a general theory to answer these questions, but only some modest suggestions:

- We should focus on frontiers as key sites of decisions for advance and retreat.
- Interactions at and across borders are the main elements in expansion.
- Asia and Europe are not as different as most people think.
- There are shared patterns across Eurasia, past and present.

Many writers invoke one of three common models to explain imperial expansion:

- 1 The theory of "natural borders"
- 2 The impact of charismatic personalities
- 3 Resource shortages (either in the form of push factors, such as desiccation of the steppe, or pull factors, such as the attractions of cities, tropical agricultural goods, gold, etc.)

Each of these explanations holds part of the truth, but each has its defects. The natural borders theory stresses the significance of geography in determining the boundaries of states. It has been popular since the nineteenth century, especially among German historical geographers.⁴ It assumes a natural fit between the borders of peoples, states and terrain. Today, Chinese historians and state ideologues claim that the current boundaries of the PRC are the natural boundaries of China, and that “for five thousand years”, as Sun Yat-sen put it, Chinese have always occupied this territory.

The grain of truth in the natural borders theory is that physiogeographic features guide the course of expansion. Geography affects the logistics and tactics of armies and the directions of trade routes, migrations and cultural flows. But no geographic barrier has ever determined, by itself, the borders of states and nations. All barriers can be overcome with enough effort. Buddhist missionaries crossed the Himalayas and went through Afghanistan to get to China, while the Silk Road caravans have crossed deserts and steppes continually for over two millennia. On the other hand, states can erect barriers in regions that lack them. The Chinese construction of the Great Wall is the pre-eminent example, but other wall-building and defence projects across Eurasia also show how human effort constructed borders where nature did not.

The nineteenth century was the heyday of geographic determinism, but scholars have increasingly emphasised the limitations on the role of geography in determining boundaries. The evolution of the thinking of Owen Lattimore demonstrates this process. Lattimore initially endorsed many of the determinist arguments of Ellsworth Huntington and Karl August Wittfogel, but later he rejected them, arguing that social and political developments overcome the impact of geography in particular cases.⁵

As for the second theory, certainly personality matters. Great warriors attract followers when they win battles, creating a bandwagon effect. We cannot ignore the personal factor in the formation of both steppe and settled empires. But one man cannot do everything. Imperial conquerors need followers, who respond only to certain kinds of achievements. Victory in battle is not enough to ensure permanent loyalty. Mongol Khans who were not descendants of Chinggis Khan, for example, always had difficulty in keeping the loyalty of their supporters, even when they achieved military victories. Accounts written after the founding of empires tend to exaggerate the founder's power. During the time of formation, the founder had rivals with equally persuasive claims. The personality theory also cannot explain the continuation of empire after the founder's death, the role of succession crises, and decisions on the administration and integration of conquered regions.

The third type of explanation invokes structural pressures, arguing that the limitations of a resource base drive expansion. Nomads attack settled empires to gain trade goods (the “greedy nomad”) or to make up for the

lack of subsistence requirements (the “needy nomad”).⁶ Discussions of the expansion of settled empires against nomads also often invoke the domination of trade routes. In explaining European imperial expansion in Asia, historians often cite the need to seize control of high-value and addictive tropical agricultural products, such as spices, coffee, tea and opium.

The resource-driven explanations assume that powerholders at the centre see the need or opportunity to gain valuable resources, then give orders to colonisers and regional commanders, and then succeed in obtaining the resources they wanted. Most analyses of European and non-European expansion, however, find that the process was much more complex. The “Columbus” model, in which an enterprising voyager sells the idea of investment in a voyage by promising great riches to a state sponsor, is not the most common one. In most cases, it is easier to obtain resources by peaceful trade rather than by expansion. Central authorities in London usually tried to restrain the more aggressive activities of East India Company representatives in India, rejecting requests for high budgets for military intervention. More often than not, local activists drew the imperial centre into approving *de facto* conquests after the event, instead of having the centre plan expansive projects first.

Analysts of imperial expansion, European and Chinese, still generally stress the impulses originating from the central court or metropolitan decision-makers, attributing expansion to a consistent long-term project aiming at specific material gains. These analyses fit well with the urge for dramatic stories described by Tilly, but inevitably leave out other less obvious factors. They pay less attention to the contingent dynamics of interaction in frontier zones. Writing after the fact, scholars in both China and the West have tended to see expansion as an inexorable, natural process.

Chinese dynastic and modern historians were especially skilled at naturalising the uncontrollable contingencies of conquest. Since each dynasty wrote its predecessor’s history, and destroyed most of its archives after completing the official history, each new dynasty had ample scope for bending the record to show the inevitability of dynastic change. Ever since the Zhou conquered the Shang in the first millennium BCE and attributed their victory to the turning of the Mandate of Heaven against the wicked last Shang king, Chinese dynastic founders have known how to obscure the causes of their success.

To get a better perspective on imperial expansion, we need to look not only at the official sources but also beyond and within them. Careful analysis of even the most massaged official texts often reveals contradictions and uncertainties that undercut the confidence of the overall message. Beyond that, looking at non-Chinese sources provides a very valuable alternate perspective that holds a mirror up to the Chinese official bureaucratic view. Within multilingual dynasties such as the Qing, sources in

different languages such as Manchu or Mongol reveal different points of view or nuances even within the official narrative. Beyond the borders of the Qing, other observers of the empire also put forth views that did not necessarily support those of the imperial centre.

Analysts of European imperialism often debate which of several mono-causal theories best explains the expansion of empires from the sixteenth century through to the end of the nineteenth. Some stress religious motives, such as the Spanish drive to spread the Christian gospel; others focus on material motivations, such as the search for the riches of the Orient. Security issues created by the rival expansion projects of different European empires drove competitive warfare, even when the promised rewards were small. Cultural visions, including the “civilising mission” toward backward natives, inspired imperial adventurers to launch projects of social transformation that inspired colonial expansion.

These explanations are, however, limited to the special context of European imperial maritime expansion. We need to examine them in a wider context, including the continental empires of Eurasia and the non-European empires, in order to know which motivations are specifically European and which are more generally shared. There is no one-size-fits-all model of expansion, but there may be underlying common processes that express themselves differently in local contexts.

The late nineteenth-century theorists of imperialism, from Hobson to Hilferding to Luxemburg to Lenin, focused on a single structural principle driving expansion: the search of capitalism for new markets and new resources. They reduced imperialism to an economically driven mechanism, confined to industrial capitalism. These empires, primarily the British and French, served as the modal cases, the truly modern empires. Critics have, however, shown that economic motivations alone do not explain European imperial expansion. Although industrialising countries needed resources and markets from the colonised world, they did not have to obtain them through colonisation; much global trade was in fact with major uncolonised areas such as the Americas. These theoretical models also placed all their focus on the metropolitan centres, giving the colonies little or no agency in colonial expansion. Modern analysts of colonialism stress interactions between the metropole and the colonies, and the complex tensions within each side that generated the dynamics of colonial expansion. As Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper argue, “Europe was made by its imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself”.⁷ Alexander Woodside has likewise pointed to the “symbiotic relationship” between the Chinese frontier and the imperial centre.⁸

Turning away from Europe also alters our perspective on cultural factors in imperial expansion. The European maritime empires faced, on their first contacts, radical gaps between their cultural values and those of the societies they conquered. Colonisers of the New World marvelled at

the “wondrous possessions” they had accumulated. The natural wealth of the New World far surpassed European expectations. On the other hand, the conquerors put the peoples of the New World far below Old World civilisation on their scale of values.

The continental empires of Eurasia, by contrast, perceived smaller and less startling racial and cultural gaps. Russians, Chinese, Middle Easterners and Central Eurasians had interacted with each other for many centuries before open conquest. The settled empires, to be sure, often described the mobile nomads as animals, beneath consideration as humans. On the other hand, the writers who described nomadic peoples often granted them moral characteristics that qualified their universal denunciations. Descriptions of nomads drew on a tradition of diplomatic and commercial contact, often reflecting empirical study of conditions in the steppe. For practical reasons, the settled rulers had to find out about the powerful military rivals who surrounded them. Their nuanced descriptions show a more complex pattern of contact than simple racial division. They were at least aware of alternatives to casting out non-settled peoples from the human race.

Mobility and frontier management in the Ming and Qing empires

In order to look beyond European models for comparative perspectives on imperial expansion and to incorporate concepts of cultural difference along with economic imperatives, we need new models of the places and forces where expansion was generated. Frontier zones have attracted a great deal of interest in recent studies of empires because they reveal basic processes in their clearest light.⁹

I have proposed a simple sketch of frontier interactions, based on the idea of fractal hierarchies¹⁰ (see Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

Fractal hierarchies are based on binary divisions which repeat each other at different levels of a social structure. Several historians and social scientists have invoked this idea to analyse topics including the evolution of academic disciplines, the Chinese social and administrative hierarchy, and global historical processes. For our purposes, we may use the basic distinction between settled and mobile peoples to establish a conceptual division of the population embraced by officials and many of their subjects.

In the orthodox official view, settled agrarian populations were the only ones with “civilisation” (*wen* 文), because they could be easily counted, taxed and controlled. Those who moved around, whether they were itinerant merchants, artists, religious pilgrims, famine refugees or nomads, raised serious suspicions of heresy and social unrest. Officials aimed to ensure that their mobility was temporary or that they moved from one known, registered place to another. The Chinese famine relief administration offered temporary relief to those who fled famine-struck regions, but

Figure 2.1 Frontier interactions in Imperial China: Northwest Frontier peoples.

Figure 2.2 Frontier interactions in Imperial China: Southeast Frontier peoples.

also made sure that the refugees returned to their homes once the escorts had ended. Just as the Elizabethan English feared “sturdy beggars” who made a profession of asking for alms, Chinese officials warned against those people who might exploit the food kitchens to simply keep moving from one relief station to the next. Guarantors, village registration records and, if possible, escorts should follow the true refugees back to their homes.

Buddhist monks and pilgrims would not cause problems as long as they were registered by the temples they visited. Mass pilgrimages caused concern, but they were predictable, temporary collective movements for

which the officials could make preparations. In both famine relief and pilgrimage administration, officials tolerated temporary disruptions of settled life because they expected to be able to soon restore the division between the reliable settled subject and the unreliable migrant. The liminality created by mobility would soon resolve itself.

Merchants and nomads, however, raised bigger challenges. As long as a dynasty did not completely control the steppes, it could not confine the nomads, who lived off herds and roamed on grasslands. Chinese rulers had to decide whether to include the nomads, by conquering and settling them, or exclude them by defensive means. Each policy implied a different strategy, with its own benefits and costs. Aggressive military expeditions could defeat some tribes, but others simply withdrew. Eventually, the high costs of campaigning forced the Chinese armies to return home, often under embarrassing threats of food shortage and logistical incapacity. From the expeditions of Han Wudi to the early Ming and early Qing, no major Chinese military expeditions could spend more than 90 days in the steppe. These logistical limits meant that, until the mid-eighteenth century, Chinese dynasties could never completely encompass all the nomadic peoples who roved on their frontier.

The activities of merchants raised similar questions, both domestically and internationally. They moved along a wide variety of networks at many different scales, from the local marketing system to international ocean networks. Merchants within the empire had to register and accept some official supervision. Settled merchants in large cities such as Hankow could even support local administration.¹¹ But the activities of overseas traders, like those of nomads, raised sharp questions of control and supervision. Should the empire try to incorporate them by sending large fleets to dominate the coastal and oceanic trade routes? This strategy flourished from the Song dynasty through the early Ming expeditions, but ended thereafter. Or should it try to exclude threatening merchants entirely and seal its borders? Only the Ming dynasty seriously tried this policy, and only for a short period of time. Bans on overseas trade merely generated the attacks by “dwarf pirates”, which inflicted heavy costs on overseas ports. Responding to appeals from southeastern officials, the Ming court eventually called off the ban on overseas trade in the mid-sixteenth century at the same time that it lifted prohibitions on trade with nomads in the steppe.

For most of their rule, the Ming and Qing dynasties therefore tolerated the ambiguous, fluid interactions of the frontier zone. Usually unaffected by trade bans or aggressive expansionist moves, the zone attracted and constructed new identities from both sides. Farmers moved from overpopulated regions of the interior to the wider spaces of the frontier, where they could obtain their own land. The state often encouraged these migrations in order to relieve pressure in the interior. The people who settled in the newly opened regions, however, differed from those who stayed at home. They were used to moving around, they were vulnerable to harvest

crises on the more marginal lands that they had cleared, and they were harder to control. Even those who were “reluctant pioneers” learned of a wider world beyond their home villages.¹² Frontier settlers, because of their less secure attachment to the soil, resembled in part the mobile nomads farther out in the steppe.

Some of the nomads, likewise, moved closer to the settled regions, attracted by the chance to supplement herding with agricultural income or by trading opportunities at the border towns. They settled in communities that moved less often, or shorter distances, than the nomads farther away. These populations, from the other side of the fractal hierarchy, became more similar to the settled farmers.

But in Eastern Eurasia, the two groups did not merge. Few Han Chinese became nomads, and few nomads became permanent agriculturalists. At least as an ideal type, we can thus sketch four types of settlers in and around the frontier zone, each with their own type of mobility: the core peasantry, emigrants to the frontier, sedentarised nomads and “pure” nomads.

The Ming and Qing dynasties followed different strategies at different times to shape the characteristics of this zone, responding to local situations which had an impact on central court policy. These policies developed in parallel on both the northwestern and southeastern frontiers. Figures 2.3 through 2.6 summarise several phases of this process.

Here I will give a few examples of these discussions in the Ming and Qing, to show the connections between frontier policies on the northwest and southeast. Ming strategists fiercely debated defence policies from the 1550s to 1570s. The northwest faced continual raiding from Mongols led by Altan Khan, while the southeast suffered from attacks by traders prohibited from

Figure 2.3 Ming and Qing security policies on the Northwest Frontier: Late Ming (c.1500–1600 CE).

Figure 2.4 Ming and Qing security policies on the Northwest Frontier: High Qing (c.1750–1911 CE).

Figure 2.5 Ming and Qing security policies on the Southeast Frontier: Late Ming (c.1500–1600 CE).

engaging in commerce. The basic terms of the debate concerned how to manage alien peoples on the frontiers: to drive them away, or to partially incorporate them in a policed frontier zone? Idealistic moralists at the centre called for “wiping out the shame” of defeat through ambitious campaigns to exterminate the enemy; more pragmatic officials on the frontiers worked out ways to engage local forces, commercial and military, in order to achieve a less costly settlement. The Ming stabilised its borders because of the local influence of frontier officials and commanders. In this case,

Figure 2.6 Ming and Qing security policies on the Southeast Frontier: High Qing (c.1750–1911 CE).

frontier conditions generated impulses for accommodation, not expansion and conflict.

By banning coastal trade in 1523, the Ming stimulated raids by armed smugglers, peaking in the 1550s and 1560s. Just as in relations with the nomads, the traders responded to the closure of ports with destructive attacks and by seizing commercial goods. These so-called “Japanese pirates” (*wokou* 倭寇) consisted mainly of Chinese peasants and deracinated farmers, supported by some aristocratic warrior families in Japan. The pirate confederations also included Portuguese and Southeast Asians. Local officials soon found that influential families on the mainland had connections with the pirate-smugglers, supplying them with ships to carry contraband goods. Some even married into pirate families. One official who stubbornly attacked this local collusion was impeached by the Fujian elites whom he threatened; he was dismissed from office and made to commit suicide.

Other officials preferred a more liberal policy. They proposed to restore legal trade, pardon the chief offenders, and use revenue from restored trade to improve local welfare, so as to remove incentives to engage in crime. They argued that the raiders were not simply after plunder; if allowed to trade legally, they could contribute to the local economy.

The brilliant military commanders Hu Zongxian (1511–65) and Qi Jiguang (1528–88) helped to enforce this trade policy. They relaxed trade restrictions, invested in local militia training, and persuaded the ringleaders of the pirate groups to surrender on favourable terms. Qi Jiguang especially emphasised the need to use local forces experienced in coastal defence, and he told his troops that since they were supported by local taxes, they owed it to their fellow villagers to fight nobly on their behalf.

In 1567, after the death of the hard-line Jiajing emperor (r. 1522–67), the court was able to enact the liberal trade policy and end two decades of pirate raids. The major leaders had surrendered, militia groups defended the countryside, and trade revenue supported local economic growth. The Portuguese, who had just arrived in Macao, also cooperated in suppressing piracy in Guangdong. The Single Whip tax reform, another local innovation, promoted rural markets by simplifying and monetising tax collection. Commercial interests in the south had prevailed over repressive military measures demanded by the agrarian-oriented officials in the court. This security policy grew out of the experience of local commanders, who accommodated the different groups so as to avoid the need for major military campaigns. Intricate and often deceptive diplomacy, based on local understanding and personal knowledge, won out over abstract threats of military force. One faction argued for centralised control, repression, and strict prohibitions on overseas migration and trade; the other argued for local participation in defence, attention to the local economy, liberal attitudes toward trade, leniency toward criminals who surrendered, and the use of one pirate against another.

The same two cultures clashed in the concurrent debates over defence on the northwest frontier. Unlike the pirates, the nomads had a single leader, Altan Khan (1507–82). Beginning in the 1530s he led raids against the frontier, coupled with offers of trade. When the Ming refused trade, he increased the scale of his raiding. This cycle of “request, refusal, raid” continued for 40 years, while debates raged at court.¹³

Yang Jisheng, the young vice-director of the Bureau of Equipment in the Ministry of War, passionately denounced a proposal to accommodate Altan Khan by opening horse markets at the border, exclaiming:

Last year the masses of the Ordos violated Heavenly norms and wantonly plundered our towns, killed our people, enslaved our women and children, burned our houses, and terrified our ancestors in their graves. They utterly humiliated our Central Kingdom. I was in the South; when I heard this news, my hair stood on end, and my guts split open. I was so angry I could not live with this ... we must exterminate [*jiao* 剿] the rebel bandits to avenge our shame [*baochou* 报仇].

He rejected any policy that would make peace with barbarians who looted and enslaved the Chinese, calling for “taking revenge and wiping away shame” (*baoyuan xuechi* 报怨雪耻) and invoking the strategists of the Warring States period and the expansionist emperors of the Han and Tang. Yang’s vituperative attacks on the Grand Secretary brought him imprisonment and floggings, and eventually a death sentence.

Yang followed what we may call the “logic of theory” in contrast to the “logic of practice”.¹⁴ He derived policy from abstract, unchanging principles. Since barbarians, in his view, “by nature” had insatiable desires,

trading with them would only increase their resources; it would not tame them. Their atrocities demanded revenge, not compromise. Only total extermination could fulfil security goals and give moral satisfaction. He and his supporters, like the opponents of trade with pirates, argued for centralised military power with a strong emperor.

Yang's opponents, by contrast, derived policy from day-to-day experience. They argued for the opening of horse markets to test the nomads' sincerity: if the opening of markets reduced raiding, then trade should be expanded. It was a "tit-for-tat" policy to induce cooperation. Believers in the logic of theory thought that nomads were a force of nature, like flood waters that could only be driven back by force. Weng Wanda (1498–1552), by contrast, argued that Mongols could calculate costs and benefits; thus it was possible to negotiate with them.

Again, after the death of the Jiajing emperor eliminated support for the hard-line faction, the governor-general of Shaanxi, supported by Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng, settled the northwest security problem by allowing licensed trade, building walls and inducing surrender and cooperation from the nomads. Altan Khan was given the title of "Obedient and Righteous Prince" (*shunyi wang* 顺义王). He settled down, establishing Mongolia's first major city, Guihua, with merchants flocking to the frontier to sell silk, fur, grain and cooking pots to the Mongols. With the establishment of this regular trade, the Ming also began its commitment to building the continuous Great Wall. The Great Wall strategy fixed Ming boundaries and stimulated the development of a systematic transportation network, bringing supplies to the frontier garrisons, at a cost of over four million taels per year. The frontier officials had succeeded in restraining extreme cries for revenge on barbarians, accepting the nomadic presence across the border.

The Qing story differed markedly on the northwest frontier, but looked rather similar in the southeast. In the northwest, the Manchus succeeded in exterminating or incorporating their Mongol rivals by launching long-distance military campaigns. Unlike the campaigns of nearly all previous dynasties, these expeditions succeeded. They succeeded for three basic reasons: the Manchus, as close relations of the Mongols, understood how to manipulate Inner Asian alliances to their benefit; the commercialisation of the Chinese domestic economy made it possible to deliver supplies to distant armies for long periods of time without straining the agrarian production of the core; and the presence of the Russians, as a new settled empire reaching eastward to the Qing borders, removed the escape hatch that allowed other nomads to flee. The Zunghars, the most defiant Mongols ever to resist Chinese expansion, were exterminated as a people under the Manchu onslaught.

The Manchus, however, except in limited cases, did not use the language of extermination and revenge. Their proclaimed goal was not revenge but order. They used the same language as Ming writers, "wiping away shame", but this referred to the shame of the Ming for failing to keep

domestic order, not its failure to resist foreign conquest. This key shift from an ethnically-oriented policy to a universalist one reflects the Manchus' own Inner Asian origins. Unlike the Han-centred Ming dynasty, they could comfortably embrace multiple peoples in their ruling coalition and in their legitimisation ideology.¹⁵ Qing expansion relied on an ethic of inclusion, offering all who submitted a proper place in a universal moral order. Mongols who surrendered to the Qing received noble titles, designated pasture lands, regulated succession processes, and often the prospect of intermarriage with the Qing imperial clan. By enrolling Mongols in banners, the central military and administrative institution of the empire, the Manchus recognised their key role. Far from being animals, cooperative Mongols could gain superior status to the Han subjects.

On the other hand, recognising Mongol humanity also implied that they had a fateful choice to make. If they chose to cooperate with the Manchus, they received great rewards; if, on the other hand, they rejected this offer, they indeed deserved extermination. The invocation of the rhetoric of righteous extermination (*jiao*) increased as long as the Zunghars continued to resist successfully the imposition of Qing power. The Kangxi emperor and his successors alternated between dismissing the Zunghars as insignificant tribesmen on a remote frontier, and elevating them to a major strategic threat. The Zunghar refusal to accept Qing claims of universality implied that there were alternate bases of legitimisation outside the Qing synthesis. In fact, the Zunghar leaders appealed both to Central Eurasian traditions of the Khanate and Tibetan Buddhist clerics to gain support. The Qing had to remove these alternative claims by taking over the Chinggisid descent of the Khanate (capturing a Yuan dynasty seal from the last Chinggisid, Ligdan Khan) and by intervening in Tibet with military invasion and regulation of the succession of the Dalai Lama. In addition, they strove to cut trade and diplomatic links between the Zunghars and Tibet and the Zunghars and Russia.

Frontier interactions in the eighteenth century northwest thus drove a policy of expansion instead of containment. What was the balance between the different factors of expansion in this case? Certainly, the personalities of the emperors played a large part. Kangxi and Qianlong actively embraced distant campaigns, while the Yongzheng emperor only reluctantly approved them and suffered a major defeat. The search for resources did not directly drive imperial expansion. The Qing sought to deprive its rivals of their resources but did not expect profit for itself. The idea of natural borders was unknown to the Qing, the Russians or the Zunghars. They all realised that they needed to draw boundaries between their converging states, but they did not pretend that these boundaries could come from nature. The struggles between Qing and Russian representatives at the treaty negotiations in Nerchinsk in 1689 show that knowledge of the region was unclear and borders subject to compromise.

The primary dynamic driving Qing expansion over the long term came from the interactions between Manchus and rival Mongolian tribes in this vast frontier zone. The Manchus had brought in certain Mongol tribes when they formed their state in the early seventeenth century. They attacked and defeated Ligdan Khan in 1628 and 1632 to defend this coalition against a threat from the last living representative of the Chinggisid lineage. Later in the seventeenth century, Galdan began to consolidate control in western Mongolia, while Khalkha Mongols exerted authority in the east. A feud between the western and eastern branches of the Khalkha drew the Qing and Galdan into conflict in the 1680s.¹⁶ Initially, neither side had ambitious long-term goals. Galdan attacked the Tüsiyetü Khan of the eastern branch in order to take revenge for the killing of his brother and to avenge slights made against his patron, the Dalai Lama. Kangxi at first acted defensively, but in 1690 he finally launched the series of personal expeditions that began the project of exterminating the Zunghar state. The immediate origins of this epic conflict lay in personal grudges and factional divisions within the Manchus and Mongols. The Qing-Zunghar wars could not be predicted solely from structural or personal perspectives.

Likewise, division among the Zunghars made possible the final elimination of the Zunghar state.¹⁷ The two pre-eminent Zunghar leaders of the mid-eighteenth century, Dawaci and Amursana, first became allies to seize control of the Zunghar state, but then split over how to divide the Zunghar lands. Amursana then invited the backing of Qing troops to make himself the sole leader. After the joint invasion forced Dawaci's surrender in 1755, Amursana realised, to his dismay, that he would not receive the title of Khan for himself alone but would have to share power with three others. He rebelled against the Qing, forcing another military expedition which eliminated Amursana and the Zunghar state in 1757. Once again, the Qing forces took advantage of divisions among the Mongols, responding to the unpredictable dynamics of the frontier zone. Without the division of strength between the two rival Zunghar leaders, Qing armies would have had a much harder time in conquering the state.

In the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, on the southern coast, Qing authorities faced conditions similar to those experienced by the Ming in the sixteenth century. Pirate confederations, stimulated by upheaval in Vietnam, raided along the coast of Guangdong.¹⁸ The pirates included Vietnamese, Cantonese and Fujianese, among other groups. The pirates were the masters of this "water frontier". General Nayan Cheng, who had done brilliantly well in defeating the uprising in Gansu, failed completely to suppress the pirates of the south. The pirates extracted revenue from the commercial networks leading to Guangzhou, causing the price of grain and salt to skyrocket. At their peak, the pirate commanders controlled a fleet of 10,000 junks with 50,000 to 70,000 men. By 1810, however, the Qing had won over defectors with promises of

leniency, even allowing one of the major pirate leaders to join the Qing army. These tactics caused the confederation to collapse quickly. As in the sixteenth century, local knowledge combined with inducements worked better than outright suppression at undermining the pirates' strength. But the Qing also applied here the same tactics they had so effectively used in the northwest on a larger scale: inducing one leader to surrender and turning him against his former allies.

In many ways, the mid-eighteenth century expansion to the northwest provided valuable lessons for Qing frontier officials, which they then applied to other frontiers. I have pointed out such practices as the creation of "extraterritoriality" in treaties with the Khan of Kokand, the chartering of official merchants at Kiakhta, and the use of "officially supervised merchant trade", later known as *guandu shangban*, for integrating the northwest regions into the core.¹⁹ The success of expansion against the Mongols encouraged Qing officials to believe that they had mastered the difficult art of dealing with barbarians.

Unfortunately, the south was different. Qing military interventions in Burma and Vietnam ended in embarrassing failures, and the Qing inability to control opium imports through the Canton trade system led to its epochal defeat in 1842. Dian Murray argues that the victory over the pirates in 1810 bred a fatal sense of complacency among southern Qing officials, leaving them unprepared for the arrival of the British in force several decades later. Wei Yuan, the great chronicler of the empire's military victories and observer of the British in Canton, at first thought that the British could be bribed into submission with sufficient inducements. Only later did he argue for strengthening coastal defences and learning from Western technological advances.

Frontier engagements from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth provided a rich legacy of experience for policy makers of both the Ming and Qing empires. The interactions of settlers, soldiers, nomads, pirates, merchants and officials on these frontiers constructed the social matrix, which generated issues of agrarian production, trade and security that affected the entire empire. Northwestern and southern frontiers were connected through common policy experiences, common personnel and common patterns of social interaction. The Western impact of the nineteenth century appeared to Qing officials as an extension of this frontier experience. The frontier has directed the course of Chinese history as much, or more than, other civilisations.

Voices from the borders: two frontier poets

Let us now return to the two scholar-poets who opened this paper, using them to illustrate alternative points of view on imperial expansion derived from the same classical tradition. Ji Yun, a scholar sent into exile in Ürümchi for two years in 1769–70, expresses the exhilaration of discovery

in this remote region. Across the border to the south, at about the same time, the Vietnamese scholar Lê Quý Đôn took a different view of Chinese expansion, using the same classical motifs.

Ji Yun (1724–1805) rose to the high post of Hanlin compiler at a young age, but he was sent in exile to Xinjiang for involvement in a bribery case. Returning under an imperial pardon, he became one of the chief editors of the great imperially-sponsored scholarly encyclopaedia, the *Siku Quanshu*. His two years in exile were only a short interlude in his life, but a memorable one. In his poetry, he vividly described the strong impressions that the rough frontier had made on him. He enjoyed the bustling life of the new frontier city, with its crowded markets, active brothels and haunting lute music in the evenings.

As the poem cited above shows, Ji Yun saw the conspicuous military presence in the region as a force for peace and prosperity. He also remarked on the orderliness enforced by government allocation of land:

The green fields and green plains have clear borders.
The ridges parting the farmers' fields mean that they do not need to fight.
In Jiangdu they originally set up the equal field system
But now it only survives here beyond the passes.²⁰

The five disparate types of settlers of the region lived together peacefully:

Households are registered in five categories.
Although they live together they do not associate with each other.
Among them they rely on village elders.
When there are disputes, the elders negotiate peace.²¹

The five categories of landholders were civilians recruited from the interior, merchants, military colonists and their families, voluntary civilian migrants, and criminal exiles who remained as commoner settlers. In Ji Yun's view, the frontier brought together diverse populations from the interior and showed them how to live together peacefully. For the military colonisers, it was an idyllic time of peace:

The signal fires have gone out, the deserts are green.
Bows and knives hang idly, only spring plowing matters.
Your five-year term of service is over in an instant.
Who is afraid of the cartwheels traveling 10,000 li?²²

Even the original Mongol inhabitants received some attention. Ji Yun described their rituals respectfully. He noted that the Ölöd Mongols worshipped at Tiger Peak every year, where they piled up rock cairns (*obo*) to mark sacred sites:

Mist from afar blows across the green lotus.
 The *obo* still preserve traces of ancient days.
 You cannot reach the cloud-covered sacred mountain.
 Every year they only worship at Tiger Peak.²³

Ji Yun also travelled outside the city to inspect ancient ruins. He found an abandoned city where Buddhist temples and relics still remained. It may have been the remains of a Tang-dynasty garrison. Again, he noted the transition from war to peace:

High walls, moss grows for ten *li* around.
 When was this heroic defence built against Western barbarians?
 The traveller rests, gazing on a bone of the Buddha in a golden vase.
 The pagoda instructs that one must follow Ashoka.²⁴

These samples of Ji Yun's writing show how he saw frontier expansion as a pacifying, civilising process. He did not disregard the military force needed to conquer and secure the borders, but he saw conquest over the long term as bringing peace, order and new opportunities for the ambitious settlers and the military colonists in the region.

Lê Quý Đôn (1726–84), Ji Yun's Vietnamese counterpart, also meditated on ancient ruins in former border regions. In his verse, he too marked the change from war to peace, but he emphasised the limits to imperial ambition:

Fort Cổ-lộng:
 Four hundred years – these walls have crumbled since.
 Bean stalks and melon vines now sprout and thrive.
 Limpid blue waves wash off King Trần's fierce wrath.
 Spreading green grass can't hide Mu Sheng's shamed face.
 Gold oxen, after rain, plow up some swords.
 Cold birds, by moonlight, moan amidst the ruins.
 Why must the empire's bounds forever stretch?
 Nine districts formed the realm of Yao and Shun.²⁵

Lê Quý Đôn meditates here on a fort built in Northern Vietnam by the Ming general Mu Sheng in the early fifteenth century.²⁶ The Yongle emperor (1403–24) had invaded Vietnam in 1406 and occupied the country. Trần Gián Định had proclaimed himself king and fought against the Ming forces, defeating Mu Sheng and forcing him to retreat to Fort Cổ-lộng in 1408. Eventually, the frontier warlord Lê Lợi drove out the Ming forces with a protracted guerrilla war, forcing them to make peace in 1427. Chinese forces did not cross the Vietnamese border again until 1788. Lê Quý Đôn, writing in the late eighteenth century, describes the conversion of battlefields into paddies, while noting that old swords still

remain below the ground. The ruins evoke a vanished, futile war that contrasts with the abundance of peace. Lê openly questions the need for Chinese expansion, citing the ancient times of the sagely kings Yao and Shun, when the span of the empire was much smaller than either the Ming or the Qing. For Lê, the classics provided a model of a more modest empire, conscious of its limits and willing to respect other proud kingdoms on its borders, which had equal claims to civilisation. The famous eleventh-century poem attributed to Marshal Lý Thường Kiệt, rallying his troops against Chinese aggression, had expressed more resolute defiance:

The Southern emperor rules the Southern land.
Our destiny is writ in Heaven's Book.
How dare you bandits trespass on our soil?
You shall meet your undoing at our hands.²⁷

On the other hand, Lê Quý Đôn unequivocally approved of the expansion of the Vietnamese kingdom to the south. His "Frontier Chronicles" (Phủ Biên Tạp Lục) vividly described the new territories taken by the expanding Vietnamese state.²⁸ After the Trịnh lords conquered the Nguyễn rulers of the south in 1775, Lê served for six months in the new territories, collecting abundant detail in order to ensure that officials of the north would be well-informed about the new lands they ruled. His *Chronicles* resemble Ji Yun's poems in "pursu[ing] the swarming details of economic and social life with a prodigal enthusiasm".²⁹ He, like Ji Yun, was a transient official, not a colonist. Yet both saw the frontier as a place that shaped one's character. It provided direct contact with real, if less "civilised", people who deserved moral government. The frontier expanded the cultural horizons of both men. Lê Quý Đôn, however, had a greater consciousness of limits than Ji Yun. He could not embrace unbounded expansiveness as a universal principle, especially not as practised by Vietnam's giant neighbour to the north. Lê Quý Đôn's complex view recognised the contingency of border creation and the importance of local situations in determining them.

Conclusion

Frontiers are good places to think with. Both modern historians and those who lived on frontiers in the past have had to confront disturbing paradoxes, causing them to think critically about the historical processes which created identities, states, borders and cultural interchange. Careful comparative study of frontiers in Central Eurasia and many other places can illuminate the forces that affect our own world.

Appendix

Hoang luỹ đồi viên từ bách thu
 荒垒颓垣四百秋
 Qua đặng đậu mạn phóng xuân nhu
 瓜藤豆蔓放春柔
 Bích ba dĩ tẩy Trần vương hận
 碧波已洗陈王恨
 Thanh thảo nan già Mộc Thạnh tu
 青草難遮木晟羞
 Hoàng độc vũ dư canh cổ kiếm
 黄犊武雨余耕古剑
 Hàn cầm nguyệt hạ tảo tàn lâu
 寒禽月下噪残楼
 Phong cương hà sự cần khai tịch
 封疆何用勤开辟
 Nghiêu, Thuần đương niên chỉ cử châu.
 尧舜当年只九州

Lê Quý Đôn, 1726–84

From *Lịch triều hiến chương loại chí [tập 1]*, ed. Phan Huy Chú
 (Tủ sách cổ văn – Ủy ban dịch thuật Saigon, 1972), vol. 1, p. 150.

Notes

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- 2 Ji Yun, “Wulumuqi Zashi”, in *Congshu Jicheng – Zhongguo Fengtuzhi Congkan* (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1937), p. 4.
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- 7 Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 1.
- 8 Alexander B. Woodside, “The Centre and the Borderlands in Chinese Political Theory”, in *The Chinese State at the Borders*, ed. Diana Lary (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), pp. 11–28.
- 9 Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History”, *American Historical Review* 104, 3/4 (1999): 814–44, 1221–39; Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (eds), *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands 700–1700* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998).
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 - 12 James Reardon-Anderson, *Reluctant Pioneers: China’s Expansion Northward, 1644–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).
 - 13 L. C. Goodrich and Fang Chaoying, *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368–1644*, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 1516–19 (on Yang Yiqing).
 - 14 Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990). See also the discussion of metis in James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
 - 15 Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
 - 16 Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 144–61.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 270–89.
 - 18 Dian H. Murray, *Pirates of the South China Coast, 1790–1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).
 - 19 Perdue, *China Marches West*, p. 313. On Kokand, see also L. J. Newby, *The Empire and the Khanate: A Political History of Qing Relations with Khoqand c.1760–1860* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
 - 20 Ji Yun, “Wulumuqi Zashi”, p. 6.
 - 21 *Ibid.*
 - 22 *Ibid.*
 - 23 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
 - 25 Huynh Sanh Thông, *The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 15. See Appendix for original Chinese and Vietnamese text.
 - 26 Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary*, pp. 361, 793–7.
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3 Asian states and overseas expansion, 1500–1700

An approach to the problem of European exceptionalism

Tonio Andrade

Were there any significant differences between Asian and western European territorial expansions? One key contrast seems to involve the oceans. Although Asianists can point to numerous Asian states that projected their power overseas, from the Ottoman Empire to Ming China, there does seem to be some truth to the proposition that during the early modern period (1450 to 1750) European states were more inclined to seaborne expansion than were Asian states. European empires stretched around the world, consisting primarily of small seaports strung together across the oceans. Indeed, outside of the New World, European colonies rarely extended past the immediate hinterlands of their ports. More importantly, during the early modern period, there were no analogous Asian sea-empires.

How do we explain this odd fact? Traditionally, scholars have suggested that Europeans benefited from some naval or military superiority, as though oceanic empires were the norm of history. But military historians have cast doubt on this argument, suggesting that if early modern Europeans had an edge over Asians in fortification techniques, gun casting or naval warfare, it was slight and cannot fully explain European expansion.¹ A more recent approach to the problem is more satisfying: to invert the normative framework. From this perspective, Europeans were able to establish their seaborne empires in Asia because they played by strange rules, bringing patterns of armed seaborne commercial projection to maritime Asia. In this way, European expansion is to be explained not by technology or military might, but by the fact that Europeans' maritime incursions either took the leaders of Asian states by surprise or left them unimpressed.²

Most of the historiography detailing this approach, which we will call the maritime exceptionalist model, focuses on the Indian Ocean region. It arose out of a desire to understand how the Portuguese and their successors achieved a degree of dominance over Indian Ocean trade routes after they erupted onto the scene in the late 1400s. This chapter, in contrast, assesses the model for East Asia. It surveys Chinese, Korean and Japanese official attitudes toward and laws about seaborne trade and adventurism, showing that, in general, East Asian states actively suppressed overseas

trade and adventurism, leaving a power vacuum that more maritime-oriented Western powers were able to fill. There are, however, a couple of exceptions, the most important of which is Taiwan, the only overseas colony established by China during the Late Imperial Period (1368–1911). The case of Taiwan appears to challenge the model of maritime exceptionalism because although the island was first colonised by Europeans (in 1624), it was later captured by a Chinese army (1662). In fact, however, what the history of Taiwan shows is that sometimes East Asian powers – in this case a Ming loyalist government – could and did become interested in the seas. In such cases, arms and military techniques were not enough to preserve European dominance. The maritime exceptionalist model thus appears to work well for East Asia, so long as we recognise that occasionally Asian states could themselves become exceptions.

The notion that Europeans were unusually willing to use force to project their power over the seas is not new. Variants of the idea appear throughout the literature on European expansion, most seminally in the work of Niels Steensgaard, who makes clear his debt to the work of historian Frederic C. Lane.³ It is also taken up in the magisterial work of Kirti Chaudhuri, who states the idea clearly and succinctly:

Before the arrival of the Portuguese in ... 1498 there had been no organized attempt by any political power to control the sea-lanes and the long distance trade of Asia. The Iberians and their north European followers imported a Mediterranean style of warfare by land and sea into an area that had hitherto had quite a different tradition.⁴

This interpretation is now widely accepted: the Portuguese managed to achieve some degree of control over the Indian Ocean not so much because of superior technology, but because they brought a foreign conception of the politicisation of maritime space.

But why did Portuguese and Asians have such different notions about maritime expansion? Historian Michael Pearson has compared Asian and European states' attitudes towards commerce and oceanic trade in an important but neglected article.⁵ Much of his treatment takes a modified liberal economic line – states should neither dominate nor neglect commerce – but he also explores the significance of violence and protection costs in European expansion and it is here that he offers his most intriguing hypothesis: polities that raise a significant portion of their revenues from sea trade act differently from those that raise their revenues from agriculture. During the early modern period, Pearson believes, most Asian states tended to raise revenue from agriculture. The maritime European states, on the other hand, were beginning to collect a good amount of revenue from seaborne trade and therefore focused on projecting state power overseas.⁶ For Pearson, the issue of sea revenues is a key to understanding European expansion.

Like most other historians tackling the topic, he focuses on the Indian Ocean, arguing that Indian states were funded by agricultural rather than commercial revenues and were thus indifferent to maritime trade. Even Gujarat, one of South Asia's most maritime-oriented states, drew only six per cent of its revenues from sea-trade, which is why, according to Pearson, it did not busy itself with the ocean. In the late 1500s, when the Mughals established their Indian empire, the situation did not change. They, too, raised their revenues from agriculture and thus offered little resistance to the Portuguese and other Europeans at sea. So, in the 1500s, when the Portuguese burst onto the scene backed by state support, they were able to bring the seas under unprecedented political control.

Pearson does not ignore Asian responses to Portuguese advances. He discusses, for example, how Gujarat allied itself with Egypt to try to regain trade routes, an alliance that fell apart after the Battle of Diu in 1509, when a Portuguese armada defeated the combined fleet. Since Pearson composed his account, new research has emerged detailing other Asian responses. The most intriguing work is a book by Giancarlo Casale, which explores an Ottoman attempt to oust the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean by means of an alliance with other Muslim maritime states.⁷ Still, Casale's analysis does not challenge Pearson's basic argument, since the Ottomans were not fully committed to the project. They were more focused on their land empire and the Mediterranean. More intriguing is the seventeenth-century Omani attack on Portuguese positions in the Persian Gulf, which successfully drove them from Muscat.⁸ Oman was not a large or particularly powerful state. So this episode indicates that Asian states – even small ones – could be effective at checking European colonial expansion, when they had a will to do so. Imagine what a major Asian power might have done if it had devoted itself to resisting European incursions into the Indian Ocean!

This type of maritime exceptionalist position is generally accepted in South Asian and Indian Ocean historiography: European states were able to control parts of the Indian Ocean because they had the will to do so, whereas Indian Ocean states generally did not trouble themselves with maritime affairs. In this way, South Asian polities left a maritime power vacuum that western European ones were only too happy to fill. But how well does this argument hold up in East Asia? Let us examine official attitudes toward trade in East Asia's three major early modern polities: Ming China, Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan.

I once had a Chinese teacher who was fond of declaring, "China does not have colonialism. If it did, much of Southeast Asia would now be Chinese."⁹ At first, I disagreed: what student of Chinese history is not aware of the millennia of Chinese expansion? The borders of the Middle Kingdom stretched and stretched, reaching their apogee in the mid-Qing period. But the more I considered the question, the more I realised that he had a point. The term colonialism today usually refers to overseas

colonisation, and in this respect, my teacher was absolutely correct: China was uninterested in overseas colonies, and for much of its history it was relatively dismissive of overseas trade. So, although its territory increased dramatically during the early Ming, and again even more dramatically under the Qing, the expansion tended to occur overland, not overseas.

The Middle Kingdom's lack of interest in the seas is famously symbolised by the Ming Maritime Prohibition (海禁). Scholars have interpreted the prohibition strictly, believing that trade was fully prohibited, at least before the relaxation of the policy in 1567. In fact, some Ming ports, most notably Guangzhou, welcomed foreign traders, apparently with imperial consent.¹⁰ Even so, the Maritime Prohibition does illustrate Ming officials' restrictive attitudes toward trade. Consider, for example, the Ming Ancestral Injunction: "Overseas foreign countries ... are separated from us by mountains and seas and far away in a corner. Their lands would not produce enough for us to maintain them; their people would not usefully serve us if incorporated."¹¹ Relative to the Yuan and especially the Song, the Ming restricted seaborne commerce, and, for most of the Ming period, revenues drawn therefrom were inconsequential.

But what about the famous voyages of Zheng He in the early 1400s? These were the largest fleets the world would see until the nineteenth century: the largest wooden ships ever built carried 28,000 people across the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf and the eastern coast of Africa. There has been much discussion of these voyages, with some authors viewing them as analogous to the great voyages of discovery and colonisation of the Europeans.¹² But, in fact, the Zheng He voyages were not intended for exploration or colonisation. This is not to say that they were peaceful, as some historians have suggested.¹³ On the contrary, they carried huge armies, which were used to project Chinese influence abroad. Recent scholarship has shown that the Zheng He expeditions were intended to demonstrate, to the states of maritime Asia, the "power and majesty of Ming China and its emperor".¹⁴ They were, however, the pet project of one emperor; when he died, they ceased.¹⁵ Over the next century, Ming policies actively discouraged maritime activities. In 1524 the Ming Ministry of Justice began punishing people who engaged in foreign trade, seizing and destroying two-masted ships, and later even trying to limit the voyages of fishing vessels.¹⁶

Such rules did not end China's overseas trade. Smuggling exploded in coastal provinces, and in 1567 Beijing ultimately legalised a limited amount of overseas commerce, under a permit system. This open seas policy did not sanction trade to Japan, the most important port of call for Chinese traders. Thus smuggling continued thereafter. Moreover, Chinese governments treated those who traded abroad with suspicion. In 1603, after Spanish troops massacred 20,000 Chinese sojourners, Spanish officials feared Ming reprisals, but none came: officials in Beijing felt that those who abandoned their homes and sailed abroad did not deserve the emperor's favour.

China was not the only East Asian power that placed restrictions on overseas trade. Korea followed a similar trajectory. Just looking at geography, one might expect that Korea might naturally have developed into a maritime power. Its position between China and Japan, combined with the ease of sea travel across the Yellow Sea and the Korea Strait, made it ideally suited to seaborne trade. Moreover, its long coastline, with 3000 islands, and its long and important tradition of ocean fishing gave Koreans a natural maritime orientation. Koreans were avid sailors who constructed effective vessels; they built not just coastal fishing vessels but also powerful warships, such as the famous iron-clad turtle ships and their less famous but more significant cousins, the *panokseon* (板屋船). These were formidable ships which were manoeuvrable, sturdy and armed with large cannons. Indeed, early in its history, the so-called Hermit Kingdom was deeply involved in maritime commerce. During the Three Kingdoms period (57 BC to AD 668), when Korea was ruled by three separate, competing polities, Koreans were active sea traders. More importantly, during the period that followed, especially the ninth century, Korean merchants sailed throughout East Asia, playing a significant role in Chinese and Japanese overseas trade. And Korean pirates raged across the Strait of Korea and threatened Japan itself.¹⁷

Thereafter, however, and for the rest of Korea's premodern history, Korean governments severely restricted overseas trade. The rulers of the Choson Dynasty (1392 to 1910) deliberately modelled their trade policies on those of Ming China, stipulating that foreign trade be carried out only in connection with official tribute missions. Indeed, such tribute missions were dispatched whenever possible overland in order to avoid fostering contacts across the seas. To be sure, there was some sea trade, especially with the Ryukyu Islands and Japan, and three Korean ports were designated for Japanese traders, who became an important source of silver and tropical goods from Southeast Asia.¹⁸ Koreans themselves, however, were prohibited from overseas foreign commerce until 1882. Thus Korea, like Ming China, actively prevented its citizens from sailing and doing business abroad.

Japan, on the other hand, seemed set to follow a trajectory different from those of China and Korea. During the 1500s it was divided into small domains, whose leaders were known as Daimyo (大名) and which were, for all intents and purposes, independent sovereign states, raising their own taxes, administering justice, and maintaining their own armies. They were involved in a fierce war, known as the Warring States period (戰國時代, 1467–1573). As Cicero said, “money forms the sinews of war”, and Daimyo found that one way to fund their wars was through fostering overseas trade. Japanese settlements sprang up in Manila, Vietnam, Cambodia, Siam and many other places in Southeast Asia.

But when the Warring States period ended, Japan's tendencies toward seaborne trade weakened. At first, Japan's new central leadership was

content merely to regulate overseas commerce, issuing sailing permits known as red seals (朱印狀). The seals were popular among Japan's sea traders because they conferred not only permission to trade but also protection. Starting in 1615, however, the shogunate began to limit foreign trade. In 1616, it issued decrees confining European merchants to Nagasaki and Hirado. Five years later, it turned down an offer from Ming China proposing direct trade between China and Japan in exchange for the shogun's help suppressing piracy. Had this overture been accepted, the history of East Asia might have taken a very different course. Indeed, only a decade before, the shogunate had sought direct intercourse with the Ming, so the rejection of the Ming offer displays a remarkable shift in Japanese trade policy. It was an historic edict of 1635, however, that was most significant because it forbade Japanese to sail abroad at all.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of this edict. At a stroke, it curtailed Japanese tendencies toward maritime expansion, tendencies which seemed as though they might be backed by state power, even after Japan's unification. Consider, for example, that the great unifier, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, had drawn up plans to subjugate all of Asia. These plans foundered in the disastrous invasion of Korea (1592–98), after which Japan's central government withdrew from overseas adventurism. Yet there were a few other scattered attempts at overseas expansion. In 1609, the lord of the southern Japanese province of Satsuma invaded the Ryukyu Islands with the consent of the shogun. In 1616, a Japanese official named Murayama Toan sent a private expedition to subjugate Taiwan, although the expedition was unsuccessful.¹⁹ The edict of 1635 symbolised Japan's complete withdrawal from seaborne power projection and even from the participation of private Japanese traders in overseas commerce.

Thus Ming China, Choson Korea and Tokugawa Japan all reined in their citizens' tendencies toward overseas trade. The contrast with western Europe could hardly be greater. The traders of the maritime states of western Europe could count on their governments to provide military, financial and legal support for overseas adventures. We have already discussed the Portuguese, but the Dutch Republic was also important for the history of East Asia. Its primary organ of overseas projection in Asia was the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, VOC). Although ostensibly a private company, the VOC was in reality a state-sponsored colonial enterprise with the legal authority to wage war against the Netherlands' enemies, especially the Spanish and Portuguese: it had the authority to make treaties, subjugate populations and found colonies. Moreover, the Estates General of the United Provinces supplied it with materiel and personnel. So as East Asia's powers withdrew from the China Seas, the Dutch expanded. One result was the odd but instructive colony of Taiwan.

By the late 1500s, Taiwan had become an important trading zone. Japanese traders ventured there to buy deerskins and Chinese silks. More

importantly, Chinese traders went there to trade not just with the Japanese but also with the island's aborigines. Their trade appears to have increased in the late 1500s, and by the 1620s as many as 1500 Chinese sojourners lived among the Austronesian aboriginal peoples on Taiwan's southwest coast.²⁰ But these earliest pioneers did not have the support of their governments; no formal East Asian colonies were established. Indeed, on the contrary, Ming officials in Fujian actually urged VOC to base itself on Taiwan (preferring that the company abandon an earlier base in the Penghu Islands, which, unlike Taiwan, the officials considered to be part of Ming territory). Thus it was not superior technology or naval techniques that allowed the Dutch to colonise the island before the Chinese or Japanese. It was, rather, the lack of interest on the part of East Asian powers. In this sense, the colonisation of Taiwan fits well with the European sea-borne exceptionalism model.

But there were differences as well. Taiwan, unlike most other European colonies in the Old World, was a territorial colony, stretching well beyond the immediate hinterlands of the Dutch port fortress. It had not been intended as such. When the Dutch established their base in southwestern Taiwan in 1624, they had in mind a trading port on the model of Portuguese Macao: a place to engage in the rich trade between Japan and southern China. But they soon realised that the hinterlands around their fortress were so fertile that they might easily be turned into rice paddies to feed the company's other colonies, and into sugar plantations to fill the company's coffers with silver. With proper care, Taiwan might become the "Breadbasket of the Indies".²¹

But who would plant, tend and harvest? The Austronesian aborigines themselves did farm rice, but not intensively and not for sale. Early Dutch officials proposed establishing a colony of Dutch farmers, but the idea was vetoed by the company's directors. Instead, the Dutch looked across the Taiwan Straits, where they found thousands of would-be colonists. These people were eager for land and opportunity, but their own governments (local, provincial and central) did not have any interest in helping them open up overseas lands.²² We tend to forget how difficult it is to establish agricultural colonies. Pioneers face hunger and illness as they toil to clear land and dig irrigation channels, and rice paddies are especially labour-intensive. Farmers must also watch out for their new home's established inhabitants, who often look upon new arrivals with suspicion. The indigenous societies of Taiwan were particularly bellicose. Taiwanese Austronesian societies, although diverse, all practiced ritual headhunting, which was a practice ensconced in social structure: boys had to capture a head before they could advance to full adult status. Although most headhunting raids were carried out against rival villages, visitors from overseas were also fair game. This institutionalised form of violence was an important barrier to colonisation. Moreover, unlike the native Americans, Taiwanese aborigines had been exposed to Eurasian diseases, so they did not die off on contact.

Thus would-be pioneers on Taiwan faced difficult prospects. They would be trying to establish paddies and plantations in lands frequented by healthy and bellicose people. Homesteaders must trust in the future; otherwise they will be unwilling to venture their capital and time (not to mention their lives). The early Chinese pioneers in Taiwan therefore did not establish concentrated settlements. They were analogous to the *coureurs de bois*, French fur traders who canoed through the lakes and streams of the northern part of North America. Although some Chinese settlers may have planted small gardens, these were rare and were most likely not on Taiwan's mainland, since, as we shall see, it took some doing to establish farms and protect them from aboriginal raiders.²³ Thus adventurers who hoped to establish large-scale settlements on Taiwan would need military strength and the organisational cohesion to project it. Ming China was unwilling to provide such support. It is an odd fact of history that Chinese settlers turned to an organisation sponsored by a government more than 10,000 kilometres away.

A brief look at the history of Taiwan shows how difficult it was to establish agriculture on the island, even for the VOC. Shortly after arriving, the Dutch constructed a house and a corral in a place called Saccam, across the bay from the main Dutch fortress.²⁴ They intended to grow crops there but, in 1629, inhabitants of an aboriginal village called Mattau destroyed the little settlement and slaughtered its cows, geese and horses.²⁵ The company rebuilt the house, sending troops to protect it. At the same time, it encouraged Chinese migrants to plant sugarcane nearby, "providing them, to this end, small sums of money and company cattle to plough the land".²⁶ It also began trying to foster other agricultural enterprises.

But Chinese agriculturists complained that their work was hindered by aboriginal violence. In response, the company provided protection, issuing passes to Chinese colonists that said, in Chinese: "should [the aborigines] molest the Chinese any more, they must expect bitter consequences".²⁷ It also widened its policy of subvention, providing low-interest loans, guaranteeing to buy harvests and lending oxen for ploughing. In addition, the company encouraged Chinese farmers to try other crops such as cotton, indigo, tobacco and hemp. These policies seemed to work, but they did not go far enough. Chinese farmers continued to complain about harassment by aborigines, and the Dutch governor of Taiwan wrote in 1635:

If it should happen (which we fear, since there have already been incidents ... in which they have cut and stolen sugarcane and harassed Chinese) that these [aboriginal] people ... become jealous and set the fields on fire, these poor [Chinese] would be greatly hurt and would become so afraid that they would not dare to try planting anything again in the future.²⁸

The governor believed that the aboriginal villages that were located near Chinese agricultural enterprises must be definitively pacified. Accordingly, in the winter of 1635–36, he led company troops against the greatest offenders, achieving a series of victories; by the end of 1636, the company had established control over most of southwestern and central Taiwan.²⁹

Having established this *pax Hollandica*, the company decided to further stimulate Chinese migration. The governor and ruling council resolved to put up placards

calling all Chinese who are so inclined to come to us here from China and settle in Saccam to plant rice, with the promise that they will pay no tolls or residence taxes for the first four years and, in addition, that they will be paid a guaranteed price of 40 pieces of eight for every *last* of rice produced.³⁰

Nor was the tax benefit limited to rice; sugar, hemp, cotton, ginger, indigo and Chinese radish were all included. Four years of tax-free living would, the Dutch believed, be enough to establish an enduring Chinese colony, because “a Chinese who senses profits will not leave”.³¹

Colonists poured across the Taiwan Straits, and Chinese entrepreneurs invested in larger enterprises. Taiwan had never before seen intensive agriculture on this scale, and it required considerable investment. One Chinese entrepreneur complained to the company about his expenditures for the purchase of labour to prepare the land, oxen to pull the ploughs, mills to press the cane, pans to boil the juice, and buildings to bleach the sugar. Over two years he had spent more than 800 reals, a considerable sum, and had yet to see any return on his investments.³² The governor of Taiwan wrote about this man’s troubles to his superiors, in an effort to defend the colony’s tax policy. If, he wrote, it is “difficult even for this man, who has resources enough, [consider] how difficult it must be for those poor farmers just arrived from China, who have little in the world!”³³

The farmers’ investments eventually began to pay off. By 1637, Dutch officials estimated that Saccam was producing 180,000 kg of sugar! There were still challenges, of course. For example, Chinese entrepreneurs complained that they were at times unable to buy bleaching equipment in China due to the “vexations of the Mandarins” who, it seems, were jealous of Taiwan’s rapidly growing sugar industry.³⁴ Production levels did not rise as rapidly as hoped. Indeed, it was only after 1642 that the production of processed white sugar was consistently above 1500 piculs (90,000 kg) per year. Nonetheless, by the mid-1640s a self-sustaining commercial sugar industry had been established on Taiwan, thanks to Dutch subventions and to the hard work of Chinese colonists.

It was similar for rice production as well, although the rice sector was more volatile; sugar brought more consistent profits, both to the company and to Chinese entrepreneurs. Moreover, rice required a greater investment

in terms of labour, so incentives for cultivating rice were lower, especially because it could be imported cheaply from China and Japan. Droughts, insect infestations and deer also made life difficult for the paddy farmer. Eventually, however, rice fields began to turn a profit. In 1643, some sugar planters even switched to rice, prompting company employees to conclude that rice agriculture had been established and that they could therefore begin levying taxes on it.

Thus it was that the Dutch helped Chinese settlers to establish the first large-scale self-sustaining agricultural enterprises on Taiwan, and these enterprises became the heart of a flourishing – and rapidly expanding – Chinese colony on the island. By the early 1640s, the Chinese population of Taiwan was probably close to 25,000, and after the fall of Ming Beijing in 1644, immigration to Taiwan increased further. As Chinese enterprise expanded, Chinese colonists came into contact with aborigines farther afield, and many were killed in clashes with aboriginal warriors.³⁵ The Dutch responded by further expanding their authority in order to protect these Chinese colonists. This pattern of expansion shows how the Sino-Dutch colony evolved in a sort of feedback loop; Chinese expansion led to a need for broader Dutch control, which led to further Chinese expansion, etc.

This system of Sino-Dutch colonial cooperation worked quite well. Dutch administrative structures allowed for some degree of Chinese influence. Chinese entrepreneurs frequently came before the governor and appeared during meetings of the Council of Formosa. Often, proposals from Chinese colonists were debated and accepted in council meetings, and Chinese headmen sat on the colony's Board of Aldermen (*Scheep-enbanck*). That is not to say that there were not also tensions. Company authorities frequently had trouble with Chinese organisations that did not accept their power, such as pirates and smugglers. And in the late 1640s and early 1650s, Dutch soldiers engaged in extortion against Chinese settlers in the guise of inspecting residency permits. The result was a peasant rebellion, whose 5000 adherents' war cry was "Kill, kill, kill the Hollandish dogs!" The poorly trained rebels were ruthlessly hunted down by company troops and aboriginal warriors, and perhaps 4000 perished. Moreover, the colony recovered quickly from the rebellion, which hardly made a mark on the Chinese population, as the dead rebels were replaced by new immigrants.

In general, the Chinese colonists of Taiwan had little option but to rely upon the Dutch colonial state because no alternative existed. The geopolitical conjuncture that allowed the colony of Taiwan to emerge – a Chinese state that was uninterested in colonial expansion on the one hand, and a Dutch state that was interested in attracting Chinese colonists on the other – created a stable environment for the Sino-Dutch co-colonial system to flourish on Taiwan. In the 1650s, however, the geopolitical balance changed. There had emerged in China a Chinese state that *was*

interested in overseas adventurism. And it is the history of this state that sheds the most light on the seaborne exceptionalist model of European expansion.

When the Ming capital of Beijing fell in 1644, officials loyal to the Ming established a series of courts in other Chinese cities, aiming to restore the Ming to power. By the early 1650s, one of their most powerful supporters was Zheng Chenggong, whose court was in today's Xiamen City. His father Zheng Zhilong had worked as a translator for the Dutch before devoting himself to piracy. Later, he gave up his pillaging ways in exchange for a prestigious post as a Ming official. Having gone legitimate, the senior Zheng came to dominate Chinese trade routes to Japan and Southeast Asia. Indeed, he was so oriented towards the sea that he built a family mansion that could be accessed directly by boat.³⁶

After Zheng Chenggong took over his father's empire in 1646, he used it to finance his war against the Qing invaders. In the early 1650s, he established a government based on Ming administrative structures, with six boards staffed by Ming scholar-officials, but that was where its similarity to other Ming courts ended.³⁷ Zheng made sure that military and merchant interests held sway over scholar officials, a priority symbolised by the burning of Zheng's Confucian scholar robes. More importantly, his government gained most of its revenue not from agricultural taxation, as did other Ming courts, but from foreign trade, which provided almost two-thirds of state revenues.³⁸

For this reason, the Zheng regime was not willing to let the Dutch and other Europeans dominate the seas in East and Southeast Asia. It competed with the Dutch in Southeast Asia and Japan. The Dutch responded by acting as had the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. They defended "their" trade routes with maritime violence, capturing Zheng's junks. But while many governments in the Indian Ocean region were content to pay the Portuguese protection fees rather than go to the trouble of fitting out navies, Zheng retaliated. He levied a devastating economic blockade on Taiwan, causing the colonial economy to collapse. In the Philippines he also moved against the Spanish, whom he accused of mistreating his merchants. This type of intervention overseas was unheard of in Late Imperial China. The Ming proper had troubled itself little with affairs in Dutch Taiwan and the Spanish Philippines, but it had few seaborne revenues to protect. Zheng, on the other hand, had to protect his sea routes, for he depended upon them as a source of revenue to pay for his armies.

Unfortunately for him, these armies did not do well. On 7 July 1659, his armada sailed up the Yangtze River toward Nanjing, the Ming's original capital. If he succeeded in taking the city from the Manchus, he might hope to turn the tide against them. But in the event his siege was unsuccessful. He tarried too long, and a Manchu army routed his army, which returned in tatters to Xiamen. Zheng considered his options. With Manchu forces advancing, he knew he could not hold the city for long. He

therefore called his generals together and showed them a map of Taiwan, saying that “the red-haired barbarians who now control it have less than a thousand men in their fortress. We could take it with our hands tied behind our backs”.³⁹ Although many generals were skeptical, he overruled them and prepared his invasion. On 30 April 1661 he began landing his troops to the north of Saccam, helped by thousands of Chinese settlers. There was little the Dutch could do. A few skirmishes showed the futility of the Dutch position, and the company’s fortresses on Taiwan fell quickly. The main fortress, which was difficult to assault by land, held out for nine months but, ultimately, it too surrendered. Thus it was that Taiwan gained its first Chinese government.

The Zheng family ruled over Taiwan for 20 years. In 1683, however, a Qing invasion force captured the island. The Qing were reluctant to append the island to the empire. “Taiwan”, said the emperor, “is no bigger than a ball of mud. We gain nothing by possessing it, and it would be no loss if we did not acquire it.”⁴⁰ He suggested removing Chinese settlers and abandoning Taiwan. Most of his officials agreed. This position was rooted in traditional ideas about the seas, which were considered to be fundamental borders; China’s territories stopped where the ocean began.⁴¹ In fact, Chinese maps sometimes even showed China’s *land* borders as stylised ocean waters, to illustrate their impermeability.⁴² Taiwan appeared in Ming and early Qing as a place “hanging alone beyond the seas”, or “far off on the edge of the oceans”.⁴³ But proponents of Taiwan’s annexation argued that if Taiwan were abandoned, it would fall to pirates or, even worse, to foreigners, who were “drooling” over it. They also touted its bounty:

Fish and salt spout forth from the sea; the mountains are filled with dense forests of tall trees and thick bamboo; there are sulphur, rattan, sugarcane, deerskins, and all that is needed for daily living. Nothing is lacking.... This is truly a bountifully fertile piece of land and a strategic territory.⁴⁴

Due in part to these arguments, the emperor decided that Taiwan would become a prefecture attached to Fujian Province.

This notion that China was bounded by the seas, and this reluctance to incorporate Taiwan into China despite the fact that it was home to more than 100,000 Chinese colonists, offers further corroboration to the sea-borne exceptionalism model of European expansion. In the period 1450 to 1850, East Asian states generally tended to pay little attention to the seas, a phenomenon that Europeans capitalised on in the formation of their own overseas empires. The Dutch were able to colonise Taiwan only insofar as China and Japan allowed them to. During the first half of the 1600s, no East Asian state was interested in Taiwan and the Dutch colony prospered.⁴⁵ The situation changed during the 1650s, when the Zheng state began to assert itself.

The Zheng state was an anomaly in modern East Asian history (after 1450); it was highly dependent upon seaborne trade, which provided almost two-thirds of its revenues.⁴⁶ Propelled by a need to protect seaborne trade revenues, it vied with the Dutch in Southeast Asia and Japan. When the Dutch responded by trying to uphold monopsonies, Zheng levied a devastating economic blockade, causing Taiwan's economy to collapse. Later, when the Zheng state needed a new base, it invaded Taiwan and ousted the Dutch. So the history of Taiwan is intimately related to the degree of maritime preoccupation of East Asian states. The emergence of a maritime Chinese state sealed the fate of the Dutch colony. Thus the case of Taiwan – and the case of East Asia in general – supports the seaborne exceptionalism model.

But what of the model elsewhere in Asia? Far more work is needed. For one thing, we must learn more about Asian states that successfully resisted European maritime power. The history of Oman is pitifully neglected, as are events such as the anti-Portuguese alliance of Gujarat and Mameluke Egypt. More importantly, we must pay attention to Southeast Asia, which has for too long been considered peripheral to world history.

In fact, Southeast Asia may hold one of the keys to understanding European exceptionalism. The successive maritime states of Southeast Asia, such as Srivijaya, Malacca, Macassar and Aceh, did project their power over maritime space. Southeast Asia was a region with similarities to the Mediterranean, where land and sea intermingled. Therefore, from a geographical perspective, we might expect that the two regions would exert similar selective pressures toward the evolution of polities focused on the control of maritime space. Indeed, after Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century some of these states, most notably Aceh, successfully challenged Portuguese and Dutch expansion. Yet Europeans usually prevailed, which means that the seaborne expansion approach is only part of the answer to the question of European exceptionalism. In Southeast Asia, military variables seem important, as the case of Malacca seems to indicate, with the fallen Sultanate trying in vain to oust the Portuguese from their powerful fortress, A Famosa.⁴⁷

So what accounted for the European military edge? As many have argued, from Max Weber through to contemporary military historians, Europe's prolonged Warring States period (1400 to 1945) created selective pressures toward military innovation. Protracted warfare also led to a search for fresh revenues, which provided an impetus toward overseas expansion. This is clearest in the case of the Dutch, who explicitly embraced overseas trade as a strategy to weaken their Iberian rivals.

It is fascinating to note that in East Asia as well, geopolitical competition seemed to lead to trends favouring maritime expansion. Consider that Korea's brief period of maritime power occurred during and shortly after its Three Kingdoms period, and that it ended once Korea was decisively unified. Similarly, it was during Japan's Warring States period

that Japanese overseas trade reached its apogee (and this was also the heyday of Wokou 倭寇 piracy). Once Japan was unified, expansionist tendencies were curtailed, leaving the seas open to Europeans. Even more pertinent is the example of Zheng Chenggong's Ming Memorial Capital. If Zheng's state had not been at war and desperate for revenues to build its armies, it would not have reacted with such vehemence to Dutch trade protectionism, and it certainly would not have invaded Taiwan. And if we look at China's earlier periods of maritime projection, we see that they too were during periods of geopolitical insecurity; this is clearest in the case of the Southern Song Dynasty, a golden age of Chinese maritime power.

So it appears that interstate rivalries tended to add an element of urgency to states' tendencies to foster and protect seaborne revenues, leading to more intense attempts at overseas conquest. Future studies should try to correlate variables such as frequency of wars and number of colonies on a global scale. It would not be an easy task, but the work of scholars such as Victor Lieberman shows that such global comparisons are possible and fruitful. In any case, as we look into the strange parallels that seemed to characterise developments throughout early modern Eurasia – such as polity expansion itself – let us also keep in mind the divergences. One of the key differences involved states' attitudes toward the seas.

Notes

- 1 Geoffrey Parker's work is still the best place to start to understand the military variable in European expansion. Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 115–45.
- 2 This perspective can be seen, for example, in the classic book of Kirti N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), esp. pp. 63–79, and it is reflected in the work of other specialists on the Indian Ocean and the Portuguese empire, such as Michael N. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003), and Malyn Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion, 1400–1668* (London: Routledge, 2005), although Newitt suggests that the military variable has been overlooked in recent work. For a clear and succinct overview of works that approach Portuguese expansion from this perspective, see David Ringrose, *Expansion and Global Interaction, 1200–1700* (New York: Longman, 2001), esp. pp. 149–60.
- 3 See Niels Steensgaard, "Violence and the Rise of Capitalism: F. C. Lane's Theory of Protection and Tribute", *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 5 (1981): 247–73.
- 4 Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, p. 14.
- 5 M. N. Pearson, "Merchants and States", in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 41–116.
- 6 Pearson's argument is not as reductionist as my portrayal might make it seem. He believes that other variables also mattered: the size of states, their geopolitical environment, etc. Because European states were smaller and in constant competition with each other, they were more likely to "concede rights for

- revenue” than were the Asian “empires” (Pearson, “Merchants and States”, p. 48).
- 7 Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010). See also Giancarlo Casale, “The Ottoman Discovery of the Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century: The Age of Exploration from an Islamic Perspective” (paper presented at Seascapes, Littoral Cultures, and Trans-Oceanic Exchanges Conference, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 12–15 February 2003). Available online as of March 2005 at www.historycooperative.org/proceedings/seascapes.
 - 8 Abdul Ali, “Struggle between the Portuguese and the Arabs of Oman for Supremacy in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean”, *Hamdard Islamicus* 9, 4 (1986): 75–80.
 - 9 My teacher’s exact words were “中國沒有殖民主義”.
 - 10 Zhang Dechang (Chang Te-ch’ang), “Maritime Trade at Canton during the Ming Dynasty”, *Chinese Social and Political Science Review* (Beijing) 19 (1933): 264–82. Bodo Wiethoff, *Die chinesische Seeverbotspolitik und der private Überseehandel von 1368 bis 1567* (Hamburg: Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, 1963). John Lee, “Trade and Economy in Preindustrial East Asia, c.1500 – c.1800: East Asia in the Age of Global Integration”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58, 1 (1999): 2–26. See also Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 119–21.
 - 11 Quoted in Chang Pin-tsun, *Chinese Maritime Trade: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Fu-chien* (doctoral dissertation, Princeton University, 1983), p. 14.
 - 12 The most recent proponent of this view is retired submarine captain Gavin Menzies, who believes that Zheng He’s fleets actually established colonies in the Americas: Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered America* (New York: William Morrow, 2003). His argument is riddled with problems, however. See, for example the review of *1421* by John Wills Jr., “Book Review: Gavin Menzies, *1421: The Year China Discovered America*”, *World History Connected* 2, 1, http://worldhistoryconnected.press.uiuc.edu/2.1/br_wills.html. An outstanding overview of the evidence that reputable scholars have contested can be found in a petition that Geoff Wade and others presented to the US Library of Congress on the occasion of a symposium devoted to *1421*. It can be found online at www.1421exposed.com/html/library_of_congress.html.
 - 13 The most influential proponent of the idea that Zheng He’s voyages were peaceful was perhaps Joseph Needham. See Joseph Needham, *The Shorter Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Chapters 2–4, esp. p. 142.
 - 14 See Edward Dreyer, *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433* (New York: Longman, 2006), quote at p. xii. Historian Geoff Wade goes even farther, suggesting that the voyages were “intended to achieve the recognition of Ming dominance of (or perhaps suzerainty over) all the polities of the known maritime world”. To be sure, they were not interested in establishing colonies. Their intent was, rather, to extend China’s “political and economic control across space”. Geoff Wade, “The Zheng He Voyages: A Reassessment”, *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 78, 1 (2005): 37–58, p. 18.
 - 15 One expedition was carried out after his death, but after 1434 there was a backlash against the Zheng He legacy. A 1477 proposal to resume the voyages resulted in another backlash and the destruction of the records of the Zheng He voyages, a sad event from the perspective of maritime historians.
 - 16 Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 123.

- 17 See Lee Hun-Chang and Peter Temin, “The Political Economy of Pre-industrial Korean Trade”, International Center for Korean Studies Working Papers in Korean Studies 5 (2004): http://icks.korea.ac.kr/public_papers.asp, p. 25.
- 18 Lee and Temin, “Political Economy”, p. 25.
- 19 Iwao Seiichi, “Shiqi shiji Riben ren zhi Taiwan qinlue xing dong” 十七世紀日本人之臺灣侵略行動 [Japanese Invasion Activities Regarding Taiwan in the Seventeenth Century], *Taiwan yanjiu congkan* 臺灣研究叢刊 71 (1959): 1–23.
- 20 On pre-European trade to Taiwan, see Chen Di 陳第, Dong Fan Ji 東番記 and Shen Yurong 沈有容, “Min hai zeng yan 閩海贈言”, *Taiwan wenxian congkan* 臺灣文獻叢刊 56 (1959): 24–7 (English translation in Laurence G. Thompson, “The Earliest Chinese Eyewitness Accounts of the Formosan Aborigines”, *Monumenta Serica: Journal of Oriental Studies* 23 (1964): 163–204). On Chinese living in Taiwan in the 1620s, see J. A. Van der Chijs, H. T. Colenbrander and J. de Hullu (eds), *Dagh-Register Gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant Passerende daer ter Plaetse als over Geheel Nederlands-India* (Batavia/The Hague: Landsdrukkerij/Martinus Nijhoff, 1887–1903, 1624–29), pp. 23–4.
- 21 Letter from Governor Hans Putmans to the governor-general in Batavia, 20 February 1635, VOC 1116: 311–23, fo. 321v.
- 22 There is some possibility that Fujianese officials discussed moving drought victims from Fujian to Taiwan. See Fang Hao 方豪, “Chongzhen chunian Zheng Zhilong yimin ru Tai shi” 崇禎初年鄭芝龍移民入臺事, *Taiwan wenxian* 12, 1 (1950): 37–8. Yang Yanjie, a historian from mainland China, argues that the pirates Yan Siqi and Zheng Zhilong established “political authority” (政權) on Taiwan before the arrival of the Dutch, although he does not make a strong case for the idea. Yang Yanjie 楊彥杰, *Heju shidai Taiwan shi* 荷據時臺灣史 [A History of Taiwan under the Dutch] (Taipei: 聯經 Lianjing Press, 2000), p. 50.
- 23 An early Dutch source indicates that the Chinese had brought to Taiwan “some of their crops, such as large Chinese apples, oranges, bananas, watermelons”. Letter from Pieter Jansz. Muijsers to Pieter de Carpentier, 4 November 1624, VOC 1083: 508. On early Chinese agriculture in and before Dutch Taiwan, see John Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier 1600–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). See p. 85 and pp. 54–5 in Nakamura Takashi, “Heling shidai zhi Taiwan nongye ji qi jiangli” 荷領時代之臺灣農業及其獎勵, *Taiwan yanjiu congkan* 臺灣研究叢刊 (1954): 54–69.
- 24 Saccam (赤崁) became the heart of today’s Tainan city.
- 25 Letter from Missionary Georgius Candidius to Governor-general Jan Pietersz. Coen, 16 September 1629, VOC 1100, fo. 5. Mattau is present-day Matou (麻豆), in the Tainan district.
- 26 Letter from Governor Hans Putmans to governor-general at Batavia, 20 February 1635, VOC 1116: 311–23: 319v.
- 27 See *Zeelandia Dagregisters*, V. 1, G: 233.
- 28 Letter from Governor Hans Putmans to Batavia, 20 February 1635, VOC 1116: 311–23: 320.
- 29 See e-book of Tonio Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese: Dutch, Spanish, and Han Colonization in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), esp. Chapter 3.
- 30 Letter from Governor Johan van der Burch to Batavia, 5 October 1636, VOC 1120: 288–323: 307. A *last* was a unit of measurement used for rice equivalent to 20 piculs (or around 1250 kilograms).
- 31 Letter from Governor Johan van der Burch to Batavia, 5 October 1636, VOC 1120: 288–323: 308v.
- 32 The man was named Hambuan. His Chinese name was most likely 林亨萬. See Ang Kaim 翁佳音, “Shiqi shiji de fulao haishang” 十七世紀的福佬海商, in

- Zhongguo haiyang fazhan shi lunwenji di qi ji* 中國海洋發展史文論集第七輯, ed. Tang Xiyong 湯熙勇 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1999), pp. 77–9.
- 33 Letter from Governor Hans Putmans to Batavia, 7 October 1636, VOC 1120: 252–82: 264.
- 34 Letter from Vice-Governor Paulus Traudenius to Batavia, 20 March 1640, VOC 1133: 147–162: 153.
- 35 See Tonio Andrade, “Pirates, Pelts, and Promises: The Sino-Dutch Colony of Seventeenth-century Taiwan and the Aboriginal Village of Favorolang”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 64, 2 (2005): 295–320.
- 36 As an early biography of Zheng Chenggong puts it, “They built their fortress in the town of Anping; their ships could sail directly to the bedroom” (自築城於安平鎮, 舳舻直通臥內). “Zheng Chenggong Zhuan” 鄭成功傳, *Taiwan wenxian congkan* 臺灣文獻叢刊 67, p. 3.
- 37 See Lynn Struve, *The Southern Ming, 1644–1662* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).
- 38 Yang Yanjie indicates that during the period 1650 to 1662, oceanic trade provided to Zheng Chenggong’s government some 2,500,000 silver liang, which he estimates accounted for 62 per cent of his military and governmental expenditures (see Yang, *Heju shidai Taiwan shi*, p. 263).
- 39 Yang Ying 楊英, “Cong zheng shi lu” 從政石路, *Taiwan wenxian congkan* 臺灣文獻叢刊 32 (1958): 184–5.
- 40 Cited in Emma Jinhua Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683–1895* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 34.
- 41 This argument is made by Emma Jinhua Teng in *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography*.
- 42 For an exemplar of such a map, see Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography*, p. 39.
- 43 Cited in Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography*, p. 38.
- 44 Cited in Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography*, p. 35.
- 45 In Japan, certain southern daimyo were interested in colonising Taiwan but after 1635, their ambitions were quashed by the centralising Tokugawa Shogunate. See Andrade, *How Taiwan Became Chinese*, Chapter 2, “A Scramble for Influence”.
- 46 Yang Yanjie, *Heju shidai Taiwan shi*, p. 263.
- 47 See Geoffrey Parker, “The Artillery Fortress as an Engine of European Overseas Expansion, 1480–1750”, in *City Walls: The Urban Enceinte in Global Perspective*, ed. James Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

4 The “native office” (土司) system

A Chinese mechanism for southern territorial expansion over two millennia

Geoff Wade

Contrary to popular and frequently-disseminated opinion within the Chinese state, “China” has not always extended as far as the PRC does today. The processes by which the Chinese state came to enjoy the geographical spread it does today are diverse and sometimes difficult to assay. Perhaps, with a broad brush, we can divide these into state-sponsored and non-state-sponsored processes, although this is also a difficult division to sustain with any precision. The archaeological record suggests that Chinese societies and polities (those which used Chinese script as part of their cultural and administrative identity) developed and were initially centralised around the Yellow River. Their expansion south, west and east was achieved through diverse means and modes.¹ The successive polities alternately expanded against neighbours and were compressed by incursions from outside in a continuing process of what one might call the concertina of Chinese history over many centuries. In this chapter, we will explore a subset of the state-sponsored processes of Chinese polity expansion.

State-sponsored expansion of Chinese polities can be said to have involved at some stage of the process, and almost without exception, the use or threat of military force. Following this application of military threat or force, there were two basic patterns pursued in respect of the administration of the newly-subjugated territory.

Formal bureaucratic incorporation through occupation

Often, in the process of extension of a Chinese polity, members of the Chinese bureaucracy as well as local bureaucrats were appointed to administer the new acquisition. An excellent example of this is the Ming invasion of Đại Việt in 1406 and the subsequent bureaucratic incorporation of the polity as the new province of Jiaozhi up until 1427, when the Vietnamese drove out the Ming military forces and civil appointees.²

Đại Việt had seen marked changes during the latter decades of the fourteenth century³ and it was thus that in the early years of the fifteenth century, this increasingly powerful polity was to become a target for the

expansionist aspirations of the Yongle emperor. The tension between Đại Việt and the Ming had grown over several decades, and the creation of pretexts⁴ for the attack by the Ming saw the usurping emperor Yongle emperor issuing, on a date equivalent to 15 July 1406, an imperial proclamation laying down the reasons why forces were being despatched against Annam.⁵ The 20 formal reasons for the military invasion are given in detail in the *Ming shilu*, the reign annals of the Ming emperors.⁶ These are summarised in Wang Gungwu's study of China and Southeast Asia in the early fifteenth century.⁷

In early 1407, the invading Ming forces besieged and eventually captured both the western and eastern capitals of the Vietnamese polity. Great slaughter accompanied these military actions. In one engagement, the Ming forces claimed 37,390 "heads".⁸ Other battles produced claims of "tens of thousands" of Vietnamese officers and men killed. In the final victory announcement, the Chinese commanders claimed that "seven million" of the Vietnamese forces had been killed.⁹

The intentions of the Ming to incorporate Đại Việt into China were clear from the time the invading forces were despatched. Imperial orders sent to Zhu Neng in 1406 included the claim that

Annam is secluded in a little cranny in the ocean. Since ancient times it has been an administrative division of China. Since the Five Dynasties [AD907–960], China has been engaged with many things and has been unable to govern it.¹⁰

There was thus already a historical pretext for incorporation before the troops were despatched.

The orders from the Ming capital issued in response to the notification of victory stipulated arrangements by which "the peaceful rule of Yongle" would be instituted. Reviving the name of Jiaozhi for the new province, imperial orders required the establishment of the administrative offices and the appointment of administrators, including defecting Vietnamese, to staff them.¹¹ New administrative divisions, commanderies, stores, Buddhist registries, fishing tax offices, courier stations, police offices and salt distribution offices were established. Military commands and battalions were also set up. By 1408, 472 military and civil offices had been established to govern over three million people and in excess of two million *man* ("barbarians").¹² The number of offices would peak at about 1000 in 1419. Major cities throughout the occupied regions had moats and walls added, and troops alternated between defence and farming duties to provide their own food needs.

Cultural incorporation was also pursued with the new Jiaozhi administration advising to the Ming court:

The *yi* people of Annam venerate the law of the Buddha, but do not know how to worship or sacrifice to the spirits. We should establish

altars for sacrifice to the spirits of the wind, clouds, thunder and rain ... so that the people become familiar with the way to express gratitude to the spirits through sacrifice.¹³

In 1416, a large number of Confucian schools, Yin-yang schools and medical schools were established within the province. Examinations for the local bureaucracy along the pattern of those of other provinces were formalised in 1411.¹⁴ Chinese mourning rites and mourning leave were instituted among the officials of Jiaozhi in 1419.¹⁵

The desire of the Ming to exploit the resources of Annam was also evident prior to the conclusion of the initial hostilities. Imperial orders despatched in early 1407 required that

when the troops overcome Annam, enquire far and wide within the borders for knowledgeable and moral men, as well as those who have abilities which can be used or skills which can be employed. Such persons should, with due ceremony, all be sent to the Court.¹⁶

This exploitation of human resources was not slow in being realised, and in October 1407, 7700 tradesmen and artisans “from Jiaozhi” arrived in the capital.¹⁷ Later in the year 9000 scholars and administrators from the new province were sent to the capital.¹⁸ Many of these persons were assigned to other parts of China to serve the Chinese state.

One of the earliest orders to be promulgated by the new rulers was a prohibition on maritime trade by military personnel and civilians.¹⁹ The importance of the goods and revenues to be derived from Đại Việt’s formerly flourishing maritime trade was not ignored by the new rulers. Over time, three new maritime trade supervisory bodies were established. In addition, in order to draw revenue from their new province, the Chinese established or revived commercial tax offices, fishing tax offices, transport offices and salt tax offices.²⁰ New gold-mining offices were established in 1408 to supervise the extraction and/or taxation of gold.²¹ The impositions on the indigenous populations must have been severe: in 1411, as an attempt to assuage some of the ill-feeling, it was announced that

The levies and taxes other than grain tax, including taxes on gold, silver, and salt, as well as iron tax and fishing tax will be lifted for three years. It will remain forbidden to mine gold and silver privately, but the prohibition in dealing in gold, silver, copper and iron will be lifted for three years. The people will be allowed to trade in these goods within the borders, but will not be allowed to carry them beyond the borders.²²

The degree to which the new overlords controlled the flow of precious metals can be gauged from these few words. The same was the case with

aromatics, with the private export of such products being banned in 1416. In many cases trusted eunuchs were appointed by the court to control metals and other valuable commodities. Foremost among these was Ma Qi, who, after being sent back to China from Jiaozhi, requested to be transferred again to Jiaozhi “to control and manage the gold, silver, pearls and aromatics”. The imperial response suggests the degree to which exploitation was a cause of great social turbulence in the area:

How can I receive such words! Have you officials not heard that previously while in Jiaozhi, he brought calamities to both the military and the people. Since he returned [to the capital], it seems that the troubles in Jiaozhi have abated. How can he be sent again?²³

This phenomenon whereby in the early Ming eunuchs were given imperial license to gather valuables – a situation which, given their political and military muscle, almost inevitably led to exploitation – can also be observed to have occurred in Yunnan and throughout the voyages of Zheng He’s “treasure ships”. In addition, annual tribute demands made on Jiaozhi included large quantities of silks, lacquer, sapan-wood and other aromatics, kingfisher feathers and fans.²⁴ The failure of the new province to meet the tribute and tax demands imposed by the state suggests that the demands were beyond the capacity of the population to supply.²⁵

After consolidating their control over the Viet lands, and taking advantage of a relative lull in insurrections from 1414, the Ming continued to seek to expand their new province of Jiaozhi. Territory on the southern border, formerly subject to Champa, was divided into subprefectures of Jiaozhi in 1414.²⁶ A proposal by Chen Qia, the minister of war, to launch an invasion of Champa in 1415 was, however, not pursued.²⁷

Even though this is not the focal point of the present chapter, it might be instructive to review the mechanisms by which the Ming state attacked, occupied and incorporated as a formal province the foreign polity of Đại Việt (Annam) over the period 1406–27. This may provide a basic model against which to compare instances of aggression and territorial absorption by Chinese polities in other ages and places.

- 1 Validation of an impending military expedition was sought out or invented as required. In the case of Annam, 20 crimes by the rulers were set down (*Taizong shilu*, juan 60.1a–4a).
- 2 A military expedition against the polity was launched (*Taizong shilu*, juan 53.4b–5a to 67.2a).
- 3 Assistance was obtained from local persons familiar with the terrain, the people and the systems in the area being invaded. This assistance was obtained by threats or by offering posts or rewards, and it was often these persons who were used to bring further areas to submission (*Taizong shilu*, juan 60.5a–b). These persons are often cited in the

historical record as supporting and thereby validating the Chinese occupation, by making statements such as “Annam was formerly China’s territory, but later we sank into *yi* ways. Now we are able to gaze on the brilliance of Chinese culture” (*Taizong shilu*, juan 65.1b–2a).

- 4 Intimidation by slaughter was used. It is noted that in a few encounters with the Vietnamese, 37,390 heads were taken by the Chinese forces (*Taizong shilu*, juan 63.1a). In the victory announcement, the Chinese commanders claimed that “7 million” of the Vietnamese forces had been killed (*Taizong shilu*, juan 68.3b–7a).
- 5 Captured local leaders were executed or removed (*Taizong shilu*, juan 67.1b–2a).
- 6 Instructions were issued to the population of the occupied area; these noted the moral rectitude of the military action, stressing how the Chinese state was assisting the local people and how evil the previous rulers had been (*Taizong shilu*, juan 68.1a–3b).
- 7 Chinese administrative systems were instituted and, if necessary, existing administrative divisions were changed (*Taizong shilu*, juan 68.3b–7a).
- 8 Military organs and civilian offices were established (*Taizong shilu*, juan 68.8b–9a, 73.4a, 74.1a–b, 80.3b–4a etc.). By 1408, 472 military and civil Chinese offices had been established in Jiaozhi.
- 9 Levies were instituted to obtain local grain and tax income (*Taizong shilu*, juan 68.8b–9a), and monopolies over salt and over gold and silver mining were also instituted (*Taizong shilu*, juan 71.1b and 163.3a).
- 10 Useful human resources were stripped. In 1407, 7700 tradesmen and artisans, including gun-founders, were sent from Annam to Nanjing (*Taizong shilu*, juan 71.6a).
- 11 Further opportunities for territorial gain were sought. In 1414, the Ming administration of Jiaozhi expanded into areas which the Cham had recovered after the defeat of Hồ Quý Ly (*Taizong shilu*, juan 149.4b–5a).

Incorporation through the native office (*tusi* 土司) system

In many instances of Chinese expansion (and particularly southward expansion) over the last 2200 years, the areas into which the Chinese polities expanded did not have a system or tradition of formal bureaucratic administration. Instead, many of the polities attacked or threatened with violence had a system of chieftainship or some other form of supreme tribal rulership. In such cases, the polity was certainly not administered by salaried bureaucratic specialists.

It was in such cases that a different form of incorporation was developed. When needing to incorporate such polities, another system of integration –

the *tusi* (土司 “native office” or “native control”) system – was invoked.²⁸ This involved the Chinese polity using the existing system of local rulership and the allegiances innate within in, by recognising the existing (often hereditary) ruler or appointing a new ruler, often a member of the ruling family or clan, and imposing certain economic and military demands upon the polity through that ruler. The description below is aimed at exploring this mechanism of territorial control and expansion, which was used by Chinese polities over a period of approximately 2000 years.

The *tusi* system is actually a generic name for a variety of systems that successive Chinese polities used to control and exploit polities that bordered them. In brief, these systems involved:

- The domination of a bordering polity by either the threat or use of military force.
- The formal recognition (Chinese texts use the term “appointment” 授) of the existing ruler or a subsequently appointed ruler, usually from the existing ruling family or group.
- As a *quid pro quo* for the Ming recognising and not removing the ruling group, the rulers were subject to a variety of demands, including silver and gold payments, the provision of troops for further expeditions, the provision of other labour and the supply of grain.

The benefits of such a system for a Chinese state were substantial:

- Often, the target polity could be made to submit without the need for huge and extended military expeditions.
- The dominated area could be ruled through existing administrative systems, which obviated the need for bringing formal Chinese administrators into the area.
- Income in silver or gold could be generated from these polities, which had two functions. First, it aided the fiscal balance of the Chinese state. Second, it ensured that any fiscal surplus of the polity was drawn off, which reduced the possible threat that the polity could constitute to the Chinese state.
- The polity could be pressured into supplying troops and corvée labour at little or no cost to the Chinese state.

Such a system was a common phenomenon under many empires, Asian and Western. The aim here is to provide a brief overview of the evolution of the system under the successive dynastic entities of China.²⁹

The Qin (221–207 BCE)

The historical antecedents of this system within East Asia are indeed long. In fact the system of enfeoffing feudal lords under the Zhou dynasty was

probably the model for the later *tusi* system. The key difference was that the princes who were thus enfeoffed were generally considered to have some cultural affinity with the Zhou emperor. In general, the *tusi* rulers were considered to be outside the culture of the Chinese state.

The famous Emperor Qin Shihuang Di, lauded in China as the first “unifier” of China, was one of the widest-ranging aggressors seen in the history of East Asia. He launched massive invasions of areas to the south of Qin in the 220s BCE. In the areas that he came to dominate through these expeditions, it appears that there was no anxiety on the Chinese emperor’s part to replace the rulers that were in position or to formally incorporate their lands into his empire. Obviously the impossibility of such an aspiration would have been a conditioning factor. In many cases, then, it was a case of domination and then recognition. In what is today’s Sichuan, following the Qin “pacification of Shu”,³⁰ the ruler of Shu lost (at least within the Chinese texts) his title as ruler (王) and had it replaced by the title “marquis” (侯). Although it appears, from the few sources available to us, that he was retained as the ruler/administrator of the region, this recognition had costs in terms of exactions imposed by the Chinese state, varying with the capacity of the latter to exercise punitive sanctions.

The Qin troops reached into areas which are today areas of Guangdong/Guangxi, and roads were subsequently established to allow the rapid movement of troops into the areas conquered. This capacity for rapid transfer of troops was an intrinsic part of the punitive mechanisms which provided the threat element of the system. It was also these conduits which allowed economic incorporation into the Chinese empire.

Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE)

The rulers of Han China followed Qin systems in many ways and again, after huge forays to the south, established various formal *jun* (郡 prefecture/commandery) administrations in areas that are today parts of Guangdong, Guangxi and northern Vietnam, as well as areas of Sichuan. The crushing of the revolts against Chinese attempts at domination during the 54-year reign of the Han Emperor Wudi (140 BCE – 86 BCE) saw massive military expeditions to the west and south. States such as Yelang were, at least according to the Han records, permitted to keep their rulers and offer tribute. This was the real beginning of a system of rule by “barbarian rulers” (蠻夷君長). The ruler of the Dian polity in Yunnan was noted as having surrendered and, having had a seal conferred upon him, was required to offer tribute and was required to again rule his people (“滇舉國降，請置吏入朝，於是以爲益州郡，賜滇王王印，復長其民”).³¹

Within these surrendered states, the Han established some rulers as “defenders of subordinate states” (屬過都尉) who were “in charge of the surrendered barbarians” (主蠻夷降者). These were not however formal members of the Han bureaucracy and can be considered to come under

the generic *tusi* category. There are many other examples of “surrendering” (*guiyi* 歸義) chieftains being given silks and seals and being required to administer their own groupings. Some were also assigned Han positions, including as governors (太守) and regional inspectors (刺史).³²

The demands made upon these non-Chinese rulers during this period are not always evident in these early texts, but we can note (1) the mandatory sending of tribute to the court; (2) the payment of taxes generally in cloth, salt or cash; and (3) the need to provide troops. This last element was extremely important for pursuing the Han southern border policy of “using barbarian to attack barbarian” (以夷伐夷).³³ That is to say, the troops of one “native office” (non-Chinese polity) were employed to attack or threaten another and thereby extend the capacity of the Chinese state to also exploit that polity economically. This system was also common in other empires, with the British empire in India being a prime example.

The forced migration element should not be neglected, even in these early periods. In order to weaken the polities, people from the newly-controlled areas were shifted into Chinese areas, while Chinese people were shifted into the newly-subordinated regions. Yue people were, for example, shifted up into what is today Hubei and Jiangxi following the military expeditions against them. This Chinese system of moving people into “newly-attached” areas as a means of consolidating Chinese incorporation remains with us today.

Three Kingdoms (221–419CE)

This period saw a tripartite division of the Chinese realm into the states of Wei, Shu and Wu, with great cultural and political diversity. The paucity of relevant texts from the period limits our knowledge, but it appears that these states again generally followed the methods used by the Qin and Han in “managing” peoples to the south. However, the Shu appears to have more fully incorporated peoples to the south because of the proximity of the Shu capital to these peoples. It is obvious and pertinent that the three kingdoms (or at least Shu and Wu) imposed onerous demands on those southern polities forced into submission. After Shu conquered Nanzhong to its south, it required submission of gold, silver, cinnabar, salt, iron, lacquer, ploughing buffalo and war-horses. Much of such economic exploitation appears to have been used to fund further military actions.

Southern Dynasties (420–589CE)

This period of great political diversity in the Chinese cultural region saw many political aspirants establishing their own states.³⁴ During this period, various of the non-Chinese leaders in polities to the south were assigned military rank titles (such as commandant 校尉, military protector 護軍,

leader of court gentlemen 中郎將 and protector general 督護),³⁵ but were not formally part of any Chinese military system. These were prestige titles, but they underlined the role that these people were intended to play for Chinese states. The policy of “using barbarians to attack barbarians”, or at least to threaten others, was a key element in this *tusi* system.

One of the most prominent examples of how the *tusi* were utilised in this period is the history of Lady Sinn (Xian Furen 洗夫人, 512–602), a Nanyue (possibly proto-Tai) woman who held high office as a “native official” under the Liang (502–557), Chen (557–589) and then Sui (580–618) dynasties. She resided in what is today the southern part of Guangdong. The area here was long reputed as a place of bandits: “To the South of Guangzhou there are bandits called Li [俚]. They are centred on the commanderies of Cangwu, Yulin, Hepu, Ningpu and Gaoliang, and their territory extends for thousands of *li*.” These regions, despite being named “commanderies”, were beyond Chinese control, and while Chinese troops may have held commandery towns, it was in the broader regions that the Nan-yue Sinn clan exercised control.

Lady Sinn’s family reportedly (according to the dynastic history *Sui shu*) was one of the most prominent of the Nan Yue families, controlling over 100,000 families. Lady Sinn was married to Feng Bao, the son of a descendant of the Northern Yan rulers; and he had been appointed by the Chen court, based in what is today Nanjing, as governor of Gaoliang. This allowed the Feng family, who had been unsuccessfully trying to implement Chinese rule in that region, to achieve some degree of local control. Lady Sinn came to political power and was given all manner of titles, and both she and her sons subsequently (from the 530s to about 600 CE) went on to provide the Liang court, the Chen court and later the Sui court with a non-Chinese force which controlled the Nan Yue areas. She led forces until well into her seventies. “If emergencies occurred, she was permitted to respond militarily as the circumstances required.” Lady Sinn was later deified, one of the few *tuguan* (native officials) so treated.³⁶

There is also much evidence that the Southern Dynasties utilised the forces of these *tusi* both as vanguard forces (邊蠻以爲前驅) in the wars against the northern dynasty forces and against other non-Chinese forces in the south. The official biography of Lady Sinn concentrated on the military titles which had been conferred upon her as a *tuguan*, but economic demands were also in place – mainly grain and silver, often based on a per-family amount.

Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE)

The Tang was to be a huge force in Asia, with unprecedented expansion of Chinese political and cultural influence during that period. The new dynasty saw the development of more systematic methods of managing their southward expansion. The Tang bureaucrats began establishing *jimi*

(羈縻), literally “haltered and bridled” administrations: prefectures, subprefectures and counties on their southern borders. These administrations were all controlled by non-Chinese persons.

This arrangement formally began during the Zhengguan reign (627–650 CE), and had two salient characteristics. One was the large number of such subprefectures created, reflecting an increased awareness of the possibilities of divide-and-rule policies. There were over 800 such *jimi* subprefectures as compared to about 360 subprefectures under the formal administration. The other feature was the small size of their territories, with populations of only a few thousand people and controlling but a few subordinate counties. This ensured that these polities stayed weak and would find it more difficult to pose a threat to the Chinese state. This was a development of the divide-and-rule policies which have long marked Chinese political culture. Again all sorts of military and civil titles were assigned to these “native rulers”, usually as hereditary posts, and the economic demands made upon them included “native products” and local manufactures in “tribute”: grain taxes, corvée labour, slaves and troops. It was during the Tang that the employment of the military forces of these native officials greatly expanded.³⁷

Song Dynasties (960–1279)

The Northern (960–1126) and then Southern Song (1127–1279) polities continued the *jimi* system instituted during the Tang. Fan Chengda, writing in the twelfth century, gives some idea of the system and how it was employed in an area known as Guangnan Xi Lu, which is today in Guangxi:

Since the Tang dynasty, the Nong and Mo clans have given their allegiance. Their tribes have been divided, with the larger groups being made into subprefectures and the smaller into counties. The even smaller group are made into *dong*. When the dynasty began to grow, there were over 50 subprefectures, district and *dong* administrations. Their respected members were selected as leaders and their people were registered (as subject to corvée and military service). The people are wild and their practices uncivilized and they could not be governed solely by China’s education and law. Thus they were just haltered and bridled.

These systems were widely distributed across areas south of the Yangtze, with these “haltered-and-bridled” administrations generally being located in what are today’s west Hunan and Hubei, Sichuan, Guangxi and Guizhou. As during the Tang, the aim was to keep these administrations as small and as numerous as possible, in an attempt to preclude alliances. An area in western Hunan was described in the Song dynastic history as follows: “There are 16 subprefectures among the various *man* (barbarians)

in Nanjiang. However, of these, only Fu, Xia and Xu have in excess of 1000 households. The remainder have only several hundred households.” Some of the administrations extended only several tens of miles.

But economic exploitation was still a major thrust in dealing with these native offices. A Song official, Su Xun, in the eleventh century noted that: “Guangnan and Sichuan are the sources of wealth and goods, and the northern provinces depend on them for provisionment. Bringing the southern tribes under control is an urgent priority.” As in earlier times, there were tax demands, tribute demands and demands in terms of grain to feed the military imposed on these polities. They were also required to organise local military forces – *tubing*, *tuding*, *dongding* (土兵, 土丁, 洞丁) to assist the Song in its military endeavours. Generally these forces were used locally, but sometimes they were employed on distant campaigns.

The decimation of the military capacity of these polities, their atomisation and their economic exploitation provided, during the Song, opportunities for Chinese people to move into these areas, sometimes on their own initiative and sometimes in state-sponsored migrations. This was an age when mercantilism was encouraged,³⁸ and with the opportunities provided by the phenomena described above, we see many examples of Chinese people moving into these areas which had been divided and subject to “halters and bridles”. In 1081, for example, a non-Chinese official in Hainan noted that Chinese persons from the mainland had been encroaching on the land of the Li people on the island, resulting in them having no land to till. The local official was concerned that clashes would occur and asked that such migration be banned. Similar situations occurred right through the southern Chinese border regions at this time.³⁹

Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368)

The creation of a united Mongol empire by Chinggis Khan in the early thirteenth century provided the basis for further expansion both westwards and eastwards,⁴⁰ defeating the Western Xia in 1209 and taking the Jin capital (today’s Beijing) in 1215. His successors were to capture the subsequent Jin capital at Kaifeng in 1234 and eliminate the Western Xia in 1227. Under Möngke Khan (1208–1259), more attention was paid to the Chinese polities and the Song state was outflanked by the Mongols through their capture of the Dali kingdom in 1253. Möngke’s death in 1259 led to the eventual breakup of the Eurasian Mongol empire and the emergence of Kubilai Khan, the first Yuan Emperor of China. He moved his capital to the modern Beijing in 1264 and began military actions against the Southern Song, establishing his dynasty (the Yuan) in the process, and ending the Southern Song’s existence when Mongol forces took Guangzhou in 1279.

The ruling group was ethnically quite diverse, and being Chinese was certainly not a necessary qualification to be part of it. But in an alien

empire centred in areas which had long been ruled or influenced by Chinese polities, the advice of Chinese advisers was constantly near at hand, even if there was a continuing struggle between “Chinese” policies and the ways of the steppe.

How then was the Yuan to deal with polities to the south? Generally their policy had been one of direct rule, appointing Mongols to administer newly-captured regions. After they took Dali, for example, a succession of Mongol princes were appointed to administer it. Under Kubilai there were further efforts to expand his empire to Japan, Java, Đại Việt, Champa and Pagan. The overland ventures brought the Mongol forces into contact with a wide range of polities; but with a limited number of possible assignee Mongol rulers, they had no choice but to adopt the *tusi* form that had been utilised by previous Chinese administrations and to allow the traditional rulers to rule under some form of recognised submission. This was the mode followed in many areas of what are now Yunnan, Hunan, Guizhou, Guangxi and Guangdong. The obligations of these “native officials” included tax and tribute payments, and failure to pay taxes brought military punishment. These punishment brigades were frequently comprised of other non-Chinese forces located close by.

In fact, the native-office system saw so much development during the Yuan that a new system of terminology was created, a system which was to continue on into the Ming and Qing. The generic system name for the native office system – *tusi* 土司 – was also brought into use at this time. The terms/posts created and carried into the next dynasties included Pacification Commission (*xuanweisi* 宣慰司), Pacification Office (*xuanfusi* 宣撫司), Pacification Bureau (*anfusi* 安撫司), Chief’s Office (*changguansi* 長官司) and Military and Civilian Tribal Command (*junmin zongguanfu* 軍民總管府).

Ming Dynasty (1368–1644)

The Ming, a regime established by Zhu Yuanzhang in 1368, replaced the Mongol rulers of China with a Chinese dynasty. In terms of its administrative structures and systems, it derived aspects from the Yuan systems and other elements from the earlier Tang and Song traditions. During the 270 years in which the Ming remained in power, first in Nanjing, and after 1421 in Beijing, it was to establish a large number of formal and less formal administrative bodies.⁴¹ On all of its borders, the Ming state established methods by which to maintain a certain degree of regional control and also facilitate further expansion where necessary. The late Professor Fritz Mote devoted a chapter of his last major work to Ming China’s borders,⁴² addressing the issue of *tusi*. He notes that during “Ming times” there were some 800 military *tusi* and 650 civil posts around the empire at various times and that unlike the formal bureaucratic posts, *tusi* posts were generally expected to be hereditary. In his major study of the *tusi* system,

Gong Yin came to a total of 960 native-official military positions and 660 native-official civil posts during the Ming.⁴³ Thus much of what is today considered southern China was not Chinese in any real sense of the term during the Ming, even in the eyes of the Chinese. John Herman⁴⁴ has also detailed the role of these bodies in Ming and Qing China’s colonisation of Guizhou. The “native offices” are therefore significant elements in both Chinese history and the history of China’s expansion.

Through the Hongwu (1368–98) and Yongle (1402–24) reigns, massive military expeditions were launched against Yunnan, and military guards were established at major strategic points to try and ensure that the native offices which the Yuan had recognised accepted the new supremacy of the Ming. By the early fifteenth century, Burma, Laos and Cheli (Sipsong Panna), as well as other major Tai polities such as Luchuan, Mengyang and Mubang, had all, as far as Ming historiography is concerned, been brought within the “native office” system and were subject to the Ming state.

These offices were issued with verification tallies to confirm their identity and the veracity of envoys from the Ming. These offices were at times completely independent from the Ming. In 1391, for example, it was advised that Menghua Subprefecture in Yunnan (a native office) was still “obstructing culture”, which suggests that even some areas claimed as native-official administrations of the Chinese state were beyond its control. However, as the dynasty progressed, increasing pressure was placed upon them through taxation and other demands.

When the Ming bureaucracy had arranged for their appointees to rule in these native offices, they often went to great lengths to ensure their maintenance of power. An example can be cited from 1397, when Dao Ganmeng rebelled against Si Lunfa, the ruler of the Tai Mao polity of Luchuan. In response, the Chinese state gave sanctuary to the fleeing Si Lunfa; it then sent troops against Dao Gan-meng and restored Si Lunfa to the ruling post, extracting vast tracts of his territory in exchange for this assistance and then breaking them down into smaller polities.

However, being recognised and appointed as a ruler by the Ming did not guarantee one security in office or indeed necessarily Ming support. When Si Zheng, who had been recognised as the ruler/native official of Manmo (Bhamo) by the Ming state, was pursued by the Burmese into Yunnan in 1602, the Yunnan grand coordinator, in his account of the incident, noted that “there was no option but to remove him”. Later sources reveal that what this in fact meant was that the Chinese forces had killed him and handed over parts of his corpse to the Burmese in order to halt the advance of the Burmese forces.

The economic demands on these recognised rulers of border polities, as a *quid pro quo* for allowing the ruler to remain in power or as restitution for costs of expeditions against them, were often staggering in magnitude. In 1387, the Chinese court demanded 15,000 horses, 500 elephants and

30,000 cattle from Si Lunfa, the ruler of Luchuan/Pingmian (the Tai polity of Mōng Mao). Subsequently, large silver demands ("silver in lieu of labour") were levied on Luchuan.⁴⁵ An annual amount of 6900 *liang* of silver was initially set and this was soon almost tripled to 18,000 *liang*. When it was recognised that it was impossible for this greater amount to be paid, the levy was again reduced to the original amount.⁴⁶ Smaller polities had relatively smaller demands imposed. When assigning territory back to Mengmi to "manage and utilise" in the early sixteenth century, for example, an annual levy of 1000 *liang* of silver was set.

In addition to the annual silver or gold levies in lieu of labour (*chaifa yin/chaifa jin* 差發銀/金), regular "tribute" was also demanded of those who had been "recognised" by the Ming state. That from Luchuan generally comprised elephants, horses and what were generically referred to as "local products".⁴⁷ Other local polities were required to pay smaller but still sometimes apparently harsh levies. In 1411, the Qichu Chief's Office in Yunnan advised that although it was required to pay 79,800 strings of cowries annually, it did not "produce" cowries.⁴⁸ In the 1440s, a Chinese official based in Yunnan noted the harsh effects of such demands:

The native officials have been appointed without adequate investigation and they have been pressed for payment of gold and silver in lieu of labour. The *yi* people have been stirred up and this has resulted in them cherishing anger and feuding and killing each other. This is what has produced the troubles of the southwest.⁴⁹

When such polities failed to meet Chinese demands, the Chinese state had a bargaining chip to utilise. For the Ming, it was far more practical to employ the troops of Yunnan polities against other Yunnan polities than to mobilise and move forces from Chinese areas. There are many example of this policy being pursued throughout the Ming dynasty. In exchange for cancellation of its debt of 14,000 *liang* of silver "owed" to the Chinese state, the Tai polity of Mubang (Hsenwi/Theinni in today's northern Myanmar) was required to provide troops to assist the Ming forces against Si Renfa of Luchuan, and not in small numbers.⁵⁰ That is to say, in 1438, the Ming court "accepted the offers" by the "native offices" of Mubang and Dahou to deploy 100,000 *yi*⁵¹ troops against Luchuan. Mubang (Hsenwi) was in fact a frequent pawn in this strategy, as it was one of the buffer polities between China and Ava-Burma and was subject to demands from both sides. By this time, the preferred Chinese description of this was "using *yi* to attack *yi*" (以夷攻夷).

The benefits to the Chinese state of using non-Chinese troops in areas where Chinese troops were not physically able to operate efficiently is noted in an interesting reference from 1491, wherein the retired official Zhou Hongmo, in putting forward various administrative and military proposals, noted:

Laos and other areas in Yunnan have extremely poisonous miasma, and those who enter there are certain to die.⁵² If there is no option but to proceed on expedition against them, we must deploy native troops of various areas, provide them with rations and promise them rewards and promotions. This is like when the Tang court deployed Yimouxun of Yunnan on expedition against Tubo [Tibet]. This was far outside the borders and still he achieved great victory. How much easier it will be in areas close to Yunnan!⁵³

During the Ming, the *tusi* system was, as in ages past, utilised as a means of ensuring the political division of peoples to its south. During the first decade of the seventeenth century, Chen Yongbin, at that time the grand coordinator of Yunnan, advised the court in a memorandum: “When there is contention between the *yi* and the *di*, it benefits China”. The Ming state made great use of the discord, existing or potential, among its neighbours and potential rivals, and made efforts to ensure that the polities which ringed it remained as divided as possible, usually by dividing polities which had been dominated and then appointing or recognising separate rulers administering smaller tracts of land. An excellent example is seen during the Hongwu reign (1368–98), when Si Lunfa of Luchuan/Pingmian (Mōng Mao) sought assistance to regain his territory from chieftains who had rebelled against him. The Chinese state took advantage of his restoration (and his death in 1399 or 1400) to break up his territory into the separate administrations of Luchuan, Mengyang, Mubang, Mengding, Lujiang, Ganyai, Dahou and Wan Dian, all under separate rulers. A further attempt by the Ming to divide the power of major entities to the south was seen in 1404 with efforts to divide Babai/Dadian (Lanna) into Babai/Dadian and Babai/Zhennai (Chieng Rai). There was a similar attempt by the Ming state to split the polity of Cheli (centred on the modern Jinghong in Sipsong Panna) into Cheli and Cheli/Jingan in 1421, so as to reduce its power and allow the appointment of a Chinese registrar and military commissioner in the latter. This was successful for over a decade. These actions had the dual roles of first reducing the threat any single polity could pose to China, and second facilitating the manipulation of these polities. In this manner, China pursued an active policy of “divide and rule”.

It is from the late fifteenth century that there comes evidence of bureaucrats desiring to further incorporate these “native offices” within the formal state structure. One such policy was that proposed in 1481: that the heirs to “native-official” posts in Yunnan be sent to Confucian schools in nearby prefectures so that their own culture could be replaced by Chinese values. This indicates how tightly frontier security considerations were linked with the rhetorical “desire to civilize”. Other modes of increasing interaction, and thus ultimately the incorporation of these native offices into a more formal bureaucracy, were also pursued.

The extension of the range of Chinese administration was achieved initially by allocating civil and military officials to assist the “native officials”⁵⁴ and subsequently by replacing “native officials” by members of the Chinese bureaucracy, or by placing the administration under a formal administrative unit. Any justification might be used for forcing the integration. An example from 1588 relating to an area near the Ming-Viet border is instructive. The entry in the Ming imperial annals reads as follows:

The native office of Siming Subprefecture was changed (改) and placed under the direct jurisdiction of Taiping Prefecture. At this time Huang Gongsheng, a member of the native-official ruling family, plotted to seize the ruling post and he colluded with Duoxiong and killed five persons, including his brother Huang Gongji. The Siming prefect Huang Chengzu aided them and took advantage of the disorder to pillage villages and stockades. The grand coordinator and the regional inspector requested that Huang Gongsheng and Duoxiong be punished under the law, that Siming Subprefecture be changed and placed under the circulating-office prefecture, that Huang Chengzu’s title be withdrawn and that he be required to realise achievements to atone for his crime. Also, that which he plundered was recovered.⁵⁵

Thereby, the Ming incorporation of an independent (or at least semi-independent) polity was validated within Chinese historiography as an act of benevolence, driven by the judicial and social concerns of the Ming bureaucrats and the emperor. Such measures were supplemented by the institution of the *kaizhong* (開中) system⁵⁶ and the opening up of state farms and military farms in areas previously beyond the Chinese state. This in turn facilitated the inflow of Chinese persons into the region.

In the early seventeenth century, as Ming control over China was beginning to break down,⁵⁷ approximately one-third of Yunnan, half of Guizhou, much of Guangxi and three-quarters of southern Sichuan were governed by native chieftains.

Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)

The Qing invasion of Ming China in the 1640s was the climax of long-term contestation between the two polities. Over the next 50 years, the new Manchu state was to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy engaging in warfare on the borders of the former Chinese state. While at the same time establishing Qing control over a broader area north of the Yangtze, by 1646 they were engaged in military action in the southern borders of the Chinese state, and recognising many of the existing *tusi*. They also established further *tusi* in areas such as Qinghai, Gansu and Tibet, which had not been part of the Ming state. But for diverse reasons, beginning in the 1650s and extending through the next two centuries,

there were plans and programs to use self-policing groups, Chinese education and the Qing legal code to “transform” the native offices in the south.⁵⁸ The Yongzheng emperor (reigned 1722–35) set down the reasons for this as follows:

The native chieftains in Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan and Huguang live in remote areas along our borders and often conduct themselves in despicable ways. Due to the evil nature of the native officials, the people who live under their rule are continually subject to unspeakable cruelties. Thus I have ordered my provincial officials to recommend plans that will abolish the native chieftainships and bring the barbarian population under administrative control.⁵⁹

One of the major figures in this process was E’ertai (O’ertai), a Manchu Bannerman who served from 1726–31 in Guangxi and Guizhou/Yunnan, first as governor and then as governor-general. As soon as he arrived in Yunnan as governor in 1726, he started to abolish the hereditary chieftainships and incorporate those areas as part of the provincial administration system. He did the same in Guizhou. The exercise was partly aimed at extending the taxable land. During his period in control of the region, he abolished half of the native offices through the *gaitu guiliu* (改土歸流 “change the native, and institute the circulating”) reforms. This meant that the indigenous rulers were removed on some pretext (usually at their request according to the Chinese record) and formal members of the bureaucracy replaced them (and then were subject to regular postings elsewhere). Those that were retained had great restrictions imposed on their powers, and by 1705 only male descendants of native ruling families who had attended Chinese schools could inherit the post of “native official”. In addition, from 1702 to 1722, 74 charitable schools were established in Yunnan, while 17 were built in Guizhou. In 1720, Beijing ordered 50 Guangxi native chieftains to build charitable schools within their chieftainships. This was intended to facilitate control, increase affiliation with the Chinese capital and reduce the possibility of local political uprisings.⁶⁰

But the transformation actions were not always endorsed or supported by all within the Qing administration, and many saw the policies as being counter-productive to the asserted aims. The violence that accompanied these transformations saw many officials, both military and civilian, speaking of this abolition as “senseless” and involving “wanton destruction of life and property”. One noted:

Your humble servant takes this opportunity to inform your Majesty of the devastation and misery caused by E’ertai’s actions, in hope this policy towards native chieftains will be brought to an end and we can resume the strategy of peaceful assimilation initiated during previous reigns.

(Zu Binggui 1782)

Apart from the violence that the *gaitu guiliu* induced in the Yunnan region, the Qing adjusted its administrative forms; in the border regions new social forms emerged. The hybrid cultures that emerged in this region subsequently and the effects that the indigenous people had on the Chinese colonists have been detailed by Pat Giersch.⁶¹ The *tusi* continued to exist even under the Republican government in the early twentieth century and were only abolished with the establishment of the PRC in 1949. Some claim that the current “autonomous regions” of the PRC are successors to the *tusi*. In that they are generally located in areas inhabited by non-Chinese people, this is true, but in terms of the firm hierarchy in which they are fixed, the lack of any traditional ruling elite and the lack of any real autonomy, they are quite different.

Overview of the “native office” system

How then are we to assess these *tusi* policies pursued by successive Chinese and non-Chinese administrations in China? They were, in the end, a mechanism used over several thousand years by which to dominate, emasculate, exploit and eventually incorporate surrounding polities.

- The initial process involved domination by military action or threat and the appointment or recognition of a reasonably pliant member of the traditional ruling family to administer the polity, upon the basis of local knowledge and existing loyalties.
- The emasculation often included the dividing of polities into smaller units.
- The exploitation involved economic/taxation demands of gold and silver, tribute requirements of diverse commodities, and provision of troops and corvée labour on demand. The advantages to the Chinese states were political, economic and military in nature.
- The gradual incorporation involved the appointment of Chinese clerks and assistants, the subordination of the polity to an existing formal administrative unit, often the removal of the ruler and eventually the abolition of the separate identity of the polity.

The history of Chinese expansion is a nascent discipline and faces obvious political obstacles. However, the importance of studying the diverse processes by which Chinese polities (and the Chinese cultural realm) expanded during the entire imperial period is clearly evident. This will involve the study of overall frontier policies, moving borders, frontier historiography, and Chinese foreign relations. However, one of the key elements must be the interrogation of Chinese historiographical rhetoric. Chinese historical texts inform us, for example, not of polities being invaded or annexed or decimated by Chinese forces but of states and peoples being “pacified”, “coming to allegiance”, “returning to right”,

“according and attaching”, and so on. The aggression waged by the successive states is thus innately righteous, and Chinese states could not by definition engage in invasion – *qinlue* (侵略) – precisely because of the morality implicit in the idea of the Chinese state in Chinese historiography. This was so throughout the imperial period. From at least the early twentieth century, the schema of a multi-ethnic China has been used to depict the violent interactions of the past as fractious relations between fraternal Chinese nationalities. This obscures much and denies the possibility of Chinese aggression. The realities hidden behind the *topoi* of China’s historiography, and of China’s relations with neighbours, need a new interpretation. This will also involve complete revision of the existing historical atlases of China, which are politically motivated by contemporary exigencies and territorial claims. Finally, the processes and mechanisms of Chinese expansion over time need to be examined across space. How do they compare with other imperial expansions in terms of similarities and differences?⁶² Only by exploring such questions will we be able to place Chinese expansions in global comparative perspective.

Notes

- 1 Two volumes which directly address these phenomena are: Charles P. Fitzgerald, *The Southern Expansion Of The Chinese People: Southern Fields and Southern Ocean* (New York: Prager, 1972); and Herold J. Wiens, *China’s March Toward the Tropics: A Discussion of the Southward Penetration of China’s Culture, Peoples and Political Control in Relation to the Non-Han-Chinese Peoples of South China and the Perspective of Historical and Cultural Geography* (Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, 1954).
- 2 For details of these events, see John K. Whitmore, *Việtnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming (1371–1421)* (New Haven: Council on Southeast Asian Studies, Yale University, 1985).
- 3 For which see E. Gaspardone, “Lê Quý-ly”, in *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368–1644*, ed. L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 797–80.
- 4 While the Ming Annals record that in 1404, Hu Di (Hồ Dê = Lê Hán Thương) was recognised by the Ming as ruler of Annam, subsequent entries detail how supposed members of the former Tran ruling family and administration came to the Ming court to denounce Hồ De as a usurper (*Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 25.11b). In a familiar pattern, utilised in Yunnan, the Ming endorsed the claims to the throne by one of the refugees named Chen Tianping (Trần Thiên Bình) and sent him back to Đại Việt under armed escort, with the aim that he take up the throne. The subsequent ambush and killing of Trần by the Vietnamese (*Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 52.6a–7a; see note 6) was used as one of the Ming court’s major pretexts for its subsequent invasion of Đại Việt. Yamamoto Tatsuro’s researches have demonstrated how the genealogy of Trần Thiên Bình was fabricated by the Ming to validate his claims to the Đại Việt throne, presumably with the aim of having a compliant ruler within that polity (see Yamamoto Tatsuro, *Annanshi Kenkyu* (Tokyo: Yamakawa, 1950), pp. 283–6).
- 5 Yamamoto, *Annanshi Kenkyu*, pp. 283–6.
- 6 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 60.1a–4a. The *Ming shilu* annals are available in English translation in Geoff Wade (transl.), *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open*

- Access Resource (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, 2005), <http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/859>.
- 7 Wang Gungwu, "China and Southeast Asia 1402–24" in Wang Gungwu, *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1992), pp. 113–14.
 - 8 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 63.1a.
 - 9 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 3b–7a.
 - 10 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 58.1a.
 - 11 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 68.1a–3b.
 - 12 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 80.3b–4a.
 - 13 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 69.7b.
 - 14 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 115.4b–5a.
 - 15 In "The Chinese Urge to Civilize: Reflections on Change", Wang Gungwu has examined the notion of the Chinese "urge to civilize", or more precisely the urge "to change others for the better in moral and behavioural terms" (p. 4) through Chinese history. Wang concludes that "there is no evidence of a great urge to civilize people, whether they were Han Chinese or not" (p. 6). See Wang Gungwu, "The Chinese Urge to Civilize: Reflections on Change", *Journal of Asian History* 18, 1 (1984): 1–34. In the example above, the cultural incorporation can thus perhaps be seen as manifestation of a "desire to dominate" rather than any "desire to civilize".
 - 16 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 64.2a.
 - 17 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 71.6a. A number of skilled architects and gun-founders were included in this group of persons sent to Nanjing.
 - 18 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 72.1a.
 - 19 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 68.1a–3b.
 - 20 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 68.3b–7a.
 - 21 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 75.2b.
 - 22 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 113.4a–b.
 - 23 *Ming Renzong shilu*, juan 4A.5b–6a.
 - 24 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 183.4a.
 - 25 For details of the tribute and tax demands and percentages fulfilled in 1417–18, see Cheng Yung-ch'ang, "Ming Yongle nianjian (1407–24) Zhongguo tongzhi xia de An-nan" (Annam under Chinese Rule during the Yongle period 1407–24) in *Zhongguo haiyang fazhan shi lunwenji (Di wu ji)* 中國海洋發展史論文集 (第五輯), ed. Chang Pin-ts'un 張彬村 and Liu Shih-chi 劉石吉 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1993), pp. 90–1.
 - 26 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 149.4b–5a.
 - 27 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 170.3b–4a.
 - 28 Some of the key Chinese studies of the system include She Yi-ze 佘貽澤, *Zhongguo tusi zhidu* 中國土司制度 [China's Native Office System] (Chongqing: Zhengzhong shuju, 1944); Wu Yongzhang 吳永章, *Zhongguo tusi zhidu yuanyuan yu fazhan shi* 中國土司制度淵源與發展史 [Origins and Development of China's Native Office System] (Chongqing: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1988); and Gong Yin 龔蔭, *Zhongguo tusi zhidu* 中國土司制度 [China's Native Office System] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1992), pp. 57–63.
 - 29 An interesting element in the modern Chinese studies of this system is that the areas where the *tusi* system was implemented are termed *minzu diqu* (literally "nationality areas", but implicitly "minority nationality areas"), rather than non-Chinese areas. This derives from the modern nationalist rhetoric of China being a multi-national country, led by the Han ethnic group. Thus rather than the idea of an expanding China during the imperial Chinese era, we have fractious nationalities, all part of the innate Chinese nation, contending with each

other. This hides the idea of an historically expansive Chinese political and cultural realm.

- 30 Chinese states never “invaded” (*qinlue*) other polities. They engaged in “pacification” and “punishment”, which are socially responsible rather than morally reprehensible actions. For a discussion of the rhetoric of imperial Chinese frontier historiography, which discusses such issues, see Geoff Wade, “Some Topoi in Southern Border Historiography During the Ming (and their Modern Relevance)” in *China and Her Neighbours: Borders, Visions of the Other, Foreign Policy, 10th to 19th Century*, ed. Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderich Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), pp. 135–59.
 - 31 Yu Ying-shih’s *Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967) pays little attention to Han dynasty expansions to the south and, when it does, adopts the rhetoric of the imperial historians: “For instance, during the reign of Emperor Wu, both chieftains of some of the Southwestern barbarian tribes and the king of Southern Yueh asked to become inner barbarians of China” (p. 70). The imperial Chinese historiographical rhetoric of course validates expansion by the state against neighbouring polities.
 - 32 This practice was very different from that practiced in the north, where soldier-farmers were settled permanently beyond the frontiers in the North and Northwest in military colonies called State Farms (*t’un-t’ien* 屯田). Such colonies were expected to be self-sufficient, permanent extensions of Han’s military and political presence in areas that could not be absorbed into the normal Han patterns of settlement and administration. It was with such scattered colonies, under a Protector-in-Chief (*tu-hu* 都護) that Han eventually established its overlordship in Central Asia.
- Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 15.
- 33 See Yu, *Trade and Expansion in Han China*.
 - 34 The Song Dynasty established by Liu Yu and the three successive dynasties of Southern Qi, Liang and Chen are known collectively as the Southern Dynasties. They had the same capital location at Jiankang (in the area which is today known as Nanjing).
 - 35 Title translations follow those suggested in Hucker’s *Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*.
 - 36 For further details of Lady Sinn, see Geoff Wade, “Lady Sinn and the Southward Expansion of China in the Sixth Century”, in *Guangdong: Archaeology and Early Texts/Archäologie und frühe Texte (Zhou-Tang)*, ed. Shing Müller, Thomas O. Höllmann and Putao Gui (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), pp. 125–50.
 - 37 In modern Chinese history-writing, with the wonderful benefit of hindsight, the *jimi* system is noted as having been positive as it promoted the economic development of the “nationality areas” and strengthened ethnic integration between the central plain and the “nationality areas”. The repeated violence which the peoples of these areas engaged in against the intrusions by the Tang forces and their agents suggests that other explanations are possible.
 - 38 See Shiba Yoshinobu (transl. Mark Elvin), *Commerce and Society in Sung China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969).
 - 39 In the new age of mercantilism initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s, there has been a similar process of movement and land-seeking occurring, and people in Burma and Laos today complain of similar phenomena.
 - 40 For the various campaigns pursued during the thirteenth century, see F. W. Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 430–1.

- 41 An excellent introduction to the Ming administrative structure can be found in Charles O. Hucker, "Ming Government", in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644 – Part 2*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 9–105.
- 42 Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800*, Chapter 27: "Ming China's Borders", pp. 685–722.
- 43 Gong Yin, *Zhongguo tusi zhidu*, pp. 57–63.
- 44 John E. Herman, "The Mu'ge Kingdom: A Brief History of a Frontier Empire in Southwest China", in *Political Frontiers, Ethnic Boundaries and Human Geographies in Chinese History*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo and Don J. Wyatt (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2003), pp. 245–85; and John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200–1700* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Asia Center, Harvard University Press, 2007).
- 45 *Ming Taizu shilu*, juan 190.3b.
- 46 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 17.6a.
- 47 *Ming Taizu shilu*, juan 215.1a and 231.1a.
- 48 *Ming Taizong shilu*, juan 116.3a.
- 49 *Ming Yingzong shilu*, juan 156.1a.
- 50 *Ming Yingzong shilu*, juan 100.1b.
- 51 A generic reference to peoples outside Chinese culture.
- 52 For further discussion of the issues of miasma, malaria and the expansion of states in Asia, see Anthony Reid and Jiang Na, "The Battle of the Microbes: Smallpox, Malaria and Cholera in Southeast Asia", ARI Working Paper no. 62, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (April 2006), www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps06_062.pdf.
- 53 *Ming Xiaozong shilu*, juan 48.7a–9b. In the same memorandum, Zhou Hongmo suggested a further policy, and this directly illuminates the function of the *tusi* system.

On regulating the area's outside the Yunnan borders. South of Linan County in Yunnan, there is an area of wild people (野人). They are not subordinate to Yunnan nor to Jiaozhi. We should properly instruct their chieftains, establish offices for them and have them recommend stockade leaders who are worthy of official posts, as prefects and such officials. The names of such persons should be memorialised for decision. They should only have to offer tribute of horses once every three years and they should be exempted from all payments in lieu of labour. Thus, internally, they will serve as a screen for Yunnan and externally will protect against Jiaozhi.

(Ibid.)

- 54 This process often began with the appointment of clerks or registry managers, or even relay post station managers. In October 1427, for example, a post of clerk was established in the Wa Dian Chief's Office under the Jinchi Military and Civilian Command and a postal relay station with an establishment of one postal relay station master was established at Leinong under the Ganyai Chief's Office. See *Ming Xuanzong shilu*, juan 31.8a.
- 55 *Ming Shenzong shilu*, juan 196.9a–b.
- 56 This system involved selling state-monopoly salt to merchants for grain, which the merchants were required to transport to areas where border troops were stationed. The system was instituted in Yunnan during the Hongwu reign (1368–98) in order to feed the Ming forces sent to occupy the region. In the 1420s, with the Ming occupation of Vietnam, the merchants preferred to sell their grain to the forces in Vietnam, rather than continue to supply Yunnan. In the 1430s, the system was strongly revived in Dali and Jinchi in Yunnan to supply the forces to be used against Si Renfa of Luchuan. It was still being used

in 1445 to feed the persons building the walled city at Tengchong, the new Chinese outpost in Yunnan. A proposed expedition against Si Die of the Tai polity of Mengmi (Mōngmit) in 1493 again induced the reintroduction of the system in the same area. The system played a major role in extending the Chinese administration, first by feeding troops who were engaged in military activities aimed at expanding the Ming state, and second in that many merchants, rather than transporting the grain over vast distances, set up their own farms with their imported farm labourers in the border areas to grow locally the grain which they would sell for state salt. It also promoted Chinese settlement of these areas: when the *kaizhong* system was no longer in force, the farms and the labourers would usually remain, and subsequently these areas settled by Chinese persons would come under the control of the Chinese administration. One of the most detailed studies of the *kaizhong* system during the Ming dynasty is Lee Lung-wah 李龍華, “The Kai-zhong System during the Ming” 明代的開中法, *Xianggang Zhongwen daxue Zhongguo wenhua yanjiu suo xuebao* 香港中文大學中國文化研究所學報 4, 2 (1972): 371–493.

- 57 For which see William Atwell, “The Tai-ch’ang, T’ien-ch’i, and Ch’ung-chen Reigns 1620–44” in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644 – Part 1*, ed. Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 585–640.
- 58 For a useful study of these policies, see John E. Herman, “Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, 1 (1997): 47–74.
- 59 Cited in Herman, “Empire in the Southwest”, p. 47.
- 60 Ibid, p. 66.
- 61 For which see Pat Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) and his earlier essay “‘A Motley Throng’: Social Change on Southwest China’s Early Modern Frontier, 1700–1880”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 60, 1 (2000): 67–94.
- 62 Efforts in this area have already begun. Peter Perdue’s “Comparing Empires: Manchu Colonialism”, for example, was included in a special issue of the *International History Review* (20, 2 (1998): 255–62) that looked at Manchu colonialism.

5 The Southeast Asian mainland and the world beyond

Rethinking assumptions

Victor Lieberman

In schematic and preliminary fashion, this essay reconsiders the pre-1825 history of Southeast Asia, in particular the mainland, and attempts to place that history in Eurasian context. I see Southeast Asian development exhibiting four basic features.

First, over roughly 1000 years, *c.*800 to 1825, and with accelerating force after *c.*1600, communities within each of mainland Southeast Asia's three principal north–south corridors – the Irrawaddy basin, the region enclosed by the Chaophraya and the upper and mid-Mekong basins, and the eastern Vietnamese lowlands – grew ever more closely integrated politically, culturally and economically. Unremarkable though it may seem to outsiders, this claim of accelerating, linear integration contrasts with claims for indigenous stasis found in virtually all colonial and most postcolonial historiography.¹

Second, the impetus to integration derived in part from external maritime trade, but more basically, from local agricultural, commercial, demographic and institutional pressures partly or substantially independent of maritime forces. This too departs from conventional wisdom which, treating maritime commerce as the primary, even the sole, source of dynamism, has accepted as axiomatic what I term the “law of Southeast Asian inertia”: unless acted upon by outside forces, native societies remained at rest.²

Third, at a workable level of abstraction, political evolution in mainland Southeast Asia between *c.*800 and 1825 resembled that in much of Europe, Japan and other areas that collectively comprised what I call the “protected rimlands” of Eurasia. That is to say, the dynamics, chronology and trajectories of integration in mainland Southeast Asia were fundamentally comparable to those in Europe and Japan, as was the pattern whereby indigenous elites remained in unchallenged control of political organisation and cultural expression. These conclusions also reject, or modify substantially, conventional historiography insofar as the law of Southeast Asian inertia posits a radical disjuncture between Western dynamism and Southeast Asian lethargy.

Fourth, according to these same criteria of progressive integration and unimpeded indigenous agency, the history of island Southeast Asia

between *c.*1565 and 1825 diverged from that of the mainland but had something in common with those of China, South Asia and other sectors of what I call the “exposed zone” of Eurasia. In this specific sense, it is difficult to speak of post-1565 Southeast Asia as a coherent unit.

Now, I am the first to concede that the patterns of political and cultural integration on which I focus hardly exhaust criteria for comparisons either within Southeast Asia or between Southeast Asia and other world regions. A consideration, for example, of demography, foreign trade diasporas, urbanisation, gender roles, family organisation, animist propitiation or popular literature – to name a few possible lines of inquiry – would yield alignments very different from those that I produce. No doubt most such comparisons would emphasise, far more than this essay, the regional coherence of Southeast Asia, both mainland and islands, in comparison with other parts of Eurasia.

Nonetheless, for centuries the patterns I examine remained critical to the self-images, political identities and economic options of popular and provincial strata as well as capital elites. As such, these patterns not only defined the political and cultural contours of the mainland but also suggest novel connections between local phenomena – political, religious, demographic, commercial – that are usually treated in isolation. More critical, by permitting structured comparisons with other sectors of Eurasia, such inquiries allow us to introduce Southeast Asia, essentially for the first time, into discussions of world history.³

Long-term territorial consolidation and administrative centralisation on the mainland

I focus initially and primarily on the mainland, because a reconsideration of its historiography is a precondition for fresh comparisons within Southeast Asia and of Southeast Asia with other regions. What, then, were the chief long-term trends on the mainland?⁴ The most obvious was a halting but persistent and accelerating trend during a thousand years for local polities to coalesce into three overarching imperial systems, those of Burma, Siam and Vietnam, each centred in a north–south corridor. During this same period, that is, *c.*800–1825, imperial administration in each zone became more effectively centralised. Consolidation proceeded through a series of grand cycles, each of which ended with a generalised political collapse. As economic, political and cultural ties between localities grew more secure, these interregna, at least in the western and central mainland, grew shorter and less institutionally and culturally disruptive.

The earliest grand cycle lasted, with local variations, from *c.*800 or 900 to *c.*1250 or 1300. In this period, newly-risen polities, most notably Pagan in the western lowlands, Angkor in the centre and Champa and Đại Việt in the eastern corridor, were content with a largely ritual authority in outlying provinces and with elaborate social and economic networks in imperial

cores under the control of autonomous Buddhist or Hindu temples. The latter tended if not to obviate then to compress sharply the scope of royal administration. Extensive areas in the rugged upland interior in what are now eastern Burma, western Thailand, Laos and western Vietnam escaped even nominal imperial control. Notwithstanding their limited local power, these early empires provided a territorial, religious and cultural charter for all subsequent states, by virtue of which I term these centuries the “charter era”.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the principal charter polities, except for Champa, disintegrated through a combination of excessive temple autonomy, population pressure on a yet limited agrarian base, severe climatic deterioration, Tai pressures abetted by Mongol incursions, and the centrifugal implications of commercial expansion in outlying coastal areas.⁵ Charter collapse inaugurated a long era of political fragmentation, endemic warfare, ethnic migration and cultural dislocation. Most dramatic was the collapse of Pagan and Angkor, the decay of Angkorian Hinduism in favour of Theravada Buddhism, and the proliferation of Tai-led statelets in the western and central mainland. By 1350, in lieu of four principal charter empires, some 23 independent kingdoms sprawled across the mainland.

In the mid-1400s a second phase of consolidation began, spurred by institutional experiments, improved domestic pacification, climatic amelioration, renewed population growth, trade expansion, and Chinese- and then European-style firearms. As Đại Việt launched an unprecedented southern expansion and as new hegemons emerged in the western and central mainland, the number of contending polities fell from 23 to eight.⁶ Compared to their charter predecessors, post-1450 states not only exerted greater influence in the interior highlands but supported better equipped, more powerful armies and controlled religious organisations more tightly. A switch from land to cash donations and new institutional arrangements effectively deprived Buddhist temples of the extensive landed wealth they had enjoyed in the charter era. In the eastern lowlands, moreover, the neo-Confucian revolution of the fifteenth century introduced a particularly sophisticated Sinic bureaucratic model.

This second political cycle climaxed in the mid- and late sixteenth century when the new empires of Toungoo Burma, Ayudhya, Lan Sang (centred in present-day Laos) and Đại Việt all split apart, inaugurating another era of disorder and localism. In Toungoo Burma and Đại Việt, collapse was primarily a function of physical overextension: conquests outstripped the centre’s ability to monitor and control newly assembled territories. Ayudhya and Lan Sang suffered from similar structural weaknesses, although more directly their collapse was precipitated by attacks from Toungoo Burma.

Compared to the chaotic thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, however, this new round of disorders c.1560–1613 was quite tame. Not only were

geopolitical, cultural and ethnic shifts more limited but, at least in the western and central mainland, the disorders themselves lasted barely two decades. Accordingly, a third phase of consolidation began in the late 1500s or early 1600s and lasted until the late 1700s. During this cycle, the number of viable states continued to decline, while far-reaching administrative reforms in the western and central mainland strengthened imperial authority by reducing the ceremonial pretensions and functional autonomy of both hereditary tributaries and appointed provincial governors; by increasing gubernatorial deputies responsible to the capital; by routinising land, census and tax records; and by expanding the population of hereditary servicemen obliged to supply the crown with military or civilian labour. In this same period, that is *c.*1600 to 1775, the division of the Vietnamese-speaking eastern lowlands into rival seigneuries, those of the Trinh in the north and the Nguyen in the south, represented a movement opposite to territorial consolidation elsewhere on the mainland. Vietnamese fragmentation reflected the localising environment of the eastern corridor, which was divided into small east-west pockets and which lacked a unifying riverine artery comparable to the Irrawaddy or the Chaophraya. Coastal communications could compensate to only a limited degree. And yet the Trinh and Nguyen for most of their history regarded themselves as parts of a single overarching polity. Like its Burmese and Siamese counterparts, moreover, the Nguyen seigneurie continued to expand, extending Vietnamese culture ever farther south at the expense first of what was left of Champa⁷ and then of Khmer lands. Like its western neighbors and indeed the Trinh, the Nguyen also experimented with new administrative forms.

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century all the principal states of the mainland collapsed a third and final time, the result of locally-specific combinations of institutional strains, renewed land shortages in agrarian cores, further military overextension, and the destabilising effects of rapid commercial growth. However, by 1802, the fourth, final and most vigorous phase of precolonial consolidation had compressed states across the mainland into three overarching empires, those of Konbaung Burma, Chakri Siam, and Nguyen Vietnam. Not only were all three unprecedentedly extensive and powerful, but in terms of provincial control, resource mobilisation and cultural *éclat*, all three represented the apogee of precolonial development.

Long-term cultural integration on the mainland

This long-term simplification of the political map was accompanied by a comparable reduction in ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity in favour of three hegemonic cultural systems corresponding to the three great empires. Cultural homogenisation was far more extensive in the lowlands than in the rugged upland interior, the most inaccessible sectors of which continued to support bewilderingly complex mosaics, but even in upland

wet-rice growing valleys Burmese, Siamese and Vietnamese practices became influential. More dependent on local capillary processes than on dramatic political events in each capital, cultural integration tended to be more gradual and continuous than cyclic political fortunes.

During the charter era, c.800/900–1250/1300, cultural standardisation, both horizontal and vertical, had been quite limited. Among the overwhelmingly illiterate peasantries, there was no basis for religious orthodoxy or exclusion. Cultic practices were animist, fluid, and pragmatically inclusive of whatever demonstrably effective sources of supernatural power were at hand. But even in charter-era capitals, animist, Mahayana, Theravada, Saivite, Vaisnava and, in Đại Việt, **Confucian elements mingled promiscuously**. During the charter era, moreover, not only did imperial elites, particularly religious personnel associated with the great temple complexes, have an effective monopoly on writing, but that writing was often oriented to sacred universal languages – Sanskrit in Angkor, Chinese in Đại Việt, Pali and Sanskrit in Pagan – quite divorced from fragmented local speech patterns. Although Khmer was used for humble documentary purposes and although Burmese writing had begun, vernacular-language literatures were still anemic. As for charter-era ethnicity, this too was extremely complex and localised, even in the lowland corridors.

From the fifteenth century and with unprecedented vigour in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, however, the evolving ethnic, linguistic and religious norms of capital elites radiated outward to provincial elites and down the social scale.

In the Irrawaddy basin, for example, in 1400 Burman ethnicity and language were confined to the interior region of Upper Burma. This same area also held sizeable populations of Shans and other minorities, while Lower Burma supported Burmans, Shans, Karens and Mons, among whom Mons dominated. By 1830, however, indigenous records and foreign accounts alike show that the vast majority of residents in the Irrawaddy lowlands identified themselves in most contexts as Burmans, with most Mons in the south, who had resisted Burman control bitterly and determinedly, having been killed, exiled or assimilated. Meanwhile, Burman writing, calendrical, religious and aesthetic norms permeated those Shan courts in the upland interior that were subject to Burman imperial control.⁸

Likewise, the lower Chaophraya basin in the fifteenth century contained a mix of Khmers, Mons and Tais, with commoners speaking a Mon language different from that of the newly ensconced Tai elite. But thereafter, a melded Siamese identity came to dominate all localities within the basin and to exercise a growing ritual, literary, aesthetic and legal influence on tributary Malay courts in what are now southern Thailand and northern Malaysia, on the dependent Khmer kingdom to the east, and on Lao tributaries in modern Laos and northeastern Thailand.⁹

In the eastern lowlands below Ha Tinh, it is doubtful whether even ten per cent of the population spoke Vietnamese dialects or identified themselves as

Vietnamese in 1450, but by 1830 perhaps 85 per cent did so. Given the north-south split of 1600–1775, Vietnamese ethnicity, unlike Burmese and Siamese ethnicity, was not tied to a single political centre. Nonetheless, in timing, scope and durability, the southward movement of Vietnamese-speakers at the expense of Chams and Khmers paralleled the Burman destruction of Mons and the Siamese absorption of Khmers. Even more clearly than in the Irrawaddy basin, the displacement of minority communities in the eastern lowlands through assimilation and large-scale violence constituted what can only be termed a form of genocide.¹⁰

Within each realm, as horizontal assimilation proceeded, culture also became more vertically uniform. Particularly in the western and central lowlands, literacy, which necessarily meant religious literacy, now became common at the village level. Accordingly, Theravada orthodoxy pushed deeper into the countryside, elevating written texts over oral traditions, honouring monks over homosexual and female shamans, outlawing liquor and animal sacrifices, creating new ritual complexes, and utterly reshaping peasant life and culture. The two key institutions in this transformation were omnipresent village monasteries and semi-universal male ordination, which the new monastic networks made possible.

In the Vietnamese-speaking lowlands, literate high culture remained appreciably weaker along the southern frontier than in the north and centre, and among peasants than among official and landed elites. Without universal village monasteries, Vietnamese peasants lacked the same access to literacy, and hence to textual norms, as their Theravada counterparts. Accordingly they preserved pre-Sinic features, including a substantially bilateral kinship system, on which their educated, Chinese-literate superiors looked askance. Nonetheless, the neo-Confucian revolution of the fifteenth century enhanced the societal prestige of Chinese norms of family relations, law and ritual; with time these also became more influential among the peasantry. Whereas in the charter era Vietnamese culture had been part of a recognisably Southeast Asian continuum, a fault line now began to separate the Sinicised eastern lowlands as a whole from Theravada Southeast Asia. The development of demotic Vietnamese scripts known as *nom* and the rise, comparable to Burmese and Siamese developments, of more popular, more commercialised and more socially inclusive Vietnamese literary genres reinforced vertical acculturation.¹¹

The dynamics of change: external and domestic economic stimuli

In sum, between c.800 and 1830, each of the chief mainland realms expanded its territory, centralised its administration and saw elements of the population adopt more uniform religious and ethnic identities. These trends accelerated after 1400 and more so after 1700.

Before proceeding, let me add a cautionary note: by taking as its end point the contemporary states of Burma, Thailand and Vietnam, one could argue that this approach essentialises the nation and reads history backwards as a prelude to an inevitable culmination. I readily concede that determinedly local histories, such as those that Keith Taylor, James Scott, Sunait Chutintaranond and Chris Baker have championed, can yield perspectives very different from, but inherently no less valid than, my own.¹² By itself, however, the tracing of long-term shifts implies neither national essentialism nor inevitability. Not only did most Southeast Asian ethnicities arise late, often after 1400, and not only did such ethnicities remain socially and demographically fluid, but the territorial triumphs of Burma, Siam and Vietnam were all quite contingent. With different political decisions, after 1550 power in the western mainland well might have remained centred at the coast rather than in the north, and Burman ethnicity might not have submerged Mon. By the same logic, had Khmer elites proved less factionalised after 1450, Cambodia might have eclipsed Ayudhya and prevented the emergence of a Siamese state-cum-ethnicity. Still more probably, without a series of political and military accidents in the late 1700s, precolonial Vietnam would have remained divided.¹³ Yet if final outcomes were contingent, if configurations other than those that cohered by 1800 remained perfectly plausible, one can still accept that long-term forces favoured consolidation, however territorially or ethnically open-ended.

From these preliminaries let me turn, then, to consider the question of causation. Why the halting but sustained movement toward political and cultural integration? Thus far I have said little about underlying dynamics.

Basically, I argue that foreign contacts joined increases in domestic output, population and local commodification to enhance the power of incipient imperial heartlands at the expense of less favoured districts. So too, by stimulating movements of religious and social reform and by strengthening communications between emergent cores and outlying territories, economic change enhanced each core's cultural authority. As warfare between cohering polities grew in scale and expense, those principalities that would survive were obliged to overhaul their administrations periodically, to magnify their resource base, and to promote capital cultures over provincial traditions. Meanwhile, the very growth of the state had a variety of economic and cultural effects, often unintended, even unobserved, which on balance were also sympathetic to integration.

The relative weight and the relation of external and domestic stimuli varied with context, but I begin with the factor that has received by far the most attention in the literature, namely, trade with the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Maritime exchange after 1400 benefited from market expansion in Europe, South Asia, South China and Japan as well as Southeast Asia, whose more or less coordinated vitality in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is as striking as it is curious. Improved silver extraction in Japan and the New World provided the bullion necessary to lubricate

this growth, both directly within Southeast Asia and indirectly through Chinese-Southeast Asian and Indian-Southeast Asian exchange.¹⁴ After a slowing of commerce in the late seventeenth century, Southeast Asian coastal districts enjoyed an accelerated commercial upswing from the 1710s that lasted, amidst temporary vicissitudes, well into the nineteenth century. Moreover, especially from the late 1600s Chinese settlement in Yunnan and Guangxi and Chinese-run silver mines along the frontier with northern Southeast Asia promoted landward exchanges whose value could be 50 to 60 per cent of that of maritime trade.¹⁵

In combination, maritime trade and overland exchanges with China aided political integration in several ways. Most obviously, perhaps, these forces magnified the income differential between central authorities in control of ports and frontier bazaars, on the one hand, and provincial elites who relied on agrarian income, on the other. After 1500, agriculture tended to grow more slowly than trade. Moreover, because perishable, bulky in-kind agrarian revenues were far more difficult to collect and transport than cash and luxuries available at ports and bazaars, each unit of foreign trade yielded the crown larger revenues. By pumping in bullion and strengthening wholesale/retail networks, coastal trade also stimulated disproportionately the economy of well-populated lowland areas, which again concentrated royal taxes.

Finally, after *c.*1520, ports offered access to European-style firearms. Supplied by Portuguese and later Dutch and English traders and mercenaries, such weapons rapidly eclipsed Chinese and Muslim weapons for urban sieges and field encounters alike. Privileged access to guns again favoured coastal principalities in circular fashion, insofar as guns assisted conquests of interior districts without firearms, which enhanced central revenues, which in turn allowed the purchase of more guns. Even among coastal states the rising cost of the new weaponry conferred a cumulative advantage on the wealthiest and most innovative. And by aiding internal pacification, guns further enhanced each throne's domestic tax base. We see these dynamics at work in the fortunes of Ayudhya and Đại Việt, but most spectacularly in the expansion of the First Toungoo Dynasty of Burma between 1540 and 1590.¹⁶

But if maritime revenues and coastal military assets were valuable, one can also exaggerate such influences. To appreciate the limits of maritime influence, consider:

- During the first and most dramatic period of mainland growth, 900–1300, maritime trade remained quite marginal to the economies of both Pagan and Angkor.
- In the western mainland, coastal assets were never adequate to dislodge for more than two generations the capital from the demographic heartland of Upper Burma.
- In Vietnam the *nam tien*, the march to the south, was pre-eminently a

function of Vietnamese demography and agricultural technique, not maritime assets.

- Before 1760, some 60 to 80 per cent of cash revenues in the chief lowland states derived from domestic rather than maritime sources.
- As late as 1760, Burmese and Vietnamese rice exports were still negligible, while Siamese rice exports rarely exceeded two per cent of the crop.¹⁷

In other words, we need to pay more attention to agrarian and demographic history in what were still overwhelmingly peasant societies. In much of the existing literature, ports hover like disembodied spirits over their own countrysides.

The sources of demographic and agricultural vitality were at once climatic, possibly epidemiological, and more certainly migratory, political and botanical. The same periods of hemispheric warming that favoured agrarian and demographic expansion in northern Europe through an extension of the growing season saw increased monsoon rainfall with resulting agrarian benefits in mainland Southeast Asia, South India and South China. Based on current evidence, the most dramatically improved pluviation, particularly critical to rice cultivation in the dry zones surrounding Angkor and Pagan, came during the so-called Medieval Climate Anomaly or Medieval Warm period of *c.*850 to 1250. Agriculturally propitious climate in these centuries contributed in varying degrees not only to Pagan and Angkor with their magnificent religious monuments, but to the European high middle ages whose cathedrals were no less a sign of novel prosperity than Southeast Asian temples, to the unprecedented rise of Kiev and other cities in western Russia, to expansive polities and temple complexes in South India, and to the “first commercial revolution” in Song China.¹⁸ The Medieval Climate Anomaly was followed in both northern Europe and much of southern Asia by a markedly cooler period less favourable for agriculture between *c.*1250/1300 and 1450/1500, which in turn yielded to renewed, if more modest, warming *c.*1450/1500 to 1600 and *c.*1720 to 1800. Climatic conditions therefore fluctuated, whereas long-term demographic growth was linear. But charter-era climate contributed to the creation of a cultural and economic substratum on which subsequent polities were built. Thereafter, climate continued to influence the pace and timing of agrarian expansion.¹⁹

In Southeast Asia, as in other outlying areas of Eurasia, after *c.*800 cumulative population growth and more frequent contacts with longer- and more densely-settled Eurasian cores may have begun to convert once uniformly lethal diseases such as measles and smallpox to more endemic diseases primarily affecting children. If so, this may have contributed to the coordinated population growth characteristic of widely dispersed Eurasian rimlands in the late first millenium and the early second.²⁰

Over many centuries, Southeast Asian lowlands served as culs-de-sac for north–south migrations, which increased lowland population densities

compared to the hills. As they moved south, moreover, Burmese, Tai and Vietnamese migrants introduced water control techniques that seem to have been markedly superior in efficiency and ecological reach to those of longer-settled Mon, Cham and Khmer populations.

Meanwhile, political pacification and state economic initiatives (see below) in the lowlands, and to a lesser extent the hills, reduced mortality and encouraged settlement and trade, creating conditions suitable for further agrarian reclamation. As cultivation became more extensive, it grew more specialised as well. After 1350, for example, the large-scale introduction of cotton raised the productivity of non-rice lands and fostered diverse handicrafts. So too new late-ripening, highly photosensitive strains of *indica* rice, developed for specific ecological settings, boosted yields over *japonica* strains, while tobacco, maize and commercial fruits and vegetables also found specialised niches.²¹

Along with new commercial openings, to be discussed below, agrarian extension and intensification between 1400 and 1825 promoted population growth in Burma of about 100 per cent and in Vietnam of over 400 per cent. Siamese growth may have been in the same order of magnitude as in Burma.²² Population growth in turn joined external stimuli to invigorate domestic commerce. Higher population densities meant larger aggregate demand for textiles, handicrafts and foodstuffs produced in specialist centres and disseminated through three-tiered market networks. Evidence of local Smithian specialisation, especially in lowland cores and particularly between c.1500 and 1830, appears in the wider circulation of specie and bullion; the commodification of crops and handicrafts; a corresponding commutation of taxes and labour services; a marked expansion in the number of markets and the size of towns; more commercially oriented systems of land tenure, credit and contract; and rising tensions between ascriptive social categories and status acquired through novel commercial activities. I have argued that foreign trade strengthened the domestic economy. But in reciprocal fashion, domestic vitality fueled foreign commerce by increasing the supply of specialised goods for export, boosting aggregate and probably per capita demand for textiles, bullion and other imports, and strengthening each court's ability to attract foreign traders.²³

To varying degrees, similar processes of expansion and specialisation were transforming the early modern economies of mainland Southeast Asia's chief trading partners in South China, India, Japan, Europe and island Southeast Asia. To be sure, international trade had an autonomous dynamic rooted in ratchet-like improvements in shipbuilding, navigation, mining and commercial institutions. But expanding international trade also reflected increasingly coordinated economic growth in Eurasia's several parts. That is to say, Smithian specialisation proceeded both internationally and within each regional economy. Trade was not simply an exogenous force imposed on Southeast Asia; it was also an artifact of demographic and commercial processes in which Southeast Asia participated directly. Around

the South China Sea, one could even argue that long-distance trade was often an epiphenomenal reflection of coordinated demographic rhythms.

Political and cultural correlates of economic change

How did economic growth influence political and cultural change?

In the medium term, as my potted history of territorial consolidation suggested, expansion repeatedly joined external pressures to destabilise polities by aggravating tensions between centre and periphery and between sectors of the ruling stratum. Although space precludes elaboration, virtually every political breakdown came in the wake of rapid demographic and economic growth. Hence, in part, the simultaneity of collapse across the mainland in the thirteenth/fourteenth, late sixteenth and mid-to late eighteenth centuries, which were periods of crisis that found parallels in other sectors of Eurasia.

Over the long term, however, as authorities in the west and centre learned to harness manpower and commercial reserves, internal economic expansion reinforced the centripetal impact of firearms and foreign trade. Consider: even if the economies of core regions such as the Irrawaddy basin and of more peripheral areas such as the Shan hills grew at the same rate, the former's initial superiority would have ensured a constantly increasing absolute advantage in rice, manpower and other military factors.²⁴ But in fact, across the central and western mainland, better pacification, hill-to-lowlands population movements and higher levels of specialisation typically induced more rapid growth in lowland cores than in upland peripheries.

In the eastern Vietnamese lowlands, frontier expansion soon outran control from the Dong Kinh (northern Vietnamese) heartland. But with the creation of a separate southern state after 1600, a new coordinating centre near Hue was able to harness frontier growth and thus magnify its authority until the 1760s. As noted, the southern Vietnamese state thus responded to many of the same integrative pressures as did post-1600 Burma and Siam, and as northern Vietnam had done in an earlier era.

At the same time as economic growth magnified the scale of royal resources, commercialisation and monetisation modified the nature of the political economy by permitting replacement of in-kind revenues and service obligations with cash taxes. Again, these were far easier to collect, transport and redistribute than bulk commodities. Along with maritime income, domestic cash revenues were then used to finance military campaigns, to substitute hired labour for *corvées* and to replace *apanage* grants with salaries and commercial awards. The growth of monetary in lieu of landed donations was also critical to the aforementioned transformation of religious donations and to the post-charter political emasculation of religious institutions.

In a wider social and psychological sense, this same mobility of land and labour helped to erode autonomous networks. Capital-local relations may

be considered from the standpoint of political patronage and of cultural diffusion. The former approach, that of patronage, considers the growing inclination of local elites to use the developing apparatus of the state – indeed to help build that apparatus – so as to buttress their own power. The crown's increased wealth and patronage, growing opportunities to acquire military spoils, the manifest danger of unrestricted peasant mobility, commercial expansion and a corresponding increase in intra-elite competition for trade monopolies, tax farms and offices – all such developments made it difficult for local leaders to maintain their preeminence or to direct local affairs without help from a coordinating apparatus. They therefore sought to enhance central authority and resources while improving their own access to those same resources. Especially from the fifteenth century in northern Vietnam and from the seventeenth century in Burma and Siam, provincial elites joined royal officials to expand government revenues, a major portion of which local notables retained; to mobilise larger armies; to restrict peasant movement and so guarantee labour services; to extend royal justice; to integrate local hierarchies; and to regularise access to office (whether through civil service examinations as in Vietnam or through royal adjudication of hereditary claims as in Burma). Thus, provincial leaders gained new sources of income and patronage and more secure status in an expanded social universe.

The second approach to capital–local relations, namely that of cultural diffusion, emphasises the multifaceted breakdown of local ethnic and religious systems under the combined impact of frontier colonisation, more rapid market exchange, and novel educational and literary structures. On agrarian frontiers, especially in southern Vietnam and Burma, colonists continuously expanded the area in which dialect and usages associated with majority ethnicity prevailed. Within long-settled districts closer to the imperial core, as pedlars, seasonal workers, scholars, monks, actors and puppeteers moved along routes from coast to the interior and from interior towns to the countryside, they too carried texts and information that served to homogenise local practices. In the opposite direction, peasants visiting market towns and pilgrimage sites gained exposure to supra-local dialects and customs. Particularly important to rural acculturation were academies and civil service examinations in northern and central Vietnam and village monasteries throughout the Theravada world. In Burma such monasteries proliferated after *c.* 1500 following the collapse of the so-called Forest-Dweller sects with their self-sufficient landed estates. Supported by novel forms of wealth and by new patterns of popular and royal donations, and responding to a deepening popular Theravada commitment, the new monasteries, as noted, began to provide virtually universal male education. Whereas thirteenth-century cultivators had been overwhelmingly illiterate, heavily animist, and without textually based notions of orthodoxy, by 1830 Burmese and Siamese male literacy was in the range of 50 to 70 per cent, which was unusually high for pre-industrial societies. Textual orthodoxy

and scholarly authority now became as firmly rooted in many villages as they were at court. In the absence of near-universal monastic ordination, Vietnamese rates, as I have already suggested, were more modest, perhaps 20 per cent, but these too were appreciably higher than in the charter era.²⁵

Apart from the growth of orthodoxy, the most dramatic indication of wider, commercially aided literacy was the bloom of vernacular language literatures in lieu of charter writings that had been confined largely to Sanskrit in Angkor and Chinese in early Đại Việt. These new materials had a far wider authorship as well as readership than courtly and religious texts, explored a broader array of topics and social contexts, and experimented with new stylistic forms, genres and characterological structures. In Vietnam, popularisation required the dissemination of quasi-phonetic *nom* scripts adapted from Chinese but designed for writing the Vietnamese language.

To be sure, cultural change was neither unidirectional, uncontested nor strictly homogenising. As options multiplied, in some ways the cultural landscape grew more, rather than less, complex. The appearance of new literary forms was itself symptomatic of growing specialisation in all manner of activity, from scholarship, poetry, art, architecture and music, to the provision of food, clothes and handicrafts. As colonists entered new ecological environments and interacted with minority peoples, they created novel provincial versions of Burmese, Siamese and most especially Vietnamese culture. Minority populations also had to redefine themselves. Sometimes they added a more encompassing metropolitan identity to an earlier local sense of community. In other cases – in the Mon country of Lower Burma, in Cham and Khmer districts faced with Vietnamese settlement, and in the northern Malay states – they defiantly embraced neo-traditional, expressly anti-centralising religions or ethnicities as a mark of independence. Even in imperial cores, in response to lordly impositions peasants often subverted or satirised elite norms.

Given these multiplying niche identities, how can one claim that culture became more standardised? Were practices across the mainland really any less variegated in 1825 than in 1225? The chief difference is that in the thirteenth century, local cultures tended to be geographic or social isolates, which defined themselves without express reference to elite metropolitan cultures. By contrast, in the early nineteenth century, new horizontal and vertical niches tended to function as self-conscious subspecialities within an overarching grid of shared symbols and motifs. That is to say, historians, litterateurs, monastic reformers, boat-builders and textile and handicraft producers alike carefully defined themselves vis-à-vis the styles of their predecessors and contemporaries. Villagers more often measured themselves against elite expectations, just as frontier peoples had to respond, positively or negatively, to the norms of colonists and officials from imperial heartlands. In other words, specialisation was a by-product of integration. In

this sense, cultural elaboration was isomorphic with administrative and economic development. A larger administration automatically spawned more specialised military and civilian offices. More encompassing market networks inevitably supported more specialised producers, transporters, wholesalers and retailers.

Despite the possibility for internal fracture, this development of common knowledge and the spread of standard religious and cultural symbols and assumptions had powerful centripetal political implications. Religious orthodoxy tended to tie localities more closely to the capital, precisely because it devalued local sources of sanctity and local religious knowledge in favour of standardised texts and cultic personnel. Scriptures, monks and scholars became subject to stronger central influence, whether through royally-sanctioned monastic councils, official patronage, imperial religious hierarchies or civil service examinations. In a moral and didactic sense, both Theravada and neo-Confucian teachings expressly buttressed royal power as mankind's link to cosmic order and as indispensable guarantor of private and public morality.

What is more, ethnic traits became recognised badges of affiliation to the court with which that ethnicity was associated. I refer, for example, to the use of Burman hairstyles, tattoos and speech in the western lowlands to identify with the Ava court vis-à-vis anti-Avan Mon rebels, the use of Siamese language and religion as marks of loyalty to Ayudhya and Bangkok, and the use of language and religion to rally Khmers and Vietnamese against one another in the Mekong delta. On the Burman–Mon, Burmese–Siamese, Siamese–Lao and Vietnamese–Khmer frontiers, post-1700 expansion generated what can fairly be termed ethnic wars and even, as noted, genocidal displacements. In each case, external threats enhanced local reliance on the throne as coordinator and protector. To be sure, such sentiments differed from twentieth-century nationalism because sovereignty resided not in the people but in the ruler, whose authority was proleptically universal. Religious loyalties often trumped secular culture; society was hierarchical, not civically egalitarian; and popular involvement with frontier dangers remained episodic and intermittent. Nonetheless, even in Siam, where the link was weakest, a growing practical, if undertheorised, association between ethnicity and political allegiance magnified the coherence and mobilising capacity of each realm.²⁶

The military dynamic and state influences on economics and culture

In turn, especially after 1450 or 1500, the growing size and power of emergent empires produced more large-scale and sustained warfare. Alongside economic growth and new communications circuits, warfare itself spurred various forms of integration.

In the west and centre, virtually every major administrative initiative responded to the demands of external conflict or domestic rebellion. As

the history of Lao principalities, the once-powerful Khmer kingdom, Early Ayudhya and Lower Burma all confirmed, the price for excessive factionalism or sluggish imagination was internal fragmentation and external conquest. Hence the convulsive quality of reform, with periods of collapse followed by intensified, even frantic projects of reconcentration and reorganisation; hence too the rough synchronisation of reform in major kingdoms, as best practices spread across the Theravada world. One thinks, for example, of those far-reaching provincial, military and fiscal reforms that transformed Burma and Siam in the aftermath of late-sixteenth-century catastrophes, and again after the crises of the mid- and late eighteenth century. Both through deliberate imitation and through parallel but independent responses to similar problems, the evolution of Burmese and Siamese administrations became remarkably coordinated.²⁷

In Vietnam the correlation between military challenge and administrative reform was more complex, in part because Confucianism had a social blueprint demanding implementation regardless of military circumstances, and in part because a unique military versus literati rivalry made Confucian reform less likely during periods of warfare when literati influence was often eclipsed. Yet the neo-Confucian model of bureaucratic selection, three tiers of appointed local officials, and uniform provincial organisation also had a strong practical appeal insofar as these features promised over the long term to curb regionalism in an exceptionally unpromising geopolitical environment and to facilitate resource mobilisation against Champa, Cambodia and finally Siam. That Đại Việt's greatest period of expansion followed the neo-Confucian revolution of the mid-1400s was hardly accidental.

Administrative expertise – like new crops, commercial knowledge or military techniques – was a resource which could accumulate and which helps to explain the ratchet-like nature of integration and the shorter duration of successive interregna, at least in the western and central mainland. As for the psychological effects of military competition, I have indicated that intensifying warfare could strengthen identification with the monarch, especially on contested frontiers. This it did by generating mythic tales of communal danger and salvation, by rendering border communities more dependent on the capital for security, by integrating conscripts from different locales, and by nurturing ethnic stereotypes and self-flattering polarities.

Thus political integration drew sustenance from an interlocking set of economic, social and cultural changes in the local environment. But surely the lines of causation ran in the opposite direction as well. That is to say, as each state achieved greater penetration and expertise, it modified, both intentionally and unintentionally, the physical and cultural environment in which it operated. The general trend of such interventions was further to strengthen the state's economic and cultural base and for the state to reproduce itself with increasing success.

This became particularly clear in the economic sphere. Each throne repeatedly sought to augment its commercial and agrarian wealth in order to bolster domestic patronage and military prospects. Thus courts encouraged resettlement, supported the introduction of new crops and sponsored irrigation works. They also standardised weights and measures, lured foreign merchants with tax concessions, encouraged bullion imports, welcomed large-scale Chinese immigration, sent repeated tribute-cum-trade missions to China, and in Siam dug massive canals to improve maritime access to the capital. These incentives persisted even though other state actions, including excessive taxation, chronic warfare and commercial monopolies, frequently worked at cross-purposes with economic patronage. Alongside such self-conscious efforts, rulers encouraged production through activities whose impact was incidental to their original purposes and, in many cases, probably unnoticed. Although territorial unification, for example, was an expressly political action, it served to lower transaction costs and to integrate specialised economic zones. Likewise, by driving peasants to the market, cash taxes had the long-term, if unintended, effect of promoting commodification, while the relocation of princely establishments from the provinces to the capital, although a strategic innovation, concentrated urban demand and thus encouraged handicraft and crop specialisation.

The same mixture of motives, the same distinction between intended and unintended effects, applies to government influence on religion, language and ethnicity. As noted, Theravada and neo-Confucian leaders promoted cultic orthodoxy by adjudicating disputes, disseminating texts, suppressing schismatics and organising monastic and civil service examinations. To such religious projects must be added persistent efforts to unify lay hierarchies, to define aesthetic norms and to modify lay social practices. Through literary and artistic patronage, each capital made itself a cultural model for provincial imitators. In frontier areas, especially areas of revolt, late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Burmese and Vietnamese officials self-consciously promoted majority ethnicity by degrading symbols of minority culture and by encouraging majority colonisation and schooling. The indirect cultural effects of government action were no less significant. By appealing to a combination of snobbery and practical ambition, royal patronage offered a powerful, if implicit, spur to self-Burmanisation, self-Siamisation, self-Vietnamisation. The growing circulation of legal decisions and government documents had a similar standardising effect, as did the annual rotation of tens of thousands of provincial servicemen in the Burmese and Siamese capitals.

To summarise the entire argument: between c.800 and 1825, within each of mainland Southeast Asia's three chief corridors, cultural and political integration drew strength from several variables, including foreign trade, European-style firearms, agrarian extension and intensification, monetisation, a wider, more rapid circulation of physical and cultural goods, rising literacy, and diverse state interventions, both deliberate and

unintended. Most factors had their own etiology, but all modified one another in ways that were both open-ended and potentially cumulative. To take a single thread, agricultural vitality magnified the tax base, which encouraged interstate competition, which promoted administrative reform and popular identification with capital culture, which strengthened the crown, which in turn encouraged agrarian expansion. The relations between such factors varied widely by time and place and must be approached on a strictly empirical basis.

Integration in other protected rimlands

The foregoing has sought to modify two favoured tenets of Southeast Asian historiography, noted at the outset of this essay: namely, the claim that Southeast Asian state and culture, left alone, were inherently inert, and the correlative claim that such dynamism as they did exhibit derived primarily from external maritime contacts. In the remainder of this essay, I reject, or modify substantially, two other widely shared assumptions:

- 1 Southeast Asian and European historical patterns had little, if anything, in common.
- 2 The historical experiences of mainland and island Southeast Asia prior to the onset of high imperialism in the nineteenth century were fundamentally similar.²⁸

It seems to me that the pattern of cyclic-cum-linear evolution we have just considered for each of mainland Southeast Asia's three chief regions represented local variations on a far more widespread, but rarely acknowledged, pattern of sustained local integration that implicated most of Europe as well as Japan.

This is not to minimise the powerful specificities of Europe, or at least northwestern Europe, especially between c.1500 and 1825. Any such inventory would include unusually high capitalisation of agriculture; an intense commitment to innovations in military technology and finance; unique state-sponsored maritime investments, which provided exclusive access to New World wealth and disproportionate profits after c.1650 from expanding global trade; unusually stable transgenerational business enterprises; notions of popular sovereignty and civic equality; and public spheres that supported patriotic critiques of institutions and policy in the name of national greatness. Such features help to explain why Europe came to dominate Asia, rather than vice versa, and why full modernity was, in origin, a European phenomenon.²⁹

And yet, alongside idiosyncrasies – which, of course, can be enumerated for Japan and Southeast Asia as easily as for Europe – the basic trajectories, dynamics and chronologies of integration were similar across the “protected Eurasian rimlands”.

Lying on the periphery of older civilisations, in the late first millennium northwestern Europe, represented in this discussion by the territories that would become France; northeastern Europe, represented by the future lands of Russia; the Japanese islands; and mainland Southeast Asia all developed “charter states” – the Frankish/Carolingian kingdom, Kiev, *ritsuryō* Japan, and Pagan, Angkor, and Đại Việt – whose territorial, dynastic and religious traditions were considered normative and legitimating by later generations. Each charter state championed a literate high culture, including a sacred language (Latin, Greek, Church Slavonic, Chinese, Sanskrit, Pali), a universal religion (Latin or Orthodox Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism), and aesthetic, literary, legal and administrative concepts that were imported wholesale from older centres of civilisation (the Mediterranean, China, South Asia). Across Europe and mainland Southeast Asia, although not Japan, charter florescence was associated with marked demographic and economic vigour lasting from c.850/900 to 1250/1300. I have already suggested that this vitality derived in part from agriculturally benign conditions in northern Europe and Southeast Asia associated with the Medieval Climate Anomaly. The sluggishness of Japanese population growth until the late 1200s and the unfavourable state of the Japanese climate in this same period reinforce the hypothesis of a climatic-demographic link.³⁰ More certainly, charter florescence benefited in each instance from intensifying commercial contacts between rimland populations and older civilisations, contacts which themselves owed much to growing market demand. In circular fashion, insofar as charter states were able to enforce domestic pacification, that condition favoured commercial exchange and agrarian settlement. Likewise, as noted, in some rimlands denser populations and more regular contacts with older centres may have begun to reduce smallpox and measles (and perhaps mumps and influenza) from epidemic to endemic status.³¹

Along with Southeast Asian charter principalities, Capetian France, Kiev and other European states disintegrated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries due to local combinations of these factors: (1) unresolved institutional weaknesses; (2) strains derived from centuries of economic and demographic expansion, which increased the economic clout of outlying centres at the expense of imperial cores and/or reduced marginal productivity on newly reclaimed land; (3) post-1300 climatic deterioration; and (4) Mongol interventions, either direct military attacks as in Pagan and Kiev or the Mongol-mediated transmission of the Black Death to western and central Europe and Russia. Not only in Southeast Asia but also in post-charter France and Russia, political fragmentation and demographic and economic contraction lasted well into the fifteenth century. Alongside destructive warfare, continuing adverse weather and global bullion shortages inhibited recovery. Japan also experienced a devolutionary trend starting in the late thirteenth or fourteenth century and continuing into

the 1500s, although in Japan, in contrast to other Eurasian rimlands, the late 1200s inaugurated an era of agrarian and commercial vitality.

The three chief sectors of mainland Southeast Asia, Russia and France all saw a marked revival of central power from the mid- or late 1400s to the late 1500s. This trend benefited from self-conscious responses to previous military and administrative weaknesses, from improved production as hegemony succeeded in re-pacifying much of the countryside, from demographic recovery following the Black Death, from improved climate, from expanding local and long-distance trade and associated improvements in commercial technique, and from an end to the bullion famine of preceding centuries.

In Burma, Siam, Russia and France central authority then collapsed a second time in the late 1500s or early 1600s. This new round of disorders – including the Time of Troubles in Russia and the Religious Wars in France – reflected *inter alia* the strains of rapid renewed economic growth, territorial over-extension encouraged by firearms, and in France peculiar tensions deriving from the print-borne Reformation.

Yet this second interregnum was far shorter and less disruptive than the collapse of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In every instance, moreover, the polity that arose from the ashes in the early 1600s was more administratively sophisticated, fiscally ambitious, militarily powerful, territorially expansive and culturally cohesive than its pre-crisis predecessor. This characterisation applies equally well to the Restored Toungoo empire of Burma, the Late Ayudhya empire of Siam, the Romanov empire, the Bourbon kingdom, and indeed the Nguyen seigneurie in Vietnam, all founded within a few years of one another. Of course, these polities differed radically in absolute strength and internal structure, but my yardstick of achievement in each instance is *local* antecedents. To this list of unprecedentedly successful early modern realms reborn in the early 1600s, we must add Tokugawa Japan. There too, centralisation was linked not only to fiscal and provincial reorganisation but also to pervasive programs of popular regimentation and social control. Such programs produced Tokugawa estate divisions, Russian serfdom, the Burmese *ahmu-dan* system, and the Siamese *phrai luang* system. Testimony to their enhanced solidity is that all these realms either avoided a fresh collapse in the late 1700s (Russia and Japan) or, if they did collapse, emerged from this latest interregnum with novel speed and vigour. Konbaung Burma, Chakri Siam, Nguyen Vietnam and revolutionary/Napoleonic France all support the thesis. In short, the pattern we have observed in Southeast Asia of progressively shorter, less disruptive interregna and increasingly effective states applied equally well to France, Russia and Japan.

Again, enhanced solidity reflected the synergistic effects of sustained population growth, Smithian economic specialisation, stronger market ties, rising literacy and pervasive monetisation, all of which boosted the state's resource base and extractive capacity. At the same time, each state

continued to benefit from an accumulation of administrative expertise and, most insistent, from the demands that warfare placed on territorial and fiscal structures. Japan, which saw very rapid fiscal and military innovation under rival *daimyo* domains during the Warring States period of the sixteenth century and which then saw a marked reduction in military stimuli during the Pax Tokugawa, conforms to this general pattern. At roughly the same time that 23 Southeast Asian states were collapsing to three, some 500 European states were compressed into 30, and over 200 *daimyo* domains were reorganised, albeit with considerable residual autonomy, under Tokugawa suzerainty.

In what was both symptom and cause of political integration, in each realm between c.1400 and 1820, and with a notable acceleration after c.1700, cultural motifs grew more horizontally and vertically uniform. During the charter era in France, Kiev and Japan as well as in mainland Southeast Asia, elite cultural identities had been substantially distinct from those of the subject population. Whereas the former had gloried in their membership of a religion and civilisation whose emblem was a universal sacred language, peasant references had remained substantially local. From the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, however, we see the crystallisation of Russian, French and Japanese, not to mention Burmese, Siamese and Vietnamese, identities based largely on the dialects and usages of capital elites, which then spread outward to the provinces and down the social scale. Typically, cultural integration drew strength from commercialisation and urbanisation; from a more rapid circulation of texts, entertainers, seasonal migrants and pilgrims; from new educational institutions and an associated expansion in popular literacy and vernacular-language literatures; and from each state's growing capacity to define and police cultural norms. At the same time, of course, integration fostered all manner of provincial resistance, popular subversion and niche specialisation.

Outside Japan, intensifying warfare infused political culture with a novel sense of political alterity, as provincials nurtured self-flattering stereotypes and looked to the throne for guidance and protection. Notwithstanding religion's ostensibly universal character, kingdoms frequently presented themselves as uniquely faithful exemplars of normative doctrine (France had "the most Christian king", while the Burmese invaded Siam to clean up the latter's "corrupt" Theravada practices). Where neighbouring peoples embraced different faiths – as on the Vietnamese–Khmer, Burmese–Manipuri, Russian–Tatar and Russian–Lithuanian frontiers – the fit between religious and ethnic loyalty was yet closer. We thus revisit a persistent irony: as international commercial and information linkages grew stronger, the cultural mobilisation of ever greater numbers, whose only language was the vernacular, began to create ever more exclusive protonational cultures.

Note finally that in Burma, Siam, Vietnam, Japan, France, Russia and indeed most European lands outside Ottoman control, political and

cultural integration remained in the hands of indigenous elites, that is to say, of men whose families for generations were physically and culturally enmeshed in the core tradition of each emergent polity and who identified strongly with that core tradition. Notwithstanding Mongol suzerainty from 1240, this was true even in Russia, where the Mongols left administration to Russian princes who proudly continued to identify as Orthodox Christians and who from the late 1380s began to escape Mongol–Tatar suzerainty. In all these areas, precisely because elites and subjects, notwithstanding class differences, shared basic language, ethnicity and religion, vertical bonds remained relatively strong. In turn, local elites remained in charge because northern and western Europe, mainland Southeast Asia, and Japan enjoyed substantial physical protection from Inner Asian conquest. Inadequate local pasture, mountainous jungle terrain, malarial climate or oceanic barriers made it impossible for Mongols, Turks or Manchus to enfold these areas within their cavalry-based empires. Hence my term the “protected rimlands”.

The exposed zone, including the island world

The classificatory coherence of the “protected rimlands” becomes clearer if we now contrast it with a second category that I term the “exposed zone” of Eurasia. In this latter grouping I include the eastern Mediterranean, Southwest Asia, South Asia and China.

Now, I hasten to emphasise that the same forces that encouraged integration in protected zone realms – including demographic and agrarian expansion, commercialisation, wider literacy, firearms, military demands and accumulated institutional wisdom – also encouraged integration in the exposed zone. In terms of demographic waves and a persistent trend toward more complex political organisations and more rapid cultural circulation, I see no fundamental difference between the six realms we have considered on the one hand, and exposed-zone countries on the other.

In China, for example, successive imperial breakdowns grew shorter and less institutionally disruptive, while imperial administration became more stable, efficient and genuinely bureaucratic. From China’s original unification to the late 1700s, the size of imperial territories more than doubled, and Chinese ethnicity spread from the North China plain to include what is now south, southwest, and western China proper. By almost any measure, the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) was the most successful in Chinese history.³² In South Asia, integration remained more fragile than in either the protected rimlands or China, but in South Asia too intervals between successive subcontinental empires diminished, administration grew more effective and imperial territories expanded. The Mughal realm of *c.*1560–1710, as India’s largest, wealthiest and most efficient polity, drew strength from world bullion flows, domestic commercial and agrarian expansion, imported firearms and cumulative institutional

improvement, climaxing a pattern of regional development in much the same way as did the contemporary regimes of Toungoo/Konbaung Burma, Late Ayudhya/early Chakri Siam, Nguyen Vietnam, Bourbon France, Romanov Russia and Qing China. Likewise the diffusion across the subcontinent of Sanskritic and Perso-Islamic culture, the growing salience of caste, and the continuous agrarian incorporation of pastoral and forest peoples encouraged a real, if modest, degree of vertical and horizontal cultural exchange.³³

How, then, did exposed zone realms differ from Southeast Asia and other protected rimlands? Most obvious, perhaps, is that primary state formation, civilisation itself, began some 1000 to 3000 years earlier in Southwest Asia, North China and North India than in the protected rimlands, all of which in fact looked to these older Eurasian cores for high cultural and religious inspiration.

In addition, as befits my definitional distinction between protected and exposed zones, in India, China, Southwest Asia and the Near East, political life during the second millennium was increasingly dominated by Inner Asian conquerors – Jurchens, Mongols and Manchus in China; Turko-Mongols and Afghans in South Asia; Mongols, Seljuks, Timurids, Kizilbash and other Turkish groups in Persia; and Ottomans in the eastern Mediterranean. Their power derived from tribal cohesion and from superior horses, cavalry tactics and archery skills, supplemented in the case of Turkish forces by Perso-Islamic cultural and administrative traditions.³⁴ Whereas in the protected rimlands local elites remained in unchallenged control, in the exposed zone Inner Asians decisively altered local trajectories and became the principal architects of pre-1850 territorial integration. For example, without the Mongols, North and South China – which Marco Polo regarded as separate countries – might never have been reunited; and without the Manchus, surely China never would have been joined to Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet. Likewise, from c.550 to 1200, South Asia remained split among modest regional states whose increasing coherence suggests that South Asia was headed toward a permanent multi-state system not unlike that of Europe. But after 1200, Muslim Turkish invaders imposed a genuinely novel imperial vision that assumed its most impressive form in the Mughal empire. Administratively, Inner Asians also brought local governance to unprecedented levels of efficiency, in China by improving indigenous systems (which they were determined to prove they could operate better than the Chinese themselves) and in India by introducing substantially novel systems of Persian and Near Eastern origin. In these realms, one could argue that Inner Asians became the chief agents of early modernity, if early modernity is defined as that stage of accelerated political integration and commercial circulation that began with recovery from fifteenth-century disorders and anticipated far more durable nineteenth-century consolidations.³⁵

Culturally as well, if we take China and South Asia as our models, Inner Asian rule bore idiosyncratic features. In the protected rimland states, I emphasised that elite and mass, at least in the core, shared a common ethnicity, language and religion, and that ruling elites deliberately disseminated their cultural norms as an aid to political integration. But in order to retard assimilation and thus ensure their own cohesion, small Inner Asian conquest elites – rarely more than one per cent of the size of the subject population – consciously sought to maintain a separate identity through mechanisms that Mark Elliott, writing of Qing China, terms “ethnic sovereignty” and “Manchu apartheid”. This system included Manchu domination of Chinese provincial government and high-level deliberative bodies; Chinese exclusion from the administration of Inner Asia; elaborate economic and legal privileges for Manchus organised in the Eight Banners military system; residential segregation; barriers to intermarriage; and determined efforts to preserve Manchu culture.³⁶ In India, Mughal cohesion and self-preservation had both ethnic and religious dimensions, manifest, for example, in the highly disproportionate allocation of top imperial posts to Inner Asian and Indian Muslim nobles and in rising assertions of Islamic ritual primacy over non-Muslim traditions.³⁷ Such distinctions endured despite growing Manchu–Chinese and Turkish–Indian accommodations on a popular level. And whereas proto-national mobilisation enjoyed increasing, if still episodic, official sanction in Burma, Siam, Vietnam, France and Russia, Inner Asian conquest elites, most notably in China, feared that politicised popular ethnicity would be directed against them and vigorously prohibited such expressions.³⁸

I would note in passing that these two features of the exposed zone, namely, civilisational precocity and vulnerability to Inner Asian conquest, were probably related. In the third and second millennia BCE, openness to migrants and to new crops, animals and technologies moving along Eurasia’s east–west arteries encouraged urban civilisation far earlier than in more isolated, protected areas ranging along the far rimlands of Eurasia. But later that same openness left the exposed zone uniquely vulnerable to nomadic incursions.

Odd though it may seem, after 1565 or 1620, though certainly not before then, I would include parts of island Southeast Asia within the exposed zone of Eurasia. For most of its history, notwithstanding a 1025 Cola raid on Sumatra and a 1293 Mongol seaborne assault on Java, the sea protected the archipelago from external attack. Likewise, the sea and the region’s pre-500 CE isolation from the chief lines of east–west exchange mandated a late civilisational genesis coeval with that on the Southeast Asian mainland. Accordingly, although geography in most of the islands was inherently more centrifugal than on the mainland, early kingdoms and empires – of which Srivijaya and Melaka in the western archipelago and Majapahit on Java were the most extensive and celebrated – followed rhythms broadly similar to those on the mainland. As on the mainland,

moreover, until the sixteenth or seventeenth century political and cultural change proceeded under entirely local auspices and responded to a mix of maritime, agrarian and cultural forces familiar from our discussion of the mainland.

However, Spanish conquests in the Visayas and Luzon from 1565 and Dutch East India Company (VOC) activities in north Java and what is now eastern Indonesia from *c.*1620 became ever more transformative. The sea, formerly a barrier to outsiders, now became a highway. Although Spanish and Dutch acquisitions were far smaller than Inner Asian conquests, and although the structures of European and Inner Asian rule bore little relation to one another, by the mid- or late 1600s both the Spanish and Dutch had launched territorial projects no less novel in local terms than Manchu and Mughal projects in their respective regions. Like Manchus and Mughals, the Europeans benefited from new military systems and commercial linkages. As tiny alien conquest elites, they generated cultural tensions reminiscent in some ways of Inner Asian regimes. In short, if Manchus and Mughals were agents of early modernity, that claim is yet more fitting for the Spanish and the Dutch.³⁹ My analysis of archipelagic history *in toto* does not support the “law of Southeast Asian inertia”, because I do not claim that pre-1565 societies were in any sense static. Clearly, however, I do privilege, without claiming exclusive agency for, external maritime influences after 1565/1620.

To follow Anthony Reid, we may see the Dutch forward movement of the mid- and late 1600s as responding to a global economic crisis, which squeezed commercial profits and precipitated head-on collisions with regional trade rivals. By 1700, although its own financial position was none too secure, the VOC was triumphant. In addition to small posts scattered across the archipelago, it controlled western Java and parts of Java’s north coast, the Spice Islands, and the celebrated emporium of Melaka. The VOC also broke the power on Sulawesi and adjacent islands of once formidable Makassar, contributed to the decline of the major west Sumatran kingdom of Aceh, and catalyzed the fragmentation of the interior Javanese empire of Mataram, which until 1677 was arguably the most powerful in Javanese history. The VOC had not set out to acquire territories, merely to trade, but in effect it became the archipelago’s premier power by virtue of its naval superiority, trans-generational continuity, global reach, capital resources, and profitable alliance with Chinese merchants, not to mention the fissiparous propensities of Javanese states themselves. The VOC’s collection of Southeast Asian forts, enclaves and dependencies – which bore no obvious relation to any pre-Dutch archipelagic empire – was nominally subordinate to the Dutch governor-general at Batavia, who in turn answered to the VOC directors in Amsterdam. Despite local cultural accommodations, as seen in the development of a syncretic Dutch-Javanese *indische* culture and in the prominence of Eurasians in Batavia, Dutch religion, language and administrative practices, and persistent if distant ties

to Europe, left local Dutchmen at least as distinct from their host population as Manchus in China or Mughals in South Asia. As Dutch pressure mounted, many indigenous states fragmented or lost control of their peripheries. Kingdom-wide cultural ties weakened, indigenous urbanisation went into reverse, and Indonesians, unable to compete with Dutch monopolists or Chinese merchants, often withdrew from cash cropping and interregional exchange. The rise of a Dutch state-in-embryo paralleled the contemporary creation not only of the Manchu and Mughal realms but of early modern Burma, Siam and Nguyen Vietnam. Yet between *c.*1650 and 1825 the fortunes of indigenous elites in the principal kingdoms of island and of mainland Southeast Asia were almost mirror images of one another.

In what the Spanish came to call the Philippines, local elites suffered no comparable eclipse because the pre-Spanish northern and central islands had never known a supra-local political organisation, not to mention urbanisation, a world religion or administrative literacy. The nominal unification under Spanish military and church officials of these resolutely local societies; the building of a walled capital city, Manila; the imposition of taxes and *corvées*; the cooptation of local chiefs to form an hereditary stratum responsible for organising those collections; the Christianisation of those same elites and eventually of most of the lowland population; the introduction of administrative and religious writing; the concentration of population in new lowland settlements; and the inauguration of Mexican–Philippine–Chinese commercial links – together, these features constituted the most novel socio-political transformations anywhere in Southeast Asia between 1550 and 1800. If the Dutch were innovative, the Spanish were yet more so. So too, by virtue of their highly asymmetric inheritances, the cultural gap between Spanish elites, concentrated in Manila, and the indigenous Filipino population was arguably the widest of any early modern society under review.

Why was the European impact dramatically greater in the archipelago than in mainland Southeast Asia? Why in the islands, but not the mainland, did Europeans before 1825 alter the direction of local development? Three factors were at play. First, demography and geography were less likely to support powerful states capable of resisting European inroads in the archipelago than on the mainland. Long before the Spanish and Dutch arrived, archipelagic states tended to be more fissiparous than their mainland counterparts, with what seems to have been a weaker sense of institutional and territorial continuity. In the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and other areas that the Dutch, based in Batavia, would later term “the outer isles”, modest agrarian resources supported populations far thinner and more widely dispersed than in the mainland valleys. Java’s rich volcanic soils did permit population densities comparable to the mainland, but Java’s geography was fragmented into discrete clusters separated by mountains and marsh, without a unifying riverine

artery comparable to the Irrawaddy or Chaophraya. True, this terrain may have been no more centrifugal than that of central and southern Vietnam. Yet Java lacked the Sinic political complex – civil service exams, an intensely prescriptive social philosophy, and a relatively impersonal, bureaucratic administration – that allowed Vietnam to (re)integrate its disparate territories and to block European intrusions, at least until 1858. Arguably, the Burmese and Siamese states presented yet more substantial obstacles to European inroads than the Vietnamese. For whatever reasons, including no doubt their marginal location on international trade routes, the Philippines represented the maximum degree of indigenous vulnerability.

Second, however powerful they may have been, mainland states were rarely put to the test against European forces because the mainland did not produce spices or other exports that were as valuable as those of the archipelago and that could attract sustained Dutch or Spanish interest.

Third, the Europeans' chief military advantage of superior naval craft and naval weaponry tended to be more useful in the island world than on the mainland, especially in the western and central sectors.

To be sure, even before the nineteenth-century onslaught of high imperialism, Europeans did intervene on the mainland: Spanish forces entered Cambodia in the 1590s, Portuguese adventurers occupied parts of coastal Burma from 1600 to 1613, French troops were stationed in Siam in 1687–88, and both Portuguese and Dutch meddled in the Vietnamese civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century. But all these short-lived, generally half-hearted actions either had no long-term impact or succeeded, often inadvertently, in strengthening local authorities (I include the Nguyen regime in the latter category).

To repeat my opening caveat, this contrast between indigenous-led integration on the mainland and European-directed integration in parts of the island world after 1565 does not preclude seeing Southeast Asia as a coherent region in terms of demography, social structure, religious practices, trade diasporas, or merely geographic convenience. But it does suggest that along with assumptions about regional stasis and the invariably critical role of maritime agency across space and time, the thesis of unified Southeast Asian precolonial history might profitably be re-examined.

Notes

- 1 See historiographic discussion in Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800–1830 – Volume One: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 6–21.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 The ensuing argument derives from Burmese primary sources and European records, together with against-the-grain readings of secondary sources. On Burmese sources, see Victor Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy*

- and *Conquest*, c.1580–1760 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), app. II; Lieberman, “How Reliable Is U Kala’s Burmese Chronicle?”, *Journal of South-east Asian Studies* 17 (1986): 236–55.
- 4 For documentation of these arguments, see Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, Chapters 2–4.
 - 5 The rising power of Lower Burma, Ayudhya and Phnom Penh at the expense of Pagan and Angkor, and of maritime-oriented Champa at the expense of Đại Việt, all conformed to this pattern.
 - 6 Arakan, Toungoo Burma, Ayudhya, Lan Na, Lan Sang, the Khmer Kingdom, Đại Việt, and rump Champa. See Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, Map 1.5 and Chapters 2–4 *passim*.
 - 7 Champa was dismembered by Đại Việt, in a process that started in 1471 and continued into the nineteenth century.
 - 8 On evolving cultural patterns in the western mainland, see Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, Chapter 2; Michael A. Aung-Thwin, *The Mists of Rāmañña* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005); Victor Lieberman, “Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-century Burma”, *Modern Asian Studies* 12 (1978): 455–82; Lieberman, “Excising the ‘Mon Paradigm’ from Burmese Historiography – Review Article”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 38, 2 (2007): 377–83.
 - 9 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, Chapter 3.
 - 10 *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, and unpublished manuscript by Ben Kiernan on Vietnamese–Khmer conflicts.
 - 11 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, Chapter 4.
 - 12 E.g., James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); K. W. Taylor, “Surface Orientations in Vietnam: Beyond Histories of Nation and Region”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, 4 (1998): 949–78; Sunait Chutintaranond and Chris Baker (eds), *Recalling Local Pasts: Autonomous History in Southeast Asia* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002).
 - 13 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, pp. 418–27.
 - 14 Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680. Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), Chapter 1; Ward Barret, “World Bullion Flows, 1450–1800”, in *The Rise of Merchant Empires*, ed. James Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 224–54.
 - 15 Cf. Sun Laichen, *Ming–Southeast Asian Overland Interactions, 1368–1644* (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2000); Nola Cooke and Li Tana (eds), *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750–1880* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004).
 - 16 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, pp. 45, 60–61, 146, 152–3, 164–7, 256–8, 268–70, 309–10, 393, 406, 426, 437; Lieberman, “Europeans, Trade, and the Unification of Burma, c.1540–1620”, *Oriens Extremus* 27 (1980): 203–26.
 - 17 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, pp. 305–6.
 - 18 For documentation of these claims, see Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, pp. 101–12, 224–8, 362–5; and Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800–1830 – Volume Two: Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia, and the Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapters 1–2, 5–6.
 - 19 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, Chapters 2–4, and vol. 2, Chapters 3, 5–6.
 - 20 See previous two notes.
 - 21 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, pp. 101, 142–5, 148, 170–6, 226, 234, 249–51, 293–4, 306.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 148, 154, 175–6, 420. Within 1830 borders.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, Chapters 3, 4 *passim*; Victor Lieberman, “Secular Trends in Burmese Economic History, c.1350–1830, and their Implications for State Formation”, *Modern Asian Studies* 25 (1991): 1–31.

- 24 Thus, for example, if in 1400 the basin contained 100 units of rice and manpower, while the Shan hills contained 30, the former enjoyed an absolute advantage of 70. But if the economy of both regions grew by 50 per cent in 400 years, by 1800 that absolute advantage would have become 105.
- 25 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, pp. 38–40, 58–9, 87, 117–19, 135–8, 188–99, 231–2, 260–2, 272–3, 313–16, 320, 354–5, 362, 443–6, 455.
- 26 See Lieberman, “Ethnic Politics”, and Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, Chapters 2–4 *passim*.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 158–64, 182–7, 277–82, 302–13; Victor Lieberman, “Provincial Reforms in Taung-ngu Burma”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43 (1980): 548–69.
- 28 The following discussion of protected rimlands relies on Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2, Chapters 2–4.
- 29 Cf. C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) and Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
- 30 Cf. William Wayne Farris, *Japan’s Medieval Population: Famine, Fertility, and Warfare in a Transformative Age* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006).
- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 26–8, 100–1, 171; Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2, Chapters 2, 4.
- 32 Lynne Struve (ed.), *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004). Discussion of Chinese patterns follows Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2, Chapter 5.
- 33 Discussion of South Asia derives from *ibid.*, Chapter 6; John F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India, I, 5: The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 34 See previous note together with Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and Robert L. Canfield (ed.), *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 35 On problems of defining “early modernity”, see Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, pp. 5, 79–80.
- 36 Mark Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).
- 37 M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility Under Aurangzeb* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966).
- 38 In a sense, Maratha and Sikh revolts against the Mughals may be seen as regional examples of politicised ethnicity.
- 39 Ensuing discussion of island Southeast Asia follows Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c.1200* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); and Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2, Chapter 7.

6 The thirteenth province

Internal administration and external expansion in fifteenth-century Đại Việt¹

John K. Whitmore

One element in the early modern state of mainland Southeast Asia that differentiated it from the polity of the classical/charter era was a growth in centralised administration. The resulting administrative structure was, however, not merely an internal affair. It had, I shall argue, a significant impact on the ability of the state to grow and to maintain this growth. The flexible nature of the earlier focus, the mandala of an accumulation of localities, was transformed into a tighter, more permanent administrative structure with stronger links to the capital.² This also allowed the capital to bring outer and newly acquired territories more directly under its control. The result was a more stable political entity that now had a greater ability to link the new regions to itself. I use the emergence of the thirteenth province in Đại Việt as an example to demonstrate one element of Victor Lieberman's thesis of growing integration.

The mandala nature of the earlier territories of what is now Vietnam can be seen in the adjacent realms of Đại Việt (in the north) and Nagara Champa (in the centre). In the first millennium CE, each grew by incorporating a variety of hitherto self-sufficient regions. Champa encompassed a series of river valleys. Đại Việt, slowed in its formation by being within the Tang empire of China, appeared a few centuries later upon the Tang's dissolution. In the early second millennium, Đại Việt brought together a variety of regions in the mid- and upriver zones of the Red River delta. Champa was centred in Amaravati on the Thu Bồn River (behind what is now Hội-an). In between lay a stretch of territory (now north-central Vietnam) that would be on the outer stretches of both mandalas.³ The two realms would contest these loosely controlled territories through the centuries.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, major economic changes, particularly the surge of international trade linked to the rise of Song China, brought significant shifts in both mandalas. In Champa, the focus of trade shifted south to the port of Thi Nại (Quy Nhơn) and the Vijaya region with its greater access to valuable mountain goods. In Đại Việt, the down-river coastal zone of the Red River delta benefited greatly from both the inland growth of the court and the international trade. In the thirteenth

century, Vijaya, emerging from a period of Angkorean control, became the capital region of Champa, while in Đại Việt, the coastal zone under the Trần gained control of the capital Thăng-long (Hanoi). Though united in their resistance to the Mongols late in the century, thereafter the two realms continued to fight over the territory lying between them. Early in the fourteenth century, the Vietnamese, through the marriage of their princess with the king of Champa, gained the old Cham territory of Indrapura (now around Huế), but in the second half of the century, the king of Champa, known to the Vietnamese as Chế-Bồng-Nga, retook that territory and over two decades threatened to detach the outer territories of Nghệ-an and Thanh-hóa from Đại Việt as well. His death in 1390 allowed the Vietnamese to move back into the territory north of Hải-vân Pass.⁴

In both realms, the regions within the mandala were controlled by members of the ruling aristocracy, local in Champa and princes of the royal Trần clan in Đại Việt. The regions in between the two had local elites who could shift back and forth as the two powers swept to and fro across their territories. Occasionally, members of the central elite from Vijaya or Thăng-long might move in to control the outer stretches of their own mandala, but this was subject to shifting circumstances. In both realms, the relatively loose conglomeration could easily fracture as localities chose to join the opposing force. Local control tended to be personal and could change as the situation shifted. Thus both internal and external control remained tenuous, and the ability of each realm to tie new territory firmly to its capital was always weak. Generally, when Đại Việt armies conquered Vijaya (1312, 1318), they left behind a local lord on the throne and returned home, merely confirming control over the outlying territory already held. Champa, in turn, was about to do the same thing in 1390 when Chế-Bồng-Nga died.⁵

Managing the mandala

When Lê Lợi (Thái-tổ. 1428–33) took power in Đại Việt in the late 1420s after a decade of insurgency and two decades of Ming occupation, he and his colleagues abandoned the bureaucratic structure of the Chinese province and returned to the organisation of the realm as it had existed under the Hồ, prior to the Ming invasion in 1406.⁶ Though Lê Lợi would retain schools and an interest in the law from the Ming period, in general the new conquerors from the hills to the southwest initially put aside those connected with the Ming and relied on older scholars who had originally served the Hồ. Nguyễn Trãi is a prime example of these literati.

Thus, at its beginning, the Lê regime replicated the earlier Vietnamese systems of the late Trần and the Hồ, though with its own regional twist to it. The political systems of Đại Việt before the Ming occupation were organised around aristocratic groups who controlled the royal court and

the capital. There was little difference between the Trần through the fourteenth century and the Hồ at the beginning of the fifteenth century. A fundamental continuity existed through this period; this went on into the first decades of the Lê, via the scholars who had served the Hồ, survived the Ming occupation, and joined the Lê. The pattern for all three was a royal clan, an aristocracy, and the supporters they chose on personal grounds to run the state. The patronage of classical Chinese studies occurred as a new pattern of literati thought emerged from the middle of the fourteenth century. Yet each of the three regimes had its own variant on the system. The late Trần had a strong royal clan that gradually weakened and saw its power become more diffuse through the century, eventually losing it to members of the aristocracy, in particular Hồ Quý Ly (r. 1400–07). The Hồ then had a strong royal clan, including some who were awarded the royal surname, with little aristocratic competition in their short period of rule. In both cases, kinship and personal loyalty formed the organising principles of the state.⁷

The new Lê dynasty formed a third variant, with a weak royal clan and a strong emergent aristocracy. Esta Ungar has characterised very well the nature of the early Lê political system.⁸ Lê Lợi had developed his sense of community and political order in the western mountains of Thanh-hóa province, south of the Red River delta and distanced from the lowlands and the culture of Đại Việt under the Lý and the Trần dynasties. There, in the multiethnic borderlands far upriver, he grew up in a leading family of Lam-sơn village, surrounded by a variety of local peoples. He believed in the spiritual power of his immediate ancestors, in a familial and communal sense of relationships, and in a brotherhood of like-minded compatriots.⁹ He based his uprising against the Ming on these notions, beginning with the oath of Lũng-nhai and ending with his armies centred on the Thiết-đột (Iron-striking) brigades. Without a major clan around him, Lê Lợi drew his veteran officers into a tight group for support. Like Hồ Quý Ly, but in a much more familial and far-reaching way, he bestowed his royal surname on them and thereby formed the basis for his new state, in Ungar's words, "the vision of remembered community". These Lê-named merit subjects (Vietnamese *công-thần*; Chinese *gong-shen*) would help form a familial state.¹⁰ Calling on them and their descendants never to forget the hard suffering they had undergone, the new ruler sought to establish a dynasty bound strongly together by these warrior and social ties. As he declared, "If we remember my pledge [to the martyred hero Lê Lai], then under water this sword will become a dragon. [If] we abjure my words, it will be a [mere] knife."¹¹

Thus the power of Lê Lợi's state depended on memory and on a strong sense of ancestral descent and communal solidarity rising from the subjects' joint past in Lam-sơn and hardened by their shared experience of war. Hereditary privilege, fictive kinship and the oath would carry this unity into succeeding generations, he believed. In the year after his death,

the blood oath was administered to these men in the hope of re-forging this unity and sustaining the new dynasty. Swearing to “Heaven, Earth, and the spirits of the mountains and the rivers”, they drank the blood of a white horse at the full moon and recited the oath. The regime then made sacrifices to the spirit cults throughout the land.¹² This oath ceremony joined the 400-year-old state tradition of the oath in the capital with the highland cultural pattern of the oath. It was meant to reinforce and broaden particularistic and personal loyalties and to create solidarity out of the individual relationships.

Yet, as Ungar additionally points out, Lê Lợi also worked with the lowland scholar Nguyễn Trãi (1380–1442) to develop a broader regime and to strengthen the state.¹³ The core of what would become the Lê Code emerged in the first two reigns (1428–42), with an emphasis on military and fiscal matters. In this way, the new dynasty both consolidated its control over the realm and built a solid fiscal foundation for this control, quite different from that of the late Trần. The armed forces, centred on the core of the resistance army from Thanh-hóa province, were battle-hardened and loyal. The 13 legal articles dealing with the military (numbers 241–53) were based on their wartime experiences and acted to underwrite discipline, strength and loyalty at all levels. With the military control maintained, the new regime turned to face the economic problems of the late Trần, where the capital practically had to beg for material support from the outer regions. Here, rather than relying on princely or aristocratic domains with serfs, the Lê government went directly to the individual villages and established public lands therein, a portion of whose revenue went to the state. This system would last almost 300 years. The first 32 legal articles of the section on property (numbers 342–73) were meant to establish and maintain the fiscal foundation of the new state. All these legal articles, both on the military and on property, were generally specific to the Vietnamese code, having been taken from neither the Tang nor the Ming codes of China.¹⁴

In this way, the Lê state began on a solid military and fiscal basis, much more centralised than the late Trần state or the Hồ state had been. Nevertheless, Lê Lợi continued the old pattern of using his loyal compatriots to control the countryside. The Trần had placed their princes and nobles over the lowlands stretching away from the capital, while the Hồ had worked to break down the resulting local autonomy, doubtless relying on their trusted family and lieutenants to handle the varied regions.¹⁵ As laid out by Nguyễn Trãi and his colleagues in their 1435 geography, “*Dư địa chí*”, the Lê divided the land into five *đạo* or circuits,¹⁶ one each to the north, west, east and south of the capital, and one, called Hải-tây (West of the Sea), covering the territories stretching south from the Red River delta down to Hải-vân Pass and Champa. These *đạo* were controlled by *hành-khiển* (lords) at the ministerial level of the royal court. The five lords directly managed civil affairs in the “inner” territory, that within 300 *lĩ* of

the capital Thăng-long, as well as – indirectly via subordinates – the “outer” territories, some 200 *li* beyond, by military means.¹⁷

To all appearances, these five posts of great consequence were held by members of the new ruling aristocracy, those who had stood by Lê Lợi through the long anti-Ming campaign. With such status, these lords outranked and outflanked the civil officials of both the central government in the capital and those in the outer administration, and they were able to participate directly in the deliberations of the royal court. Thus, a certain autonomy existed for these territories, answerable as the five lords were only to the throne itself. While officials in the capital and low-level officials in the countryside increasingly expressed their displeasure and disagreement with the lords, the power of the latter faced few restrictions; as court control weakened, their autonomy increased proportionately. In Lê Lợi’s vision, these men formed part of the larger familial whole. He expected them to act accordingly as well as to be in accord with the broader cosmic view of humanity expressed by Nguyễn Trãi.¹⁸ Yet in reality, and especially after the founding ruler’s death, these lords were increasingly in a position to exercise their own personal control. The chronicle that we use for this period was compiled essentially for the literati, not for the aristocracy, and the appearance of these lords therein is often negative. Therefore, we can only surmise what the control over the countryside was like as the court, for a quarter of a century, fell into increasing conflict. Being the equals of the court ministers, these five lords of the *đạo* would have built up their entourages, acquired land and wealth, and gained local power. While an administrative structure existed down to the district level, the weakening of central power and the continuity of the five lords in their positions undoubtedly strengthened the latter.

The late 1440s saw the growth of the “powerful families” (*thê-gia*), which must have been of Thanh-hóa origin or at least linked to that place. The throne (in this case the Queen Mother) attempted warnings to the government against being involved with these clans.¹⁹ A scholar-official declared, “In this court, important public charges have lain only with the royal counselors [the Thanh-hóa nobility], both in the capital and in the provinces.”²⁰ The mid-1450s saw this nobility in complete control, including over the new literati examination system, and through this control they were free to pursue their personal interests. What had begun under Lê Lợi as a strong effort to centralise control of the human and natural resources of Đại Việt had, during this quarter of a century, tended once more toward a centrifugal pattern within the mandala system.²¹

While the administrative system was devolving back into the old style of rule based on personal relations and power, the style of foreign relations had continued in the old pattern. We can see this in the centuries-old standard interaction with Nagara Champa to the south. The two realms had been contesting the outer edges of each other’s mandala for 500 years. As the “Đư địa chí” of 1435 described, Champa too continued in its

mandala form, encompassing some 37 territories that stretched from the traditional border at Mount Hoành on the north 600 *li* down to Khmer lands. This included the territory of Indrapura, even though Đại Việt now controlled it. There was little arable land in Champa and by noting the “closeness” of Java, this work implied the important trade link between the two. Champa followed a Hindu-Buddhist religion (*gan-ni dao* 乾泥道), casting large gold and silver statues of their deities. It was constantly raiding north into the lands held by Đại Việt, including that which had once been its own. This ambiguity concerning the overlap of the two mandalas can be seen in an exchange between officials of Đại Việt and Champa that same year. The key question was the land that lay between them. The Vietnamese claimed that it was theirs, though Champa had seized it, and that Champa did not understand how a “small country” should relate to a “large” one. Champa soft-pedalled the charges and stated that the situation in its court did not allow it to respond.²² In this way, Đại Việt recognised Champa as a legitimate land, albeit a “small” one, even as Champa steadfastly stood its ground.

In the mid-1440s, Champa had strengthened itself politically and economically and was once again attacking the hold of Đại Việt over the old northern Cham segment of Indrapura, moving twice against Hóa-châu and taking inhabitants back with them.²³ In the 1370s and 1380s, the great king of Champa, Chế-Bồng-Nga, had not only regained control of this former northern territory of theirs, but had also threatened Đại Việt’s hold on its own southern fringe of Nghệ-an and Thanh-hóa. On this king’s death in 1390, Đại Việt had regained control of its border territories. Upon Lê Lợi’s victory over the Ming and through the 1430s, his attention and that of his son was more on the highland Tai (“Lao”) forces on their western border than on Champa and the south, due to the former’s role in supporting the Ming during the resistance.²⁴

Now the attention of the court in Thăng-long and of the new Thanh-hóa nobility turned back towards the south and Champa. They immediately began to organise their armed forces, veterans of the Ming and the highland campaigns, to move against Vijaya, capital of Champa. Led by the major nobles of the royal court, Trịnh Khả (1399–1451) in particular, the forces of Đại Việt moved out, in great strength according to the Chronicle, during the first lunar month of 1446. A supply base had already been established near the traditional southern border at Mount Hoành. The Vietnamese troops rapidly crossed Hải-vân Pass and entered Champa’s now northern territory, its old capital region of Amaravati in the Thu-bồn River system. Defeating the opposing forces, the Vietnamese took the main port of Thi-nại (Quy-nhơn) in central Champa and, by the beginning of the fourth month, had besieged and seized Vijaya.²⁵

The war thus finished rapidly, but the Vietnamese did not take over the conquered territories. Instead, they carried off “the king, his women, his entourage, ... his horses, elephants, weapons, and officers”. Putting

another Cham prince on the throne, they returned home. The two realms remained, however, as before, with the Hải-vân Pass demarcating them. The royal court in Thăng-long thereafter received this new king's envoys, treating them well, and sent a message back with them. However, once a coup had led to a change of kings in Vijaya, Đại Việt refused the proffered tribute and scolded the Cham throne. Yet this discourse remained one realm speaking to (and accepting) the other: "Yours is a country (*quốc*) and therefore you have a king and subjects. That is the constant way." Though the court of Đại Việt chastised Champa severely for this violation, it did not question the existence of Champa and continued to accept its control over its own territory. It was right for Champa to exist and for its king to rule his land.²⁶

Despite the effort at centralisation in the 1430s, Đại Việt in the mid-fifteenth century still formed a mandala, its varied regions ruled by aristocratic lords and its outer territories defended against other such realms. The two mandalas of Nagara Champa and Đại Việt contested these outer territories and fought each other over them, yet fundamentally they accepted each other's continued existence. Given the fluctuating nature of power within and between such realms, there was no steady and constant expansion by either. It had been this way for half a millennium.

Adopting bureaucratic administration

Political upheaval in the royal court of Thăng-long through the late 1450s eventually led to the dismantling of the mandala system in Đại Việt and its replacement, at least for 40 years, by a much more tightly structured bureaucratic administration. This upheaval and change revolved around the four young Lê princes, half-brothers, sons of the murdered Thái-tông (r. 1434–42), and grandsons of the heroic founder Lê Lợi. The eldest prince, Nghi Dân, had been named heir apparent, then demoted for the third son, Bang Cơ (Nhân-tông, r. 1443–59), who became king as an infant. As they grew up during the 1440s and 1450s, the four youngsters lived in the capital and studied together in the royal palace under the instruction of scholar officials. Finally, in 1459, Nghi Dân (r. 1459–60) led a coup that killed the king, his younger brother, as well as the Queen Mother, and worked to displace the Thanh-hóa aristocracy that had served his grandfather in establishing the dynasty.²⁷

First, the new king and his associates from the Red River delta pushed aside the aristocracy and turned to the scholar-officials, also from the delta, to develop a new governmental form. Nghi Dân reorganised provincial administration, depriving the lords of the five *đạo* of their positions and power. Then, for the first time, he fully established the major element of the Chinese-style bureaucratic system, the six ministries, in the capital. He thus began to centralise power there and to focus the government of Đại Việt on the interests of the scholar-officials, turning away from the

personal and narrow claims of the Thanh-hóa aristocracy in the more diffuse mandala system. The aristocracy then responded violently twice, finally killing Nghi Dân on the second try and placing the apparently pliant fourth son, Tư Thành, on the throne (the second son having wisely declined the honour).²⁸

The successful Thanh-hóa nobles charged that Nghi Dân had “esteemed the criminal, slaughtered former lords, and sown confusion in the ancestral system of law”; they had lived, they felt, “under injustice and rebellion and stood in a usurping and regicidal court”.²⁹ The ancestral and traditional had to remain, maintaining the memory of Lê Lợi and the glorious past. These men obviously felt that the new 18-year-old prince would do just that. In their instructions to him, the new set of dominant lords stressed the difficulty of being on the throne and the stability that had to result – that is, compliance to their wishes was what the lords expected. They had re-established the ancestral, hence their own positions of authority and the mandala system itself. They gave Nhân-tông and the Queen Mother a proper funeral befitting them, and bestowed more merit on themselves, the surviving nobility. This re-authorised and strengthened the founding bond established over 30 years earlier. Inherited privileges, land, and new posts for the next generation served the nobility well, all bearing the royal surname, whether by blood or by title.³⁰

Yet, gradually, the young prince quite unexpectedly turned king, Lê Thánh-tông (r. 1460–97), worked to surround himself with scholar-officials. Classically educated in the Chinese fashion, Thánh-tông employed his former palace tutors and brought others into the court as well. The indulgent lords probably saw no problem in this, for the young king had said he would handle such appointments – “Why bother with many reports?”³¹ – an appeal undoubtedly dear to the hearts of the older, semi-literate warriors. This was, of course, precisely the wedge needed by the Vietnamese literati community. As the government began to involve itself once more in the activities of the countryside (legal cases, population and land registers), the need for these scholar-officials increased, and the throne began to work directly with the localities, undercutting the authority of the five lords.³²

Surrounded now by supportive literati in positions around the throne, Thánh-tông worked out a program that would both appeal to the nobles and advance his control of the state. A number of these literati-officials had visited the Ming court on embassies and undoubtedly experienced a quite different situation there that reinforced the young king’s resolve. He began in 1461 by instituting the New Year’s *giao* (suburban) sacrifice to Heaven and Earth, to all appearances in place of the blood oath.³³ Thereby did he move from the narrower confines of the personal loyalties of the mandala (not to mention those of the western mountains) to the cosmic realm of Heaven itself. Modelled on that of the Ming ceremony, it set the stage for the literati government to come. All along, Thánh-tông

claimed, he was not really changing anything of great significance and instead was advancing and refining the sacred ancestral system.

As Thánh-tông and his literati developed their program, they worked out its rationale on exactly this basis. It was, they said, a restoration (Vietnamese *trung-hưng*; Chinese *chung-xing*), a program that restored the “great thinking” of Lê Lợi (and Nguyễn Trãi) three decades earlier, following the years of intervening chaos. Thereby they were reverting to the ancestral system and supporting the original ways of the nobility. The nobility were “subjects of merit” (Vietnamese *công-thần*; Chinese *gong-shen*) whose valiant efforts had preserved the system. Now it was up to Thánh-tông to insure that this system functioned well.³⁴ He did so by establishing the triennial examination system, aiming for the standard Ming year of 1463. Beginning with the regional examinations, then the capital and palace sessions, Thánh-tông drew the best and the brightest into his government every three years. This involved going directly out to the villages to confirm the moral quality of the candidates, an act that would have further undercut the control of the lords of the five *đạo*.³⁵ Despite opposition from the nobility, which the young king was able to control by imposing his authority, the first of the great triennial examinations went ahead early in 1463. The 44 who passed entered the government at higher levels, while others who did reasonably well received lower provincial and local offices. The question posed by the king on the palace examination concerned how an emperor was to rule his country.³⁶

We do not know the expected answer to this question, but it certainly must have involved choosing good officials and utilising them to rule the land and serve the people directly. The great minister Nguyễn Trãi, who had so advised Lê Lợi and the latter’s son Thái-tông a quarter of a century earlier, would have been most proud, and indeed his writings and reputation were soon resurrected.³⁷ In the meantime, Thánh-tông acted to bring his government and its officials more directly into the localities and the villages, further undercutting the five lords – any local office could send a memorandum to the throne on any relevant subject; village chiefs had to be literate and of a certain quality; and powerful families (*thê-gia*) could not grab land.³⁸ Late in 1463, Thánh-tông finally brought the core of the new form of government, the six ministries, to the fore. The five literati ministers (that of Public Works had yet to appear) were to hear him give a discourse on government. Citing the eleventh-century Song scholar, Sima Guang, the king urged them “to move to the basis of rule” and to be diligent.³⁹

With this core in place in the capital, Thánh-tông acted to establish better contact throughout the countryside. He had official seals delivered to all government offices across the realm so that these officials could authenticate their reports. This established these offices as independent of the five lords. The king also worked to block private interests in the countryside from linking with powers in the capital. He included entourage

members and kin acting for high officials, as well as the officials themselves.⁴⁰ Slowly, Thánh-tông was concentrating his government efforts on the lower public offices of the countryside and undercutting the hold of the aristocracy there.

As he did this, the king continued both to rein in the aristocracy and to discipline the hierarchy of officials. His goal was to blend the two forces creatively within a unified, well-functioning government. It involved praise and blame for members of each group, which he applied with discretion. He cut back on the aristocracy's privilege of passing the royal surname on to their sons. These efforts by the throne occurred through 1464 and 1465. Curbing the arrogance of the lords and channelling the ideals of the literati-officials, Thánh-tông was able to achieve his goal – to bring all elements of the state into service of the public good as seen by the throne. By 1465, he was ready to begin the transformation of the state of Đại Việt from its mandala nature into a Ming-style bureaucratic entity.⁴¹

The beginning lay in morality and law, as Thánh-tông sought to bring the ideology he was advocating in the capital out into the countryside. This process also meant relying on and strengthening the local offices against those of the regional lords. It required a standardised and consistent effort – one which was regular and just, not personalised and shifting. Emphasising the local official and his caseload, the throne called for good judgements from them. Keeping aristocratic hands off such judgements was central to this effort, and Thánh-tông sent out officials to check on the local offices. These local officials had to uphold their offices with dignity, with no favouritism or petty selfishness; if these officials or their families were treated with disrespect, the punishment was swift. The establishment of Temples of Literature (Vietnamese *văn-miếu*; Chinese *wen-miao*) throughout the provinces, with their twice annual ritual performances by the officials, further strengthened the position and dignity of the local offices.⁴²

Through 1465, Thánh-tông worked to replace the mandala style of government with the administrative form borrowed from contemporary Ming China – the Sinic bureaucratic model. The key element was the communications office (*thông-chính-ty*), which had the responsibility of gathering reports from the local offices across the countryside as well as from those in the capital for distribution to the ministries and other central offices. The ministries formed the core of the central government directly under the ruler, with no aristocracy separating the two levels. The king then abolished the *hành-khiển* (lords) of the five *đạo*, initially replacing them with a bureaucratic office, the *tuyên-chính-sứ-ty*. Where the lords had held a royal court rank and could participate in its deliberations, literati-officials with no such privilege now stood in their places.⁴³ Thánh-tông then proceeded to put the developing rural administrative structure into operation. In mid-1465, he ordered the taking of a new census that would be replicated every six years. All local officials within the five *đạo*

were to call representatives of every village together. From each of these villages, they were to bring its population records in. The records were then taken to the capital, copied and returned. The capital thus accumulated data for all adults, male and female.⁴⁴

Thus, gradually, the governmental hierarchy from the capital out into the localities began to take shape. This growing bureaucratic structure was already demanding and producing reports and data. A report consequently came in from a scholar and censor – the paperwork was getting to be too much, and each office should have more supporting officials, especially at the lowest level, the district. The throne agreed and so ordered.⁴⁵ At the beginning of 1466, Thánh-tông ordered officials at all levels, inside and outside the capital, to take a breather from their daily work to reflect on the earlier acts and documents, and to contemplate the best ways of handling those situations. He also strengthened the underdeveloped *đạo* offices, adding four officials to each one. Filling these posts with literati-officials was a move that further built up civil government over aristocratic control across the countryside. In addition, he placed literati-officials in provincial posts, at the next level below the *đạo*. Each *đạo* consisted of several provinces, and this act began the shift of the administrative emphasis down to this lower, more widespread level.⁴⁶

In mid-1466, the young ruler completed his dismantling of the mandala across the countryside. Abolishing the five *đạo*, he focused the government administration on the 12 provinces (*thứ-tuyên*) with prefectures (*phủ*) and districts (*huyện*) below that level. Having thereby regularised and standardised the bureaucratic administration stretching out from the capital, he began to staff the different offices with his new officials from the examinations. By clearing up the variety of existing regional offices and bringing in the unified provincial bureaucratic structure, Thánh-tông for the first time removed the aristocracy from its control over the countryside and brought the government and the hand of the ruler directly down to the local level and the villages.⁴⁷ One aspect of this shift to be noted here is that, because Đại Việt itself was only the size of a single Chinese province (as it had just recently been), the central government there was one level closer to the villages than was the Ming imperial government. A Vietnamese province was perhaps one-tenth the size of a Ming province.

Thereafter, Thánh-tông concentrated on restructuring the central government itself. Using the standard Ming bureaucratic form, with some adjustments,⁴⁸ he centred his administration on the six ministries, now officially and completely installed, and their specific functions. With information funnelled to them via the communications office and reporting directly to the throne, the literati-officials became direct policy-making partners within the royal court. As under the rule of the Ming founder Taizu in the previous century, no prime minister or aristocratic presence stood between ruler and literati-official. Outside the bureaucratic structure of capital and countryside was the parallel hierarchy of the censorate

(upgraded in Đại Việt), which kept a check on the public functions of the offices and their officials, reining in private and personal activities. This reached out through the localities to insure the central government's hold. Thánh-tông also acted to circumvent the standard bureaucratic channels by allowing low-level officials (and even non-officials) to gain access to tallies necessary for delivering memoranda to the capital.⁴⁹

This entire new bureaucratic structure and procedure ran on paper and needed highly literate officials to ensure that it ran smoothly and effectively, from the district offices close to the villages all the way into the six ministries and the royal court. As the structure developed through the mid-1460s, these officials were moved into, out of and around the varied offices as new ones were recruited via the triennial examinations. One problem with the constant transfers was the disappearance of utensils from the offices. More significant was the gap in time between officials when one had left and his successor had yet to arrive – a secondary official was to be designated to provide continuity in the workload, after the first official had caught up on pending business before leaving. Those who had passed some but not all of the examination sections could serve as clerks in the offices.⁵⁰

The late 1460s saw this new bureaucratic system in operation and its literati-officials having a direct impact on the localities and their people. Indeed, the harmony of the state (and of the cosmos at large) depended greatly on the abilities and success of the local officials. Working against drought, helping to organise regional armed forces, and levying taxes were tasks that they were involved with. They were to advance the well-being of the people in their jurisdictions, and reduce illness and hardship among them. It was necessary for the central government to insure that good officials filled the district positions, and that local subordinate officials not be allowed to wield undue influence. Ultimately, as the bureaucratic system developed apace, the district, prefecture and province officials were held responsible for knowing their jurisdictions at first hand and the specific economic and social conditions therein. Within a hundred days of an official's arrival in office, he was to report on all this in detail to the capital. The officials were to work with the offices for the encouragement of agriculture and for the maintenance of the dikes to advance and secure the local economy. The development of the agricultural and economic potential lay with these local officials, and Thánh-tông expected them to involve themselves directly in the practical side of the life of their jurisdictions. Agricultural instruction, land reclamation and market regulation all fell within their purview (today we might call them extension agents). Government involvement and efficiency, more than technological advance, appears to have moved the economy forward. These officials were also to make sure that the "powerful families" (*thê-gia*) did not seize and accumulate land into private estates, and that good land did not lie unused.⁵¹

A key step in the move from the mandala style to the new form of bureaucratic administration developed out of these demands on the local official. This resulted from the accumulation of local data that all such officials sent up the bureaucratic hierarchy to the capital. In the middle of 1467, Thánh-tông ordered the officials of the 12 provinces to examine their jurisdictions carefully, to lay out the terrain ("mountains and rivers") with all the strategic points therein, and to submit a map to the ministry of finance in the capital. Then all the provincial maps would be compiled, and a complete map of the entire realm laid out. Two years later, the full numbers of the different types of communities were added. For the first time, specific lines were being drawn around the jurisdictions and plotted on this map. From the vague and fluctuating sense of the mandala, we have moved into the (more or less) precise outline of defined bureaucratic jurisdictions. As an administrative map, this was its primary function. In the process, the sense of the geo-body of Đại Việt emerged.⁵²

The new bureaucratic administration thus brought both spatial and social depth to the state of Đại Việt. The cosmic harmony so desired by Thánh-tông now depended on the performances of the district, prefectural and provincial officials within their precisely drawn jurisdictions. They were held to account for all their territories, and for what went on inside them. Thánh-tông duly recognised that his standing with Heaven (the cosmos) ultimately depended on such local performance. The right amount of rain and the resulting good crops signalled to him Heaven's recognition of his (and his officials') success. Good weather, peace and the well-being of the populace signified the harmony that enveloped Heaven, Earth and Man – the ultimate goal of the newly established bureaucratic state in Đại Việt.⁵³

These achievements of the 1460s were officially proclaimed in the great administrative edict of 1471, "The Imperial Bureaucratic System" (*Hoàng triều quan chế*).⁵⁴ Herein was outlined the entire structure, with all its offices and ranks. Borrowed directly from the contemporary Ming structure in China, yet tailored to fit the specific circumstances of Đại Việt, this new administrative system now brought the authority of the throne directly into the localities and the villages as well as throughout all territories claimed by Đại Việt. The aristocracy had been removed from local administrative operations of the realm, though they still had access to decision-making in the royal court and served as assigned by Thánh-tông. As the king stated, "Having established the three provincial offices (in each province) and completed the six ministries, the authority has become one." To his mind, according to this edict, the times had changed significantly and he had had to bring in a new regime to deal with them. To accomplish what his ancestors had desired required him to do this and, he insisted, he was *not* violating tradition but instead acting through modern means to uphold the ancestral aims.

Forging a new foreign policy

As Lê Thánh-tông and his government were bringing the new bureaucratic form of administration to the state of Đại Việt and dismantling the old mandala style, the realm of Nagara Champa to the south continued to maintain its flexible yet conservative mandala pattern. As it had done for centuries, this realm combined agriculture with a thriving inland and external trade. The great successes of its king in the prior century, Chế-Bồng-Nga (r. 1360s–90), had expanded the scope of its mandala north against Đại Việt, south versus the weakening Angkorean domain, and west up into what are now known as the Central Highlands of Vietnam. While the Vietnamese had subsequently pushed Champa back, its deeper links up into the hills and down into the Mekong Delta no doubt held. Goods continued to come down to the ports and there joined the flow of international goods north into China and south to Melaka. Through the first half of the fifteenth century, Champa continued to interact strongly with the Ming court in China.⁵⁵

Thus, under energetic leadership, a thriving Champa was as prepared as ever to expand its mandala once again to the north and to retake the old lands, now southern territories of Đại Việt. After a diplomatic stalemate in the court of Thăng-long, the king of Champa began to probe aggressively into the old northern territories of his realm. In early 1469, while Thánh-tông was involved in a campaign against Tai hill peoples to the west, troops from Champa again raided the southern Vietnamese coast by sea. A year and a half later, the Cham king himself, no doubt emulating Chế-Bồng-Nga, led a full scale invasion of this southern territory with infantry, cavalry and sea-going forces.⁵⁶ What he had yet to realise were the major changes that the state of Đại Việt was then undergoing. First of all, the new bureaucratic regime was vastly more efficient at bringing human and material resources to bear on a problem. A part of this was a better-trained and better-equipped armed force. Second, Thánh-tông had explicitly brought his regime into the Sinic cultural sphere and its belief in the civilised versus those “outside civilisation” (Vietnamese *hoa-ngoại*; Chinese *hua-owai*). War was no longer merely fighting over outlying portions of competing mandalas, raiding to establish political supremacy, however temporary, and looting. The goal was now to dominate on a more permanent basis and to transform culturally.⁵⁷

An entirely different game had come into play. Thánh-tông had already begun to bring the royal court of Đại Việt into the Chinese intellectual world, utilising the term *Thiên-nam* (“Celestial South”) as a description of his realm. He saw his court sharing in the “civility” (Vietnamese *văn*; Chinese *wen*) of the northern civilisation and indebted (Vietnamese *ơn*; Chinese *en*) to that civilisation for much of what it had. This view would also be reflected in the 1479 edition of the Chronicle of Đại Việt (*Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*) and the 1492 edition of the “Selected Oddities From South

of the Passes" (*Lĩnh nam chính quái*), where the distant ancestor of the Vietnamese was tied tightly to that of the Chinese. Seeing itself in these terms, as part of the Sinic civilised world, it was very easy for the royal court of Đại Việt to turn around and apply the standard foreign relations of that world to its neighbours within Southeast Asia. Stressing filial piety, the principle of being filial (Vietnamese *hiếu*; Chinese *xiao*), the Vietnamese saw themselves as the responsible parent, bringing such lessons of civility to the surrounding lands.⁵⁸

These lessons may be seen in Thánh-tông's edict to the realm proclaiming the campaign against Champa, and in his report to the Ancestral Temple (Vietnamese *Thái-miếu*; Chinese *Tai-miao*) on the same matter.⁵⁹ The Vietnamese king began by denigrating his enemy. It seems that he wasted no time in disparaging them, depicting them as the savages he felt them to be. No longer were they (even their aristocracy) seen as peers of those in Đại Việt. Speaking to the people in his edict and to the spirits of his ancestors at the temple, Thánh-tông, in full rant against Champa, characterised the people there as beneath contempt, threatening, and certainly not sharing any sort of "civility". Operating within the Sinic pattern of foreign relations, one strongly advocated by his literati-officials, Thánh-tông chose to use a vivid writing style with pithy descriptions of his opponents, rather than the standard cosmic formulations, to express his deep feelings on the matter. The people of Champa were, to him, slow-witted, dolts, stupid, venomous bees, scared rabbits, foxes, poisonous snakes, filthy pigs, sneaky dogs, crows and, in general, animals of the lowest kind, cruel, bestial and vicious. Their lands were like dogs' dens and their capital an anthill. In Champa, one found "the stink of fish, dog fathers and pig mothers". Such people delighted in chaos and acted contrary to the Way (*Đạo*).

The two presentations strongly evoke Thánh-tông's royal ancestors and their spiritual power. In the edict, the first sentence summons his grandfather, Lê Lợi, following which he proceeds to refer to his father Thái-tông and his elder brother Nhân-tông. Yet the rulers of Champa had held themselves superior as elders and, indeed, as Heavenly Buddhas, lording over the people of Đại Việt. In their narrow view (like a frog at the bottom of a well), they believed that shooting at Heaven was a good strategy. "Grasping the heart of Shang-di and connecting with the will of the [prior] kings and [fore]fathers", Thánh-tông called on his people to support his campaign, to be "of one heart", "to gain merit for the history books". Citing two Chinese Classics, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Book of Changes*, he justified his action, calling attention to the conquests of Xia and Zhou times in Chinese antiquity, some 2000 years before. Such rulers as King Wen of Zhou and Emperor Wu of Han (who had conquered what would become Đại Việt) served as his proclaimed mentors.⁶⁰ Through the campaign, in his words, "the hatred of a hundred generations will be washed clean. Because the people will rid themselves of this deep poison,

we shall never allow the enemy to exist for our descendants.” All in the land were to hear this.

To his ancestors, Thánh-tông appealed for their spiritual support and their sacred power, for calm seas and a steady wind. He would not dare go to war, he declared, except for the mass provocations of Champa. He had consulted the royal court, the temples and the people – all stated that the crimes of that land had to be ended. “Above, we join the furious hearts of you, our ancestors, our [prior] kings and [fore]fathers; below, we save from misery our myriad people. Planning for our descendants, we slay the enemies of [you,] our ancestors.” The men of Đại Việt, like bears and tigers, would march out with awesome power and authority to accomplish this.

What were the explicit reasons Thánh-tông cited for this campaign? He described the operation of the mandala of Nagara Champa – the dream of Chế-Bồng-Nga still lived as Champa sought to regain its former lands all the way north to Mount Hoàn, the old southern edge of Đại Việt. Stuck in their old tracks, the men of Champa continued to attack Hóa-châu, capture the people there, and cause grief to the people of Đại Việt, while their king continued to proclaim himself a Heavenly Buddha. At the same time, Champa was sending envoys to the Ming court, slandering, disparaging and sowing doubts about Đại Việt before the Chinese throne. These envoys claimed that the Vietnamese were going to attack the north, and that Đại Việt’s claim of an emperor in the south was like having two suns in the sky. Thus, Thánh-tông stated, Champa desired to harm Đại Việt, both physically in their raiding and diplomatically in Beijing.⁶¹

So, “respectfully engage the Mandate of Heaven – attack and kill these cruel people!” With these words, Thánh-tông sent out his armed forces to strike Champa once and for all, to destroy its centuries-old capacity to contest the land lying between them. This was the view echoed in more standard terms by the historian Ngô Sĩ Liên in the new edition of the *Chronicle of Đại Việt* compiled over the coming decade. The interaction of Đại Việt with its western and southern neighbors had become strongly moral, and the new order rejected exchanges with them and the past. These other peoples were geographically and culturally distant, and had to be kept separate and watched vigilantly. Those of Sinic civilisation had to be responsible parents, guiding their *hoa-ngoại* neighbours as children.⁶²

Behind this political and cultural assault on his southern neighbour, the proposed strike by Đại Việt may also have formed part of the economic contestation of the time. Economic and commercial motives (competition between the coast of Đại Việt and that of Champa, and the effort to control trade networks and ports) could well have played a role in instigating the southern invasion. As Li Tana has described so well, the port of Vân-đồn and the lower delta had developed significantly over the prior three centuries. It had participated in the international trade network of the Jiao-zhi Sea, linking the southeast coast of China, the island of Hai-nan and the coast of Champa. Would this strong economic growth on the

eastern coast of Đại Việt have led to major competition with the Vijaya region and its port of Thi-nại? Thánh-tông emphasised growth in that part of his realm, and this campaign may have served as part of this strategy. Certainly, economic integration following distribution channels could pave the way for political integration of outlying territories. This was, after all, how the Trần dynasty had integrated the lower Red River delta with the upper in the thirteenth century.⁶³

As he had adapted the bureaucratic structure in the civil sphere, Thánh-tông had also brought the military under civilian control, meaning that of the literati-officials. The greater efficiency of the new administrative structure brought the resources, human and material, of the realm into its armed forces. Equipping his forces with Ming-style firepower and giving them a standardised training, the king built up a strong, disciplined and centralised army and navy.⁶⁴ Out of this system, he brought an armed force of a couple of hundred thousand (according to the Chronicle) capable of devastating the army of Champa.

Thánh-tông sent out the naval vanguard and followed in command of the main force in November 1470. Within a month and a half, at the beginning of 1471, these forces under the veteran leadership of the aristocracy had begun to enter the waters of Champa. Slowly, through January and February, they established positions there and brought in supplies. Already the king was preparing his postwar plans, while warning against over-confidence. Champa then moved to attack, but the Vietnamese learned of it. Thánh-tông drew the opposing army directly toward his position, then attacked from the coast, on the enemy's right flank, and drove them west against his forces posted against the mountains. Crushed, Champa sought terms. Thánh-tông refused them and drove on to their capital of Vijaya, which he took in the third week of March after a four-day assault, utilising his firepower.⁶⁵

Firmly in control this time, the forces of Đại Việt did not merely seize the king and his entourage, loot, and return back north. While they did take the king of Champa back to Thăng-long (he died on the way), they remained in the northern sector of Champa, Amaravati, across Hải-vân Pass from their prior territories, and fragmented the remainder of that land. Thánh-tông declared that northern Champa was now part of Đại Việt and placed it under military authority, with orders that any resistance be immediately crushed. He dismantled the mandala of Nagara Champa, dividing it into its four parts: while Amaravati was now part of Đại Việt, like Indrapura before it, the old central capital region of Vijaya and the two southern regions, Kauthera and Panduranga, became separate entities.

Maintaining the thirteenth province

By the middle of 1471, the former Champa territory of Amaravati had become the Đại Việt province of Quảng-nam and was added to the existing

12 provinces of the northern realm. Just as the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402–24) had brought Đại Việt into the Ming empire as the new province of Jiao-zhi after his conquest of 1407, Thánh-tông incorporated this newly conquered territory into Đại Việt. With Champa shattered and his military and administrative structure in place, the king had no need to flood the new territory with Vietnamese immigrants.⁶⁶ With the three provincial offices (administration, justice, military) established there, the new territory was now locked into this new bureaucratic structure. Unlike Jiao-zhi, Quảng-nam would remain in its new structure until the present day. As Phan Huy Chú would say in the early nineteenth century, “From this time, it entered the map”, and this can be seen in the cartography through the Lê era, both in the maps of the realm and in the itineraries from north to south, from both northern and southern Vietnamese perspectives.⁶⁷

The mandala system of the previous 500 years had come to an end. No longer would there be, as the fourteenth century had seen, two contending mandalas – one in northern Vietnam and the other in the centre – whose power ebbed and flowed over the territory lying between them. The looseness and local flexibility of the mandala system was now displaced by the bureaucratic system that clamped its control over these localities. Hải-vân Pass no longer separated the two regimes.

With different peoples within the state of Đại Việt, the throne directed that all such people had to adopt Vietnamese style names, take wives from villages in other districts, and work to “correct themselves”, that is, to fit within Vietnamese society.⁶⁸ It would have been the task of the local offices to check their own jurisdictions. The active government of the literati-officials operated locally through these district officials, and the bureaucratic hierarchy linked the districts directly to the ministries in the capital. The new jurisdiction of Quảng-nam consisted of three prefectures (*phủ*) and nine districts (*huyện*). In 1490, the grand map of the entire realm was compiled with all 13 provinces, Quảng-nam as the southernmost.⁶⁹ In a broad, general sense, this was the provincial pattern that would remain for as long as Đại Việt existed, which was about 300 more years.

This would be so even in the face of mounting administrative and political vicissitudes in following centuries. Lê Thánh-tông’s Hồng-đức model of bureaucratic administration fell apart during the conflicts of the aristocratic families through the first quarter of the sixteenth century, only to be resurrected, I believe, by the new Mạc dynasty for most of the remainder of the century. Our one surviving geographical text from that period (dating from perhaps the 1550s) is for Thuận-hóa, the twelfth province, just north of Hải-vân Pass and Quảng-nam.⁷⁰ It shows the existence of the local bureaucratic structure there, with the provincial office, two prefectures and eight districts, as well as the number of officials for each. The provincial level had the three main offices (administrative, justice, military), and the prefectural offices included those for education, agriculture and the dikes.

During the second half of the sixteenth century, Thanh-hóa noble and military officials absorbed the Mạc system in Quảng-nam. It is apparent that administration in the southern provinces (the twelfth and thirteenth) came to be more in their hands than in those of the literati-officials. Nguyễn Hoàng (1524–1618) received the post in Thuận-hóa, working with another lord stationed in Quảng-nam. On the latter's death, Hoàng took over that post as well and would control the south for the remainder of his life, into the seventeenth century. This former Mạc territory became the base of his family's operations against both the north and farther south. Utilising the trade connections from the old Cham base beyond Hải-vân Pass, Hoàng was able to gain wealth and cannon and to carve out his own domain. He integrated his regime with local spirit cults, pushed the Chams farther south and, while keeping his political base in Thuận-hóa, worked to encourage international commerce at the port of Hội-an in Quảng-nam. Essentially, the Nguyễn remained the administrators of the twelfth and thirteenth provinces of Lê Đại Việt for 200 years.⁷¹

By the late sixteenth century, the main port of this central coast was no longer at Thi-nại and Quy-nhơn in the former Champa capital region of Vijaya but was at its old location farther north in what had been Amaravati, now called Hội-an. This was a century after Thánh-tông had destroyed Vijaya, as well presumably as its port area, and brought it under the new Vietnamese control of Nguyễn Hoàng. Through the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth, this political and economic coalition of Thuận-hóa and Quảng-nam, of Vietnamese and Chinese, served as the foundation for the expansion of the realm farther south until, in the final third of the eighteenth century, the pivot of Bình-định felt the strain; eventually its Tây-sơn revolt brought all the Vietnamese political regimes crashing down. Yet through it all, as long as Đại Việt existed in the north, there remained the 13 provinces of the Lê regime. Both the Trịnh and the Nguyễn lords swore to it, and indeed this thirteenth province would serve as the fulcrum between north and south. In effect, as the Nguyễn regime pushed south in these centuries, this thirteenth province expanded like a balloon and, within it, the Nguyễn regime developed its own administrative system. Based on the military camp (*dinh*), it too came to have 13 jurisdictions, each in its respective watershed, that would incorporate the growing Nguyễn domain.⁷²

So, as the mandala world slipped into the bureaucratic one, the ability of the state to expand and, more importantly, to retain its expansion became much greater. Where the competing mandalas had ebbed and flowed relative to each other, the new administrative regimes were able to advance and to hold down what they had recently gained. This change resembles the difference between merely relying on tidal action for agricultural development and shoring up the ground gained at low tide so as to maintain it for future production. Though the bureaucratic regime of fifteenth century Đại Việt would become aristocratic and military in the

new provinces from the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth, the original administrative control appears to have permanently held these territories for what has become Vietnam.

As Alexander Woodside has indicated in his *Lost Modernities*, a key difference between the bureaucratic and the aristocratic styles of administration lay in time measurement of accomplished tasks. Objectively rating an official's performance through legibility, together with the recording of measured work, opposed the subjective and social measure of those serving the aristocracy and ensured the concrete description of each jurisdiction. The moral ideal of the bureaucracy then urged expansion by bringing "civilisation" to the "barbarians". These two aspects combined to anchor the Vietnamese move to the south.⁷³

The emergence of this thirteenth province in fifteenth-century Đại Việt provides an example of the growing integration and expansion of the Eurasian rimland state. As Victor Lieberman has demonstrated, this was one step, though a major one, in the gradual formation of a united Vietnam stretching from the Chinese border to the Gulf of Siam. The situation was not foreordained, had numerous other possibilities, yet shows how the continual re-adoption of the Sinic bureaucratic model (seventeenth through nineteenth centuries) helped form that land. Overcoming varied regional patterns, especially with the growth of Vietnamese society and power in the famed *nam-tiến* (southern advance) that began with this 1471 conquest of Champa and progressed through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the bureaucratic structure in the provinces tied the territories together and allowed Vietnamese to fill them. Only in Cambodia during the 1830s would this structure and its progress be turned back.⁷⁴

The Vietnamese bureaucratic system was paralleled by administrative centralisation in the western and central portions of the Southeast Asian mainland. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the early nineteenth, Ayudhya, followed by Bangkok, and the Restored Toungoo, followed by the Konbaung, developed ministerial government in the capital and better control of the outer areas by officials linked directly to the throne. Princes and nobles increasingly lost their autonomy and regional bases of power. While this was not always a straightforward process, the cumulative effect of better provincial administration and expanded territorial control set the foundation for the modern states of Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar.⁷⁵

Overall, the expansion of Đại Việt in the second half of the fifteenth century was a major change from its mandala form and the policy of the prior five centuries. Its new bureaucratic administration internally and its reformulated foreign policy externally combined with advanced weaponry and the strong personality of Lê Thánh-tông, beginning a process that would lead to the Vietnam of today. Its southern frontier switched from being a zone of constant contention to one of openness and opportunity for the Vietnamese (and their Chinese partners). What had been interactions

of equal powers and peer cultures became those of domination and superiority. For Lê Quý-Đôn (1726–84) three centuries later, this openness and opportunity presented economic promise and administrative risk, as well as potential gain and moral mission.⁷⁶ The 400 years after the conquest of Champa would be an age of permanent expansion for the Vietnamese as Đại Việt changed into the Đại Nam of the nineteenth century. Though aristocratic rule and competition in these centuries tended at times to put aside the bureaucratic system, the nobles would return to its efficiency and control until Vietnam emerged in the nineteenth century as one of the three dominant mainland powers of Southeast Asia.

Notes

- 1 My thanks to Victor Lieberman, and other participants in the conference that led to the publication of this volume, for their welcome comments. The work of Yao Takao of the University of Hiroshima will significantly advance the study of fifteenth-century Đại Việt.
- 2 O. W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1999), pp. 27–40, 107–8, 112–18, 126–54; Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800–1830 – Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 31–7, *passim*.
- 3 For a discussion of the geography involved, see E. J. Stirling, M. M. Hurley and Le Duc Minh, *Vietnam: A Natural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 157–71, for the north, that of Đại Việt, and pp. 211–24 for the lands of Nagara Champa in the centre.
- 4 J. K. Whitmore, “The Last Great King of Classical Southeast Asia: ‘Chê-Bông-Nga’ and Fourteenth Century Champa”, in *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art*, ed. Trần Kỳ Phương and B. M. Lockhart (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2011), pp. 168–203; J. K. Whitmore, “The Rise of the Coast: Trade, State, and Culture in Early Đại Việt”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37, 1 (2006): 103–22.
- 5 J. K. Whitmore, *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming, 1371–1421* (New Haven: Council on Southeast Asian Studies, Yale University, 1985), Chapters 1–2.
- 6 Whitmore, *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming*, Chapters 3–4.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–6, 60–3, 67–8.
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7 The Vietnamese empire and its expansion, c.980–1840

Momoki Shiro

When the state of Đại Cồ Việt¹ was established in the tenth century, it inherited only the territory (I use the term “territory” in a broad sense, regardless of the nature of rule) of the Chinese protectorate of Annan, which covered present-day northern (Bắc Bộ) and north-central (Bắc Trung Bộ) Vietnam north of Ngang Pass, but which did not include present-day Tây Bắc or the northwest region. The maximum extent of the territory at that time was around 110,000 square kilometres. However, when Nguyễn Vietnam surrendered to France in the late nineteenth century, the territory it claimed to control had more than tripled to over 370,000 square kilometres, similar in extent to the present-day Socialist Republic of Vietnam, stretching from the Chinese border to the Gulf of Thailand. For this reason, the territorial (mainly southward) expansion realised by successive “Vietnamese” dynasties (Đại Cồ Việt, Đại Việt and Việt Nam) forms one of the major themes in conventional Vietnamese historiography.² Alongside glorious resistances to foreign (mainly Chinese) invasions, the expansion was regarded as an expression of the vitality of the Vietnamese nation. Vietnam’s Chinese-modelled state system, supported by neo-Confucianist social and family norms, was often argued to be superior to that of its “Indianised” neighbours, while in socio-economic terms, fierce demand for arable land among peasants living in over-populated lowland villages was often thought to have been the key factor in the expansion.

However, a thorough revision is now required. First, there have been few detailed studies of the process of expansion. Moreover, most of the earlier studies were conducted only from the viewpoint of the Viet people.³ This situation contrasts sharply with the research into the resistance to China, of which many details have been clarified from both sides. Second, the earlier explanations outlined above can no longer be maintained in the face of recent developments in Vietnamese and broader Asian historical research. The expansion brought about a diversity of “Vietnameseness” in different regions rather than the development of a single homogeneous nation.⁴ Arguments about the Chinese-modelled state system make sense only when the concrete historical context and the

process of localisation are closely examined.⁵ Images of “traditional” overpopulated villages and great hydraulic works can be adequate only in the early modern phase,⁶ while more attention should be paid to commercial interests and the struggle for hegemony over trade.⁷

Many aspects of Vietnamese expansion, therefore, need to be studied before a full picture can be drawn, although its grand outlines have already been shown by recent studies⁸ and have been incorporated into the larger comparative framework of mainland Southeast Asia by Victor Lieberman.⁹ In order to fill some blanks in the picture, this chapter introduces new evidence and viewpoints. First, I will briefly review the process, cause and effect of the expansion, especially in terms of its relationship with population pressure. I will then examine how ideas of imperial polity/territory changed in the process of expansion, with special reference to the ideological differences between the North and the South after the sixteenth century, differences that derived from this very expansion. It is not my intention to reproduce the conventional North-South dichotomy accompanied by an ahistoric peasant-centric image of “traditional” Vietnam.¹⁰ Instead, I will try to historicise these areas in regional and global contexts, fully recognising the importance of other factors such as trade and coastal regions, links with mountainous regions, and so on.

The expansion of the empire

The Northern Vietnamese polity in the tenth century was inaugurated as something like the “the eleventh member” of the Ten Kingdoms in southern China. From the reign of Đinh Bộ Lĩnh (r. 966²–79), however, Đại Cồ Việt became an empire with its own regalia including imperial titles,¹¹ reign period titles and copper cash, though it was still required to send tribute to the Chinese empire. The Lý Dynasty (1009–1226) added a number of new elements to the empire, such as a patrilineal succession system for the throne, Thăng Long as its capital (present-day Hanoi), the empire name of Đại Việt (formalised since 1054?), and the vassal name of An Nam (Annan) conferred by the Chinese empire (from 1174). The Trần Dynasty (1226–1400) subsequently added Chinese-styled historiography and bureaucracy. These elements constituted a charter that was inherited by later dynasties till the end of the Lê Dynasty (1428–1789). It was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that Huế-centred Vietnam formally superseded this double-faced polity of Đại Việt/An Nam.

An empire that expressed itself with Chinese vocabulary needed its own tributary system (or “world order”) to dominate barbarians. A small polity that had to cope with constant pressure from the gigantic empire to the north needed to keep peaceful conditions or enlarge its hinterland to the south as well as to the west. In the economic context, it was important for

a mandala¹² or a solar polity¹³ to control trade networks. For these reasons, emperors of Đại Cồ Việt and early Đại Việt were eager to attack their southern neighbour, Champa. The first big expedition was conducted in 982 by Lê Hoàn (r. 980–1005), and other expeditions were launched in 1044, 1069, 1252 and 1312.

According to popular historiography, Champa faced an irreversible decline from 982, while Đại Việt enlarged its southern territory step by step, first in 1069, then in 1306.¹⁴

However, Đại Việt was not capable of perpetuating its sporadic victories in those centuries. Champa always recovered quickly and would not serve as an obedient vassal as Đại Việt wished. Rather, the major success of early Đại Việt appears to have been the recovery of the sphere of influence of the Tang protectorate of Annan (comprising the present-day Red River Delta, the mountainous region of the northeast and the southern provinces of Thanh-Nghệ) after the turmoil during the tenth century. Such a sphere had to be protected against pressures not only from the north (China) and the south (Champa) but also from the west (Yunnan).¹⁵ Many elements of Lý-Trần culture (for example, sculptures and the worship of deities) derived from Champa, Yunnan and the Tai/Lao world.

It was only after the end of the fourteenth century that the equilibrium between Đại Việt and Champa was broken and the real southward expansion started. Thuận Hoá and Quảng Nam were finally incorporated into the territory of Đại Việt in 1471, when Lê Thánh Tông (r. 1460–97) destroyed the Champa capital of Vijaya. During the period of political division from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth, Nguyễn Cochinchina or Đàng Trong (also called Quảng Nam by foreigners) survived the pressure of the Trịnh in Tongking or Đàng Ngoài, thanks to superior firearms and trade benefits. In order to broaden its hinterland (and probably to cope with the decline of Japanese and European trade after the mid-seventeenth century), the Nguyễn resumed the southward expansion. By the end of the seventeenth century, the kingship of Champa (Pandulanga) had been reduced to the status of princeship, and even that was to perish in 1835. The Nguyễn polity in its early stage (the late sixteenth century and the seventeenth) was a kind of colonial state that governed various people including the Cham¹⁶ and the Chinese. However, they were gradually Vietnamised (or they Vietnamised themselves) after the eighteenth century.

From the mid-seventeenth century, the Nguyễn launched themselves into the new territory of present-day southern Vietnam, where they established a new administrative unit of Gia Định. Following the establishment and expansion of Gia Định, the tripartite division of Vietnam into north, centre and south¹⁷ gradually came into being. Along with their involvement in Cambodian affairs and the subsequent competition with Siam, the Nguyễn lords gradually brought Chinese (most famously, the Mạc family in Hà Tiên), Khmer and Malay local chiefs in

and around Gia Định under its control. Thanks to such ethnic diversity and the economic prosperity of Gia Định,¹⁸ Nguyễn Phước Anh defeated the Tây Sơn and unified the south and the north under the Nguyễn Dynasty (1802–1945). After the reign of Minh Mạng (r. 1820–40), however, a Vietnamisation policy was imposed in Gia Định, along with an unsuccessful assimilation policy in Cambodia.

The westward expansion toward the Northwest (Tây Bắc) and Trường Sơn Mountains also began in the late Trần period. In 1479, Lê Thánh Tông launched a major expedition to the “Golden Triangle”, in which the army of Đại Việt marched as far as the territory of Burma. For the Restored Lê Dynasty (1532–1789), who failed to reunify the south, the Tai-Lao chiefs in the Northwest and Trường Sơn Mountains and the kings of Lan Sang were indispensable as members of the Trịnh’s own tributary system. Minh Mạng tried to impose a direct control system upon minorities who had been governed through the “native office” system, but his policy toward Laos was also unsuccessful.

Along with the administrative organisation of new territories, the Lê Dynasty tried to create a large tributary system including all of its “barbarian” neighbours.¹⁹ In 1485, Lê Thánh Tông promulgated *Chư phiên sứ thần triều cống kinh quốc lệ* (“The Regulations concerning Tribute Missions from Vassals to the Imperial Capital”), which listed Champa, Laos, Siam, Java and Melaka as tributary polities. Ideas of cultural purification of the Viet people and assimilation of barbarians were often articulated in this period, although such could be realised only slowly in the following centuries. Chiefs of mountainous and peripheral regions were then treated as barbarians to be ruled through the “native office” system, rather than allies within a loose federation lacking a strict ethnic distinction. The Nguyễn Dynasty before the French invasion also regarded all Southeast Asian and European countries that had contact with Vietnam as its tributary countries, although Nguyễn Phước Anh had to pay tribute to Bangkok because he had taken refuge there during the Tây Sơn war.

Development or crisis?

Ample arguments have been made about the cause of the rapid expansions of Đại Việt. Concerning the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, for instance, agricultural production was developed with huge embankment networks and coastal reclamation projects, which resulted in a rapid increase of population. Rural handicrafts represented by export ceramics produced at Hải Dương kilns (Chu Đậu, Ngói etc.) also contributed to the economic growth. Chinese-modelled administrative and military systems were extended. On the battlefield, Ming-modelled firearms were overwhelming.

The expansion of Vietnam, however, should not be understood simply in such evolutionary contexts. We must also give attention to the general

crisis during the fourteenth century, which Đại Việt had to overcome at the expense of others. It is not clear whether Champa was affected by the fourteenth-century crisis,²⁰ but the decline of Cambodia was obviously related to it. In Đại Việt, not only the old political system (which was more “Southeast Asian” than “East Asian”) but also the recently-developed village societies appear to have faced severe problems after the mid-fourteenth century. Compared to the political change,²¹ the socio-economic crisis has so far been treated in too general a fashion from fragmentary records about the deadlock of large estate economies, the resistance of dependent people, and natural calamities.

We should now be closely examining late Trần inscriptions, most of which became available only recently.²² To my knowledge, 60 inscriptions survive from the Trần period,²³ compared with only 30 from earlier periods.²⁴ Most of the Trần inscriptions were incised in the fourteenth century (probably 52, including some undated inscriptions). Their contents show a drastic change from those of earlier inscriptions. Most of the inscriptions before the end of the Lý Dynasty are gravestones of aristocrats or commemorative inscriptions of temple buildings or bell-castings sponsored by aristocrats. Little information about the economy or village society can be found in these inscriptions. However, 40 Trần inscriptions mention lists of properties of or donations to Buddhist temples and local shrines. Most of the properties and donations were small plots of rice fields less than two *mẫu* (approximately 7200 square metres). More than 350 personal names of donors are recognisable, more than one-third of whom were women. The majority of them seem to have been upper- and middle-class villagers to whom the state assigned specified service in palaces and administrative offices (probably similar to the case of Burmese *ahmu-dans*).

In my opinion, such information attests to the rise of villagers at the expense of aristocrats who had held large estates and monopolised religious rights. At the same time, however, the small scale of the donated fields and the fact that so many people had to make nominal donations to protect their actual rights of cultivation suggest a desperate shortage of arable lands and severe threats to secular property rights.²⁵ It is likely that the huge embankment projects and coastal reclamations that began in the thirteenth century brought about a “poisonous success”, which resulted in unprecedented population pressure after the mid-fourteenth century.²⁶ Though the population pressure must have been temporarily moderated in almost half a century of turmoil until 1428, it would reappear at the end of the fifteenth century on a larger scale. As the fifteenth-century expansion resulted in the north–south split after the sixteenth century, it became impossible for northerners to emigrate to the richer South, while commerce and handicrafts in the north gradually fell into the hands of Chinese. Under the unfavourable climate of the mid-eighteenth century, the early modern population pressure culminated in widespread social

unrest. After barely overcoming the crisis, villagers in the northern deltas could not help but “share poverty” in intensifying agricultural labour and consolidating the communality of their villages.²⁷ The “traditional” egalitarian village which would eventually accept the Communist system took shape in these centuries.

The Nguyễn Đăng Trong of course enjoyed more favourable conditions. Quảng Nam in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and Gia Định after the seventeenth century provided them with fertile frontier lands as well as a prosperous trade network. After the eighteenth century, however, at least in Thuận Hóa and probably in some parts of Quảng Nam, the commercial development does not seem to have kept pace with the population increase,²⁸ although too little is known about the history of agrarian societies in present-day central Vietnam to permit firm conclusions.

The southward expansion in the fifteenth century brought a new vulnerability to the empire of Đại Việt. Its territory extended too far in the north–south direction. Even the thriving coastal water network was not strong enough to maintain the political unity of the overextended territory. The long and narrow territory also meant that the southern provinces could be easily detached from the northern area by an attack from the mountains in the west, especially in the Thanh Nghệ and Thuận Hóa regions. The Tây Sơn regime would eventually collapse partly due to attacks from Laos. For this reason, only those who could keep favourable conditions in the western mountains could ensure the integrity of the whole empire. According to Yao Takao,²⁹ it was the military group from the hilly districts of the Thanh-Nghệ region, which seized state power throughout the history of early modern Vietnam (except the Mạc Dynasty of 1527–92). Their strength, as was probably the case with Đinh Bộ Lĩnh in the tenth century, lay in their membership, however marginal it may have been, of the inland region that extended from the northwest and Thanh Nghệ region as far as upper Burma and Assam. However, at Thăng Long they had to rule the mass of “Sinicised” people in the Red River Delta, who would reject the potential “Tai-isation” that prevailed in the early modern inland region of mainland Southeast Asia. The situation of the Thanh-Nghệ group could not help but be contradictory.

The ideological expansion of the empire

As vassal kings of Jiaozhi or Annan, early Vietnamese rulers had to pay tribute to the Chinese empire. On the other hand, they developed ideologies that would legitimate their imperial status in a country separate from China. These ideologies were synthesised as the concept of “the Southern Country”,³⁰ of course with regional variations. The well-known poem beginning “The Southern Emperor resides in the mountains and rivers of the Southern Country. The clear division [between the South and

the North, or Vietnam and China] is recorded in the Book of Heaven” was reportedly composed on the battlefield during the opposition to the Song army, which invaded in 1075. *Bình Ngô đại cáo*, a declaration of independence from the Ming, written by Nguyễn Trãi and promulgated in 1428, includes the famous phrases quoted below:

Now think upon our country Đại Việt.

Truly is it a civilised nation.

The area of [our country’s] mountains and rivers is already specified. Customs of the South [Đại Việt] and the North [China] are also different from each other.

It was the Triệu, the Đinh, the Lý and the Trần who in succession built our country.

Even as the Han, the Tang, the Song and the Yuan, each was sovereign in its own domain.

A detailed definition of Đại Việt is shown here: it was an empire that belonged to the Sinic world but had its own territory, culture, history and imperial power, and it was therefore an independent empire of equal status with China.³¹

This ideology was different from the state ideology of other East Asian “smaller dragons”, such as Korea and Japan, in two aspects. First, the ideology of an independent empire was compatible with a tributary relationship with China, as was the case with other Southeast Asian mandalas. Second, despite the tributary relationship, successful resistance to Chinese military invasion was the major source of imperial legitimacy. The resistance to China was often coupled with pacification of the south (or the west).³² For instance, *Đại Việt sử ký tiền biên*, compiled in the eighteenth century, records a comment from Ngô Thì Sĩ on the transfer of the capital from Hoa Lu to Thăng Long in 1010 by Lý Công Uẩn. According to this comment, Thăng Long was located at a vantage point thanks to which Lý Công Uẩn could “resist the Song and pacify Champa”, and by which later emperors also could “resist and rival China”.

The concept of “the Southern Country” was tied with the “Việt” ethnicity,³³ which allowed the simultaneous claim of Đại Việt’s universal (Sinic) civilisation and its ethnic culture and own territory. With the ambiguous concept of Việt (Yue), an ethnic/territorial term of ancient China, Đại Cổ Việt/Đại Việt (both meaning “Great Việt”) could extend its theoretical territory beyond the real border with China³⁴ without real expansion in any direction. The “Việt (Yue)” ruler should rule at least the territory of ancient Nam Việt (Nanyue) that covered present-day Guangdong, Guangxi and northern Vietnam.³⁵ Triệu Đà (Zhao Tuo), the founder of ancient Nanyue who was once proclaimed emperor of equal status to the Han emperor, was worthy of being treated as the first legitimate emperor of Đại Việt by Lê Văn Hưu (in *Đại Việt sử ký*, completed

in 1272) and Ngô Sĩ Liên (in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, 1479). Even Sĩ Nhiếp (Shi Xie), a Chinese governor of Giao Châu (Jiaozhou) at the end of the Eastern Han, could be treated as “king” (*trường*) in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, as he established a semi-independent polity which controlled the entire territory of former Nanyue.³⁶ If the emperor of Great Việt was to govern all Yue groups (*baiyue* or “Hundred Yue” in ancient Chinese), his territory should eventually cover the southern half of the Chinese Empire. If “Việt” alluded to the state of Yue in the Spring and Autumn period, the Việt ruler could even claim hegemony of the Sinic world.

Literati-officials in the late Trần period did begin to develop such ideas before the political and social crisis, and the fifteenth-century glory allowed their successors to complete them. In *Bình Ngô đại cáo* of Nguyễn Trãi, the Ming dynasty was compared to ancient Ngô (Wu) which had been defeated by king Gou Jian of Yue.³⁷ The tales of Văn Lang also developed from the late Trần period³⁸ and were completed in the late fifteenth century. According to “the History of the Hồng Bàng family” in *Lĩnh Nam Trích quái* (a collection of legends reportedly compiled in the late Trần period and published in 1492) and *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, the king Kinh Dương, the first king of the South, was a descendant of the Chinese sage-ruler Shennong. He was a younger (but wiser) brother of the Northern Emperor and therefore the southerners also had authentic Sinic civilisation. While the lineage of Shennong in the North was extinct by the new ruler Huangdi (the Yellow Emperor), Kinh Dương’s descendants, whose maternal line came from families of southern dragons and fairies and who therefore had Việt ethnicity and culture, became the Hung kings of the country of Văn Lang. Therefore, the territory of Văn Lang covered the whole of south China, which reached the Lake of Dongting in the north and Sichuan in the west.

The early modern shrinkage in the North

The southward expansion in the fifteenth century resulted in a north-south split during the next three centuries. The southern frontier of the northern polity (Tongking or Đàng Ngoài) was not extended beyond that of early dynasties before the fourteenth century. A significant change seems to have occurred there during these centuries in the ideologies of territory and ethnicity.

The Ngô family, a famous literati family in eighteenth-century Đàng Ngoài, left many academic and literary compilations, including a revised edition of *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*. The part concerning the period before the establishment of the Lê Dynasty was published in 1800 with the title of *Đại Việt sử ký tiền biên*. It includes many comments of Ngô Thì Sĩ (1726–80), who often criticised the earlier historiography of Lê Văn Hưu and Ngô Sĩ Liên. For example, the wide territory of Văn Lang was absurd, he suggested, because “our territory of Việt” was divided by the Han into

only seven provinces, which the Tang grouped into two circuits, namely Lĩnh Nam (Guangdong and Guangxi) and An Nam (northern Vietnam).³⁹ He also pointed out that the Hồng Bàng Dynasty could not have lasted 2620 years because it had only 18 (or 20) kings.⁴⁰ Such criticisms were influenced not only by Qing-style positivist academism but also by a “nationalistic” sense. Ngô Thì Sĩ’s *Đại Việt sử ký tiền biên* downgraded Triệu Đà to “king” and treated Sĩ Nhiếp as a mere Chinese governor. The commentary by Ngô Thì Sĩ criticises earlier treatment of Triệu Đà as a Vietnamese emperor, because Triệu Đà only annexed Giao Chỉ (Jiaozhi) from outside as did later Guangdong governors (including Liu Yan of the Southern Han in the tenth century). He insists that “Việt [Yue] in Nam Hải [Nanhai or Guangdong] and Quế Lâm [Guilin or Guangxi] are different from Việt in Giao Chỉ, Cửu Chân [Jiuzhen] and Nhật Nam [Rinan].”⁴¹ Nam Việt (Nanyue) did not originally include Giao Châu.⁴² He also stresses that “Sĩ Nhiếp, however wise he was, came to govern our country following a Northern [Chinese] appointment”.⁴³ These treatments, and doubts about Văn Lang, were all inherited by *Việt sử thông giám cương mục*, compiled under the Nguyễn Dynasty.⁴⁴ It seems that late early modern Vietnamese historians were indifferent to the realm of the “Hundred Yue”, and even the territory of Nanyue was thought to have been composed of two different parts, namely, Guangdong-Guangxi and northern Vietnam. Rather, the real border with China seems to have been an absolute one.

People in Đàng Ngoài had only a vague image of the prosperous but uncivilised and disloyal Thuận-Quảng (Thuận Hóa and Quảng Nam, namely, Đàng Trong), and hardly any image of Gia Định. On the contrary, geomancy, which was so popular in early modern Vietnam, contributed to the consolidation of Đàng Ngoài’s popular consciousness about its geo-body.⁴⁵ There are a number of sources that are attributed to Cao Biền (Gao Pian, a governor of Annam in the late Tang period) and/or Hoàng Phúc (Huang Fu, a Ming governor of Annam). Though the story of Cao Biền was first formed before the thirteenth century, it was enlarged many times after the fourteenth century, with the addition of the story of Hoàng Phúc. Most of the present texts are manuscripts with various titles including *An Nam cửu long kinh* (“Sutra of the Nine Dragons of An Nam”), seemingly copied after the beginning of the nineteenth century but lacking the date of compilation/copy. There are also some printed texts, such as *Địa lý Cao Biền cáo* (“Cao Biền’s Draft of Geomancy”) and *Địa lý Hoàng Phúc cáo* (“Hoàng Phúc’s Draft of Geomancy”) from the 1720s. Both these manuscripts and printed books share the leitmotif that, upon hearing that there was an imperial aura in Annam, the Chinese Emperor became worried and ordered Cao Biền (or Hoàng Phúc) to survey the territory of Annam and to suppress the aura. With this leitmotif, these sources pretend to have recorded the survey report of Cao Biền and/or Hoàng Phúc, describing geomantic conditions of each province and

district based on the administrative division of the late Lê period (some texts even give a geomantic description of villages in certain districts). Cao Biền is said to have failed to suppress some of the holy places of imperial aura. In these sources, detailed descriptions of geomancy only relate to the Red River Delta and Thanh Hóa, while the three major “dragon veins” cover the whole area from the northern mountains down to Nghệ An. Of course, these dragon veins came from the Côn Luân (Kunlun), a fictitious holy mountain of the Sinic world.

Geomancy was also popular in central and southern Vietnam, as shown in an undated manuscript entitled *Địa lý tiện lãm*,⁴⁶ which includes descriptions of Thuận Hóa.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the framework of the three major dragon veins accompanied by detailed descriptions of lowland provinces must have enabled the Việt people in Đàng Ngoài during the late Lê period to imagine a coherent territory under a sovereignty (which the Chinese emperor could not suppress) inside their real boundaries. Even in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, such sources were continually reproduced. A proto-nation-state consciousness of “geo-body” might be discerned here, as proto-nationness separate from the Sinic world was formed in many ways in late early modern Japan and Korea along with the traditional consciousness of “another Sinic empire that was not inferior to China”.

However, the emergence of proto-nationness was always paralleled by Sino-centrism. The fact that the holy places of Annam needed to be recognised by the Chinese is itself Sino-centric. Descriptions of geomancy by Vietnamese geomancers are said to have been far inferior. *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (the part added in 1697) records that the final Mạc ruler, Kính Vũ, who had resided in Cao Bằng, was defeated by the Trịnh troops in 1667 and fled into Chen’an district of “the inner territory” (*nội địa*). Here, “inner territory” means China. The eighteenth century encyclopaedist Lê Quý Đôn (1726–84) sometimes refers to China as “the upper country” (*thượng quốc*).⁴⁸ Even the nationalist Ngô Thì Sĩ often calls his country or its territory “our An Nam” (not “our Đại Việt”, as Nguyễn Trãi called it) in *Đại Việt sử ký tiền biên*.⁴⁹ It is likely that “An Nam” was at this time no longer a denomination imposed from outside. Communistic nationalists in Hanoi during the latter half of the twentieth century had to erase this history (or attribute it to “feudal ruling class”), though they apparently inherited the consciousness of the northern geo-body combined with the obscure and disobedient image of the South.

New ideas in the South

In Nguyễn Cochinchina, a territory that was a direct product of the southward expansion, different ideas appeared and developed. The Nguyễn never abandoned its formal ideology of submission to the Lê Emperor in Thăng Long. The official purpose of its resistance to the Đàng

Ngòi was to eliminate the disloyal Trịnh and support the Lê. It continued to use the Lê reign period titles till 1786 and never had its own. Before 1744, every lord adopted for himself only titles of the Lê bureaucracy. For example, the second lord Nguyễn Phước Nguyên (r. 1613–35) entitled himself “Commander-in-chief of the troops of navy and army (*thống lĩnh thủy bộ chư dinh*), concurrently with manager of important national security matters (*kiểm tổng binh chương quân quốc trong sự*), grand guardian (*thái bảo*), and duke of Thúy Quận”. When they sent official letters to China, they called themselves “Grand mentor (*thái phó*), duke of state (*quốc công*), and commander of the circuits of Thuận-Quảng of the state of An Nam (*Thuận Quảng đạo tiết chế*)”.⁵⁰ *Gaiban Tsusho*, a collection of diplomatic documents in Tokugawa Japan, records 22 letters from Quảng Nam (Nguyễn Cochinchina) from 1601 to 1694. Each of them records only the title (without personal name) of the sender. Most of the titles include “the grand commander-in-chief (*đại đô thống*)”⁵¹ of the country of An Nam”.⁵² Those letters were usually sealed with a seal of the commander general (*trấn thủ thống quân* (將軍) or *tổng trấn tướng quân*).⁵³ The Nguyễn lords never had their own diplomatic relations with China,⁵⁴ though the Qing (which seized Beijing in 1644) seems to have treated Guangnan (Quảng Nam) as a separate country from Annam till the mid-eighteenth century.⁵⁵

Along with their territorial consolidation and expansion, however, the Nguyễn were always eager to establish their own tributary system including Champa, Cambodia, Lao, Jarai, and various groups of Chinese. After the warfare with the Trịnh ceased in 1672, the Nguyễn probably found themselves less restrained by the flag of support for the Lê. In 1694, Nguyễn Phước Chu (r. 1687–1725) sent two letters to Tokugawa Japan in the name of the king of the country of Annam (*An Nam quốc quốc vương*).⁵⁶ According to *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên* (the official chronicles of Nguyễn Cochinchina), he ordered that a map of his entire territory be drawn in 1701, probably to demonstrate his sovereignty over the land of Cochinchina. While the title of king had probably been used only occasionally under Nguyễn Phước Chu,⁵⁷ Nguyễn Phước Khoát (r. 1738–65) formally proclaimed himself *vwang* (king) in 1744.⁵⁸ According to Pierre Poivre, who visited Cochinchina in 1749–50, only a few years had passed since the then king began to use the title of *vua* (king) instead of *chúa*.⁵⁹ With the vernacular title *vua*, Phước Khoát could have an equal status with the *vua* of the Lê. In 1756, he wanted to call himself the king of the country of An Nam (*An Nam quốc vương*) in a letter to the Qing, but he abandoned the idea because of the opposition of Nguyễn Quang Tiên, who was charged with drafting the letter.⁶⁰ A letter from the king of Ayutthaya dated 1755, originally written in classical Chinese (but not an elaborate form), calls Phước Khoát “*quốc vương An Nam*” (the king of the country of Annam), while in his reply he calls himself “*An Nam quốc chủ* (the lord of the state of Annam)”.⁶¹ In using titles of Annamese rulers, the Nguyễn lords seem to have shown a desire to

appropriate or supersede the position of the Lê dynasty in the diplomatic network of East Asia.

Such concerns about the Lê system notwithstanding, assertions of a polity/ territory distinct from *Đàng Ngoài* were often articulated in *Đàng Trong* from its early years. In *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên* and *Đại Nam liệt truyện tiền biên* (the official biographies of Nguyễn Cochichina), the Nguyễn polity is often referred to as a country (*quốc*) or a state (*quốc gia*). In the “edict” of proclamation of the title of king, Nguyễn Phước Chu said “the cradle of Our Country [Đàng Trong] is Ô Châu [Thuận Hóa]”.⁶²

The idea of a distinct polity/territory was expressed in two ways. One was the quasi-official use of terms that were impossible under the Lê regime. The most famous example was the use of vernacular terms for the territory (*Đàng Trong* or the Inner Region) and ruler (*chúa* or lord). In the north, the Trịnh rulers were also called *chúa*, but their official titles were nothing but the Sino-Vietnamese term *trường*. The Nguyễn lords before Nguyễn Phước Chu are often recorded with their (quasi-) official title of *chúa*, as *Chúa Tiên* (Lord of Fairies, Nguyễn Hoàng), *Chúa Sài* (Lord of Buddha, Nguyễn Phước Nguyên), *Chúa Thường* (Lord of Highness, Nguyễn Phước Lan, r. 1635–48), *Chúa Hiền* (Lord of Gentleness, Nguyễn Phước Tần, r. 1648–87) and *Chúa Ngãi* (Lord of Righteousness, Nguyễn Phước Thái, r. 1687–91).⁶³ After Nguyễn Phước Chu (r. 1687–1725), such (quasi-) official use of *chúa* is not recorded. Instead, a new term, *đạo nhân* (a Buddhist term meaning “a person of doctrine”), was employed, as *Thiên tung đạo nhân* (doctrined man of Heavenly Freedom) for Nguyễn Phước Chu, *Vân tuyền đạo nhân* (doctrined man of Cloud and Fountain) for Nguyễn Phước Tru (r. 1725–38), *Từ tế đạo nhân* (doctrined man of Mercy and Relief) for Nguyễn Phước Khoát, and *Khánh phụ đạo nhân* (doctrined man of Happiness and Brightness) for Nguyễn Phước Thuần (r. 1765–77). When Phước Khoát proclaimed himself king in 1744, he also ordered that a new (Taoistic?) title *thiên vương* (*tianwang* or Celestial King) be used vis-à-vis “vassals”.⁶⁴ The fact that the Nguyễn lords patronised Buddhism rather than Confucianism is well-known. These Sino-Vietnamese titles could also have been effective in undermining the authority of the Confucianist Lê Dynasty.

The second way the Nguyễn lords expressed that their polity/territory was distinct from the Lê-Trịnh was to appropriate the traditional comparison between *Nam* (the South or Vietnam) and *Bắc* (the North or China) in Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary. The Nguyễn often called their territory *Nam Hà* (Southern Rivers), while calling the territory of Tongking *Bắc Hà* (Northern Rivers). Terms such as *Nam triều* (Southern Dynasty), *Nam chủ* (the Lord of the South), *Nam sứ* (Southern envoy), *Nam quân* (Southern army), and *Nam tướng* (Southern general) were also employed in the Nguyễn chronicles, in contrast to things and matters of Tongking.

Nguyễn Phước Chu invited the priest Dashan (Đại Sam) from Guangdong in 1694 using the name of the king of the country of Đại Việt

(*Đại Việt quốc vương*).⁶⁵ He also had a royal seal saying “*Đại Việt quốc Nguyễn chủ vĩnh trăn chi bảo*” (“Seal of the Eternal Rule of the Nguyễn Lord of the country of Đại Việt”) cast in 1710.⁶⁶ The use of “Đại Việt” seems to have also been related to such *Nam–Bắc* comparison. Dashan heard that the Nguyễn “renamed” their territory Đại Việt after the split with Tongking.⁶⁷ If Vietnamese people before the fifteenth century regarded the names Đại Việt and An Nam as showing the contrast between the genuine denomination of the South and that imposed by the North, the Nguyễn may have regarded them as showing the contrast between the territory which still preserved genuine Southness and the territory which had lost it due to Northernisation. It is important to remember at this point that the northerners called their own country An Nam.

Việt Nam and Đại Nam in the nineteenth century

According to the account of Chapman, a British envoy who visited Qui Nhơn to meet the Tây Sơn leader Nguyễn Nhạc in 1778, Nhạc intended to “subdue the Kingdom of Cambodia with the whole peninsula as far as Siam, and the Provinces belonging to Cochin China to the north now in the hands of the Tonquinese.”⁶⁸ If the North and the South continued to co-exist, the Tây Sơn would have expanded toward the central part of mainland Southeast Asia, where the hegemony of Siam was still threatened in the mid-eighteenth century crisis. Nevertheless, the same crisis undermined the condition of the North-South co-existence. Both the Tây Sơn and Nguyễn Phước Anh were provoked to attack and occupy the North. They not only claimed to be legitimate successors of the Lê regime but also invoked the ideology of being a distinct territory/polity from the North. Emperor Qianlong of the Qing recognised the Tây Sơn leader Nguyễn Huệ (who defeated the Qing army sent to restore the Lê) with the logic that the Tây Sơn was not to be blamed as the usurper of the Lê because the Tây Sơn emerged from Quảng Nam, a country which had not subjugated itself to An Nam. Nguyễn Phước Anh first came into contact with the Qing as the chief of the country of Nongnai (Đồng Nai) or Nanyue (Nam Việt),⁶⁹ probably because the Qing had already recognised the Tây Sơn as governing both An Nam and Quảng Nam with the title of the king of Annam invested by the Qing. In the negotiation for investiture after Nguyễn Phước Anh pacified the North, he again invoked the logic of being a distinct polity/territory from Annam. Though the Qing opposed the state name “Nanyue” because it reminded the Chinese of the ancient state that had dominated Guangdong and Guangxi, a compromise was finally made to name the country Yuenan (Việt Nam), with the logic that the state emerged from the land of Yuechang (Việt Thường; see note 69) and annexed Annam (An Nam).⁷⁰ The legacy of Nguyễn Cochinchina provided both the Tây Sơn and Nguyễn Phước Anh with not only physical (economic and military) strength but also ideological weapons.

However, the Tây Sơn and Nguyễn Phước Anh also lived in the early modern South China Sea region, where the cultural influence of China was ever-growing in the wake of the expansion of overseas Chinese economic networks. As is well known, the Việt people and culture were often referred to as “Hán” by the Vietnamese themselves.⁷¹ Ming Mạng renamed his country Đại Nam (the Great South) because:

Our ancestors possessed the land of Việt Thường, and therefore the territory was called Đại Việt. ... It was not inherited from Đại Việt, the alias of An Nam. When my father *Thế tổ Cao hoàng đế* [Gia Long] possessed An Nam, our empire was named the country of Great Việt Nam [*Đại Việt Nam quốc*]. But the calendar continued to simply write [the name of our country as] Đại Việt, because it had already done so for a long time. We had no reason to stop it. Then, however, rural uneducated people found calendars of the Trần and Lê Dynasties of An Nam which also wrote [the name of the country as] Đại Việt and began to have wrong doubts [on whether our Đại Việt was inherited from the alias of Annam]. Doesn't it matter about our legitimacy? ... Because our dynasty possesses the southern region [of the Sinic World] and our territory expands every day ... now we rename it Đại Nam. ... In some cases, to use Đại Việt Nam is still reasonable, but to use Đại Việt will be prohibited eternally.⁷²

Vietnam again became a double-faced empire, which claimed to govern the southern half of the Sinic World, as did the Lê Dynasty in the fifteenth century. In other words, a cohesive ideology which would cover the whole territory of Vietnam was re-established, but at the expense of the consciousness of Viet-ness which was then omitted from the state name.

Conclusion

In the process of early modern expansion, different ideas about territory and legitimacy came into being in what is now Vietnam. From the nationalist viewpoint, Nguyễn Vietnam in the nineteenth century is to be blamed for its loss of “National Spirit” (*tinh thần dân tộc*). Or at least it can be said that the Nguyễn did not have enough time (and capability) to synthesise or to reconcile different ideas in order to consolidate the state. However, such an ideological diversity also contributed to the glorious resistance (*kháng chiến*) against France and the United States as much as National Spirit did. And now, the SRV government is openly emphasising the diversity of Vietnamese society and culture as a potential source of renovation and modernisation (though within the Suharto-like framework of “unity in diversity”).

Notes

- 1 It is likely that the name Đại Cồ Việt derived from the vernacular (nôm) form “Cự Việt” (“Great Việt”, recorded in two Lý materials) or “Kê Việt” (“the Việt Region”) which was enhanced with the Sino-Vietnamese prefix “Đại” (“Great”). Seen on tenth-century bricks found in Hoa Lư (similar bricks having also recently been found at the Thăng Long Imperial Citadel site), which were incised “Đại Việt quốc quân thành chuyên” (“brick for the military citadel of the country of Đại Việt”), the more literary form Đại Việt had also been used before it was formalised in 1054. It is also possible that the name Đại Cồ Việt, which was recorded in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (compiled in the fifteenth century) but not recorded in the earlier annals *Đại Việt sử lược* (compiled in the thirteenth or fourteenth century), was mistakenly recorded or invented in the process of the compilation of the former annals.
- 2 Bruce M. Lockhart’s *Competing Narratives of the Nam Tiến* (unpublished manuscript) analyses different historiographies in Saigon and Hanoi about the southward expansion.
- 3 P. B. Lafont (ed.) *Les frontières du Vietnam: Histoires des frontières de la péninsule indochinoise* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1989) includes chapters written from the viewpoint of the Chams, the Khmers and the Laos. Trần Kỳ Phương and Bruce M. Lockhart (eds) *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2011) also rejects traditional Viet-centric ideas when it deals with the Viet-Cham relationship.
- 4 See Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998); Keith W. Taylor, “Regional Conflicts among the Việt Peoples between the 13th and 19th Centuries”, in *Guerre et paix en Asie du sud-est*, ed. Nguyễn Thê Anh and Alain Forest (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998), pp. 109–33; Keith W. Taylor, “Surface Orientations in Vietnam: Beyond Histories of Nation and Region”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, 4 (1998): 949–78.
- 5 See the works of Woodside, Wolters, Whitmore, and Taylor, especially Alexander B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971) and Oliver W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*, revised edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1999).
- 6 See the works of Sakurai Yumio, especially *Land, Water, Rice, and Men in Early Vietnam: Agrarian Adaptation and Socio-political Organization*, ed. Keith W. Taylor and transl. Thomas A. Stanley (n.d.).
- 7 See, for instance, John K. Whitmore, “Vietnam and the Monetary Flow of Eastern Asia, Thirteenth to Eighteenth Centuries”, in *Precious Metals in the Later Medieval and Early Modern World*, ed. J. F. Richards (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 1983), pp. 363–93; John K. Whitmore, “The Rise of the Coast: Trade, State and Culture in Early Đại Việt”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37, 1 (2006): 103–22; Tran Quoc Vuong, “Traditions, Acculturation, Renovation: The Evolutionary Pattern of Vietnamese Culture”, in *Southeast Asia in the 9th to 14th Centuries*, ed. David G. Marr and A. C. Milner (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986), pp. 271–8; Momoki Shiro, “Dai Viet and the South China Sea Trade from the 10th to the 15th Century”, *Crossroads* 12, 1 (1999): 1–34; Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina*; Li Tana, “A View from the Sea: Perspectives on the Northern and Central Vietnamese Coast”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37, 1 (2006): 83–102; and Charles Wheeler, “Re-thinking the Sea in Vietnamese History: Littoral Society in the Integration of Thuan-Quang, Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37, 1 (2006): 123–53.

- 8 Keith W. Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). See also Taylor, “Regional Conflicts” and “Surface Orientations”.
- 9 Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800–1830 – Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 338–456.
- 10 Such conventional/ahistoric historiography is sharply criticised by Wheeler, “Re-thinking the Sea in Vietnamese History”, pp. 123–30.
- 11 Keith W. Taylor, “Looking Behind the Vietnamese Annals, Lý Phật Ma (1028–54) and Lý Nhật Tôn (1054–72)”, *The Vietnam Forum* 7 (1986): 47–68. Taylor argues that it was Lý Thánh Tông (r. 1054–72) who proclaimed himself emperor for the first time in the history of Đại Việt. However, the title of Đại Thánh Minh Hoàng Đế (the Emperor of Great Victory and Brightness) of Đinh Bộ Lĩnh is attested by two stelae with Buddhist mantras erected in the capital Hoa Lư in 979. See Phan Văn Các and Claudine Salmon (eds), *Épigraphie en Chinois du Viêt Nam*, vol. 1: *De l’occupation chinoise à la dynastie des Lý* [Văn khắc Hán Nôm Việt Nam tập 1, từ Bắc thuộc đến thời Lý] (Paris and Hanoi: École Française d’Extrême-Orient and Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm, 1998), pp. 64, 68.
- 12 Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*.
- 13 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*.
- 14 In his thorough revision of the conventional Champa historiography provided by George Maspéro, Vickery argued that in 982 Đại Việt only sacked a centre situated north of Hải Vân Pass (not Indrapura in present-day Quảng Nam), and sacked Indrapura in 1044 and a centre in present-day Quảng Ngãi in 1069 (neither “capital” was Vijaya in present-day Bình Định). He also proposed that the rise of Vijaya as a new centre occurred not because of any 982 sack of Indrapura but because of Cambodian hegemony in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Michael Vickery, “Champa Revised”, in *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art*, pp. 363–420.
- 15 Before the fifteenth century, the term “West” did not mean the Tai-Lao regions along the Thửờng Sơn Mountains but, rather, Yunnan. According to the comment by Ngô Sĩ Lien, some people fled south to Champa and others fled west to Dali when the Ming invaded Đại Việt in 1407 (as in the Toyo Bunka Kenkyusyo edition – a collated text published by Toyo Bunka Kenkyusyo of *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* collated by Chen Chingho, book 2, p. 549). The Yunnan polity was influential in the northern mountains of Vietnam not only in the late Tang period (the invasion of Nanzhao) but also in the Lý period. Vĩ Long Province in present-day Tuyên Quang, which occupied a strategic position on the Yunnan route along the Lô River, allied with the Yunnanese in 1012. A large-scale invasion led by Yunnanese chiefs against Đại Việt was recorded in 1014. When Thân Lợi, possibly a grandson of Lý Thánh Tông through his maternal line, initiated a major civil war in 1139 after the death of Lý Thần Tông, Dali is said to have provided him with 3000 soldiers. See Momoki Shiro 桃木至朗, *Chusei Daietsu kokka-no seiritsu to hen'yo* 中世大越国家の成立と変容 [The Formation and Transformation of the Medieval State of Đại Việt] (Osaka: Osaka University Press, 2011), p. 187.
- 16 In the seventeenth century, Quảng Nam region was often known to Europeans and Japanese by its vernacular Vietnamese name “Kẻ Chiêm” (the land of the Cham).
- 17 Wheeler, “Re-thinking the Sea in Vietnamese History”, p. 130.
- 18 Nola Cooke and Li Tana (eds), *Water Frontier: Commerce and the Chinese in the Lower Mekong Region, 1750–1880* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2004).
- 19 The first expression of such an idea can be found in the rock wall inscription incised in 1335 at Tương Dương (in present-day Nghệ An) to commemorate the expedition of the senior emperor Minh Tông against the Ai Lao (the Lao

people in the Trường Sơn Mountains). The inscription claims that the crown prince of Champa, envoys from Cambodia and Siam, and a number of barbarian chieftains came to Minh Tông's camp to celebrate his victory. A rubbing of the inscription is held at the Han-Nôm Institute with the serial number of 13494 (the inscription is also quoted in *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*).

- 20 The recent revival of Champa studies is now well attested by, for example, the papers published in *The Cham of Vietnam*. Among those papers, John K. Whitmore's "The Last Great King of Classical Southeast Asia: 'Chế Bồng Nga' and Fourteenth Century Champa" deals directly with Champa in the fourteenth century and denies an overall crisis. On the other hand, Momoki Shiro, "Was Champa a pure Maritime Polity? Agriculture and Industry Recorded in Chinese Documents" (paper presented at the Core University Seminar of Kyoto University and Thammasat University: Eco-History and Rise/Demise of the Dry Areas in Southeast Asia, Kyodai Kaikan, Kyoto, 16 October 1998) presented some speculations on a possible economic crisis in Champa from the fourteenth century onwards.
- 21 Wolters has published a number of works about this, of which O. W. Wolters, *Two Essays on Đại Việt in the Fourteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, Lạc-Việt Series no. 9, 1988) is the most important.
- 22 For a general overview, see Phan and Salmon (eds) *Épigraphie en Chinois du Viêt Nam*, vol. 1, and Phan Văn Các, Claudine Salmon and Dương Thị The (eds). *Văn khắc Hán Nôm Việt Nam tập 2, Thời Trần (1226–1400)* [*Épigraphie en Chinois du Viêt Nam*, vol. 2 *La dynastie des Tran*] (Hanoi: Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm-Chungcheng University, 2002); Momoki Shiro, *Chusei Daietsu kokka*, pp. 24–30, 99–127; Momoki, "Văn khắc thời Trần: Một nguồn tài liệu xã hội nông thôn" [Inscriptions from the Tran Period: Sources of the Village Society], in *Nhân cách sử học: Kỷ yếu mừng Bát tuần Giáo sư Phan Huy Lê* [A Personality of Historical Research: Papers Celebrating the 80th Birthday of Professor Phan Huy Lê], ed. Nguyễn Quang Ngọc, Trần Văn Thọ and Philippe Papin (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất bản Chính trị Quốc gia, 2014, pp. 399–431). Detailed analyses of the economic information in specific inscriptions can be found in Shimizu Masaaki, Lê Thị Liên and Momoki Shiro, "A Trace of Disyllabicity of Vietnamese in the 14th century: Chữ Nôm Characters Contained in the Inscription of Hộ Thành Mountain (II)", *Foreign Studies* (Kobe City University of Foreign Studies) 64 (2006): 17–49; and Momoki Shiro, "Sự biến đổi xã hội Đại Việt thế kỷ XIV nhìn qua văn khắc, khảo sát trường hợp vùng Hà Tây" [The Social Change of Dai Viet in the 14th century Seen from Inscriptions, A Case Study of Ha Tay Region], in "Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội – Viện Khoa học Xã hội Việt Nam", *Việt Nam học, kỷ yếu hội thảo quốc tế lần thứ hai: Việt Nam trên đường phát triển và hội nhập: truyền thống và hiện đại, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, 14–16.7.2004*, tập I [The proceedings of the Second International Symposium on Vietnamese Studies: Vietnam on the Road to Development and Integration: Tradition and Modernity, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, July 14–16, 2004, vol. 1] (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất bản Thế giới, 2007), pp. 77–88.
- 23 A total of 44 inscriptions (including a forged one identified by Đinh Khắc Thuân, "Đặc trưng văn bản bia Lý-Trần và vấn đề niên đại của bia A Nậu tự tam bảo diên bi" [Textological characteristics of Li-Tran Stele and the date of the Stele A Nau tu tam bao dien bi], *Tạp chí Hán Nôm* 59, 2003, pp. 17–24) were published in Phan, Salmon and Dương, *Épigraphie en chinois du Viêt Nam*, vol. 2, while another 17 inscriptions were unfortunately missed. See Momoki, *Chusei Daietsu kokka*, pp. 34–40 and "Văn khắc thời Trần".
- 24 Twenty-seven inscriptions (nine pieces from the seventh to the tenth centuries and 18 from the Lý period) were published in Phan and Salmon, *Épigraphie en*

chinoise du Viêt Nam, vol. 1. After that, three other inscriptions were found and published in the journal *Tạp chí Hán Nôm*, one from the seventh century (in no. 119, 2013), and two from the Lý period (in no. 60, 2003; and no. 119, 2013). Note that the Minh Tranh Temple inscription published in no. 60 has the date of 1060, but it was possibly forged in the late Trần period (see Đinh Khắc Thuân, “Đặc trưng văn bản bia Lý-Trần”, pp. 19–20).

- 25 The other side of the coin was the rise of large landholders, whom Hồ Quý Ly took measures to oppress. However, note that latifundia-like large-scale production with slaves or serfs appears to have developed only in peripheral areas. Vietnamese scholars – Phan Huy Lê for example – have exploited local materials from after the fifteenth century and concluded that most big landholders only accumulated a large number of small, dispersed plots, of which each farmer rented a few; see Phan Huy Lê, *Chế độ ruộng đất và kinh tế nông nghiệp thời Lê sơ* [Land Holding System and Agrarian Economy in the Early Lê period] (Hanoi: Nhà Xuất bản Văn Sử Địa, 1959).
- 26 There is no reliable record of a premodern Vietnamese census. Figures on the fourteenth century and earlier shown in previous studies are completely groundless, although I agree with Lieberman’s speculation about severe population pressures in *Strange Parallels*, pp. 367–9. Regarding the early modern era, Sakurai Yumio, “The Change of the Name and Number of Villages in Medieval Vietnam”, *Vietnam Social Sciences* 1–2 (1986): 124–45, and Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina*, pp. 159–72, tried to estimate the trends of population change in present-day northern and north-central Vietnam through the number of villages. Both found two peaks, the first in the late fifteenth century and the second in the late seventeenth century to the early eighteenth. Sakurai Yumio, *Betonamu sonraku-no keisei* [The Formation of the Vietnamese Village] (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1987), examined various manifestations of the eighteenth-century agrarian crisis in the Red River Delta. Of course, more detailed research on many aspects, varying from agricultural technology and production to the family and property (and climatic change too), is needed to better understand the interrelationship between population and society.
- 27 There appeared a number of villages, each of which specialised in a certain kind of commerce, handicraft or study (to produce literati-officials who would appropriate state power for the welfare of villagers). In many cases, however, such specialisations and divisions of labour among villages (which had stronger communality than south Chinese villages) appear to have been survival strategies of deadlocked villages, rather than a development in the modernising sense. Note that even shortages of copper cash (despite constant metal supply) do not necessarily reflect a capitalistic growth of market demand if the market is not Smithian in nature. Kuroda Akinobu has published a number of theoretical works about the nature of copper cash and its relationship with the nature of a non-Smithian market system in East Asia; see, for instance, Kuroda Akinobu, “Another Monetary Economy: The Case of Traditional China”, in *Asia Pacific Dynamism 1550–2000*, ed. A. J. H. Latham and H. Kawakatsu (New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 187–98), and Kuroda Akinobu, “Seasonal Fluctuation, Multi-Layered Market and Monetary Diversity: How to Make or Not to Make a Single Domestic Currency” (paper presented at the 13th International Economic Historian Congress, Buenos Aires, 22–26 July 2002).
- 28 On the population trends of Thuận Hóa and Quảng Nam, see Li Tana, *Nguyễn Cochinchina*, pp. 28–31. With the constant increase of population, the stagnant income of the Nguyễn government after the end of the seventeenth century appears to indicate the presence rather than the absence of a seventeenth-century crisis in the Reid sense.

- 29 See Yao Takao 八尾隆生, *Reisho Vetonamu-no seiji to shakai* 黎初ヴェトナムの政治と社会 [Politics and Society in Vietnam during the Early Le Period] (Higashi-Hiroshima: Hiroshima University Press, 2009). Yao has exploited far more local sources, such as inscriptions and family genealogies, than previous scholars have done.
- 30 This is precisely what communistic nationalist historians in Hanoi have discussed as the consciousness of the Nation.
- 31 Stephen O'Harrow, "Nguyễn Trãi's *Bình Ngô Đại Cáo* 平吳大誥 of 1428: The Development of a Vietnamese National Identity", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 10, 1 (1979): 159–74.
- 32 Trần Nhân Tông launched an expedition to the western mountains in 1290, only two years after Đại Việt defeated the Mongols. When courtiers criticised him because the damage of the Mongol war had not been rectified, the emperor rejected the criticism: "We must send an expedition right now, otherwise foreign people in three directions will think we are exhausted and depressed. Such can lead to internal disdain. Therefore we have to make a big demonstration" (*Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*). Vietnamese rulers appear to have shared such a fear of attack from two sides, based on the history that both Champa (979) and the Song (980) attacked Đại Cồ Việt after the death of Đinh Bộ Lĩnh.
- 33 Inside the Việt identity, the Kinh cultural/territorial identity also developed. In Trần and early Lê records, terms such as *kinh lộ* (kinh circuits) and *kinh nhân* (kinh people) were used. Though *kinh* literally means "capital", it eventually meant the Red River Delta and its inhabitants, often in contrast with *trại* ("fortress"), which meant the Thanh Nghệ region and its inhabitants. The Sino-Vietnamese term *trại* was probably applied to the vernacular (Tai-origin) term *mường*. In modern times, both Kinh and Mường have been treated as ethnic groups.
- 34 The real border was also historically conceptualised as something that China could not violate, through the legend of the "bronze pillar of Ma Yuan that had been erected at the southernmost frontier of the Han". Though it must have been erected in present-day central Vietnam, both Vietnamese and southern Chinese people after the Song period thought that it had been erected at the border between Vietnam and Guangdong. See R. A. Stein, *Le Lin-Yi, sa localisation, sa contribution à la formation du Champa et ses liens avec la Chine* (Beijing: Centre d'Etudes Sinologue de Pekin, Université de Paris, 1947), pp. 155–85.
- 35 A Guangdong-based polity could also be "the Empire of Great Yue" that might rule these regions. Southern Han in Guangdong, one of the Ten Kingdoms in tenth-century southern China, first named itself Dayue (Đại Việt) during 917–18, when its ruler Liu Gong proclaimed himself emperor. Later, his son Yan invaded northern Vietnam.
- 36 Cao Biền (Gao Pian), who repelled the invasion of Annan by Nanchao at the end of the Tang, was treated as a mere Chinese governor in the Vietnamese annals. However, according to *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, Đại La (Thăng Long) was called "the old capital of Kinh Cao (Cao Vương)" in the edict of Lý Công Uẩn announcing the transfer of the capital from Hoa Lư to Thăng Long in 1010.
- 37 O'Harrow, "Nguyễn Trãi's *Bình Ngô Đại cáo*", pp. 166–7.
- 38 Wolters, *Two Essays on Đại Việt*, pp. 3–53.
- 39 *Đại Việt sử ký tiền biên* (Vị kinh thư ớc edition held in the Toyo Bunko), ngoại ký vol. I, 5b–7a.
- 40 Ibid., vol. I, 10a–b.
- 41 Ibid., vol. II, 1a.
- 42 Ibid., vol. I, 6b.
- 43 Ibid., vol. III, 14a.

- 44 It revised the phrase “the old capital of King Cao” in the edict of Lý Công Uẩn about the transfer of the capital to Thăng Long as “the old capital of Cao Biền”. *Việt sử thông giám cương mục*, chính biên vol. II, 9b.
- 45 The following argument about geomancy is based on Momoki Shiro, “Nation and Geo-Body in Early Modern Vietnam: A Preliminary Study through Sources of Geomancy”, in *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor*, ed. Geoff Wade and Sun Laichen (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2010). See also John K. Whitmore, “Cartography in Vietnam”, in *The History of Cartography*, ed. J. B. Harley and D. Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 478–508, for a study of early modern Vietnamese cartography, which also shows a consciousness of the geo-body, but in less popular forms.
- 46 The Hán Nôm Institute, manuscript A. 605.
- 47 According to Phạm Đình Hồ, in the Nguyễn period, the right branch of the three major veins ran down as far as Thuận Hóa and Quảng Nam, finally dispersing into an island in the sea; see *Vũ trung tùy bút* (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju edition), p. 26. According to Keith W. Taylor, “A Southern Remembrance of Cao Biền”, in *Liber Amicorum for Phan Huy Lê*, ed. John Kleinen and Philippe Papin (Hanoi: l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1999), pp. 241–58, the tales of Cao Biền were also known to the Huế court in the 1860s.
- 48 For instance, *Phủ biên tạp lục* (the manuscript held at CNRS, Paris, vol. 4, 23b) has a phrase “ships of Fujian and Guangdong of the upper country”. *Văn đại loại ngữ* (Saigon, Tủ sách cổ văn edition), vol. 3, 38a, reads, “The northern frontier of our country adjoins the inner territory of the upper country.”
- 49 *Ngoại ký* vol. I, 1a, 5b, 6b, 10a, for instance. He also uses “our Southern State” (vol. I, 2a).
- 50 *Phủ biên tạp lục*, vol. 5, 11a.
- 51 Before 1647, the Mạc and Lê rulers only had the title of *Annan doutongshi* (*An Nam đô thông sứ*) conferred on them by China. Therefore, it is also possible that the Nguyễn pretended to be the legitimate rulers of Annan, though the title *đô thống* (*doutong* 都統) usually meant a military commander.
- 52 One letter sent in 1606 notes “the country of Thiên Nam (Heavenly South)”, the country name sometimes used during the reign of Lê Thánh Tông.
- 53 *Gaiban Tsusho* (Kaitei Shiseki shuran edition, book 21), vol. 14, p. 136, a comment of Kondo Morishige, the compiler of *Gaiban Tsusho*.
- 54 *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên* (vol. 7, 20b) recounts that, following the advice of Đại Sam (Dashan – a Buddhist priest whom Nguyễn Phước Chu invited from Guangdong as his advisor), Phước Chu was determined to request investiture by the Qing. He sent two Cantonese named Hoàng Thận (Huang Shen, a student) and Hưng Triệt (Xing Che, a priest) to Guangdong in 1702, but the request was declined at the Qing Court because Qing officials said:

Quang Nam is a strong country in the region by which Champa and Cambodia were already annexed. Quang Nam will surely be a big power. But we should not perform the investiture of its king because there still remains the Lê king in Annan.

Phủ biên tạp lục, vol. 5, 28a–29a, records the letter of Phước Chu addressed to the Qing Emperor. The story of discussion at the Qing court and the consequent refusal by the Qing Emperor is of course a fiction (no Qing document mentions it). Dashan had some connections with the local government of Guangdong, but it is quite likely that the letter from Nguyễn Phước Chu was not presented to the government or was shelved by local officials. It is likely that the two Cantonese who worked as diplomatic brokers but who had no access to the Qing court had to fabricate a report with which to console Phước Chu.

- 55 *Qing shilu* (the Veritable Records of the Qing) mentions the country of Guangnan in the entries of the twenty-second day of the sixth lunar month of 1668 and the eighth day of the second lunar month of 1717. The official administrative compendium *Qinding Huangchao Wenxian Tongkao* (compiled in 1786) still includes an entry for Guangnan. However, the entries of the seventeenth day of the fourth lunar month of 1745 and the seventeenth day of the eighth month of 1756 of *Qing shilu* employ the name Annan to refer to the Nguyễn lord.
- 56 *Gaiban Tsusho*, vol. 14.
- 57 Along with the title of *quốc vương*, a more neutral title *quốc chủ* (“lord of the state”) was also used, probably until Nguyễn Phúc Khoát proclaimed himself king in 1744. According to *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên*, vol. 7, 5a, Phúc Chu was titled *quốc chủ* in 1693 and, thereafter, every lord called himself *quốc chủ*.
- 58 At the same time, he ordered that a seal of the king (*quốc vương*) be cast, and his headquarters of Phú Xuân (*chính dinh*) be called the “capital” (*đô thành*); see *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên*, vol. 7, 6a; 10b.
- 59 Li Tana and Anthony Reid (eds), *Southern Vietnam under the Nguyễn, Documents on the Economic History of Cochinchina* (Đàng Trong), 1602–1777 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), pp. 64–5.
- 60 *Phủ biên tạp lục*, vol. 5, 11a–b; *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên*, vol. 10, 29a.
- 61 *Phủ biên tạp lục*, vol. 5, 11b–22a.
- 62 *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên*, vol. 10, 6b. Ô Châu was the original name of Thuận Châu, which covered the southern part of present-day Quảng Trị, where the Nguyễn established its first headquarters. However, Ô Châu in the edict of Nguyễn Phúc Khoát appears to indicate the entire Thuận Hóa region (present-day Bình-Trị-Thiên), as it does in *Ô Châu cận lục*, a book of the geography of Thuận Hóa compiled in the 1550s.
- 63 The transcription of these vernacular titles can be found in both European sources (the report of Thomas Bowear, a British visitor to Cochinchina in 1695–96; see Alistair Lamb, *The Mandarin Road to Old Huế* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co. Ltd., 1970)) and Thai sources (the chronicle of King Rama I; see Thadeus Flood and Chadin Flood (transl. and eds), *The Dynastic Chronicles, Bangkok Era: The First Reign* (Tokyo: The Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1978), pp. 39–43). *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên* records these titles in Sinitised expressions such as *tiền chủ* (despite the vernacular Vietnamese title being *chúa tiền*), *phật chủ* (*chúa sãi*), *thượng chủ*, *hiền chủ* and *nghĩa chủ*. *Việt Nam khai quốc chí truyền*, a history of Cochinchina probably written in the early eighteenth century with the original title of *Nam triều công nghiệp diên chí* (see Yang Baoyun, *Contribution à l'histoire de la principauté des Nguyễn au Vietnam méridional (1600–1775)* (Geneva: Editions Olizane, 1992), p. 4), uses the title of *vương*, in *Tiên Vương*, *Sãi Vương* etc., as do some twentieth-century research articles and books. However, *Việt Nam khai quốc chí truyền* was revised in the Gia Long period (1802–20), when the Nguyễn rulers were all promoted to the rank of king. Lords after Nguyễn Phúc Chu are usually referred to by the title of *vương* in research articles and books (*Minh Vương* for Phúc Chu, *Ninh Vương* for Phúc Tru, *Võ Vương* for Phúc Khoát, and *Định Vương* for Phúc Thuần). However, these titles were, of course, posthumous ones (all Nguyễn lords had posthumous titles of *vương*), while the title *đạo nhân* was used during their reigns. According to *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên*, vol. 7, 22b, Phúc Chu issued an edict in 1703 under the name of “The Lord of the State, the Doctrined man of Heavenly Freedom” (*Quốc chủ Thiên tung đạo nhân*).
- 64 *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên*, vol. 10, 7b. Chen Shangchuan, one of the Chinese leaders who took refuge in Gia Định in the seventeenth century, called the Nguyễn lord *thiên vương* (*Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên*, vol. 6, 9a). Mạc Cửu called

- the Nguyễn ruler “Nam triều thiên vương” (the Celestial King of the Southern Dynasty); see *Đại Nam liệt truyện tiền biên* vol. 6, 2a. The title *thiên vương* may have been used unofficially before 1744.
- 65 Dashan, *Haiwai jishi* (*Hải ngoại kỷ sự*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), vol. 1, p. 1.
- 66 An imprint of this seal can be found on an inscription erected in 1715 at Thiên Mụ Temple in Huế following an edict of Nguyễn Phúc Chu, and in the letters that Nguyễn Phúc Anh sent to Portuguese Macau and Goa in 1786, 1789 and 1791 (but with the title of “the king of Annam”!) to ask for Portuguese aid in the Tây Sơn war. For the letters of Nguyễn Phúc Anh, see Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Les Nguyễn, Macau, et le Portugal: Aspects politiques et commerciaux d’une relation privilégiée en Mer de Chine 1773–1802* (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1984), Pls v, viii, xii, xvi. However, a print of “the Seal of the King of the Country of Đại Việt (*Đại Việt quốc vương chỉ ấn*)” is incised in the inscriptions erected in 1729 at Hà Trung Temple (Hán Nôm Institute, rubbing No. 5703–4) and Quốc Ân Temple (No. 13437) following the edict of Nguyễn Phúc Tru. If these prints were not forged in a later period, it is not clear how the seal of the king co-existed with the *Đại Việt quốc Nguyễn chủ vĩnh trấn chỉ bảo* seal, which was handed down to Nguyễn Phúc Anh. Why Nguyễn Phúc Anh did not carry the seal of the king cast in 1744 (see note 43) is also unclear.
- 67 *Haiwai jishi*, pp. 13–14. In 1838, Emperor Minh Mạng also explained: “Our ancestors possessed the land of Việt Thường. Therefore the territory was called Đại Việt ... It was not inherited from Đại Việt, the alias of An Nam”. See below.
- 68 Lamb, *The Mandarin Road to Old Huế*, p. 100.
- 69 *Qing shilu* refers to the polity of Nguyễn Phúc Anh as Nongnai in the entry of the twelfth day of the tenth month of 1801, according to which the Qing court ordered information to be gathered about the warfare between Nongnai and Annan. However, Yoshikai Masato found a number of letters sent by Nguyễn Phúc Anh to the Qing (the first one in 1801 before the final collapse of the Tây Sơn, and three in 1802 in the process of the negotiation for the investiture) with his title being “chief of the country of Nanyue” (Nam Việt) kept in the First National Archives in Beijing as *Junjichu zouzhe lufu* (copied direct reports to the throne). In a letter of 1802 (document no. 7766–21), Phúc Anh notes that his ancestors occupied Việt Thường (Yuechang, a legendary tribal area of the south which is said to have sent tribute to the ancient Zhou Dynasty, and in this case was supposed to have been located in central Vietnam) and Zhenla (Chân Lập, probably designating the former Khmer territory in Gia Định) to establish a country named Nanyue, which succeeded for more than 200 years. Therefore, he said, if the state name was changed to Annan, it would violate the ancestors’ intention (the same explanation can be found in *Đại Nam thực lục Chính biên*, the first reign, vol. 23, 1a–2b). He added that the Yue in Guangdong and Guangxi derived from Baiyue (thy Hundred Yues) in the territory of the Celestial Empire, while the Yue in his Nanyue related to Yuechang, and that therefore there was no way to confuse the two. See Yoshikai Masato, “‘Etsunan’ kokugo mondai saiko” [A Re-examination of the Issue of the State Name of Vietnam], paper presented at the 85th Conference of the Japan Society for Southeast Asian Studies (Sapporo: Hokkaido University, 11 June 2011). It is quite likely that this Nanyue (Nam Việt), despite the Qing suspicion of the ancient name including Guangdong and Guangxi, simply meant the “southern (part of the country of) Việt” (Đại Việt), as was the case of Nam Việt until 1975.
- 70 *Qing shilu*, entry of the sixth day of the fourth month, 1803; *Đại Nam thực lục Chính biên*, the first reign, vol. 23, 1a–2b (the first month of the fourth year of the Gia Long reign).

- 71 The earliest example can be found in *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên*, vol. 7, 5b–6a (“Ordering the Chams to change their clothing style to follow *Hán phong* [Han style]” in 1693), which may have reflected a later terminology because *Đại Nam thực lục tiền biên* were annals reconstructed after the Nguyễn Dynasty unified Vietnam. The term *Hán phong* in vol. 5, 22b–23a seems to mean Sinic culture itself, when it says “*Hán phong* gradually penetrated into Gia Định”, after the Nguyễn allowed Chinese refugees led by Yang Yandi and Chen Shangchuan to settle there in 1678.
- 72 *Đại Nam thực lục Chính biên*, the second reign, vol. 190, 1a–b.

8 Siamese state expansion in the Thonburi and early Bangkok periods

Koizumi Junko

Introduction

This study examines how the polity of Siam was able to re-establish itself and expand its control over the areas that extended to the Lao Kingdoms in the north and northeast and to the Malay Peninsula in the south within the several decades after the destruction of Ayutthaya by Burmese forces. Existing studies have pointed out that thriving maritime trade, especially with China, was of crucial importance to the recovery of Siamese power. The early Bangkok period saw a frequent dispatch of tributary missions to China with a commercial motivation of unprecedented strength. Along with the dispatch of official tributary missions, private junk trade between the two countries also flourished. By fully exploiting the benefits from such trade, Siam quickly recovered from the devastation caused by the Burmese invasion and became one of the major powers in the region by the early nineteenth century.¹

Besides those studies that emphasise the significance of maritime commercial activities, there is another vein of research that stresses the importance of labour power control, particularly *corvée* service to the king imposed on all able-bodied men, for the (re-)establishment of Siam as a strong kingdom.² It is argued that in the beginning of a new dynasty, the absolute kingship based on a firm control over labour power in the form of *corvée* was realised; yet such control was to be eroded by the flourishing commercial economy, through its encouragement of *corvée* evasion as commoners fled or became *phrai som* ("private" freemen serving officials) or *that* (a person under debt bondage) on the one hand, and the employment of Chinese wage labourers on the other. This resulted in the final abolition of *corvée* by the Chakri reformers in the early twentieth century. However, re-examination of the historiography regarding the Siamese *corvée* indicates that such an understanding may possibly be a past conveniently constructed by Prince Damrong in the early twentieth century for legitimising political reforms such as the introduction of universal military conscription that he and his contemporaries wished to promote so as to establish Siam as a modern centralised kingdom.³

In fact, the actual picture of the Siamese economy and administrative system in the late eighteenth – and early nineteenth-centuries seems tantalisingly obscure. We are still not sure, for example, how the kings in the early Bangkok period secured the supply of commodities to meet the demands from overseas markets. While an extensive collection of *suai*⁴ tax from provincial areas combined with the royal monopoly of overseas trade is the most common explanation for the ample supply of export commodities and the lucrative maritime trade, it is still not clear how, after the fall of Ayutthaya, the kings in Thonburi and during the early Bangkok period could build the administrative institutions for *suai* collection and maintain the royal monopoly of trade.

By looking into various records, particularly extant Thai administrative documents, this chapter will examine the process of how the Siamese state re-established itself and expanded its control over manpower and commodities for trade in the Thonburi and Bangkok dynasties. Contrary to the existing understanding that emphasises the importance of manpower control as the basis of royal power, it is revealed that a steady increase in the number of commoners who paid *corvée* to the king started only from the 1830s; similarly, *suai* tax in kind imposed on and collected from provincial areas also expanded both territorially and in amount only from the 1820s.

Instead of the direct extraction of manpower and other resources in the form of *corvée* and *suai*, extensive use of money and purchase to obtain resources necessary for the monarchy was obvious. In other words, rather than stressing the disintegrating effects of commercial economy on the state's controlling power, this chapter argues that market exchanges preceded and even encouraged the expansion of forced extraction by the state such as *corvée* labour in provinces in the later period. Among the various factors that contributed to the expansion of the Siamese state's controlling power into provinces at the beginning of the new kingdom, acquisition of weapons and the role of non-Thai populations seem of particular importance. Through these proposals, I hope to shed light on aspects of premodern Siamese state expansion which have been overlooked by existing studies that are more focused on the Buddhist/cosmological ideology and the charismatic power of the king to secure control of manpower resources.

Processes of state expansion: *corvée* or *suai*?

When Ayutthaya was destroyed by Burmese invasions, great chaos prevailed. The palace and temples were turned into ruins and ashes. Many people who had survived the attacks were taken away by the Burmese and those who remained resorted to plundering their own people.⁵ It was in this chaotic situation that the Siamese elite allegedly learned the vital lesson of the need for “rigid control of the distribution of manpower in

the formal organization” from their bitter experience of the fall of Ayutthaya.⁶ They thus came to introduce more strict and institutionalised measures of labour power control in the Thonburi and early Bangkok periods. King Taksin, for instance, introduced tattooing to register the subjects in the mid-1770s, which is considered to have been a direct response to the acute need for controlling labour power.⁷ The early Bangkok kings, on the other hand, are claimed to have responded to the problem in a more lenient and practical manner: while granting phased reductions in the period of corvée obligation from six to three months annually, they repeatedly ordered a thorough registration of the population, including both *phrai luang* (royal commoners) and *phrai som* (“private” commoners under the members of royal families and officials), with the administrative units under the supervision of *munnai* (officials in charge).⁸

However, a closer look at the extant administrative records will show that while such endeavours to establish orderly manpower control in the beginning of these dynasties were expressed as royal proclamations, evidence of their actual implementation is very scarce in Thai archival documents. We have very few records of *suai* collection in the Thonburi and early Bangkok periods before the 1820s, and almost no records on corvée before the 1820s are available at the National Library of Thailand. While one cannot discount that the absence of records as such may have resulted from loss and damage due to poor preservation conditions, the fact that we can find comparatively thorough records of other processes, such as the tributary relations with China, suggests that the scarcity of corvée and *suai* records before the 1820s may not simply be the result of loss.⁹

In the early Bangkok period, corvée performed by *phrai luang* (royal commoners) in a certain month was recorded in a document called *banchi chamnuan lek phrai luang khao duean* (literally translated, a list of *phrai luang* who “enter the month”). This document is a thick *samut thai dam* style manuscript presumably compiled by the central officials in charge of the administration of corvée. The earliest examples date back in the 1830s; also we find more regular record-keeping practices from the 1840s to the late 1860s.

According to the extant records, there were approximately 2000 to 3000 *phrai luang* performing corvée labour service each month in the 1840s. In fact, this number was on the rise in the mid-nineteenth century. While the number was estimated to be slightly more than 2000 per month at the beginning of the 1840s, it exceeded 3000 at the end of the same decade and then remained at around 3000 to 4000 in the 1850s and 1860s.¹⁰ Considering that there were only 50 to a little more than a few hundred *phrai luang* per month who paid corvée during the last few years of the 1830s,¹¹ the growth in the beginning of the 1840s should be regarded as rapid.

We also find that those who were to perform a monthly corvée labour were not those who were registered with major *krom* (departments) such

as Mahatthai, which took charge of the northern part of the kingdom, but those registered with a limited number of minor administrative units, primarily related to the court's activities. Read in this context, a royal order addressed to *phrai luang* registered in all administrative units was in fact addressing only the small part of the population registered with those specific minor units, not the population residing all over the kingdom.

The types of corvée service performed by those *phrai luang* (royal commoners) included military expeditions and patrols; guarding palace gates and forts; guarding different types of royal boats, made of teak and other kinds of wood; guarding buildings such as garages for boats and carriages, and shrines; construction of various buildings such as temples, palaces for the royal families and halls in the royal palace, as well as roads, water pipes and rice granaries; shipbuilding; working in the royal rice fields; and fulfilling other duties specifically assigned to the departments to which they belonged, including *ken hat saeng puen* (training for arms), *nalika* (keeping watches and clocks?) and *fi phai* (oarsmen).

Regarding the geographical distribution of the *phrai luang* who performed the monthly corvée services, a concentration within the central plain along the Chaophraya River can generally be observed. For instance, it was recorded that in the twelfth lunar month of 1844, of the 317 *phrai luang* from provinces (*huamueang*) that performed corvée, 95 were from Suphanburi, followed by 80 from Saraburi, 45 from Nakhon Chaisi, 42 from Aranyik, 21 from Lopburi, 14 from Phromburi, seven from Inburi and Ang Thong, and six from Singburi.¹² Similarly, the members of the *phrai luang krom raksa phra-ong sai* (king's bodyguard department on the left) appear to have been in Bangkok and the central region, including the villages with familiar names such as Samsen, Khlong Toei, Bang Rak, Bang Khen, Prathumthani, Wat Mahathat and Krungthep all of which were supposed to be in present-day Bangkok, as well as such places as Nakhon Chaisi, Nonthaburi, Ayutthaya, Mae Klong and Phromburi.¹³ Another document, a list of the tattooed registrants of an unknown department (*krom*) compiled in the mid-1840s, also lists about 50 *phrai luang* tattooed in 1846 and residing in provinces in the central plain, that is, in Chachoengsao, Nonthaburi, Ayutthaya, Nakhon Chaisi, Nakhon Khueankhan, Lopburi, Bang Chang, Ang Thong, Ratchaburi, Samut Songkhram and perhaps Bangkok.¹⁴

While steady expansion of state control over manpower resources in the form of corvée only started in the 1830s and was geographically confined within Bangkok and the central regions comparatively close to the capital, rapid expansion of *suai* tax imposition began a little earlier and extended widely into more remote provincial areas.¹⁵

Extant Thai records suggest that *suai* imposition in the early Bangkok period started in the mid-1820s with several products, such as gold, beeswax, eagle wood, lacquer, saltpetre, iron and teak.¹⁶ Contrary to our previous understanding that *suai* was for procuring goods for export, it

seems that many of them, such as saltpetre, lacquer, gold and at least some teak, were intended for domestic use rather than overseas markets. Geographically, Champasak and Attapu along the Mekong River supplied gold, while Nakhon Ratchasima sent various products including gold, lacquer and saltpetre. Phitsanulok, Nampat and Kamphaeng Phet in the upper central areas along the Chaophraya River, on the other hand, sent teak. In addition, Nakhon Sawan and Nakhon Nayok also sent beeswax, as did other places in the upper central region such as Phichai, Phichit, Sawankhalok, Sukhothai, Phitsanulok, Uthai Thani, Suphanburi and Kamphaeng Phet. Lacquer was sent from Nakhon Ratchasima, Phichai and Phitsanulok. Interestingly, the list also includes Phetchabun, from which the medical plant called *khon dok* (*Asclepias gigantia*) and rattan mat, imposed on the Lawa people who settled there, as well as beeswax and saltpetre, were sent as *suai* tax to Bangkok.

More extensive *suai* imposition began in the late 1820s and early 1830s, when the Bangkok authorities established a stronger control over the Mekong Basin and Khorat Plateau after suppressing the Chao Anou "rebellion" of Vientiane Kingdom. *Suai* in silver was first established in 1827 for 11 *mueang* (provinces), namely Champasak, Khamthongnoi, Khongchiam, Khamthongyai, Khong, Saphat, Samia, Sithandon, Salawan, Chiang Taeng and Saenpang, at the rates of seven or four *baht* per person.¹⁷ In 1831, there were 8,519 registered population (*lek*) liable for payment of 34,076 *baht* annually in 12 provinces, with Ubon newly included in the list. By the late 1860s, the total amount of imposition had increased to 61,854 *baht*.¹⁸

Suai tax on bastard cardamom, or *phon reo* in Thai, which was one of the export items in junk trade with China, was first established at the beginning of the 1830s. The record for 1835 indicates that more than 35 tons of bastard cardamom was demanded annually from 13 provinces in the Lao and Khmer areas in the Mekong Basin and Khorat Plateau, and another 11 tons from a few provinces in the upper Pasak basin including Lomsak, Dan Sai and Loei. In addition, many provinces in the central region, such as Saraburi, Prachinburi and Kamphaeng Phet, also sent *phon reo* as *suai*, presumably imposed on the Lao war captives resettled there.¹⁹ By the beginning of the 1860s, the total imposition had more than tripled to almost 120 tons from more than 30 provinces in the region of Mekong basin and Korat Plateau; however, the imposition on the central regions remained almost the same, while a few provinces in Khmer regions such as Siemrat (Siem Reap) and Phrattabong (Battambang) were added to the list during the same period.²⁰

Teak wood was also an important *suai* item taxed on the upper Chaophraya Basin. Beginning with a little over 200 pieces imposed on 89 commoners (*phrai*) in the mid-1820s, the amount of its imposition increased by the beginning of the 1840s to 5000 pieces on over 1200 commoners,²¹ and reached more than 5800 pieces in the late 1860s.²²

“Purchasing” goods, labour and loyalty

As indicated above, manpower control in the form of regular *corvée* or monopoly of products for overseas trade collected as *suai* tax had not been established until the late 1820s or early 1830s. What then was the source of power that allowed the kings in the Thonburi and early Bangkok periods to quickly create “a vast new Siamese empire encompassing Lan Na and much of Lan Sang, as well as Cambodia and large portions of the Malay Peninsula”, and how, by the middle of the nineteenth century, did the empire “further expand and seem stronger than ever before”?²³

While evidence to suggest the existence of regular *corvée* service and *suai* collection before the 1820s is scanty, evidence implying that the kings actually purchased labour, material resources and political support in exchange for providing cash or other benefits to their subjects can more easily be found. A French source, describing Taksin’s initial advance along the east coast from Chanthaburi to Bangkok, notes: “Wherever he passed by, Taksin widely distributed money to everyone. As a result, his little troop was growing larger and larger from one day to another.”²⁴ Similarly, during the famine that occurred soon after King Taksin rose to supremacy in 1769, he was depicted as follows:

Under these unhappy conditions Phya Tak showed his generous spirit. The needy were destitute no longer. The public treasury was opened for the relief. In return for cash, foreigners supplied them with the products that the soil of the country had refused. The Usurper justified his claims by his benevolence.²⁵

Thai chronicle records also noted King Taksin’s generosity on several occasions. Having brought Chonburi under his control, Taksin distributed 160 *baht* among the local destitute.²⁶ Then, following the successful repulsion of the remaining Burmese force in 1767, over 10,000 devastated people, both officials and commoners, in the capital received a donation (*than*) from the newly-enthroned Taksin. In addition, one bucket of rice per person, which was supposed to be sufficient for 20 days, was distributed to his officials.²⁷ Two years later, in 1769, the campaign against Nakhon Sithammarat was followed by a generous distribution of cash and food to the local population. This time, one *baht* in cash, one bucket of rice and a set of robes per person were given to the Buddhist monks, and one *salung* (one-quarter *baht*) per person was distributed to the poor.²⁸ It seems that Taksin’s expenditure on similar occasions sometimes amounted to a large sum of money. One of the most extreme cases was a reward for the meritorious works performed during the large-scale campaign against Phutthaimat and Cambodia: the king distributed as much as 800 *baht* per person to the ranked officials and 180 *baht* to the commoners.²⁹

While gaining the loyalty of his subjects by distributing money and goods, King Taksin sometimes hired (*chang*) wage labourers to secure labour power when needed. To cite an example, according to the royal chronicle, soon after his enthronement King Taksin hired both military and civilian subjects and constructed over 200 abodes for temple monks.³⁰ It should be noted that the word *chang* is found in the Three Seals Law Code much more frequently than the word *khao duean ok duean* (to perform corvée), suggesting that hiring may have been more commonly practiced in the beginning of the Bangkok dynasty.³¹

Records of the amounts which King Taksin spent on various religious occasions give us details of how goods and labour were acquired on these occasions. For instance, a grand festivity to celebrate the arrival of the Emerald Buddha in 1780 was described as follows: Starting from a three-day and three-night cerebation at the Chao Sanuk pier in Saraburi, the following two months were filled with a series of rituals and events. In total, over 120,000 pieces of fireworks were set off, tens of theatrical performances were staged by day and by night, and more than 6600 people participated in the boat processions consisting of over 280 vessels. All the participants were again generously remunerated. Three hundred *baht* were paid to over 150 craftsmen skilled in fireworks; and 1800 *baht* were distributed among over 6600 people who took part in the processions. Theatrical and musical troops that staged a show were also rewarded with money. In the case of the Vietnamese *mahori* music band, sponsored by Phraya Ratchasetthi (Ong Chiang Sun), for example, a group consisting of 15 Vietnamese received 12 *baht* for their performances staged for two months, while the Chinese *mahori* music band with six Chinese, sponsored by Phraya Ratchasetthi, received 12 *baht*, presumably on a similar performance condition. In total, the whole festivity cost more than 30,000 *baht*.³²

A similar tendency of extensive usage of cash payment in acquiring the necessities for the king seems to have continued in the early Bangkok period. There is a record to suggest, for example, that when King Rama I tried to obtain about 5000 *kwien* (ox carts) of rice to feed his army during the battle with the Burmese at the beginning of his reign in 1785–86, he could supply two-thirds by using *kha na* (rice field tax collected in kind) in Bangkok and the remaining one-third was collected by purchasing and borrowing from the subjects or as a “gift” from the officials.³³

It is most likely that these expenditures were, at least partly, afforded by the benefit from the trade with China. J. G. Koenig, who visited Siam at the end of the 1770s, observed that Siam at that time “was amply provided with all sorts of articles from China”, and that Taksin was making a great fortune out of “buying the best goods imported at a very low price and selling them again to the merchants of the town at 100 per cent interest”.³⁴

Instead of *suai*, moreover, farmed-out taxes such as *akon* and *phasi* appear to have been an important source of both cash revenue and

materials in kind that the monarchy needed for their own use and overseas trade. Tin, which was also an important export commodity produced in southern Siam, especially on the island of Phuket, was obtained by King Taksin and the early Chakri kings as *phasi* (a farmed-out tax): for every one *phara* (three piculs) of tin produced (or traded?) by the local people, the king claimed one *chang* (one-fiftieth picul) as *phasi*.³⁵

One of the earliest records of *akon* revenues compiled in 1809–10 gives us an idea of how the royal revenues were generated in terms of amount, composition and geographical distribution.³⁶ There were six kinds of farmed-out taxes, of which the total amount of revenue was 290,123 *baht*. The largest revenue among the six came from the tax on distilling and sales of spirits (190,514 *baht*), followed by fishery tax (36,292 *baht*), market shop tax (25,028 *baht*), gambling den tax (20,416 *baht*), garden and orchard tax (17,213 *baht*) and lastly boat tax (660 *baht*). The spirit tax, for instance, was collected from 21 different areas, covering Sawankhalok, Sukhothai and Phisanulok to the north, Nakhon Ratchasima to the east, Kamphaengphet to the west, and Songkhla to the south.

Above all, the most important single source of revenue was the spirit tax collected in Bangkok and its surrounding areas: its revenue amounted to 80,000 *baht*, and was farmed out to a Chinese, who also had a right to collect a market shop tax in the same area for 14,216 *baht* per year. The revenues generated from the Bangkok areas, including Nonthaburi and Samut Prakan (Paknam), were most important, as they accounted for almost 40 per cent of the total amount in the list. Besides Bangkok, 30,400 *baht* of spirit tax was collected from various provinces in the central delta, such as Ayutthaya, Ang Thong, Phromburi, Singburi, Inburi and Lopburi. Chanthaburi also seems to have been important as 16,000 *baht* of spirit tax was collected from this province alone, which was farmed out to the governor, Phraya Chanthaburi.

Acquisition of arms

Of the goods obtained through the market, one important element for the expansion of the Siamese kingdom was arms and weapons. It is revealed that the Siamese monarchy paid keen attention to obtaining arms and ammunition, mainly through English country traders via local powers in the Malay Peninsula.

Actually, Siamese maritime trade activities after the fall of Ayutthaya seem to have involved two major channels, one extending eastward to China and the other extending westward to the Indian Ocean. The latter seems to have been as important as the former since it provided access to arms such as guns and cannons. After the loss of Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim to Burma, and prior to a direct contact with the Europeans at the

port of Bangkok, it is observed that the Siamese court tried hard to obtain arms via local powers in the Malay Peninsula.³⁷

Taksin and his officials had a keen interest in acquiring arms and luxurious textiles in exchange for products such as tin, pepper and aromatic woods. Noting Taksin's strong interest in arms, a French observer commented that the best present to please Taksin was arms. Siamese royal chronicles also recorded each occasion in which a new acquisition of weapon was made. It claimed, for instance, that heaps of arms were obtained in the successful military campaigns against Burma,³⁸ and it recorded the amount peacefully purchased from the Malays and Europeans. It was noted, moreover, that some *khaek* (presumably Malay people) from Terengganu and Jakarta brought 2200 flintlock guns and presented them to Taksin in 1770.³⁹ This was followed by another donation of 1400 guns (*puen*) to Taksin by an unknown local power in 1776–77.⁴⁰

Letters exchanged with the European merchants during the Thonburi period also suggest the existence of active arms transaction. A letter from the Phra Khlang, written in late 1776 and addressed to the Danish Governor of Tranquebar, documented a transaction of weaponry with Francis Light, known as “Kapitan Lek”. According to the letter, Francis Light had purchased 1000 flintlock guns for King Taksin in Tranquebar. The same letter also suggested that Taksin proposed to make another purchase of 10,000 flintlock guns from Tranquebar and invited Tranquebar merchants to trade their guns with tin, ivory, aromatic wood (*nuea mai*) or any other commodities that they wished to obtain, either at Thalang (Phuket) or in the capital.⁴¹ It is impossible to know whether or not this particular request was implemented; however, another letter addressed to “Kapitan Bangku”, who came to Thalang to receive the tin paid for those guns, suggests that in 1777, 1826 muskets to be sent to Bangkok arrived at Thalang (900 from Francis Light and 926 from “Kapitan Bangku”), and an additional 490 were also received from “Kapitan Bangken” for local use in Thalang.⁴²

Taksin's strong interest in the acquisition of arms is also expressed in the letter of appointment issued to the *chaomueang* (governor) of Nakhon Sithammarat in the same year. It ordered the governor to make a quick purchase of weapons, even if it meant borrowing money from someone rich in the locality without waiting for money from the capital, and advised him to be always well-equipped with arms.⁴³

Tin produced in Thalang was the principle medium of exchange in the transaction of arms. Interestingly, it was around 1777 that Taksin (re-)introduced a tax (*phasi*) on tin at Thalang to secure the product to be exchanged for arms. According to the stipulation, which allegedly followed the Ayutthaya custom, the king would receive one *chang* for each *phara* of tin (presumably traded), and this rate was maintained at least into the Rama I period.⁴⁴

Evidence from Taksin's campaign against Phutthaimat in 1771, for example, suggests how Taksin furnished his troops, who were at least

partly Chinese,⁴⁵ with weapons to be used in the battlefield. The officers and soldiers were equipped with 2700 guns, while 770 cannons were installed on over 260 war vessels.⁴⁶ We may also be tempted to speculate that the frequent purchase of weapon between 1776 and 1778 was by no means a coincidence. At this time the Siamese were waging large-scale military campaigns to subjugate the Lao Kingdoms, including Chiang Mai, Vientiane and Champasak, during these years.

In the early Bangkok period, it seems that the acquisition and control of arms and ammunition still remained crucial to the kings: the kingship was in the process of establishing its legitimacy, and the Burmese were still a great threat to Siam. In 1785, King Rama I issued a decree by which he placed the influx of weapons under strict surveillance.⁴⁷ Citing an incident in which a Chinese merchant who came to trade in Bangkok had not unloaded the arms and ammunition on his boat as ordered by the law when he entered Bangkok, the decree stipulated that all the Siamese commercial boats coming into Bangkok had to report and unload all arms and ammunition on board at the interpreters' office of the Kalahom department (in charge of military affairs and southern Siam). Further, it required that all outgoing ships reload the weapons they had unloaded on their arrival from the same Kalahom officer. This stipulation was also applied to foreign commercial ships, the stipulation requiring them to unload all weapons at the office of Krommatha (Department of Port) in Samut Prakan. Any violation of these rules was punishable under the laws of treason.

While thus checking the influx of arms into Bangkok, the monarchy continued its attempt to acquire arms through various channels. While the Burmese forces were still threatening Siam by staging occasional attacks, King Rama I requested 2000 pieces of bronze armour from China when he sent a tributary mission to China in 1786, citing the war against Burma as the reason that the armour was needed.⁴⁸ Although this request was declined by Emperor Qianlong, King Rama I was successful in obtaining arms from European merchants. Simmonds, examining the set of letters written in Thai addressed to Francis Light and other English country traders between 1773 and 1794, summarised that among the 19 requests for purchasing guns recorded in the letters, 17 mentioned a specified quantity, totalling 50 cannons and 8372 flintlock muskets.⁴⁹

The last in this set of letters was dated 1794. However, the transaction of arms through this channel seems to have continued in the nineteenth century. An administrative record from the beginning of the Rama II period, for example, reveals details of the purchase of arms by the Governor of Nakhon Sithammarat in preparation for the expected fighting against Burma in 1809. Various arms, including a Macao-style boat worth 2000 *baht*, 26 cannons worth more than 3600 *baht*, iron and other smaller items, to a total value of 6000 *baht*, were purchased by Phraya Nakhon Sithammarat in Penang with a loan from Francis Light and other Chinese merchants.⁵⁰

The Siamese kings in the early Bangkok period thus accumulated a substantial amount of weaponry. A list of cannons under the Kalahom's control compiled in 1807 suggests that the Thai state held almost 2500 cannons of various types at that time, in addition to another 2800 that had been discarded from the list as broken or for other reasons. Among the 2500 listed, a little fewer than half, or about 1100 of them, were installed in 32 provinces, and another 1200 were placed in storage around the capital, while the remaining 200 were installed on 16 royal junks.⁵¹ Another list of guns compiled in the early 1820s reveals that the number of guns which the Siamese court obtained between 1808 and 1823, and which were still in use as of 1823, was over 57,000.⁵²

Expansion of the Siamese state: non-Thai populations as war captives

Successful military campaigns waged by the Siamese kings brought back a large number of prisoners of war. Having been forced to resettle in the capital and nearby areas in the central plain, they formed an important labour force to serve and fill the immediate needs of the king and officials. At the beginning of Taksin's reign, when Taksin defeated his political rivals in Phisanulok and Phimai, for instance, a large number of people were forcibly brought down from these places and resettled at the new capital. According to the descriptions given by the French missionaries, they lived under miserable conditions, which were worsened by the prevailing food shortage.⁵³ In 1775, when Siam successfully fought back against the Burmese invasion, it is alleged that some 2000 Burmese were captured and compelled to labour on public works projects.⁵⁴ Three years later, Siam's attack on Lao kingdoms again provided another 3000 prisoners of war. A French source even claimed that the number would have been much higher if twice as many had not been lost on the way home. At the arrival in the capital, these Lao prisoners of war were divided into groups of three to five families and distributed among the officials as house servants.⁵⁵

The succeeding Siamese kings in the Bangkok period continued to pursue similar evacuation campaigns. A series of successful battles against Burma, Cambodia, and the Lao and Malay kingdoms in the early Bangkok period brought back fresh supplies of people from these areas into central Siam. Following the war with the Burmese in 1786, hundreds of Burmese prisoners of war were again taken to the Siamese capital, and some 400 Vietnamese who fled from the Tayson rebellion were also captured and taken to Bangkok in 1790. This was followed by another supply of 800 Lao immigrants in the late 1790s. These persons were, according to a French source, taken to a public work site in provinces located about two to three days from Bangkok.⁵⁶

The dynastic chronicle of the first reign of the Bangkok era also suggests that the important construction works in the new capital were mainly

undertaken by non-Thai populations, especially Cambodian and Lao. The Ropkrung Canal, one of the major canals in the capital, was allegedly constructed by 10,000 Cambodian labourers. Then 5000 Lao from Vientiane were also conscripted to complete the construction of the capital. In addition, the king sent royal orders to the provincial officials all the way up to the Laotian territories along the Mekong River, requesting them to come to the capital city to help with construction works such as digging foundations for the walls around the capital and building parapets on the walls.⁵⁷

By the end of Rama I's reign, a large number of non-Thai people were resettled in the central plains and incorporated into the central and provincial administrations. The list of the officials and nobles who received *bia wat* (a money allowance distributed annually by the king to the members of the royal family and officials as a token of the king's recognition of their loyalty) in 1806–07 indicates that a large number of these people were formally organised into central administrative units called *krom* or placed under provincial officials.

The number of non-Thai officials who received the *bia wat* annual allowance from the king is listed in Table 8.1. At first glance, these figures may not seem so impressive. However, if we compare them with the figures of other major administrative units, they assume a different significance. The number of officials who received *bia wat* in Mahatthai, which was one of the major departments responsible for the administration of the central and northern provinces and civilian affairs, for example, was 85, whereas Kalahom, in charge of the southern provinces and military affairs, had 65 officials. Sasadi, on the other hand, which was supposed to be in charge of the whole administration of population registration, had even fewer officials, 55 in total; and Na, in charge of rice tax, had only 23. In fact, the

Table 8.1 *Bia wat* payments: non-Thai officials in the central administration (1806–07)

<i>Administrative unit</i>	<i>Number of officials</i>
Mon	345
Westerners	166
Ironsmith sub-unit in Inner Treasury (Vietnamese and Chinese)	123
Chinese smelters	115
Burmese	77
Cham volunteers	43
Khmer under Phaya Kalahom	26
Lao Phuan	21
Chinese artisans of tin plate? (<i>chin chang phae dibuk</i>)	20
Lao raising elephants in Ayutthaya	10
Japanese volunteers	8

Source: NL.CMH.R.I, C.S.1168 No. 5.

Table 8.2 *Bia wat* payments: provincial officials (1806–07)

<i>Province and sub-unit</i>	<i>Number of officials</i>	<i>Total amount (baht)</i>
Ratchaburi governor	1	400
Khmer	279	4928
Lao	80	1616
Phetchaburi		
Customs House (<i>dan</i>)	52	344
Lao Phung Dam	17	224
Lao Phuan	13	160
Pak Nam	45	1256
Saiyok	41	852
Thongphaphum	36	720
Chonburi ¹	1	20
Tha Chin ¹	1	20
Mae Khlong ¹	1	12
Chanthaburi	3	800
Trat	1	200
Ayutthaya Lao ²	51	596
Khaek (takia) ²	51	596
Saraburi Lao	324	4792
Lopburi Lao	6	120
Lao Phranon ²	10	150
Others	1	40
TOTAL	1014	17,846

Source: NL.CMH.R.I, C.S. 1168 No. 5.

Notes

1 Responsible for transport boats for junks.

2 Making roof-tiles.

number of officials in the Mon unit, as many as 345, was the fourth largest among all the central administrative units included in the list.⁵⁸

The predominance of non-Thai people was even more conspicuous in the case of provincial officials (see Table 8.2). Almost 85 per cent of over 1000 provincial officials who received *bia wat* in that year were Lao, Khmer, and Khaek (Malay). These were the chiefs of the resettled populations. Heavy concentrations of Khmer populations around Ratchaburi, and Lao in the Saraburi area, are especially notable.⁵⁹

Some of those non-Thai people were valued for their special expertise. Besides the Lao and Khaek roof-tile producers listed, some Lao and Burmese were often found engaged in the construction of junks as iron-smiths, carpenters and wood carvers.⁶⁰ Around 1810, some Lao from Phuan state were also made to work on processing sulphur in Kanchanaburi, and the king ordered the official in charge to provide them with enough rice to survive.⁶¹

Concluding remarks

The revival of Siam as a viable kingdom and its territorial expansion in the Thonburi and early Bangkok periods was made possible not by maritime trade linked with the extensive *suai* collection and the tightened corvée service, as is often claimed by existing studies, but by procuring necessary resources mainly through the market using the revenues from commercial activities and tax farming, which were often in the hands of the Chinese. It is also suggested that acquisition of arms and ammunition mainly through English country traders via local powers in the Malay Peninsula in exchange for local products, such as tin, was another important factor contributing to the expansion of the kingdom. By utilising those resources, Siamese kings in the Thonburi and early Bangkok periods vigorously waged wars against Burma and other neighbouring powers and through these wars obtained non-Thai populations as prisoners of war, who then came to constitute an important part of labour power, often with special expertise that the king needed. Such territorial expansion also increased economic resources, which the Siamese kings could tap.⁶² Siamese state expansion at the beginning of the new dynasty, realised through a combination of coercion and the market economy, was a prerequisite for establishing a more solid state consolidation with coercive extractions such as corvée and *suai* tax in provincial areas in later periods from the 1820s.

Notes

- 1 A few examples: Sarasin Viraphol, *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652–1853* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1977); Hong Lysa, *Thailand in the Nineteenth Century: Evolution of the Economy and Society* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1984); Jennifer W. Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1993); Nithi Ieosiwong, *Watthanatham kradumphai kap wannakam ton rattanakosin* (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1982).
- 2 See for example Akin Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782–1873* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University, 1969); David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Chiang Mai and Bangkok: Trasvin Publications, 1982), pp. 154–5, 187. Some take the strong controlling power of the king over manpower as “theory” and examine the gap between the theory and practice. See Anchali Susayan, *Khwam plian plaeng khong rabop phrai lae phonkrathop to sangkhom thai nai ratchasamai phrabat somdet phrachunlachomklao chaoyuhua* [Changes of the Phrai System and their Effects on Thai Society in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn], MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1981.
- 3 Koizumi Junko, “King’s Manpower Constructed: Writing the History of the Conscription of Labour in Siam”, *South East Asia Research* 10, 1 (2002): 31–61.
- 4 *Suai* is generally understood as capitation tax in kind in lieu of corvée service imposed on the provincial population residing in remote areas.
- 5 J. J. Boeles, “Note on an Eye-witness Account in Dutch of the Destruction of Ayudhya in 1767”, *Journal of Siam Society* 56, 1 (1968): 101–11; M. Turpin, *History*

- of the Kingdom of Siam and of the Revolutions that have Caused the Overthrow of the Empire up to AD 1770, transl. B. O. Cartwright (Bangkok: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1908), p. 161.
- 6 Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society*, pp. 125–6 and Chapter 4.
 - 7 Ibid., p. 57. In 1774, King Taksin issued a decree on population registration, requiring that commoners have the name of the province (*muang*) of their residence and the name of the official in charge (*munnai*) tattooed on their wrist, “Phraratcha Kamnot Kao” [Old Royal Decrees] No. 34, in *Kotmai tra sam duang* [Three Seals Law Codes] (Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1994), vol. 5, pp. 95–6.
 - 8 Rabibhadana, *The Organization of Thai Society*, pp. 54–9. See also “Phraratcha Kamnot Mai” [New Royal Decrees] Nos 4, 5, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 39, in *Kotmai tra sam duang*, vol. 5, pp. 202–7, 237–42, 254–67, 270–2, 350–3. The law on the registration of commoners issued in 1810 prescribed the reduction in the corvée obligation from four to three months annually for administrative units which succeeded in increasing the number of registrants. See Sathian Lailak *et al.* (ed.), *Prachum kotmai pracham sok* [Collected Laws] (Bangkok: Nitiwet, 1935), vol. 4, p. 7.
 - 9 For instance, most of the copies of the royal letters exchanged between the Siamese and Chinese courts from the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries are still available in the National Library of Thailand.
 - 10 Based on my own calculation from the unpublished manuscripts entitled *banchi chamnuan lek phrai luang khao duean* categorised under the *chotmai het* [administrative records] during the first, second, third and fourth reigns of the Bangkok period, preserved at the National Library of Thailand. Hereafter, unpublished manuscripts held in the National Library of Thailand will be referred to by an abbreviated form NL.CMH.R. As for *banchi chamnuan lek phrai luang khao duean* for the third reign, see for instance, NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1203 No. 97; C.S. 1203 No. 97, ko; C.S. 1204 No. 92; C.S. 1206 No. 206; C.S. 1206 No. 210; C.S. 1206 No. 212; C.S. 1207 No. 288; C.S. 1208 No. 138; C.S. 1208 No. 138, ko; C.S. 1208 No. 138, kho khai; C.S. 1208 No. 138, kho khwai; C.S. 1209 No. 160; C.S. 1210 No. 180; C.S. 1210 No. 180, ko; C.S. 1212 No. 133; C.S. 1212 No. 149 kho khai.
 - 11 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1199 No. 61. This document is partly illegible and partly discontinuous. Other records from the mid 1820s show that 674 *phrai luang*, including 80 Lao, under the Front Palace paid labour obligations in the eleventh lunar month of 1825. See NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1187 No. 13. Two months later, the total number had decreased to 626. See NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1187 No. 11.
 - 12 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1206 No. 210. It should be noted that besides those who were noted as “from the provinces”, there were over 2000 *phrai luang* who were to perform corvée included in the same list.
 - 13 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1203 No. 98.
 - 14 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1208 No. 147.
 - 15 For more details of the imposition, collection and commutation of *suai* in the Mekong basin, see Koizumi Junko, “The Commutation of *Suai* from Northeast Siam in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 23, 2 (1992): 276–307.
 - 16 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1186 No. 31, in Phranangklaow, King of Siam (Samnak Nayok Ratthamontri) (ed.) *Chotmai het ratchakan thi sam* [Administrative Documents of the Third Reign] (Bangkok: Khana kammakan chaloem phrakiat 200 pi Phrabat somdet Phranangklaow chaoyuhua, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 85–9.
 - 17 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1192 No. 14, in Phranangklaow, *Chotmai het ratchakan thi sam*, vol. 5, pp. 47–52.
 - 18 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1193 No. 21; NL.CMH.R.IV, C.S. 1230 No. 169.
 - 19 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1193 No. 27; NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1197 No. 7.
 - 20 NL.CMH.R.IV, C.S. 1226 No. 304.
 - 21 NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1186 No. 31; NL.CMH.R.III, C.S. 1204 No. 97.

- 22 NL.CMH.R.IV, C.S. 1230 No. 169.
- 23 Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 139.
- 24 Adrien Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Siam 1662–1811* (Paris: Société des Missions-Étrangères, 2000), vol. 2, p. 269. The Thai translation is given in “Rueang chotmai het khong phuak khana batluang farangset” [Records of French Missionaries], in *Prachum phongsawadan, phak thi 39 lem 23* (Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1968), p. 90.
- 25 Turpin, *History of the Kingdom of Siam*, pp. 178–9. See also Wyatt, *Thailand*, p. 141.
- 26 “Rueang phraratchaphongsawadan krung thonburi, chabap phan chanthanumat” [The Royal Chronicle of the Thonburi Kingdom, Phan Chanthanumat Version], in *Prachum phongsawadan, phak thi 65 lem 40* (Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1985), p. 11.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
- 29 “Chotmai het raiwan thap samai krung thonburi khrao prap mueang phutthaimat lae khamen muea pho so 2314” [Daily Administrative Records of the Thonburi Period on the Occasion of Suppressing Phutthaimat and Khmer in 1771–72], in *Prachum phongsawadan, phak thi 66 lem 40* (Bangkok: Khurusapha, 1985), p. 141.
- 30 “Rueang phraratchaphongsawadan krung thonburi”, p. 19.
- 31 Koizumi, “King’s Manpower Constructed”, pp. 48–9. The term *chang* is found in more than 25 clauses in the entire law code.
- 32 Yim Panthayangkun *et al.* (ed.) *Prachum mairapsang phak thi 1 samai krung thonburi samai* (Royal Instructions, Part 1, the Thonburi Period) (Bangkok: Khana kammakan phicharana lae chatphim ekkasan thang prawattisat, Samnak Nayok Rattthamontri, 1980), pp. 33–45.
- 33 J. G. Koenig, “Journal of a Voyage from India to Siam and Malacca in 1779”, *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (1894), p. 161.
- 34 NL.CMH.R.I, C.S. 1163 No. 3.
- 35 Sutthiwong Phongphaibun, *Phraratchaphongsawadan yo lamdap kasat lae sadet phraratchadamnoen pai mueang nakhon lae songkhla* [The Abridged Royal Chronicles and King’s Visit to Nakhon Siththamarat and Songkhla] (Songkhla: Sunsongsom Phasa Lae Watthanatham Phak Tai, Mahawitthayalai Sinakharinwirot, n.d.), p. 61.
- 36 NL.CMH.R.II, C.S. 1171 No. 6.
- 37 For the involvement of the Chinese in arms trade, see Dhiravat na Pombejra, “Administrative and Military Roles of the Chinese in Siam during an Age of Turmoil, circa 1760–1782”, in Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-keong (ed.), *Maritime China in Transition 1750–1850* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 335–353, pp. 350–1.
- 38 Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Siam*, vol. 2, p. 268.
- 39 “Rueang phraratchaphongsawadan krung thonburi”, pp. 18–29, 39–40.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 67.
- 41 “Munhet haeng kan tit to kha khai kap farang chao tawantok nai phaen din somdet phrachao krung thonburi” [The Origin of Commercial Relations with the Westerners during King Taksin’s Reign], *Sinlapakon* 9, 5 (1966): 25–31, see pp. 29–30. The suggested price (exchange rate) was six guns for one *phara* (three piculs or *hap*) of tin.
- 42 E. H. S. Simmonds, “The Thalang Letters, 1773–94: Political Aspects and the Trade in Arms”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26, 3 (1963): 592–619, see p. 612. See also Sutthiwong, *Phraratchaphongsawadan yo*, p. 38.
- 43 “Samnao kot: Rueang tang phrachao nakhon siththamarat khrang krung thonburi” [Establishing the Governor of Nakhon Siththamarat in the Thonburi Period], in *Ruam rueang mueang nakhon siththamarat* [Cremation Volume for Phon-ek Chaophraya Bodinthatadechanuchit (Yaem na Nakhon)] (Bangkok: Krom Sinlapakon, 1962), p. 179.
- 44 One *chang* equals 80 *baht* (1.2kg). Sutthiwong, *Phraratchaphongsawadan yo*,

- pp. 27–9, pp. 61–2. Examples of the rate of exchange include 100 *phara* of tin for 926 guns and one *phara* for six guns. See also Sutthiwong, *Phraratchaphong-sawadan yo*, pp. 5, 38.
- 45 The administrative records of the campaign to attack Phutthaimat also included frequent reference to the Chinese in the Siamese forces. “Chotmai het raiwan thap samai krung thonburi”, pp. 142, 145, 146 and 151. In fact, Chinese soldiers seem to have been conspicuous in Taksin’s military force. In the royal chronicles of Taksin’s reign, his force was almost always referred to as *phrai thahan thai chin* (Thai and Chinese commoner soldiers) or *kong thap bok thap ruea thai chin* (Thai and Chinese army and navy) or *phon thahan thai chin farang* (the Thai, Chinese and Westerners’ military force). In addition, a French missionary reported that Taksin valued Christians for their special knowledge and valour and that at least some of Taksin’s guards were Christians, possibly the descendants of the European residents during the Ayutthaya period. “Chotmai het khong phuak batluang farangset”, p. 114. See also Koenig, “Journal of a Voyage”, p. 166. In his extensive study on King Taksin and his era, Nithi Ieosiwong has pointed out that Taksin primarily promoted those who were outside the old Ayutthaya elite as his close officials and that the Chinese, Vietnamese and Khmer were found among the core members. Nithi Ieosiwong, *Kanmueang thai samai phrachao krung thonburi* [Thai politics in the era of King Taksin] (Bangkok: Matichon, 1993 reprint), pp. 272–319.
 - 46 “Chotmai het raiwan thap samai krung thonburi”, pp. 133–7.
 - 47 “Praratcha kamnot mai 11”, *Kotmai tra sam duang*, vol. 5, pp. 234–6.
 - 48 Kong Chotmai het Haeng Chat, Krom Sinlapakon (ed.), *Samphanthaphap thai-chin* [The Relationship between Thailand and China] (Bangkok: Krom Sinlapakon, 1978), pp. 34–8. Masuda Erika, “Rama issei no taishin gaiko” [The Diplomacy of King Rama I toward China], *Tonan ajia rekishi to bunka* 24 (1995): 25–48, see pp. 36–7.
 - 49 Simmonds, “The Thalang Letters”, p. 612.
 - 50 NL.CMH.R.II, C.S. 1171 No. 2 in Munlanithi Phraborommarachanuson Phrabat Somdet Phraphuttha Loetla-naphalai (ed.) *Chotmai het ratchakan thi song, c.s. 1171–1173* (Bangkok: 1970), pp. 19–29.
 - 51 NL.CMH.R.I, C.S. 1169, No. 1.
 - 52 NL.CMH.R.II, C.S. 1185, No. 5.
 - 53 Launay, *Histoire de la Mission de Siam*, vol. 2, pp. 270–1.
 - 54 *Ibid.*, p. 277.
 - 55 *Ibid.*, pp. 298–9.
 - 56 *Ibid.*, pp. 320–1, 325–6, 330.
 - 57 Thadeus Flood and Chadin Flood (transl. and eds), *The Dynastic Chronicles of Bangkok Era: The First Reign* (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 58–9.
 - 58 The list also indicates the importance of maritime trade: *Krommatha* (Department of Port in charge of maritime trade and foreign communities in Siam), which was allegedly staffed by wealthy Chinese merchants, was one of the largest units with 220 officials who received *bia wat*.
 - 59 NL.CMH.R.I, C.S. 1168, No. 5.
 - 60 NL.CMH.R.II, C.S. 1177, No. 14.
 - 61 NL.CMH.R.I, C.S. 1148, No. 3.
 - 62 It was the Chinese, according to Koenig, who cultivated pepper plantations in Chanthaburi, and whom Taksin relied on when he procured 80,000 piculs of pepper from the area. Koenig also noted that *mai kritsena* or aloes wood of inferior kind was a tribute from the inhabitants of “Ischanthebuhn [Chanthaburi], Cambodia, and Concao [Cancão]” conquered by Taksin, and that the Cochinese Christians in Chanthaburi were also supplying this special wood to the king as tribute. Koenig, “Journal of a Voyage”, pp. 160–1, 177–8, 180.

9 Politics of integration and cultures of resistance

A study of Burma's conquest and administration of Arakan (1785–1825)

Jacques P. Leider

The early Konbaung period, from the emergence of a new dynasty in 1752 to the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824–26, was one of the most dynamic periods of Burmese history. A new dynasty self-consciously asserted itself by taking control of the plains of the Irrawaddy, pushing back Chinese invasions in the 1760s and conducting repeated wars against neighbouring Siam while controlling rebellious lords at home and reviving ceremonious forms of the Buddhist monarchy. A novel phenomenon in this period was Burma's interference and territorial expansion to the west and the north-west, towards Arakan and the tiny kingdoms of Northeast India such as Manipur, Jaintia and Assam. This study deals with the conquest of the Buddhist kingdom of Arakan (see Map 9.1) and the 40 years of Burmese administration that came to an end when King Bagyidaw had to cede Arakan to the British East India Company in 1826.

Historians of Southeast Asia can generally say very little about what exactly happened in a conquered territory after conquest, because the available sources such as chronicles or administrative records are often tight-lipped on events and developments that followed the battles. This is not the case for Arakan. Events are recorded in various sources and their analysis may teach us a lot about the historical process of Burmese expansion in the late eighteenth century. After a short account of the conquest of Arakan, we will examine in which ways the Burmese king Badon Min (r. 1782–1819), better known by his posthumous appellation Bodawphaya, tried to integrate the new conquest into his kingdom. As this policy of integration did not go unchallenged, we will examine the forms of resistance of the Arakanese against the Burmese expansion.

“Expansion” is part of the terminology of historians that goes easily unquestioned, as its meaning has been conventionalised and is seemingly well understood. But like other supposedly neutral terms, it becomes suspect at a second look because it can mean quite different things to different speakers and audiences. Recalling what Heather Sutherland states

Map 9.1 Arakan (western Southeast Asia).

regarding other such “contingent devices” of the historian of Southeast Asia, one should emphasise that the term “expansion” serves a specific line of argument but does not simply represent reality (Sutherland 2005: 36). “Expansion” suggests, at first sight, a fine narrative on war, conquest and the increase of political and economic power. The term is inherently teleological, as it purports to name a linear process of political, military, economic or social action described and analysed following a strictly chronological order. But the casting of this process of successive events and its explanation is essentially done by the historian himself in a framework where he/she will have a clear point of departure and an arrival point where “expansion” will be declared to have succeeded or failed. Notions of “success” or “failure” seem inextricably linked to the description of the expanding process. But the reality of this process is muddled rather than streamlined; it is quite a cluttering of different political, economic and socio-cultural processes that often evolve in different directions and stretch beyond the limits of conventional historical periodisation.

Conquest divides people into conquerors and conquered, and the historiographic debate that must follow on the representation and the interpretation of what happened will be naturally split between these two groups. In this chapter, the conquest and the administration of Arakan is presented both from the point of view of the Burmese rulers who conquered the country and from Arakanese perspectives. The Burmese policy

towards Arakan and Burma's impact in Arakan are described as "politics of integration", because the Burmese ruler replaced the existing administration by his own and accelerated a process that brought Arakan closer to the kingdom of Burma. The conquest and its consequences provoked resistance, a term that will be used in this chapter to synthesise the responses of many Arakanese who did not willingly embrace the new rule. We have coined the expression "cultures of resistance" to include terms that describe people from opposing vantage points either as unlawful subjects and criminals or as rebels and patriots. "Cultures of resistance" also includes the rhetorical devices of subjected voices found in textual sources. These may consist of blatant rejection or mitigated criticism of the consequences of expansion, but they also express self-reflexive interpretations that redefine ethnic and cultural identity by incorporating political and social change.

An undemanding conquest, a troubled aftermath

On 2 January 1785, after a campaign that lasted merely a month and a half,¹ troops under the orders of the Burmese crown prince occupied the capital of Arakan, Mrauk-U (see Map 9.2). Coming two-and-a-half years after he took power, this was the first major military campaign of King Badon, also known as Bodawphaya, the longest-reigning monarch of the Konbaung dynasty (r. 1782–1819). The king having successfully crushed traitors and inner political opposition and having founded and ceremoniously moved to a new capital, Amarapura, and after a major initiative to reform the *sangha* (the Buddhist monkhood), the conquest of Arakan was not only a military triumph. It was the confirmation of the king's high-flying ambitions and of his self-image as somebody born to be a great Buddhist king. For the Arakanese it meant the end of their kingdom, which had existed independently for several centuries.

Motives for conquest

In Burma, there was no "tradition" of invading Arakan as there existed in respect of Siam.² For over two centuries, there had been no major war between Arakan and Burma. The last attempts by the Burmese to conquer Arakan went back to the sixteenth century, when they had failed both in 1546 and in 1580. The conquest of Arakan in 1784–85 could be superficially explained by bringing into play a happy conjunction of military opportunity and outer stimulation, but this would preclude a thorough investigation of the historical context and the expansionary logic that was characteristic of the early Konbaung dynasty.³ What made Arakan an object of Burmese royal desire in the late eighteenth century? There are faint indications that Arakan's instability and weakness had already caught the attention of King Sinbyushin (r. 1767–73), but no concrete plan was

Map 9.2 The conquest of Arakan, 1785.

apparently made to invade Arakan. Neither had it been on the conquering agenda of King Alaungmintaya (r. 1752–60), the founder of the dynasty. When King Thamada ascended the Arakanese throne in 1782, a few dissident lords went into exile in Burma and requested military support to return home and take power. But this brand of ambitious petitioners was not unknown at the Burmese court, and it is unlikely that such persons alone offered any more than collateral impetus to the king's intentions.

It is in the marching orders of 16 October 1784 that we find an ideologically sound and politically arguable motivation. The orders assert that Arakan had not bent in humble submission to the king and that it should be conquered so as to put an end to the country's political anarchy and the sad state of Buddhism (*sasana*).⁴ As for Arakan's public order, the

pithy reference to political disruption fits the facts. As for the morally inspiring religious motive, it was not merely a disguise of wilful aggression. In King Bodawphaya's *Weltanschauung*, a lack of rightful political authority was inextricably coupled with bad conditions for the support of the religion. There is no doubt that King Bodawphaya, seeing himself as a *dharmaraja* king bound to maintain the religious institutions, strongly believed in his royal mission of purifying the *sasana*.⁵ The conquest of Arakan also fitted into the king's broader geographical perception of the Buddhist world, a perception that was grounded both in hagiographic (though not canonical) accounts of Buddha's travels during his lifetime and in a realistic view of Burma's place with regard to India, officially referred to as "Majjhimadesa", a term from the Pali scriptures.

Burmese trade interests are nowhere clearly expressed as a motive but may be considered as an implicit motive. The possession of Arakan opened up a new road towards Bengal and North India that combined a maritime track between Dhaka and Arakan's coast with the road over the Am pass that linked Arakan with the Irrawaddy valley.

The control of Arakan finally meant an increase in human and material resources. Rice for war provisions and human labour for royal building projects and for manning boats were among the big rewards that a conqueror of Arakan could confidently look forward to.

Conquering troops and Burmese pacification

The Burmese troops succeeded in marching unchallenged into the heartland of Arakan, breaking a courageous but desperate local resistance and taking possession of the country's south as well as the two islands of Man-aung (also called Cheduba) and Ramree.⁶ The first stage of the Burmese invasion underscores the entire absence of a coordinated Arakanese defence and the dividing of efforts to resist the invasion. Superior Burmese manpower and well-planned tactical moves provide one explanation for the easy conquest of Arakan. But the Arakanese also lost their kingdom because of the incompetence and the division of their own leaders. The *Dhañawati Ayedawpon*, a contemporary Arakanese source, states that before the time of the Burmese conquest, Arakan had seven local lords besides its "official" king.⁷ With such political fragmentation, the Burmese court did not need many spies to find out that the conquest of Arakan would be less demanding than a campaign against Chiang Mai or Ayutthaya.

While the divisions among the Arakanese leaders thus played into the hands of the Burmese, the undemanding phase of conquest soon moved into a second, more challenging phase less than a month after the capture of the Arakanese king and the occupation of Mrauk-U, his capital. For more than two years, the Burmese troops faced attacks by troops organised and led by several former ministers and local lords. About this period, the Arakanese chronicler tells of skirmishes with the Burmese and about

individual feats and terrible massacres, such that there is a temptation to embrace the crude scenario of cruel Burmese invaders trampling on innocent Arakanese victims.⁸ It is certainly less easy to make a fair assessment of the beginnings of Burmese rule than about its later developments. In so far as the royal orders give us information on the setting up of a regular Burmese administration, it is obvious that the process of incorporating the newly-conquered territory went beyond the simple matter of political and military control.

Cultivating integration

The conquest of Arakan offers a perfect illustration of how much, in comparison with, say, the imperial sixteenth century, the political management of conquered regions had changed in Burma. For King Bodawphaya in 1785, there was no question of leaving an Arakanese lord in charge of the country as the great Bayinnaung (r. 1551–81), in his times, would probably have done. In 1785, the Arakanese monarchy was not formally abolished; it was superseded by the rule of a man who saw his military triumph as the natural confirmation of a great personal destiny.⁹

Political decapitation

The Burmese decapitated the kingdom by eliminating its central leadership and its supporting pillars: the spiritual, ceremonial, military and administrative elite. At the same time, they uprooted what was left, after several decades of political infighting, of the embattled institution of Arakanese kingship.

In a sense, the Burmese did this even more radically than the British did a hundred years later with the Burmese monarchy. First, the Arakanese king and his inner court were taken into exile to Amarapura, where they were settled in the vicinity of the royal palace. They were accompanied by around 500 *punnas* and their families. *Punnas* are generally known as the court Brahmins of the Burmese and Arakanese kings, and they were of Bengali origin. But the collective term “*punnas*” also includes the full array of their acolytes who were called upon in ceremonies of consecration and royal ablutions. Other socio-professional categories such as astrologers, medical experts, mantra-makers and men with knowledge of sacred Hindu books were included as well.¹⁰ The eradication of this elite meant that the whole supporting infrastructure of Arakanese kingship disappeared. On the other hand, King Bodawphaya appropriated, for his own needs, Arakanese ceremonial traditions that were Buddhist in nature, but had been influenced by Indian Brahmanism as well as the Persianised court etiquette of the Bengal sultanate and its Mughal successors. While the *punnas* formed a new elite of ceremonialists at the Amarapura court, the king appointed Abhisha Husseini, the

head of the Arakan Muslim community in Mrauk-U, as head of all the Muslims of Burma.¹¹

As some former lords who could count on a local following still fomented trouble during the two years after the conquest, Bodawphaya concluded that as long as there was a pool of potential leaders in Arakan with any claim to royal authority, Burmese rule would be challenged. So he decided to also deport the sons of three former Arakanese kings and various other princes, as well as princesses and eunuchs. He also ordered the deportation of several leading *sayadaws*, abbots of the big monasteries of Mrauk-U. It is obvious that these measures emasculated future pretenders in Arakan, as they deprived them of the resources of traditional knowledge and the means for obtaining political legitimacy.

Burmese immigration

The conquest of Arakan offered opportunities that went beyond the immediate scope of royal policies. One of the least acknowledged facts is the immigration of Burmese to Arakan during that period (and actually until the late nineteenth century). Admittedly, we have no precise statistics, but a flow of Burmese immigrants to the southern province and the islands is beyond any doubt.¹² Such a move may have been well received by the Burmese court, as it was indeed by the British 40 years later.¹³ Individual motivations varied. One royal order suggests that Burmese immigrants looked forward to escaping military conscription and service group obligations by migrating to Arakan.¹⁴ Another makes clear that Burmese subjects were trying to escape the tax burden in Burma.¹⁵ The Burmese migrants soon married Arakanese women and mixed with the local population.¹⁶

Administration

Right from the beginning, the top administration that the Burmese introduced followed the standard model of the contemporary Burmese district administration. The decapitated kingdom was refashioned with a new name, Mahavihika,¹⁷ and called a “country” (*taing*) under the rule (*naing-ngan*) of the Burmese king (see Map 9.3). In 1786, Bodawphaya sanctioned a new administrative division into four geographically distinct regions that we have come to know in the sources as districts (*myo*).¹⁸ In the king’s orders, they are mostly referred to by their “classical” Pali names: district of Arakan (Dhañawati); district of Sandoway (Dvaravati); district of Cheduba or Man-aung (Meghawati); and district of Ramree (Rammawati). At the head of each district, the Burmese put a *myo-wun* (governor) assisted by one or two *sithè* (officer in charge of civil and military affairs), an *akhwan-wun* (land revenue officer), an *akhauk-wun* (tax officer), one or two *na-khan* (information officer, often simply called

Map 9.3 Arakan and its neighbours.

“spies” as they acted as liaison officers with the court), and a *myo-saye* (district secretary in charge of the records).¹⁹ The Burmese had to rely on local men to pass their orders on at the district and village level.²⁰ Local village and circle chiefs (*ywa-thugyi*, *kywan-up* and *myo-thugyi*) had generally inherited their positions and enjoyed authority among their villagers. Unless they had rebelled, they would have been confirmed in their functions by the Burmese authorities by receiving new seals and royal letters of appointment.²¹

As in other districts of the kingdom, census and revenue inquests (*sittan*) were made to make the administrative system more efficient. The few remaining royal orders dealing with revenue and taxation do not suggest any major difference with the standards applied in Burma proper. Problems of fiscal oppression did not spring from the principles of official royal policy but from over-stated population numbers and sheer corruption of local officers.²² Temporarily fleeing to the jungle to avoid tax payment and finally wholesale village desertion were a corollary of initial over-taxation, physical coercion and campaigns of violent repression. Such a vicious circle did not support a lasting process of integration and, in such circumstances, a profitable revenue system could not be created for the court, nor for local authorities or royal appanagés. On the other hand, a high level of taxation cannot be singled out to explain the rebelliousness of Arakanese villagers against Burmese rule.²³ The data do not allow for exact comparisons, but the available evidence suggests that the tax burden under the early English tax regime was even much higher than under the Burmese administration.²⁴

Religious reforms and works of merit

One may argue that religious assimilation was an integral part of the political theology of King Bodawphaya’s imperial vision. Arakan was a Theravada Buddhist country like Burma, but, as we have said above, the king pointed out the need to remove the flaws of its religious practice. The process of political and administrative assimilation was thus emulated by parallel efforts of religious integration. A keen critic of monastic laxity since the beginning of his reign, King Bodawphaya sent specially trained monks to peripheral regions to propagate his reform mission and re-ordain the local monkhood. Such *sasana-pyu* (missionary) monks were also sent to the districts of Arakan to build new ordination halls and standardise monastic behaviour.²⁵ Distinctive features of monastic practice in Arakan are today no longer recognisable. Burmese monks were also sent to the Khami mountaineers to convert them to the Buddhist faith.²⁶ The alignment of Arakanese monks was so successful that in the middle of the nineteenth century, Arakan’s reform-minded monks had a decisive impact on the renaissance of Theravada Buddhism among the Barua, an ethnically Bengali population of Southeast Bengal, and the Chakma, a Tibeto-Burman population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.²⁷

The political legitimacy of Buddhist rule is inseparable from publicly undertaken pagoda foundations and repairs, constructions of monasteries, and donations to the *sangha* members. Oral tradition and stone inscriptions in Arakan document a considerable number of such works of merit initiated by the Burmese governors in Arakan. The inscriptions also frequently refer to Bodawphaya's monastic reform program, serving the king's religious and political propaganda and at the same time legitimising his rule.²⁸

The transmutation of the Mahamuni

Barely a week after the Burmese occupied the Arakanese capital, the Burmese crown prince undertook preparations to transport the Mahamuni bronze statue, the paragon of the Arakanese kings, to Amarapura.²⁹ Arakanese kings had prayed at its sanctuary at the beginning of their reigns; they had not undertaken any major campaign without invoking the support of the Mahamuni, and in times of disaster, prayers to the Mahamuni would have been their final recourse. To the Arakanese public, the loss of the Mahamuni has always been felt as a profound humiliation, and it was deeply resented as the vanishing of their symbol of religious identity. But today, the Mahamuni is also the most revered Buddha statue in Burma and its temple in Mandalay is the place most eagerly visited by local and outside visitors and pilgrims. It has become a national sanctum and, whatever in hindsight its loss means for the Arakanese, the Mahamuni's "life" in Upper Burma greatly symbolises Arakan's integration into a larger Burmese environment. What used to be a paragon of the Arakanese kings and a local cult became a "national" cult of all those who adhere to Burmese Buddhist culture. An equally famous Mahamuni Pagoda was built in Moulmein in the late nineteenth century.

The statue did not leave Arakan without its written biography. Texts of the *Mahamuni Phaya-thamaing* were among the first Arakanese texts brought to Burma.³⁰ The way that the Mahamuni's biography was streamlined to fit the Burmese context (its cultural integration!) has received little scholarly attention, and the adaptation of the text by Burmese monks must be considered as a subject for further study.³¹

Incorporating Arakan's cultural heritage

King Bodawphaya had a keen interest in the traditional forms of Arakanese kingship, stimulated by his search for the original ways of performing kingship rituals and his desire to reform actual practice at the court. Medical and legal texts,³² calendars,³³ and texts with prophecies of the Buddha³⁴ were eagerly sought for. In a letter sent by a senior Burmese officer requesting the help of the chief of Thade, we read that "it is the wish of the king to search for the knowledge of the hermits, the *zawgyi* and the *weikza* ... and to collect medicines, stones and metals".³⁵

It was on the basis of their study of Arakan's indigenous history that the Burmese court came to lay claims even to large parts of Bengal, as south-east Bengal had been for 80 years (from c.1580 to 1666) under the control of the Arakanese kings. Since the 1760s, the administration of Bengal had been in the hands of the East India Company. The Burmese claims on Bengal seemed outlandish to the English, no doubt. They were first made to Hiram Cox, an envoy of the East India Company, in 1798, then again in 1809 (the third mission of John Canning) and most forcefully after 1817 by the Burmese governor of Ramree.³⁶ But while the expansionary ambition of the Burmese court, focusing on British Bengal as an object of conquest, may have been a folly in terms of *Realpolitik*,³⁷ it made sense in the context of the self-perception of Bodawphaya (and his successor) and in the context of the integration of Arakan's legacy. After Bodawphaya's conquest, Arakan was soon perceived by the Burmese as a part of the kingdom, a province whose history and ancient territorial pretensions³⁸ were implicitly understood to be part of a larger Burmese past.³⁹ Rather than trying to extinguish Arakan's culture, one may say that the Burmese court wanted to absorb it.

New roads and the trade in the Bay of Bengal

Another flow of expansion, the commercial and economic integration of Arakan, can only be correctly interpreted in the wider context of the flourishing trade interests of Burmese traders and of the Burmese court.⁴⁰ The conquest of Arakan brought Burma closer to Bengal and the Indian market. A number of royal orders regarding trade activities underscore the importance of the trade through Arakan and the king's early interest in commercial contacts with the British.⁴¹

Coming from Bengal, ships could go directly to Yangon. But they could also make a stopover in Ramree, pay the royal taxes there and escape, in principle, further taxation in Yangon.⁴² Goods would also be shipped to Ramree to be sent from Arakan over the mountain passes to Sinbyugywan on the Irrawaddy.⁴³ Sources show that the Bengal trade at Ramree was flourishing but suffered much during the insurgency of Chin Byan.⁴⁴ The three important land roads went by the Am and the Talak passes (towards Minbu or Sinbyugywan) and the Taunggup pass (towards Pyay).⁴⁵ The interest that King Bodawphaya paid to the progress of the trade crossing Arakan is best illustrated by the construction and repair work done on the Am road that, for reasons of its natural advantages, became the most important line of communication towards the end of his reign. The importance of the trans-Arakan roads is also underscored by at least eight missions sent by the king to northern India. The object of these missions was to collect Sanskrit texts on astrology and court ritual and to engage Indian Brahmins from Varanasi to reform the computation of the annual calendar.⁴⁶

Arakan's share in Bodawphaya's wars and works of merit

Two years after the conquest of Arakan, things looked rather settled and promising for the Burmese administrators as the ground-work for a progressive integration of Arakan into the kingdom had been laid. But then Bodawphaya requested the Arakanese local authorities to provide men and provisions for the war effort against Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya.⁴⁷ Human labour was also in demand for some of the king's ostentatious "works of merit": the building of pagodas (especially the giant Mingun Pathodawgyi) and artificial lakes.⁴⁸ This policy, as we will see, resulted in the situation in Arakan deteriorating; this provoked several waves of emigration that vastly depopulated the country, particularly around 1798–99. Chin Byan, the notorious rebel leader of 1811–12, was among those who fled to Chittagong at this time, and he told the British administrators that the king had requested him to provide 40,000 men and 20,000 muskets for the campaign against Siam. These figures may be exaggerated, but they show, in any case, that a point had been reached where Arakan could not provide manpower at the rate the king would have needed to sustain his bellicose policy towards Ayutthaya and Chiang Mai.

On the one hand, Arakan's share in the war effort and the implementation of the king's religious projects were proof of a growing integration and of the impact of administrative centralisation. But, on the other hand, the conditions of the requisitions also reveal that this recruitment was a measure of last resort to fill depleted ranks and was counter-productive for integrating the new province.⁴⁹ While we lack sources to examine how pressure on the Arakanese population and growing discontent built up, an investigation of the various facets of resistance against the Burmese integration in the next section will help us to put motive and action into a broader context.

Cultivating resistance

The fact that rebellions happened and that Arakanese families left Arakan *en masse* testifies to a repressive rule⁵⁰ and shows the failures of Burma's integrative policy. At the same time, it shows the limits of expansion itself. If expansion was nothing more than territorial conquest and administrative control with insufficient local support, it did not run its full course and must have frustrated the expectations of the conqueror.

Exodus

Fleeing one's own country is a decision born out of desperation about economic and social conditions. It can also be a sign of protest to mark dissent in respect of a political situation. As a reaction to the oppressive methods of recruiting people for the wars against Siam and Chiang Mai,

and for the king's building projects, several waves of Arakanese refugees stranded thousands of men, women and children in the district of Chittagong in Southeast Bengal (see Map 9.4).

In those days, the south of the district of Chittagong was extensively covered by jungle and only sparsely populated by Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups such as the Chakma, the Marma, the Daing-nak/Taungchenkya, the Mro and others. The hinterland was completely unknown to British

Map 9.4 Arakanese settlements in the southern Chittagong District (based on Pearn 1933).

administrators until more than half a century later, and many places along the coast had rarely been visited. Only when the number of the refugees went into the thousands did the British authorities take serious note and ensure food support. If we put the total of the Arakanese population in Arakan c.1790 at around 250,000,⁵¹ it may be proposed that at least a third of the population chose to leave the country. This would amount to at least 80,000 people, a number that is admittedly below what some sources suggest, but a hypothesis that squares with the early British figures on the population in Arakan when most Arakanese refugees flowed back to their motherland.⁵² Like the rest of the population, the Arakanese refugees were composed of both Buddhists and Muslims.⁵³ Information on the percentage of the Muslims in the total population can be gleaned from early English and American missionary sources, but it is rather confusing and not conclusive.

To understand the size of this massive migration and the relative ease with which it happened, note that the Arakanese did not move to a completely unknown land. The coastal region to which they fled had been under the rule of the Arakanese kings from the middle of the sixteenth to the late seventeenth century. Arakanese agriculturists had stayed in these areas. Even before the Burmese conquest of 1785, Arakanese fleeing the political anarchy in their homeland had come to settle in lower southeast Bengal.⁵⁴ For the Arakanese, the exodus procured a number of decisive advantages: freedom of movement in a weakly-administered area of the district of Chittagong, no direct political oppression, no military obligations, a diminished burden in terms of taxation, and opportunities to cut the jungle and either permanently settle on new agricultural lands in the plains or practice slash-and-burn cultivation (*jhum*; Burmese *taungya*). The settlement may have caused hardship in the initial phase, but it did not have an impact on social structures, as the Arakanese transplanted their cultural modes to a natural environment identical to the one of their land of origin.

For the Burmese king, the exodus of a third of the Arakanese population to Bengal was an enormous economic loss and it weakened the project of Burmese expansion. The majority of those who were settled lived quietly in newly-founded villages. But their safe establishment on the borders of their ancient kingdom also offered a fabulous opportunity to nourish rebellious designs. The haven of the exiled community was indeed the *conditio sine qua non* of raising any serious project to unsettle Burmese rule in Arakan. And the refugee settlements offered an excellent reservoir to tap so as to replenish the ranks of the rebel troops.

To sum up, the forced recruitment of thousands of men for King Bodawphaya's building sites and for the wars against Ayutthaya and Chiang Mai pushed many people in Burma to leave their villages so as to escape an impending threat.⁵⁵ This was the case in Arakan as well. The particularity of the Arakanese exodus lay in both its scale and the fact that the refugees could *safely* settle in a foreign country.

Violence

A new challenge to Burmese suzerainty in Arakan came ten years after the conquest, around 1795. In the 20 years after 1795, the raids and the insurgency by the exiled Arakanese caused much desolation in Arakan. They did not destabilise the Burmese rule as such in a country that had by then become partly depopulated, but they caused an enduring problem for the Burmese administration. As these violent struggles were part and parcel of the causes that led to the first Anglo-Burmese war, they have received by far the most attention of writers dealing with the subject. Thanks to the complacent policy of the British authorities towards the refugees, the incursions of the Arakanese from their secure hiding places in Bengal undermined the relations between the East India Company and the court in Amarapura. These struggles also provided the materials for heroic and tragic stories, a staple of nineteenth-century British as well as local and nationalist historians.

The Arakanese leaders who fled with their villagers to the Chittagong district and were allowed to settle “partly for humanitarian reasons and partly for the sake of land revenue”⁵⁶ soon incurred the dislike of the local British magistrate after committing crimes both in British and in Burmese territory. Thus the stage was set for several intertwined issues that we have to disentangle when dealing with the violence of the Arakanese settlers.

While many Arakanese were ready to settle peacefully in British territory when they were given land grants in the interior of the Chittagong district, others did not want lands for cultivation. They lay in hiding near the frontier to prepare raids against villages in Arakan.⁵⁷ Soon their activities provoked incursions by Burmese troops.⁵⁸ Pursuing the predators, the Burmese crossed into British territory for the first time in 1787 and several times more in later years. Unsuccessful, they retreated and the Burmese authorities then called for the surrender of the responsible leaders by the British authorities. Until 1795, local English officers and the government in Calcutta were rather disposed to pay attention to the Burmese complaints. For them, Arakan was an unknown land, but it had become Burmese by right of conquest, and so Burmese sovereignty should be respected. However, the policy of the British authorities radically changed for the next 25 years as they adamantly refused to surrender any rebels.

The most famous of the insurgents was a man called Chin Byan.⁵⁹ Ironically, he was the son of Nga Than Twe, one of the Arakanese who had appealed to the Burmese to invade Arakan and who had, together with his close relatives, been involved for 13 years in the establishment and the running of the Burmese administration in Arakan.⁶⁰ The son changed sides together with his brother-in-law in October 1798. Unchecked by any local British administrators and quietly gathering men and weapons, Chin Byan put together an armed troop.⁶¹ Its size is described by a contemporary British officer as “variously rated from ten to twenty thousand,

certainly no less than ten" while an Arakanese chronicler states that at the start, at least, it did not count more than 500 men.⁶² In April 1811, Chin Byan took these men to Arakan. After destroying the frontier post at Maung-daw, they entered the Kaladan valley by the Mayu river. Laying siege to Mrauk-U, Chin Byan failed to obtain the surrender of the capital.⁶³ His men were soon heavily pressed by the troops of the Burmese governor, who twice defeated them south of the capital.

The territorial control of the insurgents seems to have been limited to a few marginal spots, while strongly fortified Burmese stockades were not taken. The Burmese counter-invasion started at the end of the rains with 5000 men who, just as in December 1784, and despite a muddled start, reconquered the country from south to north and brought their campaign to a successful end in late December 1811.⁶⁴ They did this also by rallying the support of the hill tribes, such as the Thet, Khami and Chin, who occasionally put a challenge of their own to the Burmese.⁶⁵

Thousands of Arakanese countrymen are said to have then been taken along by Chin Byan to the district of Chittagong.⁶⁶ There he reorganised his men, but when he tried to invade Arakan again four months later (April 1812) with over 1000 men, Burmese troops routed them. He confronted the Burmese troops a last time in early 1814, and his troops, numbering allegedly 3000, "were slain in great numbers". The insurgent chief had to flee back to British territory,⁶⁷ where, devoid of followers but never arrested, he died in 1815.⁶⁸ During the following years, the depredations and plundering perpetrated in Arakan by bands of refugees continued unabated.⁶⁹

One cannot fail to see that the violence committed by Arakanese refugees was highly ambivalent. On the one hand, the Arakanese incursions were purportedly anti-Burmese. They were meant to dislodge Burmese rule. On the other hand, though, the proclaimed anti-Burmese stance served as a cover to pursue acts of robbery and banditry directed against fellow countrymen.⁷⁰ In studying the culture of resistance of the Arakanese against Burmese rule, we would like to distinguish neatly between political violence and criminal violence. In practical terms this is difficult, as it is not just a matter of interpretation. There is a risk of reading the present into the past by misplacing labels and categories. Patriots may rebel, but rebels are not always patriots. But then, even gratuitous violence and plunder can and sometimes must be *politically* contextualised. Was the violence described here politically significant? Was it borne by a political project? Resistance took various forms and historians will understand its political meaning, but the question remains as to how far the Arakanese incursions made military and political sense.

First of all, we have to stress that without British *laissez-faire* in the district of Chittagong, plain negligence in security matters and infinite complacency, the refugees under Chin Byan could not have pursued their successive campaigns against the Burmese in Arakan. This policy was a

clear break with the pre-1795 British policy of accommodation with the Burmese. The East India Company government in Calcutta had the extraordinary belief in 1811 that Chin Byan would be able to dislodge Burmese power in Arakan.⁷¹ From 1811 to 1821, it strictly refused to surrender any of the Arakanese rebel leaders to the Burmese.

Certainly, Chin Byan's activities are most conveniently interpreted in the context of the Arakanese resistance to Burmese rule. But what can be said positively about his political planning? It looks like a weak point. Plundering, looting and killing are acts of revenge, not signs of a political rebuilding project. But Chin Byan's basic motivation was undoubtedly political, and the freedom that British complacency gave him was vastly stimulating.

He sought British military support in exchange for becoming a vassal of the British. But while he wanted power, Chin Byan wanted it for himself. He did not fail only because of the superior Burmese troops; he also failed because he was unable to build stable political alliances with other leaders. Nga Me explains that in 1811, after entrenching himself with his men in a number of places in the Kaladan valley, in Ramree and Sandoway, Chin Byan conspired against several of the local leaders who, when hearing of his plans, soon abandoned him with their men.

It is not the Arakanese chronicles which have made Chin Byan into a hero. This was done by British colonial historians. A. P. Phayre calls him a "restless chief" and "bold outlaw", but counts him among the "patriots" who resisted the Burmese conquerors. The later representation of the Arakanese resistance has also neglected underlying political calculations of the Arakanese leaders that were well understood at the time by the British. Their hope of throwing out the Burmese from Arakan was real, and a war between the British and the Burmese was a welcome scenario. Lord Minto, the governor-general, warned in 1812 that the refugee raids created a "hazard of involving us in a war with the [Burmese]" and in 1814, a dispatch by Calcutta to the Court of Directors noted that the object of the raids spreading terror in Arakan was "ultimately to embroil the British Government in a war with the state of Ava, the consequence of which might possibly be the expulsion of the Burmese by the British power".⁷²

Building collective memories – writing one's own history

The exodus and the violence of the Arakanese refugee communities were physical reactions to the loss of their country and their oppression by the conquerors. As we have seen that the political incorporation entailed not only material but also cultural dispossession, we may wonder if there was, on the other hand, any kind of mental, perhaps even just symbolic, protest against the appropriation of Arakan cultural heritage and the Arakanese past.

Besides the transmutation of the Mahamuni and the integration of Arakanese historiography into the official discourse on Burmese successions of earlier kings and capitals, it was the incorporation of a genealogy of the Arakanese kings into the official royal chronicle ordered by King Bagyidaw in 1829 that was the most remarkable expression of the integration of the Arakanese royal tradition.

For anybody familiar with contemporary Arakanese nationalism, the way that contemporary Arakanese who are abroad or in exile evoke Burmese villainy by celebrating the faint memory of a conquest that happened over two centuries ago, and that is idiosyncratically fashioned as the initial cause of (later) Arakanese misfortune, reflects a deep-seated frustration about Arakanese impotency to reverse the wheel of time. The memory of the loss of the kingdom has become a cornerstone of Arakanese nationalism, though such nationalism in its modern shape is a product of colonial and post-colonial times. But needless to say, the blaming of contemporary wrongs on things of the past reflects less a sense of history than the fostering of memory rituals that construct history according to psychological and ideological needs.

Protest, denial, rejection, rhetorical shaping of particular events and self-serving interpretations were not only negative expressions of a selective memory, but also blended into a more general sense of (re-)building an Arakanese cultural identity. Field work on this as yet unexplored area of early ethnic identity formation is limited by a scarcity of sources.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the writing of Arakanese indigenous histories that try to bridge the gap between, on the one hand, traditional sources (poetry, dynastic lists, annals, religious tales, prophecies) and on the other hand the modern challenge of emulating the style of Burmese chronicles and facing the challenge of critical Western historiography. Nga Me's famous history compiled around 1842 at the request of Arthur Phayre, a British officer, offers a full account of Arakanese royal history in chronological order down to the celebrated feats of Chin Byan and his like.⁷³

It represents Arakan's past in a conventional way that gives precedence to genealogical accounts and royal successions. Essentially it shows the history of Arakan as the history of an independent kingdom that never came durably under foreign rule, while it conveniently bypasses complex periods in which Arakan most probably was much less autonomous than the chronicler would be ready to admit. It provides, as we have repeatedly noted, a distinctly negative account of the Burmese government. Nga Me's remarkable work may thus be read between the lines as an expression of grief and as a proclamation of Arakanese self-identity, or, from another vantage point, as a text confronting a culturally dominant Burmese discourse. Nga Me also recorded the legend that the Burmese did not take away the real Mahamuni statue as the statue

refused to follow the conquerors. Denying the evidence appears here as a way to de-legitimise the Burmese conquest itself.

The Venerable Candamalalankara's *New Chronicle of Arakan* published in Mandalay in 1931 was compiled by its Arakanese author in such a way as to resemble a "classical" chronicle account and put Arakan's royal history on an equal footing with the Burmese. Though Candamalalankara was an orthodox Mandalay-bred monk, he criticised Bodawphaya's interference with the monastic tradition of Arakan. The *Dhañawati Ayedawpon*, a late-eighteenth-century compilation of earlier Arakanese texts by a Burmese monk, underscores the validity of the Arakanese tradition of wise minister speeches, but it can be read alternately as part of a shared Arakanese–Burmese literary tradition.

Many other historiographic and religious texts from Arakan, the dating of which has not yet been clearly established, make particular sense in a late-eighteenth-century context, and their composition (or rather the formulation of the texts as we have them) may be best explained within the environment of the festering political and social crisis of the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth. The point to be made here is that the transmission of a written tradition in conventional form, stating Arakan's own terms of territorial autonomy, religious legitimacy and royal tradition, cannot be singularised as a literary product distinct from the context of its latest formulation. In the context of the loss of social order and political autonomy, the selectivity of representations in historiography and collective memories calls for a political interpretation. In itself, the traces and shadows of these memories mark the sense of a separate identity, and their defensive mood can be read as a mental front line or a silent protest against the incorporation of Arakan into the Burmese kingdom.

Conclusion

The study of the politics of integrating Arakan into the Burmese kingdom offers remarkable insights into the manifold ways that expansion worked in the heyday of the Konbaung dynasty.

After an easy Burmese military success, Arakan lost its autonomy; it was deprived of its political legitimacy and of some of the key symbols of its religious and cultural identity. Despite administrative failures that were counterproductive to integration, the new rulers successfully imposed a powerful grid of political and military control. Religious reforms ensured standardisation on a national level. At the same time, the Burmese established their own legitimacy by rebuilding pagodas and ordination halls. Among the many advantages of expansion for the Burmese court, we have mentioned the development of the maritime trade in the Bay of Bengal and the acquisition of prestige objects such as the Mahamuni statue.

Beyond the particulars of a historical case, the study of the conquest of Arakan offers lessons on a more general level. First of all, much of what

has been said here contributes to a healthy criticism of the earlier colonial and its later but dependent nationalist literature by changing the focus from a Eurocentric description to a Burma-related account. Next, this discussion confirms recent studies, such as Victor Lieberman's *Strange Parallels*, that have made Burma look less isolated and more integrated into the premodern world, where trade currents, administrative reforms and increased central control over human and material resources made expansion look ever less like military adventurism generating variable results. Burmese rule over Arakan was strong and efficient; while it was at one stage critically challenged, its superiority was never in doubt in the long term. Military responses to active resistance came fast, and suppression of revolts was brutal and produced enduring results. When we compare the integrative process that is actually the fulfilment of expansion with the resistance it provoked, our study shows that the course of historical development was clearly weighted towards the politics of integration. This conclusion is in no way different from what studies on centralisation have taught us on developments in, say, Vietnam or Thailand during the same period of time.

But the detailed study of Burmese expansion into Arakan also reveals the complexities and setbacks of the expansionary course.⁷⁴ It was not a homogeneous one-way process; it proceeded by advances and retreats. At first sight, in no other land lying at the periphery of the Irrawaddy plains was the cultural context to establish a settled Burmese rule more favourable than in Arakan. The Arakanese are culturally close to the Burmese. They speak various dialects of the same language and their literary language is identical. They share similar folk traditions and claim the same faith, Theravada Buddhism. But Burmese integration nonetheless faced massive and relentless resistance.

When we represent expansion from the single perspective of the dominant power, there is a risk of stating complex processes in a matter-of-fact and deterministic way that suggests a kind of unfailing logic of expansion. Resistance to expansion is, as we have argued, part of the full historical account, as it is a price to be paid by the conqueror.

Similarities with other countries or regions that spring to mind while studying a singular case have an inevitable teleological appeal. But to state parallels is actually little more than to represent the balance between political ambitions and the technical means to implement them in various contexts. The problems are similar, but there is always a historic variety of "solutions" or results. The differences between Arakan's integration and the way that Siam homogeneously integrated Isan (the northeast of modern Thailand) in the nineteenth century are amazing. Today, despite the evidence of resurgent regionalism, Lao from Isan will identify themselves as Thai citizens, but no Arakanese would introduce himself or herself as *prima facie* Burmese, *Bamar* or Myanmar. While the proponents of mandala or galactic models have found grounds to see Siam and Burma

as very similar, it looks as if, from a contemporary viewpoint, integration of conquered territories was in the end much more successful in Siam/Thailand than in Burma/Myanmar. To put it simply, transitions along cultural frontiers are not necessarily negotiated in the same way and the historical differences cannot be brushed away. The insistence on separate “ethnic” identity rather than integration may be called a “stubbornly” local tradition and the region studied here may thus be of particular interest for the anthropology of borders. There springs to mind the case of the so-called “Rohingyas”, Bengali Muslim immigrants from Chittagong who settled in the north of Arakan, where they assimilated, after independence, the pre-colonial Muslim community in northern Arakan their post-1945 leaders, calling for a regional political autonomy in the independent Union of Burma, have struggled since the early 1950s to define themselves and obtain recognition as a separate “ethnic” group.

When we focus on a relatively short period of time, a convincing demonstration can be made that Arakan entered a process of political and cultural integration after 1785. In the long run, stretching the time-line down to the times of authoritarian rule, integration looks rather like a political failure; space constraints do not allow this issue to be pursued here. As we said at the beginning, the historical process is muddled rather than streamlined, and its analysis calls for some self-reflection on behalf of those who paradigmatically use the term “expansion”. This chapter has decidedly taken the stance that its use should be inclusive of its ethnic, religious, mental and social complications. While expansion gains substance indeed through an integrative process that involves both conquerors and the subjugated, it also bears seeds for its disruption. In the case of Burma/Myanmar, a state but not yet the nation that it craves to be, it is the contemporary situation of ethnic dissent that bears witness to the outcome of the expansionary process as being fraught in the long run with a heavy burden of risks, huge challenges and potential failures.

Notes

- 1 The first confrontation of Burmese and Arakanese troops happened on 15 November 1784 after the Burmese troops crossing the Arakan Yoma reached the district of Tan-lwe (Candamalalankara, *The New Chronicle of Arakan*, 2nd edn, Yangon, 1931/1997 – hereafter CL – p. 303). “Officially”, the campaign ended with a royal proclamation that announced the celebration of the victorious campaign (Than Tun (ed.), *The Royal Orders of Burma (1598–1885)* (Kyoto: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, 1983–90), 10 vols – hereafter *ROB*). See *ROB* of 26 January 1785. The royal orders are quoted with their dates as given in volumes four to seven of this series. A number in brackets following an *ROB* date refers to one order among several with the same date.
- 2 Sunait Chutintaranond has argued that Siam was considered as part of the mandala of Burmese kings, a zone of domination, control or at least political influence. See Sunait Chutintaranond, “Cakravartin Ideology, Reason and Manifestation of Siamese and Burmese Kings in Traditional Warfare”, in *On*

- Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range – History of Siamese-Burmese Relations*, ed. S. Chutintaranond and Than Tun (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, 1995), pp. 55–66.
- 3 See for example A. P. Phayre, *History of Burma* (London: Trübner, 1883), p. 213, and G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1925), p. 267.
- 4 The ubiquitous term *sasana* refers to the Buddhist teaching as well as to the community of those who adhere to the doctrine and who support its practice. In the royal order, the state of the *sasana* in Arakan was compared to a parasite in the flesh of an animal. The crown prince was told to make the religion shine again by arresting the scum of bad and unjust people who were a stain on the *sasana*. See as well Jeyya Kyaw Htin's description of Arakan's political conditions before the conquest as given in his conversation with English officers in 1811 (Hla Htun Phru, *Majjhima Ayedawpun kyam*, Yangon: PEAL, 1998, ၆၈၈).
- 5 On King Bodawphaya's religious policy, see Jacques Leider, "Text, Lineage and Tradition in Burma – The Struggle for Norms and Religious Legitimacy under King Bodawphaya (1752–1819)", *Journal of Burma Studies* 9 (2004): 80–127.
- 6 Man-aung was taken without a single battle being fought.
- 7 They were Kyaw Htwe, the "mountain lord", a former military commander who was "king" in all but name in Ramree; Nga Than Twe, who had a stronghold on Kyap-sin island and later fled to Ava; Thato-Phru, ruling in Man-aung; Kaung Nyunt Ran Taing, who had failed in his wider political ambitions and held out in Pei-ne-khyaung; an Indian (Muslim?) chief named Shwe Sa on the island of Yo; and an otherwise unknown lord called Dha Ma Naing in Nga-kri-taung (CL vol. 2, 329).
- 8 The British colonial historiography has consistently painted a doom-and-gloom picture of the Burmese administration in Arakan. It is undeniable that there was brutal and often massive repression to crush resurgent rebellions. But many of the measures to gain permanent political control were not of a primarily military nature, and Burmese rule in Arakan cannot simply be portrayed as an enterprise of control through naked terror.
- 9 In the royal order of 26 January 1785 confirming the good news of the Burmese military victory, Bodawphaya states that the ruler of Arakan could not "resist" his "golden glory" (*shwe-bon*) and that the conquest had been easy because of his own superior merit.
- 10 Jacques Leider, "Specialists for Ritual, Magic and Devotion – The Court Brahmins (*punna*) of the Konbaung Kings (1752–1885)", *Journal of Burma Studies* 10 (2005–06), pp. 159–80. Beemer has excluded Arakanese war captives from his study, but meaningful information may nonetheless be found in his pioneering study: see Bryce Beemer, *The Creole City in Mainland Southeast Asia: Slave Gathering, Warfare and Cultural Exchange in Burma, Thailand And Manipur, 18th–19th c.* (PhD dissertation, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2013), in particular fn. 135, p. 326.
- 11 Royal order of 17 November 1807, in *ROB*, vol. 6.
- 12 Howard Malcom, an American missionary who visited Arakan in 1836, states that half of Sandoway's population was Burman and half-Burman, but he says, on the other hand, that "Burmans who had come with the governor when the country was their province, could not endure" the climate of Mrauk-U. Note also his remark that Arakan had been severely under-populated due to wars (see Howard Malcolm, *Travels in South-eastern Asia, Embracing Hindustan, Malaya, Siam, and China; with Notices of Numerous Missionary Stations, and a Full Account of the Burma Empire* (London: George Routledge & Co., 1848), pp. 141, 149.
- 13 Because of the exorbitant taxation after the British annexation of Arakan in

- 1826, many people left the south of Arakan after 1828 and came back only when the system was remedied in 1835; see W. B. Tydd (ed.), *Burma Gazetteer (Sandoway District)* (Rangoon: Govt. Printing and Stationery, 1962), vol. A, p. 17.
- 14 *ROB* of 7 July 1807. The order calls for the recruitment of one man per Burmese household in the four provinces, independently of their being part of a military service group.
 - 15 *ROB* of 8 September 1807. The order states that only the Burmese who had paid the *dasamabhaga* (tithe) would be allowed to stay on in Arakan.
 - 16 William Foley, "Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree, with a Geological Sketch of the Country, and Brief Account of the Customs, etc. of its Inhabitants", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 4 (1835): 20–39; 82–95; 199–207; p. 202 states that these mixed-blood were called "Bundath".
 - 17 The term appears first in the *Konbaungzet* chronicle and is not earlier found in Arakanese sources. There was a fair share of grandstanding in this renaming. In the Shwegugyi Bell inscription at Halin (AD 1798), Mrauk-U is described as the royal city (*prañ*; pron. "pyay") of Dhañawati in the country of Mahavihika and even the modest town of Sandoway/Thandwe is called a royal city in the country of "Ayujjha". In older Arakanese sources, Ayujjhapura referred exclusively to Mrauk-U.
 - 18 Foley, "Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree", pp. 20, 89–90. The rural administration in the Arakanese kingdom was similar to the one in Burma, though little is known about Arakan's ancient administrative system. One may surmise that the Burmese maintained more or less the existing administrative divisions. The 1802 Burmese census of Dhañawati (see Jacques Leider, "Taxation et groupes de service sous la royauté arakanaise: Un rapport d'enquête de 1803 d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris", *Aséanie* 1 (1998): 67–89) shows that the 44 *kywan* (lit. "islands") or circles of the district each comprised several villages. This means that a *kywan* corresponded de facto to a Burmese *myo*, which transformed the *myothugyi* of Arakan into a kind of super-*myothugyi*, in charge of the collection of the tax revenue for more than half of the population of the whole of Arakan. Conflicts on administrative competences regarding villages situated at the frontiers of Burmese and Arakanese districts and among Arakanese districts themselves erupted soon after the conquest. See *ROB* 18 August 1787 regarding cases involving Sandoway, Ramree and Bassein; *ROB* 14 October 1787 regarding an administrative border conflict between Arakan (Dhañawati) and Sandoway; and *ROB* 24 July 1795 (2) regarding a decision in favour of the Mindon *myothugyi* against administrative encroachments by the Sandoway officers.
 - 19 Besides the order indicated above, other orders contain appointments of officers in Arakan, among them *ROB* 24 July 1787, 25 June 1801, 17 July 1801, 26 May 1806, 1 December 1806, 25 (April) 1807, 10 October 1808, 27 May 1810 (1), 22 December 1810. Lists with the Burmese governors of Dhañawati are found in CL (vol. 2, 398) and in Charles Paton, "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan", *Asiatick Researches* 16 (1828): 353–81, p. 381. A list of the seven *myothugyis* of Dhañawati and the 21 *myothugyis* of Rammawati is found in CL (vol. 2, 398–9).
 - 20 Some of the Arakanese chiefs were prominent figures. Nga Than Twe and the former governor of Le-khak-taung, Nga Htun San, belonged to the group of men who had gone in 1782 to Burma to obtain military support and dethrone King Thamada. They proved useful during the first ten years of the new rule. Nga Htun San is mentioned in a royal order of 28 December 1787 as being allowed to attend an annual ceremony of homage to the king. For unknown reasons, Nga Htun San was soon replaced by Nga Than Twe as *myothugyi* of the

district of Arakan while Nga Htun San became *myothugyi* of Ramree. This meant that they were responsible for the taxing and the collecting of the royal revenue and could count on a sizable share of the revenue of these districts being allotted to them. Nga Than Twe's son Thet Nham We was appointed as *myothugyi* of Lemro (CL vol. 2, 338).

- 21 An example is found in *ROB* 18 August 1787.
- 22 The royal order of 13 November 1787 (1) states that the amount of rice due to the king was ten per cent. This order states that the rice should *not* be sent to Lower Burma, but should be kept in rice granaries in Arakan. This decision was likely due to a politically insecure situation in Arakan. On administrative corruption, see for example *ROB* 27 June 1801. The frequent dismissal of Burmese officers in Arakan must probably be linked to cases of corruption and abuse. On allegations of over-taxation, see *ROB* 6 July 1795 regarding the abuse of authority of several officers in Dhañawati and ensuing punishments, *ROB* 10 March 1810 detailing the case of the *myothugyi* of Sandoway, and *ROB* 28 April 1810 referring to a petition of village chiefs from Ramree accusing the governor of over-taxing the people.
- 23 One may recall in this context that the Burmese who lived in Arakan were not exempted from paying the *dasamabhaga* (*ROB* 8 September 1807 (1)).
- 24 Unlike in British times, not all the cultivated land under the Burmese government was taxed. The amount of the *dasamabhaga* (tithe) is confirmed by CL (vol. 2, 353) and *ROB* 23 May 1803. The amount due in 1802 is said to have been 130,310 *dinga*. But this sum did not include the land tax and other duties. According to admittedly debatable information collected by English emissaries around 1801, the king's annual tribute from Arakan was 18,663 rupees (Paton, "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan", p. 355; Gangadharan Ramachandra, *Anglo-Burmese Relations 1795–1826*, PhD dissertation, University of Hull, 1977, p. 142). This was less than a sixth of what, according to the Burmese census of 1802, he should have derived in terms of revenue (*ROB* 22 January 1810). The land revenue in the first five years of the British government was estimated at an annual 150,000 *sicca rupees* of a total revenue of 220,000 (Paton, "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan", p. 379). But in 1836, the entire revenue derived by the East India Company from Arracan amounted to about 600,000 rupees per annum; so the amount for the district of Akyab (identical with the Burmese Dhañawati district) can be estimated at around 330,000. Regarding home-grown criticism of the exorbitant taxation by the British and local protests, see Jacques Leider, "Arakan around 1830 – Social Distress and Political Instability in the Early British Period", *Arakanese Research Journal (Bangladesh)* 2 (2003): 5–24.
- 25 A list of these monks is found in Maung Maung Tin, *Konbaungzet Mahayazawintazgyi* (Yangon: Yapye, 2005), vol. 2, 33. The names given there do not match with any found in CL (vol. 2, 339–40). Information on the *sasana-pyu* monks is found in *ROB* 25 July 1787 (2), 3 October 1787, 3 January 1788 (containing a detailed list of missionary monks and the roads taken to Arakan). One document that was not available at the time this chapter was written is *Rakhaing yazawin-nge (Abridged Arakan Chronicle)* OR 3413, British Library, a text dealing with the propagation of the *sasana* in Arakan (information kindly supplied by Zaw Lynn Aung of Aiichi University, Japan).
- 26 Robert Robinson, *Among the Mughls or Memorials of the Rev. J. C. Fink* (Calcutta: D. Ghose, 1871), p. 98.
- 27 The Theravada Buddhist population of modern Bangladesh (Barua, Chakma, the ethnically Arakanese Marma and some other minor groups) was variously estimated in 2006 at between 1.4 and two million.
- 28 "Ramree inscription" in Henry Walters, "Inscription on a Stone Formerly in a

- Temple at Ramree", *Indochinois* 27 (1834). These are copies of the same inscription dated 1787 and recording Bodawphaya's monastic reform missions; "Translation of an Inscription on a Stone at Cheduba" found in *Indochinois* 4, f°63–5, and *Indochinois* 28; the text commemorates the construction of religious edifices undertaken by the Burmese governor Letya Shwe-daung between 1795 and 1800. See also the "Rammawadi Sittan" in Frank N. Trager and William J. Koenig, *Burmese Sittans (1764–1826): Records of Rural Life and Administration* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1979). Foley, in "Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree" (pp. 204–5), mentions the large tanks and remarkable monasteries and pagodas built by the Burmese governors in Ramree. In 1821, the governor Mingyi Kyawswa restored the tank between the second and third outer palace walls that had been built in the sixteenth century by King Minphalaung (E. Forchhammer, *Papers on Subjects Relating to the Archaeology of Burma* (Rangoon: Government Printing, 1891), pp. 17–19). The last Burmese governor, San Pyaw, is said to have repaired the Phara-baw pagoda in Mrauk-U. Regarding the repair of old religious buildings in Sandoway ordered by King Bodawphaya, see *ROB* 18 August 1787; on tanks, bridges and rest-houses constructed by Arakanese eunuchs, see *ROB* 20 July 1806.
- 29 For descriptions of the transport of the statue, see CL (vol. 2, 310) and Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma (1598–1885)*. Regarding the pagoda slaves attached to the statue and taken to Amarapura, see *ROB* 21 August 1787, 21 June 1799 (3), and Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 268.
- 30 *Mahamuni Phaya-shin Thamaing* (Yangon: University Historical Research Centre, 1785), palm-leaf ms. no. 577.
- 31 A conspicuous difference between Arakanese and Burmese ways of looking at the "departure" of the statue from its sanctuary is evident in the text that accompanies the pictorial representations in the Mahamuni Museum at the Mandalay shrine. The statue is said to have graciously followed an invitation by the Burmese king to come to Amarapura. See for example Mon-ywe U No, *Mahamyatmuni Thamaing-pyo* (Yangon: Myanmar Historical Commission Library, 1786), palm-leaf ms. no. 762, and *Mahamuni Phayagyi Thamaing-sa*, palm-leaf ms. no. 1244, *Mahamuni-yadu* (MS; Sittway, private collection).
- 32 See *ROB* 28 August 1807 (the order requests the former secretary of the Dhañawati district to send a list with all Arakanese medical experts to the king) and *ROB* 24 November 1807 (the order allows four Arakanese doctors to be sent back to Arakan).
- 33 A mention is made of Arakan's time-honoured calendar in *ROB* 23 June 1810.
- 34 See *ROB* 10 May 1810. While stressing the Arakanese origin of the document referred to as *kyauk-yo-thamaing*, Than Tun is mistaken in translating the title as "History of Mining Stones". The *kyauk-yo* texts, confusingly called *yazawin* or *thamaing*, contain prophecies.
- 35 Letter of the governor of Myit-si, Min Maha Min Lha Khaung, to the *taik-up* of Thade (undated) in *Indochinois* 53, f°47–8, Manuscripts orientaux (William S. Barnard MSS), Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France. A *zauygi* is an alchemist who possesses supernatural powers; a *weikza* is a person with supernatural powers seeking, in particular, immortality.
- 36 Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma* (London, The Cresset Press, 1962); p. 59 refers to the Ramree governor's letter of May 1817. See Pogson (1831), p. 114 and *ROB* 18 February 1817 regarding the same issue. In 1817, troops under the command of Mahabandula, the outstanding Burmese general, took control over Assam; this gave a big boost to the way the Burmese perceived their own military strength. Burmese expansion then fully clashed with the territorial pretensions of the East India Company in Northeast India and British–Burmese relations rapidly deteriorated. In 1823, a dispute arose about the

possession of the tiny island of Shapuri or Shin-ma-pru in the estuary of the Naf River that British and Burmese each claimed as their possession. This issue put the fire to the powder keg. It is generally believed that in early 1824, Mahabandula was about to lead a major attack against Bengal with 30,000 Burmese elite troops grouped in Arakan. While actual hostilities between English and Burmese troops broke out at the Bengal-Assam border in January 1824, the British landing in Rangoon in March 1824 put a quick end to the anticipated Burmese campaign in Bengal.

- 37 In the traditional historiography best exemplified by G. E. Harvey's *History of Burma*, the fact that the Burmese court laid claim to lands that had, by that time, been for over 50 years under British rule is never put into its proper context and is merely produced as a demonstration of gratuitous claims and Burmese arrogance that, in colonialist eyes, ultimately provoked the British declaration of war.
- 38 At the height of their power in the seventeenth century, Arakanese kings were able to destroy entire Mughal fleets, as happened in 1624 and 1664 in Dhaka. But territorial claims of the Arakanese kings on Dhaka and Murshedabad were not based on historical facts. They can only be explained by otherwise undocumented memories regarding the ancient kingdom of Vesali (approximately the sixth to tenth centuries CE), whose Candra dynasty kings may have been related to the Candra kings of Harikela in southeastern Bengal.
- 39 Interestingly, Bodawphaya ordered the clearing of the jungle at Vesali-Kyaukhle-ga, the site of the capital of the first millenium Arakanese city-state for "urban development and settlement" (*ROB* 29 August 1807).
- 40 The connection with India via the northeastern Bay of Bengal confirms Lieberman's argument on long-term economic integration and his insistence on the expansion of Burma's coastal trade between 1757 and 1825, but he refers only very briefly to the trans-Arakanese trade; see Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800–1830 – Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1, 168, 171.
- 41 In May 1787, a Burmese delegation was sent to Chittagong with a letter for the governor-general making an offer for a commercial treaty to promote coastal trade with Bengal. But nothing tangible came out of this early initiative. The letter met with a friendly reply from the Magistrate of Chittagong that was later approved by the governor-general (Ramachandra, *Anglo-Burmese Relations 1795–1826*, pp. 12–16). For a translation, see Pogson (1831: 63).
- 42 On the establishment of check points and tax obligations, see *ROB* 22 May 1795. Ramree appears to have been the main port of Arakan during the Burmese administration period. Other ports on the Bengal-Yangon route, such as Gwa, were merely important for water and shelter. The simplified system of taxing goods only at the port of entry had been introduced following the advice of the *akauk wun* of Hamsavati (Pegu). This cut the broker fees in the capital and led to protests by the brokers. On 8 March 1810, the king decided to back-track and maintain the customary fees of the brokers on imported goods.
- 43 It looks as if a sort of competition between tax authorities in Arakan and Yangon was welcomed so as to create an administrative check-and-balance system.
- 44 Foley, "Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree", pp. 203–4; "Note on Ramré", *EUR* F 140–123, OIOC, British Library.
- 45 On the importance of the Am road and its development, see Jacques Leider, "La route de Am: Contribution à l'étude d'une route terrestre entre la Birmanie et le golfe du Bengale", *Journal Asiatique* 282 (1994): 335–70. Valuable information on the trans-Arakan roads and their trade comes from English administrative reports of the late 1820s and early 1830s; see D. G. E. Hall, "R. B.

- Pemberton's Journey from Munipoor to Ava and from thence across the Yoma to Arracan 14 July–1 October 1830", *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 43 (1960): 1–96.
- 46 The officers most frequently named in the royal orders regarding missions to India are Burmese officers from Ramree. The Kapila-muni statue was also brought along to the capital by an officer from Ramree (*ROB* 21 June 1812). Regarding the eighth mission led by Jeyya Kyaw Htin, an Arakano-Burmese tax officer, see Hla Htun Phyu, *Majjhima Ayedawpun kyam*. On royal orders and sources regarding these missions, see Leider, "Specialists for Ritual, Magic and Devotion". For the numerous royal orders concerning the calendar reform, see "Calendar" in the index (vol. X) of Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma*. Burmese descriptions of trans-Arakan roads are found in Than Tun, "Paya Lanma (Lord's Highway) over the Yoma (Yakhine Range)", *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 25 (1983): 233–40 and in the unpublished "U Nu's versified notes in 55 stanzas on his travel from Amarapura to Bengal crossing Arakan on the Pha-aing-Setottaya road in the *sakkaraj* year 1167 [AD 1805]". The Pha-aing-Setottaya road is the Talak road. In 2002, the late Dr Than Tun kindly gave me a typewritten copy (made in 1967) of this text, which belonged to Shwepyi U Ba Tin's collection.
 - 47 A royal order of 23 December 1807 deals with the recruitment of troops from Arakan for the war against Siam.
 - 48 Details may be gleaned in the royal orders. On Arakanese masons and sculptors at the Aungmyeloka pagoda, see *ROB* 28 August 1807; 4 November 1807.
 - 49 One may note that as nobody else was apparently left to call upon, ten years later, it was prisoners that were sent to Mingun to work on the construction of the pagoda!
 - 50 Buchanan reports that the Hindu-Arakanese chief of Ramu told him in 1798 that the Burmese had altogether killed 40,000 Arakanese (Willem van Schendel (ed.), *Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798)* (Dhaka: Signum Press, 1992), p. 82). This number is difficult to interpret as there is no other concurrent evidence on the issue. On Arakan's collective memory of Burmese massacres, see Enriquez (1922), p. 71.
 - 51 This estimation is suggested as a working hypothesis and is derived from a concurrent reading of Burmese and British sources. A detailed explanation on Arakanese demography cannot be given here due to space constraints. References are found in Stilson *et al.* 1847; H. H. Dodwell (ed.), *Cambridge History of India, Volume 5: British India, 1497–1858* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 562; Leider, "Text, Lineage and Tradition in Burma"; *ROB* 22 January 1810; E. H. L. Seppings, "Arakan: A Hundred Years Ago, and Fifty Years After", *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 15, 1 (1925): 53–72; the *Akyab and Sandoway Gazetteers*; and Tydd, *Burma Gazetteer (Sandoway District)*. The most reliable information comes from the British census. They suggest that the population increased quickly with the return of many of the refugees during the first years of British occupation. How many returned is a matter of speculation. Arakanese Marma who had been settled in Chittagong for a long time may have preferred to stay there.
 - 52 B. R. Pearn, "King Bering", *Journal of the Burma Research Society* 23, 2 (1933): p. 57, relying on contemporary British administrative sources, writes: "By the year 1798, two thirds of the inhabitants of Arakan were said to have deserted their native land." But on p. 82, he thinks that Captain Fogo's estimation of the Mug population (June 1814) in the vicinity of Ramu ("a hundred thousand") was an exaggeration. Several authors have followed Pearn (see p. 1 in Denise Bernot, "Deux lettres du vice-roi d'Arakan au sujet du rebelle King Bering", *T'oung Pao* 47, 3–5 (1960): 395–422), but I consider that the exaggeration lies

not in the “hundred thousand”, but the “two thirds” who are said to have deserted Arakan. J. C. Fink, a Protestant missionary who lived in southern Chittagong between 1821 and 1825, put the number of the population of all the Arakanese settlements there at 225,700 (Robinson, *Among the Mughs*, p. 50). This rather high estimation is confirmed by no other source, and the population he considered included not only refugees, but also long-term residents and non-Arakanese. Taking this number at face value (referring mostly to Arakanese refugees) and accepting that “most” Arakanese moved back after 1824, one cannot explain why by 1830, at the moment of the first full British census, the total population of Arakan, estimated at 100,000 in 1825, was no higher than 174,000.

- 53 Francis Buchanan noted in 1798 that there were many Arakanese Muslims of Bengali origin who had settled among their Bengali brethren and were materially better off than the Buddhists (Schendel, *Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal*, 31).
- 54 See Francis Buchanan’s 1798 account on the Joomea Mugs in Schendel, *Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal*, pp. 27 and 47, and A. M. Serrajuddin, *The Revenue Administration of the East India Company in Chittagong 1761–1785* (Chittagong: University of Chittagong, 1971), p. 126, which uses contemporary information provided by T. H. Lewin in *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the Dwellers therein* (Calcutta: Bengal Printing Company, 1869). To form an idea of the geography and history of the area, books on the contemporary Chittagong Hill Tracts provide useful information; see for example Willem van Schendel, Wolfgang Mey and Aditya Kumar Dewan, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Living in a Borderland* (Dhaka: The University Press, 2001); Shapan Adnan, *Migration Land Alienation and Ethnic Conflict – Causes of Poverty in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Research and Advisory Services, 2004).
- 55 Michael Symes, the envoy of the *East India Company* to the court of Amarapura in 1795 and 1802, noted the depopulation of the villages along the Irrawaddy during his second mission, an observation confirmed by later observers. The reason for this depopulation, he says, was the forced recruitment of men for the Siam war.
- 56 Ramachandra, *Anglo-Burmese Relations 1795–1826*, p. 12. Robinson, *Among the Mughs*, pp. 24–5 writes:

Some went into the jungles to cut wood to be sold for fuel in the neighbouring markets; others cleared large tracts of land for the cultivation of rice and jute; others supplied themselves with fishing tackle. To encourage their permanent settlement in British territory, our Government furnished them with agricultural implements and other industrial appliances.

- 57 Crossing over the Naf back into the district of Chittagong, “they disposed of their spoils to advantage, and lived at ease, until returning want impelled them to renew their predatory inroads” (Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, p. 45, quoting M. Symes’ 1795 account). Woodman curiously calls these people “smugglers”, but the raiders after 1798 “political refugees”.
- 58 White gives a critical description of English forces at the time of Chin Byan’s major invasion in 1811, stating that they were insufficient and unable to ensure the safety of the local population (William White, *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events which led to the Burmese War* (London: W. Sams, 1827), p. 18); see also Robertson’s sarcastic comments on the handful of weather-beaten *sepoys* that were left facing a Burmese army of 30,000 elite troops in 1824 (Thomas Campbell Robertson, *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War* (London: Richard Bentley, 1853)). Their testimony may be compared with Jeyya Kyaw Htin’s allegation (Hla Tun Phyu, *Majjhima Ayedawpun kyam*, f° *dhe*) that Captain Morgan

had 30,000 men at his disposal in Ramu and that Hiram Cox stood with 50,000 on the western side of the Naf River in early 1812!

- 59 In many English sources and articles, he is called “King Bering”, a spelling derived from the Arakanese pronunciation of his name.
- 60 A son-in-law, Thet Nham We, became *aide-de-camp* of the Burmese crown prince in 1785 and was later under the authority of the *ayut wun*, the officer in charge of the lepers (*ROB* 11 August 1787); around the same time, he was made *myo-thugyi* of Lemro; later he led the Burmese delegation that negotiated the surrender of Nga Po Lum with the British and brought the insurgent with his two companions to Amarapura (CL vol. 2, 338; 343–6). He resided in Amarapura, and when his brother Chin Byan and his father revolted in 1811, he was immediately summoned by Bodawphaya and executed (Paton, “Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan”, p. 367). He was called upon to check the accounts of the land tax officer in 1795 (*ROB* 6 July 1795). On a debt case implicating himself and his father-in-law, see *ROB* 7 May 1801.
- 61 Descriptions of Chin Byan’s invasions and exploits vary widely among contemporary sources. The most important are the account given by the Arakanese chronicler Nga Me written around 1842 (a text that was adapted by Candamalakara in his *New Chronicle of Arakan*, 1931); the account given by Jeyya Kyaw Htin, the Burmese governor of Sandoway who, as a tax officer in 1811, took an active part in the repression of Chin Byan and his followers (Hla Tun Phyu, *Majjhima Ayedawpun kyam*); the account of Charles Paton (1828) based on Thomas Campbell Robertson’s translation of an Arakanese chronicle (done in 1824) supplemented with accounts of oral witnesses; and finally Captain William White’s *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events which Led to the Burmese War* (1827). Nga Me offers the most detailed account, while the most realistic and credible presentation of the troops and their battles is found in Paton. White’s text may suffer from exaggerations and ignores Burmese and Arakanese motives of action, but its critical stance is extremely helpful to put events into perspective. Jeyya Kyaw Htin focuses on events in which he himself played a leading part in 1811 and 1812. But while his text provides an insider’s report including precious details found in no other source, the author clearly overstates his role. His record lacks a precise chronology and some facts may simply have been invented, such as the alleged death of Chin Byan and the surrender of Chin Byan’s wife and some Arakanese chiefs to the English in Chittagong and Ramu in 1812 (see Hla Tun Phyu’s introduction to his edition of the text in Hla Tun Phyu, *Majjhima Ayedawpun kyam*).
- 62 White, *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events which led to the Burmese War*, p. 13; Paton, “Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan”, p. 368. According to the last source, they invaded Arakan in 25 boats. Landing at Moje, they were joined by 400 men. We may figure out that from there many more joined Chin Byan’s standard on the way up to Mrauk-U, only more or less by their own free will. Nonetheless, the number of several hundred is still suspiciously low if, as some sources claim, in just a few weeks Chin Byan was able to expel the Burmese troops from the capital. Nga Me nowhere mentions anything on the size of Chin Byan’s forces. No numbers are given by Phayre or Harvey. Woodman follows White’s data, while D. G. E. Hall suggests two to three thousand men (quoted by Bernot, “Deux lettres du vice-roi d’Arakan au sujet du rebelle King Bering”, p. 17).
- 63 Surprisingly, neither Nga Me nor Jeyya Kyaw Htin mention the siege of Mrauk-U. Jeyya Kyaw Htin (Hla Tun Phyu, *Majjhima Ayedawpun kyam*, f^o dhi-dhī) only refers to the battles south of Mrauk-U. But White reports that the Arakanese chiefs he later met in the district of Chittagong “spoke in rapturous terms of the tragical event”, boasting that “after the capture of the capital, [they]

paraded the streets, celebrating their victory, with the heads of the men and women, and entire children, stuck upon the points of bamboo poles, from fifteen to five and twenty feet".

- 64 On Burmese troops leaving Yangon on 6 December 1811, see Bernot, "Deux lettres du vice-roi d'Arakan au sujet du rebelle King Bering", p. 18. According to the Arakanese chronicle, Chin Byan left Arakan on 28 December 1811 (CL vol. 2, 359). A royal order states on 7 January 1812 that the Arakan campaign had been successfully concluded.
- 65 Jeyya Kyaw Htin (Hla Tun Phru, *Majjhima Ayedawpun kyam*) mentions the negotiations. Foley, "Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree", p. 206, comments in a note on the trouble caused by the Chin of Ramree to the Burmese administration.
- 66 The Arakanese chronicler states "ninety to a hundred thousand" (CL vol. 2, 359). A bare third of this number would be more likely. One may compare with another exaggerated figure in the Arakanese chronicle. It says that the invading Burmese army counted 90,000 (CL vol. 2, 302) men in 1784, while the actual number, as we have said earlier, was 27,000.
- 67 The events from April 1812 to February 1814 are considered by the Arakanese historians as the third revolt of Chin Byan. In English accounts, the successive invasions may be numbered up to five.
- 68 English authors say that he died in April 1815 (Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, p. 58). CL (vol. 2, 362) states that he died in February 1816.
- 69 Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, p. 58. See also White, *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events which led to the Burmese War*, pp. 73–4 on the leaders "Ryn-jungzing" and "Cheripo" who succeeded Chin Byan.
- 70 Piracy and banditry had a long tradition along the northeastern shores of the Bay of Bengal. Bengali popular poems of the eighteenth century decry the plundering by Arakanese pirates. Bengali historiography, basing itself on the oral tradition and Mughal sources in Persian that are overbearing towards non-believers, reduces Arakanese history to a long episode of plundering by barbarians in Bengal's eastern neighborhood. The Arakanese expansion of the late sixteenth century is thus framed in a way that downplays Arakan's political and economic centrality in the regional context of the seventeenth century. It is noteworthy that the Arakanese rebels recruited their men from among not only the refugees but also the Arakanese Marma who had been settled in Southeast Bengal since the seventeenth century, and who had no "patriotic" motives to join the battle for the re-conquest of Arakan (Wolfgang Mey, *Politische Systeme in den Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangla Desh* (Bremen: Übersee-Museum, 1982), p. 82).
- 71 It is ironic that many Arakanese refugees themselves, as quoted by Captain White, did not believe that Chin Byan could ever unsettle the Burmese rule. There are a few instances related to the beginning of the war between the British and the Burmese in 1824 that show that the informants of the British in the region consistently underrated the strength of the Burmese troops (cf. Robertson, *Political Incidents of the First Burmese War*).
- 72 Despatch of 4 March 1812 and 5 February 1814 quoted by White, *A Political History of the Extraordinary Events which led to the Burmese War*, pp. 72, 101.
- 73 Unlike Nga Me's chronicle, the less embellished account given in the anonymous chronicle collected by T.C. Robertson in 1824 ends with a much more sober record of Chin Byan's exploits (Paton, "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Arakan").
- 74 One has to bear in mind that facts and causes discussed in this chapter also involve many other issues relating to the definition of frontiers, diplomatic exchanges on trade, Anglo-French rivalries, and the cultural clash between imperially-minded British traders and self-conscious Burmese monarchs.

10 Re-evaluating state, society and the dynamics of expansion in precolonial Gowa

William Cummings

Beginning in the sixteenth century, a small, not very important community in South Sulawesi known as Gowa rose with astonishing speed to become the most powerful polity in the eastern Indonesian archipelago (see Map 10.1). Its empire extended across the seas around Sulawesi until it was conquered by the Dutch East India Company and local allies in the 1660s. Gowa's rise has long been recognised as a remarkable story, and it has attracted the attention of numerous scholars who have charted its century-long trajectory of territorial expansion, economic prosperity and political centralisation.¹ Collectively, however, we have left unasked questions about the precise nature and mechanics of these dynamic developments. The one that most concerns me here is: What exactly does polity expansion mean in this historical time and place?

Map 10.1 Gowa's empire.

What follows is an essay in the social dynamics of imperial expansion. By this I do not mean the social implications of imperial expansion, but the way in which Gowa's imperial expansion was fundamentally a matter of establishing, cementing and perpetuating social relationships. In other words, I argue that expansion in precolonial Makassar was not primarily an economic or political phenomenon but a social one that was manifested in kinship and other social linkages. I will make this argument by looking carefully at three episodes that represent important imperial moments in Gowa's history.

War and peace in the 1530s

Our best – in fact, nearly the only – sources for sixteenth-century Makassarese history are the twin royal chronicles of Gowa and Talloq. These began to be compiled at the end of that century and recount the main developments of the successive reigns of each ruler. They offer historians a wealth of information about these rulers' wives and children, characters, accomplishments and conquests, and notable events of their reigns. Though they are far more than simple lists of facts, and, carefully analysed, can reveal much about the concerns and mentality of premodern Makassarese, by and large they have been found to be reliable about what they relate. They are, in short, perfect sources with which to explore the nature of premodern Makassarese political dynamics.

Polity formation is by its nature an ongoing process rather than something that is achieved at a particular historical moment. Having said that, we can perhaps date the birth of Gowa's empire to the 1530s, when it defeated and incorporated the three rival communities of Talloq, Maros and Polombangkeng into its ambit of authority. The war itself is richly described in the section of the *Gowa Chronicle*² recounting the prosperous reign of Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna (r. 1510 or 1511 to 1546):

It was also while he was ruling that he was surrounded [and attacked] by the people of Talloq, by the people of Polombangkeng, by the people of Maros. The karaeng³ of Talloq with whom he struggled was called Tunipasuruq. His personal name, may I not be cursed, was I Mangayoaberang. He who ruled in Maros was called Patanna Langkana. His posthumous name was Tumatinroa ri Buluqduaya. His personal name, may I not be cursed, was I Mappasomba. His royal name was I Daeng Nguraga. He who ruled in Bajeng was the child of Karaeng Loe called I Pasairi. He was the older brother of I Daeng Masarro. He was a sibling with those who ruled in Sanrabone, in Lengkeseq, in Katingang, in Jamaraang, in Jipang, in Mandalleq. They were seven siblings; all had royal sunshades.⁴

Gowa, or more precisely Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna, was marched on by troops from Talloq, Polombangkeng and Maros. The chronicler felt it essential to

name – albeit with great care to avoid being cursed by uttering the personal names of such potent and august figures – the rulers of these three opposing polities. This is especially so with the ruler of Bajeng (the dominant community in Polombangkeng), whose sibling polities are carefully named and their status as independent communities at that time confirmed. Having explained the chief protagonists contending in this drama, the chronicler goes on to tell us more about Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna and the clash itself:

This karaeng was supported by the Three Gaukang.⁵ Karaeng ri Lakiung and Gurudaya, with the people of Manngasa, Tomboloq, Saomata, and Sudiang, there in Baroqbosoq they readied their arms and stood against the people of seaward Polombangkeng. The karaeng himself and Sulengkaya, poised in Rappocini with the people of Sudiang, the people of Manuju, the people of Borisallo, confronted the people of Talloq with I Daeng Masarro himself who stood directly against the karaeng. Karaeng ri Dataq and Cakkuridia, in Tamaman-gung he held firm with Paccellekkang, Pattallassang, Bontomanaq, and fought against the people of Maros. Once the battle raged the people of Talloq, the people of Maros, the people of Polombangkeng were put to flight. They launched ships and flew up toward their homelands. The people of Talloq fled deep into Talloq.

Here our anonymous chronicler has taken care to detail the communities and rulers who comprised the allies of the two sides. We get our first sense of how premodern Makassarese politics was a matter of constructing alliances between autonomous communities. We also gain insight into which polities were dominant or influential in the early sixteenth century. Some, such as Gowa itself, could count on the support of client communities such as Manngasa and the other nine communities that sided with Gowa in this conflict. We learn the names of Gowa's nobles who led troops into battle and the three locations where the opposing armies collided. The internal alliances and relationships within Talloq, Maros and Polombangkeng are not discussed, probably because they became irrelevant in the wake of their calamitous defeat. Victorious after the battle, Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna now awaited the supplications of the vanquished:

Then an invitation was sent out to Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna. He entered Talloq. For seven [nights] there he was feasted and honoured. They all swore oaths, the karaeng [of Gowa], the karaeng of Talloq, all the gallarrang in the great hall: "Anyone who sets Gowa and Talloq against each other, he is cursed by the gods." The only words put in [writing] are that they warred.

To the victor in war went recognition of status. Gowa definitively established its ruler as superior in rank to those of Talloq, Maros and Polombangkeng,

heretofore its rivals. From this perspective, the war was an argument about relative status and the creation of hierarchy.⁶ In a ritually prescribed series of offerings, oaths and pronouncements, the ruler of Gowa was publicly acknowledged as the dominant figure in the Makassarese heartlands; he was paid deference by his defeated rivals, and new relationships could now be established between lord and vassals.

This was especially true with the ruling line of Talloq. Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna and Tunipasuruq laid the foundation for a new relationship that in subsequent generations became a firm alliance. Shortly after his 1565 ascension to Gowa's throne, Tunijalloq appointed Tumamenang ri Makkoayang of Talloq to be the first *tumabicarabutta*, or "speaker of the land." For generations this prestigious new title was given to the rulers of Talloq by the rulers of Gowa. Each *tumabicarabutta* was charged with carrying out the commands of the ruler of Gowa, and typically was the second most powerful person within the ever-expanding empire. This remarkable partnership lasted well into the seventeenth century. In the eyes of outside observers, Gowa and Talloq seemed to be a single kingdom with two kings. In fact the two remained separate, but historians have credited this partnership with laying the foundation for Gowa's extraordinary success in becoming the dominant polity in the eastern archipelago (Reid 1981).

Following the peace agreement described in the *Gowa Chronicle*, the royal lines of Gowa and Talloq began to intermarry with frequency. Indeed, the very first thing the chronicle tells of Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna after he became ruler is that he married a daughter of the ruler of Talloq. A whole series of marriages between the Gowa and Talloq ruling lines followed and bound the two polities together. This enmeshing reached a pinnacle in Tunipasuluq, the son of Tunijalloq of Gowa by Karaeng Bainea, the daughter of the ruler of Talloq Tumenanga ri Makkoayang. When Tumenanga ri Makkoayang died he had only two daughters, both of whom were married to Tunijalloq. Karaeng Bainea became Talloq's ruler, but she seems to have deferred to her husband. Through this combination of marriages and contingent events, Tunipasuluq inherited the thrones of both Gowa and Talloq (and Maros as well) in the early 1590s.

A brief anthropological detour helps make clear the significance of this. Premodern Makassar offers a prime example of what James Fox⁷ calls Austronesian societies structured by systems of apical demotion. Ascribed status was a supreme occupation of Gowa's nobles, and they possessed and prized elaborate genealogies that marked fine gradations in rank. Status was relative, and depended on one's genealogical proximity to the ruling lord, the apical point of society. Marriages were an effective means of re-establishing links to the ruler, which benefited the centre by roping in lower-status subordinates and benefited those subordinates by securing their place in society and ensuring that they did not fade into genealogical irrelevance.

Following its wars of conquest, subordinated polities commonly sent daughters to marry Gowa's royal sons. In a culture in which kinship not

only provided the metaphorical language of politics but also mapped its substance,⁸ these marriage links were of the highest significance. Paramount among these was the marriages of the ruler of Gowa. “The power of any monarch was closely related to his number of wives”, concluded one student of Makassarese marriage politics.⁹ Thus when the *Gowa Chronicle* says of Sultan Ala’uddin (r. 1593 to 1639) “We will not name all the wives of this karaeng” and quotes Tumamenang ri Bontobiraeng as saying, “More than forty times he married”, these are not simply boasts or trivia noted in passing. They are indexes of the extraordinary ability of Gowa under Ala’uddin to expand its empire through the mechanics of marriage alliances. Subordinated polities gained the prestige of being connected to Gowa, but this was counterbalanced by the potential loss of autonomy if, as often happened, descendants of these marriages meant that sons of Gowa lords inherited titles and positions once held by local chiefs. The dense network of marriages that linked Gowa and Talloq’s ruling families constituted the sinews that held this expanding empire together, and its origins can be traced back to Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna’s impressive rout of Talloq and its allies in the 1530s.

Gowa’s relationship with Maros was also transformed by its submission in the wake of its defeat. A chronicle from Maros modeled after the Gowa and Talloq chronicles makes clear that the ruling line of Maros maintained a close relationship with that of Talloq both before and after their war with Gowa.¹⁰ Marriage and kinship ties intimately bound the two families, and the *Maros Chronicle* suggests that when Patanna Langkana went to war against Gowa he did so primarily to aid his kinsman, Tunipasuruq of Talloq. Rulers from Gowa and Maros never intermarried to the same degree, and did not achieve an equal intimacy. But they did forge a close contractual relationship that bound the two polities together. One of the few administrative positions or titles that the rulers of Gowa established was *tumailalang*, second in importance only to the *tumabicarabutta* position that was for generations held by the ruler of Talloq. Both the Gowa and Maros chronicles relate that Tunikakasang, the son of the ruler of Maros, Patanna Langkana, and Tunijalloq, who ruled Gowa from 1546 to 1565, concluded an arrangement by which, as long as Tunijalloq’s descendants ruled Gowa, those of Tunikakasang would serve as *tumailalang* in Gowa. In this manner Makassarese affirmed that Maros would join Gowa and Talloq as a valued but junior partner. Maros became a rich source of rice lands and manpower that rulers of Gowa would draw upon in later wars against Bugis rivals and ultimately the Dutch East India Company.

In short, after their defeat in battle, Talloq, Maros and to a lesser degree the communities of Polombangkeng became ritually affirmed allies in Gowa’s growing empire. They did not lose their identity or autonomy, however, and this is a crucial point when we reflect on what this episode teaches us about the dynamics of Gowa’s imperial expansion. Unlike our conventional image of how empires grow and consolidate power, in

premodern Makassar we are not dealing with territorial expansion or administrative incorporation, or even with the demands for tribute and slaves that we read of in the *Gowa Chronicle* regarding some of Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna's conquests. The 1530s war paved the way for marriage connections and strategic alliances. Particularly in Talloq, the result was a vastly expanded pool of important Makassarese with blood ties to Gowa's ruling family. Less celebrated were the communities of Polombangkeng, but nonetheless it too offered a deep pool of manpower and agricultural wealth whose chiefs were now kin of Gowa.

This war was of crucial importance because it dramatically expanded the network of kinship and other social relationships that tied the three most important communities in the Makassarese heartlands to Gowa. Gowa became the social centre of gravity that would attract – and occasionally repel – nearby Makassarese communities.

Gowa's rulers gained access to manpower, resources and tribute from alliances and from the rights entailed by the marriages enacted in the wake of its triumph. This access derived from the relationships, agreements and obligations Gowa gained by its victory and by the alliances it constructed with the rulers of its former enemies. This empire required no imperial bureaucracy to govern territories. The structure of its expansion was fundamentally social rather than administrative or military. Yet, as the second episode under consideration here evidences, military conquest was not the only engine driving Gowa's imperial expansion.

Maritime trading networks

After his death, Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna was succeeded as karaeng of Gowa by his son Tunipalangga, who ruled from 1546 to 1565. It is during his reign, in about 1561, that our second notable example of the social dynamics of imperialism took place. Again, the *Gowa Chronicle* is our source:

Also during his reign, he made an agreement with the one who asked for a place to dwell named Anakoda Bonang. He brought to the karaeng, when he asked for a place to dwell, these things: eighty-six blunderbusses, one piece of cloth, half a score of silk, one piece of velvet. Said Anakoda Bonang to Karaeng Tunipalangga, "There are four things that I ask for us." Said the karaeng, "What?" He spoke, "We ask that you do not enter our homes, do not enter our compound, do not demand payment¹¹ if we have children, do not confiscate our goods if we commit a crime." This was agreed to by the karaeng. The karaeng said, "If my water buffalo is tired, I will rest him in water. If his burden is heavy, I will set it down. What less could I do for my human flock?" Then spoke the karaeng to him, "You may not kill in my land without my knowledge." The karaeng spoke again, "For what

peoples do you speak?" and Anakoda Bonang said to the karaeng, "All of us who wear these sarongs." These were the words of Anakoda Bonang, "Such as Patani, Campa, Minangkabau, Johor, Pahang".

This episode relates the settlement of a significant Malay community in Gowa. The Malays would become vital partners in the expansion of the maritime capabilities available to the rulers of Gowa and Talloq. Unlike the hierarchy of overlord and vassal established after the 1530s war, here we witness a careful negotiation between two parties for their mutual benefit. Anakoda Bonang brought gifts to honour the ruler of Gowa and as a token of future offerings. Tunipalangga granted his request, as he astutely understood the value of having a Malay trading community beholden to him. The two then negotiated the terms of their relationship, which balanced Anakoda Bonang's concerns about preserving the Malay community's social distinctiveness and cultural heritage against Tunipalangga's rights and prerogatives as their lord.

Malays and Makassarese had been trading for centuries, and a diaspora of Malays after the fall of Melaka in 1511 (an event noted in the *Gowa Chronicle*) reinforced what was probably seasonal contact at Talloq, Sanrabone in Polombangkeng, and other coastal Makassarese communities. Anakoda Bonang's arrival and the creation of a permanent Malay quarter inevitably led to more extensive and intensive cross-cultural links. The rulers of Gowa and Talloq played the dominant role in Makassarese overseas trade, and they quickly developed an enormous appetite for foreign prestige goods alongside the bulk trade in goods such as rice and cloth. Makassar's Malay traders became key handlers of exports (especially rice and slaves) from Gowa's burgeoning empire. They also were active in the thriving spice trade linking the ports of the Java Sea with the islands of Maluku. This partnership deepened over the generations, and from being simply favoured agents of royal trade Malays became both acceptable marriage partners and key figures at Gowa and Talloq's courts.¹² It was through the mediation of Malays that Makassarese learned of and eventually accepted Islam. Malay culture and language thrived in seventeenth-century Makassar, eventually contributing as much to their hosts as did their commercial acumen and maritime networks. The depth of this relationship can easily be sensed in the *Sj'air Perang Mengkasar*, a Malay epic written about the Dutch and Bugis conquest of Gowa in the 1660s by a Makassarese Malay in the service of the sultan of Gowa.¹³

While the services rendered by the Malay community to the rulers of Gowa and Talloq is without equal in Makassar, a consistent theme in Gowa's imperial history is the effort to forge similar partnerships with the rulers of other immigrant communities. During the seventeenth century, Baju, Bandanese, Portuguese, English and Dutch all had contractual relationships with the rulers of Gowa through which they gained the privilege of settling and trading in Makassar in return for sharing their expertise, to

the mutual profit of both parties. Economically, Gowa's empire and the wealth and power of its ruling families in particular was built upon these relationships.¹⁴

It is important to realise that the economic structure of Gowa's empire was comprised of a series of specific trading networks built on established relationships. Each network allowed the rulers of Gowa and Talloq – and a select few favoured nobles – to profit from every exchange that took place within the ambit of their influence. This could be as simple as Gowa demanding tribute in gold, slaves or other goods from conquered communities. Makassarese called the payment, usually in gold, that the vanquished paid to the victor *saqbu katti*. Thus we learn in the *Gowa Chronicle* that Tumapaqrisiq Kallonna “conquered Garassiq, Katingang, Parigi, Siang, Sidenreng. He made vassals of Sanrabone, Jipang, Galesong, Laba. He took *saqbu katti* from Bulukumba, Silayar. He conquered Panai kang, Madalloq, Cempaga.” Each such vassal subject owed tribute to the ruler of Gowa, and was apparently required to make annual pilgrimages to Gowa to deliver payment in a ritual demonstration of subservience and loyalty.

The benefits accruing from these relationships within the empire were supplemented, and probably exceeded, by the profits that the rulers of Gowa and Talloq made from overseas trade. Cornelis Speelman provided a detailed description of this network of commercial ties and exchanges in his lengthy account of the region after the Dutch East India Company conquest in 1669.¹⁵ He describes the extent to which Gowa and Talloq's rulers controlled access to markets through the use of passes and the threat of force to ensure royal prerogatives. The sale of tribute from conquered areas was a monopoly of these rulers, and they often had the privilege of trading before other merchants could begin buying and selling. The result was anything but a free market: it elevated the personal wealth and power of a handful of royal nobles far beyond what the majority of Makassar's nobility could muster. The rulers and select others owned ships that dominated certain trading routes, such as those to Pasir and Kutai on the Borneo coast. In Manila an Indian Muslim acted as the agent of royal trade, and Speelman estimated that the profits on local cloth exported to Manila regularly reached 50 per cent or more. Other Indian, Chinese and Portuguese agents handled other routes in the vast network that came to be centred on Makassar. An impressive variety of imports and exports passed along these linkages – horses from Bima, slaves from Buton, wax from Tambuku, tortoiseshell from Banggai and many other products were imported and exchanged for armbands, Selayar cloths, gold, rice, iron and more goods collected in Sulawesi. Making possible all of these exchanges were agreements with specific parties – royal agents, favoured merchants, tribute-bearing vassals, allied rulers, company representatives and more – countenanced by the rulers of Gowa and Talloq. The aggregate result of scores of such arrangements was an exchange network of great variety and impressive scale.

Yet it would be a simplification to conclude that economics was the foundation of Gowa's empire. To phrase it in this way entails the unwarranted assumption that societies and empires actually behave like the models social scientists have constructed of them. It is also to assume that for the Makassarese economics was a separate sphere of activity from social, religious or other kinds of practices and behavior. As David Wyatt¹⁶ reminds us:

It is not in the essential nature of things that changes inherently and necessarily are "political" or "economic" or "cultural" or whatever. Those particular names are labels that the later historian attaches to what he or she thinks he sees ... so too are the analytical labels which we place on past events necessarily arbitrary constructions.

What I would like to underscore is the social dimension of Gowa's imperial economy. This is what the arrival of Anakoda Bonang illustrates effectively. Just as wars produced particular kinds of hierarchical social relationships of kinship and obligation, so too did commercial arrangements produce social relationships between the rulers of Gowa and the Malay, Bandanese, Portuguese, English and other communities who settled in Makassar. Indeed, it may be more accurate to say that social relationships produced commercial arrangements. Alongside and entangled with the marriage networks and lord-and-vassal relationships that provided the social framework for Gowa's imperial expansion, then, we must place the tribute obligations and maritime trading networks on which the rulers of Gowa and Talloq drew for economic sustenance. Both sorts of networks (and they necessarily overlapped) indicate how the dynamics of Gowa's empire were fundamentally a matter of social relationships.

A state?

Having briefly explored two key episodes in the history of Gowa's burgeoning empire, it is worth considering exactly what was being constructed by Gowa's rulers and their allies. To pose the question directly, using a word hitherto avoided, was Gowa a state? Are we dealing with the nuts and bolts of state formation?

Answering such a question involves selecting a definition of the state – generally a list of qualifying criteria – and then seeing how a given historical time and place matches up. Ian Caldwell's description of fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Bugis kingdoms as classic chiefdoms rather than states is a good example. He (quite correctly) notes that they were weakly centralised and without an administrative bureaucracy. In contrast (and less correctly), he notes that Gowa and Talloq achieved statehood:

The chronicles of these kingdoms record, in the sixteenth century, the development of kingship, the codification of law, the rise of a

bureaucracy, the imposition of a military draft and taxation, and the emergence of full-time craftsmen. These are all features of the modern state.¹⁷

Yet how well Gowa and Talloq met each of these six criteria is debatable.

Kingship as a feature of states is certainly a poor beginning. Gowa and Talloq never adopted the Indic model or rhetoric of universal monarchy. There were always important contractual limitations on the rights of rulers in South Sulawesi. Even taking the title Sultan and becoming an Islamicising kingdom did not make the rulers of Gowa and Talloq absolute. Makassar notions of authority were contested, and pretensions to absolutist behavior met with harsh condemnation even as the rights of rulers changed over time.¹⁸ The codification of law was both quite gradual and quite limited in the areas of social life it regulated. There is some evidence for the rise of a bureaucracy in the Gowa and Talloq chronicles, but on closer inspection it becomes clear that this was limited in both scope and significance. Anthony Reid, for example, notes that Gowa and Talloq did not have an administrative machinery responsible for major building projects, but depended on traditional modes of mobilising labour.

Vast projects were completed on this basis, including the building of a magnificent fleet of war galleys, the constructions of the walls of six forts and (in 1634) a 10-kilometre earth wall along the entire seafront of the city, the diversion of the Jeneberang River, and manufacture of a large arsenal of weapons. This appears to have been done through a complex system of obligation, whereby each noble was answerable to the king to bring his dependants (*ata*, but not necessarily slaves) to labour on great projects.¹⁹

Tribute and corvée labour obligations were the main source of internal resources for Gowa and Talloq's rulers. Mobilisation for warfare also followed the same traditional mode.²⁰

The rulers of Gowa and Talloq did not develop new administrative offices and new mechanisms to complete such tasks, but relied on a dramatically enlarged network of subordinates who could be called upon. The creation of *tumakkajannanngang* officials to oversee each craft specialisation comes closer to a premodern bureaucracy, but even this was fairly limited and was organised along the lines of traditional patron-client bonds. It seems fair to state that there were gestures toward developing a bureaucracy, but we are dealing with a rather small number of titled positions with obligations and duties that did not represent a major structural change in how society was organised or managed. The most important illustration of the limits of administrative development in Makassar involves land-holding, which generally was by appanagés granted to nobles rather than being administered by any kind of centralised authority. We

are dealing with what Christian Pelras²¹ called “spontaneous patterns” rather than “consciously articulated models”, and exemplary modes of social organisation “which actors invoke and consciously follow”. Gowa’s empire never developed or operated with anything approaching the consistency, predictability or uniformity we expect from modern states. We certainly cannot conclude from the extant sources that Makassarese *thought* Gowa and Talloq had created a new kind of entity in their midst.

So was Gowa a state on the Caldwell model? On balance I think the answer is no. What is really important may be this: if you do not believe that the organisation of society or political authority evolve – that is, if you believe that contingency, unintended consequences, human unpredictability and ad hoc measures trump rational planning, rule-making, consistency and predictable behavior, as I do – there doesn’t seem to be much point in devising typologies distinguishing chiefdoms from states. As G. Carter Bentley²² noted in his review of the literature on Southeast Asian states, evolutionary schemes of political development such as tribe–chiefdom–state fit poorly with what we actually see in Southeast Asian history. Jan Wisseman Christie²³ reached a similar conclusion in a more recent review of state formation in island Southeast Asia, writing that schematic models are inaccurate and tend to blind us to what is unique and, ultimately, illuminating about individual states. In the case of Makassar, the various definitions of the state offered by social and political theorists (for example, Day,²⁴ Migdal,²⁵ Tilly²⁶ and Weber²⁷) either poorly match what I see in the sources, are partially on target, or are so vague (albeit accurate) as to be entirely unhelpful. I confess to not seeing how it makes much difference analytically or conceptually if we determine that Gowa was a “chiefdom” or a “state”. Each historical situation must be analysed and understood on its own terms rather than festooned with our typologies. So let us abandon this classificatory mire and move on to more fertile fields.

Wars of Islamisation

The rulers of Talloq and Gowa publicly pronounced the Islamic profession of faith in September 1605. Very shortly after, we see Gowa at its most intentionally imperial. Under the tutelage of his uncle and *tumabicarabutta* Karaeng Matoaya (r. Talloq 1593 to 1623), the young Sultan Ala’uddin of Gowa (r. 1593 to 1639) launched a series of *bunduq kasallannganna* or “Wars of Islamisation” to compel their neighbours to accept the new faith. Between 1608 and 1611 all the major polities of South Sulawesi were forcibly converted to Islam. In addition to the chronicles, the Gowa court records known as *lontaraq bilang* solemnly recorded these conquests, for they were momentous events to Makassarese and Bugis at the time.

Karaeng Matoaya was known for his curiosity about religious matters, and Makassarese remembered his Islamic piety in particular. The *Talloq Chronicle* relates that

He often read holy books, never neglected [prayer] times once he became Muslim until his death, except when his foot swelled and he was given alcohol by an English physician. For eighteen nights he did not pray. He often performed optional prayers, such as *ratib*, *witr*, *wadduha*, *tasbih*, *tahajjud*. Said I Loqmoq ri Paotereka [one of his wives], “At the least he did two rakaat, at the most ten rakaat”. On Friday nights he did the *tasbih* prayers. During Ramadan each night he gave out alms of gold.

Religious conviction was thus certainly one motive for the rulers of Gowa and Talloq to launch wars to Islamicise their neighbours. But these wars were also only the most recent episode of a decades-long contest for supremacy between Makassarese Gowa and Talloq and the major Bugis polities of Bone, Soppeng and Wajoq to the east and north. Under the banner of Islam, Gowa was able to fulfill a long-standing desire to extend its empire. The *Talloq Chronicle* illustrates how imperial and religious motives were intertwined under Karareng Matoaya:

This karaeng Islamicised the people of Makassar until they became Islamic. Except for Luwuq, he Islamicised the Bugis throughout the Bugis lands, except only for the unbelievers. It was he who conquered Bulukumba twice, marched on and battled in Meru the people of Bone, renewed the treaty with the Three Lands in Takaraq, conquered Bilusu, mastered Sidenreng and part of Bilawa, mastered lower Mario and Lamuru, mastered Pattojo, mastered the people of Soppeng and their vassals, the people of Wajoq and their vassals, conquered Bone. The people conquered entered Islam. These people conquered were taken as vassals and placed before him: part of Tempe, Bulu Cinrana, Wawonio, Bilokka, Lemo, Campaga, Pationgi, Pekallaqbu.

Like the war between Gowa and Talloq in the 1530s, these wars too established hierarchical social relationships between lord and vassal. But to this traditional imperial demand was added the requirement that defeated rulers proclaim the *shahadah* profession of faith – “There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” – and in so doing enter the community of believers. Public declaration of the *shahadah* is the essential act of submission by which one becomes Muslim. Here it had multiple meanings, for it also was a token of submission to the ruler of Gowa and connoted formal acceptance of his authority.

Matoaya and Ala’uddin made other demands on conquered and subordinate communities in their increasingly self-consciously Muslim empire. Vassals from both Makassarese and Bugis polities were expected to travel to Gowa for certain religious holidays. A treaty text between the rulers of Sanrabone and Gowa, for example, promised that

If it is the celebration at end of Ramadan fasting [Idul Fitri], or the celebration on the tenth day of the twelfth Islamic month [Idul Adha], then the ruler of Sanrabone goes to give his hand in greeting and honour to the ruler of Gowa.

Similarly, Gowa required Sudiang to present its tribute three or four days before Ramadan each year.²⁸ Like pronouncing the *shahadah*, these practices clearly had religious and imperial dimensions as the rulers of Gowa and Talloq consciously sought to unite Islamic observance and political loyalty.

These periodic social obligations were buttressed by Islamic positions and institutions that Gowa sought to extend throughout its empire. For example, Matoaya and Ala'uddin established *mokkeng*, from the Arabic word *muqim*, meaning "inhabitant". This referred to people that the ruler of Gowa appointed to attend the Friday prayer service, ensuring that the minimum number of 40 people demanded by Shafi'ite doctrine were present for the service to be valid. He also appointed a leader of the *mokkeng* known as the *Anrongguru Mokkeng*.²⁹ In Gowa this functionary was active in Islamic ritual observances, and in Sanrabone there was a similar position.³⁰ When Gowa conquered Bima and Sumbawa it established *mokkeng* there as well. As one text relates, "He [Karaeng Matoaya] instituted the Friday service in those overseas countries. He desired heavenly reward by appointing *mokkings* and then setting them free. So the people called *mokking* were free, and the commoners were slaves."³¹ The date when Friday prayer services were begun in a given community was thus important and frequently was noted in the *lontaraq bilang*, beginning with the commencement of Friday public prayers in Talloq in 1607.³²

Another crucial ligament in Gowa's Islamic empire revolved around mosques and their accompanying religious functionaries. The *lontaraq bilang* assiduously record the construction of mosques in Gowa and elsewhere beginning in the 1630s. Though initially their place was contested,³³ mosques soon became the visible focal point for Muslim religious practice. From the grand mosques overseen by the most respected *ulama* (religious scholars), *imam* (prayer leaders) and *khatib* (those who deliver Friday sermons) appointed by the rulers of Gowa and Talloq to the more modest mosques and finally to local prayer houses, during the seventeenth century a network of sites devoted to encouraging daily and Friday prayers began to spread through the empire. The French observer Nicholas Gervaise³⁴ described in detail the appointment of Makassarese officials whose tasks at mosques involved preserving sacred texts, caring for the facility, beating brass drums to summon people to prayer, preaching on holy days, reading from the Qur'an, directing public prayers and more.

Certainly the communities closer to Gowa were more intensively Islami-cised – if by that we mean enmeshed in the everyday practice of Islam through *mokkeng*, mosques and other institutions – than those in the

furthest reaches of the empire. But there is little doubt that Islam became a constitutive element of Gowa's empire. The seventeenth-century *bunduq kasallannganna* is another example of how Gowa's empire was constituted by and in essence equivalent to the social relationships that its rulers encouraged, constructed or compelled. In this case Gowa's power expanded under the aegis of religious conviction, and familial, political, social and religious relationships were often synonymous in this empire. The goal of the rulers of Gowa and Talloq was to make obligations that had been intermittent, casual or nonexistent become regular, meaningful and lasting. Wars of Islamisation, and the subsequent determined efforts to mould subordinate communities into proper Islamic societies, were effective means of creating social networks that knit diverse peoples, communities, traditions and even islands together. Gowa's impressive empire lasted until the Dutch East India Company and their Bugis allies under Arung Palakka joined forces to conquer and occupy Gowa and Talloq in 1669. So decisive was this event in Makassarese history that its chroniclers ceased to add to the Gowa and Talloq chronicles, the main sources through which we can explore this golden age.

Analysis and implications

The analysis undertaken here demonstrates the importance of places such as Gowa to those engaged in the larger pursuit of the nature of the state and territorial expansion in Asia. It is precisely Gowa's distinctive dynamics, grounded in local societies and responding to contingent circumstances, which make it of special interest for this wider project. The examination of key episodes in the creation of Gowa's empire leads to two main conclusions that have important implications for the comparative study of polity expansion in Asia.

The first concerns the nature of the state. As numerous scholars of (primarily) modern states have concluded, the state is not a coherent object or entity separate from society and possessed of its own unitary agency.³⁵ I have found Bruno Latour particularly useful at deconstructing this traditional notion of the state. He employs the analytical notion of the network and insists that we must trace their paths and byways to see how they connect people and places. What we call "states" or "societies" are in fact the aggregate of their networks. They are the threads of practices, instruments, people, documents, machines and so forth that constitute them. A state is a construction of statistics, calculations, offices, documents, people, practices, ideas, arrangements, projects and conversations.³⁶ Latour's concern is the modern state, but I have certainly found this disaggregated picture of polities as collections of networks an apt description of premodern Makassar. There was no clearly identifiable state separate from the complicated web of malleable and evolving marriage,

kinship, alliance, exchange and other fundamentally social relationships between individuals and groups.

Gowa's empire (the term I prefer, rather than "state", for this heterogeneous construction) was the tangible residue of a series of discrete human efforts to concretise and so stabilise or perpetuate social relationships. Imperial expansion was the result of efforts to extend (in quality and quantity, extensively and intensively) social hierarchies between ruling families, lines and individuals. Thus Maros did not disappear but was established as a subordinate vassal of Gowa through marriage, titles and ritual practices after its defeat in the 1530s. Gowa's empire was one of great suppleness and at the same time fragility. Not grounded in institutional arrangements that could weather the shifting fortunes of alliances, the changing picture of kinship relations, and the simple passing of generations, it was continuously changing. In advocating "empire" over "state" as the relevant analytical category, we might define empire as a hierarchy of communities bound to a centre by structures of obligation through networks of ritual, kinship, social and material form. These relationships could be durable or tentative, contested or accepted, dense or thin. The fragility of this personalised form of empire meant that in the wake of Gowa's defeat its empire quickly evaporated as these networks were loosened, broken or fragmented hopelessly.

The second implication for the comparative study of polity expansion in Asia concerns the relationship between imperial expansion, centralised political structures and territorial integration. In his examination of pre-modern mainland Southeast Asia, Victor Lieberman maps the relationship between elements that produced a remarkable integration into three main empires by the late eighteenth century. "Consolidation", he summarises, "drew strength from several variables, including rising foreign trade, imported guns, population growth and agricultural extension, wider literacy, new religious currents, and the demands of intensifying interstate competition."³⁷ These spurs toward integration operated systemically as inputs drew strength from other variables, then increasingly reinforced these trends to produce the core regions of Burma, Thailand and Vietnam.

Premodern Makassar is a useful contrasting case because it is an example of how imperial expansion need not depend on the creation of centralised administrative structures, nor must it result in territorial integration. Centralised administrative innovations – in particular bureaucracies capable of knitting together regions and peoples to counter centripetal tendencies – certainly helped make the empires of the mainland more powerful and more enduring than Gowa's constellation of social networks. But given the constraints of geography, manpower and resources in the island world, we should nevertheless be extraordinarily impressed at what the rulers of Gowa and Talloq were able to accomplish.

The other contrast that premodern Makassar highlights is how imperial expansion need not result in or primarily be manifested in territorial integration. The vast collection of subordinate polities harnessed into Gowa's empire did not disappear. Gowa embarked on no project to station troops, encourage colonists or administratively absorb its vassals into itself. Its networks of alliances and obligations in fact depended on the continued presence and participation of these subordinate communities and their rulers. I am not arguing that territorial expansion was non-existent or that territory was of little concern to Gowa and Talloq's rulers. Control over key territory, resources, and pools of manpower were of vital importance and often brutally contested. But we should not mistake these specific and local contests for the broader sweep of imperial practices in which territorial expansion was almost a byproduct of Gowa's networks. This empire did not advance through mechanisms of territorial expansion, nor was this the primary goal of the wars of Gowa's rulers. Empire can be manifested in many ways, it seems, and it is this diversity of local dynamics that makes premodern Makassar of note for scholars examining the diverse range of historical processes of polity expansion in Asia.

Notes

- 1 For which see Abdurrazak Daeng Patunru, *Sedjarah Gowa* (Ujung Pandang: Jajasan Kebudayaan Sulawesi Selatan dan Tenggara, 1969); Leonard Y. Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka: A History of South Sulawesi (Celebes) in the Seventeenth Century* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981); F. David Bulbeck, "The Politics of Marriage and the Marriage of Politics in Gowa, South Sulawesi, during the 16th and 17th Centuries", in *Origins, Ancestry and Alliance: Explorations in Austronesian Ethnography*, ed. James J. Fox and Clifford Sather (Canberra: Australian National University, 1996), 280–315; William Cummings, *Making Blood White: Historical Transformations in Early Modern Makassar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); William Cummings, *The Makassar Annals* (Leiden: KITLV, 2011); Anthony Reid, "A Great Seventeenth Century Indonesian Family: Matoaya and Pattingalloang of Makassar", *Masyarakat Indonesia* 8, 1 (1981): 1–28; and Anthony Reid, "The Rise of Makassar", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 17 (1983): 117–60.
- 2 The translations of the chronicles used here are taken from William Cummings, *A Chain of Kings: The Makassarese Chronicles of Gowa and Talloq* (Leiden: KITLV, 2007). Detailed comparison of extant versions and alternate readings are omitted here for the sake of brevity.
- 3 Noble Makassarese bore several names. Most commonly these included a personal name, a royal name signified by the title Daeng, and a *karaeng* name that indicated their high birth. Upon installation as ruler of a given community they took the additional title of *karaeng* of that community, becoming, for example, the Karaeng of Talloq. The most revered also received posthumous titles or names such as Tumatinroa ri Buluquduaya, or "He Who Died in Buluquduaya", and Tunijalloq, or "He Who Was Cut Down".
- 4 Literally meaning "half-umbrellas" (*laqland sipue*), this refers to a sunshade made from palm lontaraq leaves that was held above the heads of rulers as a mark of their loftiness. The ritual of first having such an umbrella raised over one's head was part of the ceremony by which a new ruler was installed.

- 5 This refers to three banners named Gurudaya, Sulengkaya and Cakkuridia. Each was an important part of Gowa's growing collection of sacred objects. Tales abound of how these banners, commonly believed to be imbued with a sentient spirit, could move of their own will, pulling their bearer this way and that. Troops who fought beneath them were believed to gain bravery and might from the Three Gaukang.
- 6 The cultural dimension of warfare, treaties and alliances is discussed in Andaya's *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*.
- 7 James J. Fox, "Austronesian Societies and their Transformations", in *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Peter Bellwood, James J. Fox and Darrell Tryon (Canberra: Australia National University, 1995), pp. 214–28.
- 8 William Cummings, "The Dynamics of Resistance and Emulation in Makassar History", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, 3 (2001): 423–35; and Tony Day, "Ties That (Un)Bind: Families and States in Premodern Southeast Asia", *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, 2 (1996): 384–409.
- 9 Bulbeck, "The Politics of Marriage", p. 311.
- 10 William Cummings, "Reading the Histories of a Maros Chronicle", *Bikdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 156, 1 (2000): 18–21.
- 11 This refers to a Makassarese practice in which, if a man and woman divorced and there was an odd number of children, one parent paid the other a sum of gold in compensation for taking the youngest child. Anakoda Bonang's request implies a strong Malay identity and the concomitant desire to not be forced to live by Makassarese social strictures.
- 12 William Cummings, "The Melaka Malay Diaspora in Makassar, c.1500–1669", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 71, 1 (1998): 107–21.
- 13 C. Skinner (ed. and transl.), *Sja'ir Perang Mengkasar* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963).
- 14 J. Noorduyt (ed.), "De handelsrelaties van het Makassarse rijk volgens de Notitie van Cornelis Speelman uit 1670", *Nederlandse Historische Bronnen* 3 (1983): 96–123; and Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680. Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
- 15 Noorduyt, "De handelsrelaties".
- 16 David K. Wyatt, "Southeast Asia 'Inside Out', 1300–1800: A Perspective from the Interior", *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 3 (1997): 689–709.
- 17 Ian Caldwell, "Power, State and Society among the Pre-Islamic Bugis", *Bikdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 151, 3 (1995): 394–421. See p. 418.
- 18 William Cummings, "'The One Who Was Cast Out': Tunipasuluq and Changing Notions of Authority in the Gowa Chronicle", *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 39, 1 (2005): 35–59.
- 19 Anthony Reid, "Pluralism and Progress in Seventeenth-century Makassar", in *Authority and Enterprise among the Peoples of South Sulawesi*, ed. Roger Tol, Kees van Dijk and Greg Acciaioli (Leiden: KITLV, 2000), pp. 55–71. See p. 69.
- 20 Andaya, *The Heritage of Arung Palakka*.
- 21 Christian Pelras, "Patron-client Ties among the Bugis and Makassarese of South Sulawesi", in *Authority and Enterprise among the Peoples of South Sulawesi*, ed. Roger Tol, Kees van Dijk and Greg Acciaioli (Leiden: KITLV, 2000), pp. 15–54. See p. 51.
- 22 G. Carter Bentley, "Indigenous States of Southeast Asia", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986): 275–305.
- 23 Jan Wisseman Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia: A Consideration of the Theories and Data", *Bikdragen tot de taal-, land- en*

volkenkunde / *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 151, 2 (1995): 235–88. See pp. 268–9.

24

The state is a complex agent that acts through culturally constructed repertoires of potent, rational, authoritative, magical, symbolic, and illusory practices, institutions, and concepts. The state is distinct from yet interactive with societal forces, in ways that vary according to time and place. The state regulates power and morality and organizes space, time, and identity in the face of resistance to its authority to do so.

Tony Day, *Fluid Iron: State Formation in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), p. 34.

25

It must be thought of at once (1) as the powerful image of a clearly bounded, unified organisation that can be spoken of in singular terms (e.g., a headline stating "Israel accepts Palestinian demands"), as if it were a single, centrally motivated actor performing in an integrated manner to rule a clearly defined territory; and (2) as the practices of a heap of loosely connected parts or fragments, frequently with ill-defined boundaries between them and other groupings inside and outside the official state borders and often promoting conflicting sets of rules with one another and with "official" Law.

Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 22.

26 States are "coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households

and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories." Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Malden, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 1.

27 "A state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory." Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, transl. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 78.

28 Cummings, *Making Blood White*, p. 161.

29 Ibid, pp. 156–7; and Noorduyn, "De handelsrelaties".

30 A. A. Cense and Abdoerrahim, *Makassaars-Nederlands Woordenboek* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), p. 460; and Noorduyn, "De handelsrelaties", p. 322.

31 Noorduyn, "De handelsrelaties", p. 318.

32 Cummings, *The Makassar Annals*.

33 Pelras, "Patron-client Ties", p. 121.

34 Nicolas Gervaise, *An Historical Description of the Kingdom of Macasar* (London [publisher unknown], 1701 [1685]), pp. 153–9.

35 Cf. Migdal, *State in Society*; Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics", *American Political Science Review* 85, 1 (March 1991): 77–96; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and George Steinmetz, "Introduction: Culture and the State", in *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 1–49.

36 Bruno Latour (transl. Catherine Porter), *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993 [1991]), pp. 120–2.

37 Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c.800–1830 – Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 64.

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