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Fraught Collaboration:

Diplomacy, Intermediaries, and Governance at the
China-Vietnam Border, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Joshua C. Herr

2017

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Fraught Collaboration:

Diplomacy, Intermediaries, and Governance at the
China-Vietnam Border, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

by

Joshua C. Herr

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Richard Von Glahn, Chair

Scholarship and opinion on the history of international borders have tended to think of them as modern institutions that originated in Europe and were imposed globally through colonial expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Historians, moreover, have focused predominantly on the process of border genesis. My study of the China-Vietnam border in the seventeenth and eighteenth century takes a different tack. The subject of my study is an international border in Asia that existed well before significant European involvement in the region and, in fact, well before the period covered in this study. Rather than border genesis, my interest is in the nature of a pre-European, pre-nineteenth century border in Asia and how this “old” border changes over time.

This dissertation is structured chronologically as well as thematically. In my chapters, I trace the evolution of the China-Vietnam border in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in three aspects: diplomatic relations, local society in the borderlands, and border governance. In varied measure, the chapters reflect three perspectives, namely the view from the two courts, the view from local and translocal society, and the view from state representatives on active service in diplomacy and the border.

To reflect these various perspectives, I have combined the use of conventional as well as underused sources. In addition to the familiar court chronicles such as the Chinese *Shilu* and the Vietnamese *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, I have mobilized embassy accounts, a *tusi*-domain local gazetteers, and Vietnamese local history sources such as local gazetteers and temple inscriptions to complicate and enrich my narrative.

In contrast to many studies of premodern international relations in East Asia, I argue here for the significance of horizontal, lateral dimensions within a hierarchical, asymmetric diplomatic relations. Specifically, I argue that border governance became a crucial area of common interest and collaboration between the Chinese and Vietnamese courts. Moreover, border governance and regulation of transborder movement grew in importance not only as a result of court policy, but also in relation to change in local society and crises in the neighboring state.

The dissertation of Joshua C. Herr is approved.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam

George Edson Dutton

Richard Von Glahn, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

For my teachers,

Lau Yin Hung 劉燕虹

and

Wong Hoi Kit 王海傑

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INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth century, an era sometimes called the era of “high colonialism,” Euro-American empires were taking over the world. An important tool in imperialism’s toolbox was the creation of borders.¹ In many parts of the world, the modern boundaries between countries were the result of impositions by imperialist powers on maps and the landscape. It is easy to generalize, then, that the modern world of interstate borders came from ideas and practices created in Europe, which were then spread and imposed around the world.

However, borders existed prior and apart from nineteenth century European imperialism. Immediately following the conclusion of the Sino-French conflict in the 1880s, separate delegations from the Chinese and French sides met at the China-Vietnam border to survey the boundary and define the limits of the Chinese empire and the French protectorate. At this point, the French, like many other Euro-American powers, had already used cartography and border-making to advantageous effect in their imperialist expansion in West Africa.²

But at the China-Vietnam border, the French found an existing border. An account by one of the members of the French demarcation commission tells how the Chinese and French delegations went from one gate to another, from one marked and guarded mountain pass to another, along a well-defined and built-up border. The resulting agreement between the French and the Chinese by and large recognized the existing border.³

¹ For the case of the British Raj, see Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construct of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Ian J. Barrow, *Making history, drawing territory: British mapping in India, c. 1756-1905* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

² Thomas J. Bassett, “Cartography and Empire Building in Nineteenth-Century West Africa,” *Geographical Review* 84, no. 3 (Jul., 1994), 316-335.

³ P. Neis, *The Sino-Vietnamese Border Demarcation, 1885-87*, trans. Walter E.J. Tips (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998).

The existence of a border between China and Vietnam is attested to long before the nineteenth century. Pham Su Manh, a fourteenth century Vietnamese official and poet wrote of the border between the two countries as he patrolled the borderlands. In these poems, natural barriers and frontier people groups form the border: “The barrier mountain’s strong points determine our strategy./Streams, mountain torrents, and a screen of tribesmen provide a far-flung defence”; and “The rocks are a strong border. The water is a moat./The terrain separates South from North, as forbidding as a fortified citadel.”⁴

While the exact origins of the China-Vietnam border are unclear, the boundary was most likely first created in the tenth century, when the first independent Vietnamese state broke away from the crumbling Tang empire (618-907). As the Song dynasty (960-1279) recouped much of the rest of the Chinese empire, the practical limits of the two states may have acted as a de facto border. But in the eleventh century, following an uprising in the borderlands between the two states, the Chinese and Vietnamese courts negotiated an agreement among themselves and established a border, although the exact contours and infrastructure involved does not appear in the historical record.

One major change to the China-Vietnam border since the eleventh century was the gradual addition and clarification of a boundary between northwest Vietnam and Yunnan province in China. This process continued well into the twentieth century. In fact, the reason for the growth of this boundary was the expansion of the Chinese and Vietnamese states into the frontier of those areas in the intervening centuries.

⁴ Poem no. 2, “Thuong Ngao,” verses 5-6, and poem no. 4, “The Tam Thanh Grotto,” verses 3-4, O.W. Wolters, “Pham Su Manh’s Poems Written while Patrolling the Vietnamese Northern Border in the Middle of the Fourteenth Century,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 13, no. 1 (1982): 111, 113.

However, the location of the boundary between China and Vietnam that ran along Guangxi province did not change significantly from the eleventh century to the current day. Today, the national boundary between the two states in this area and the border crossings are largely the same as what has existed for centuries.

Thus, the China-Vietnam border can be considered an example of an old border, rather than a recently-demarcated one. Some have even called this type of border a fossilized border, meaning that the demarcation of the boundary has ceased to be dynamic over time.⁵ However, the acceptance of precedent and the lack of territorial expansion does not mean that a border does not have a history. My study of this border takes a fresh look at borders and suggests some characteristics and patterns of change for an early modern, East Asian border.

⁵ See Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 1, for discussion of idea of “fossilized” border.



Figure 1 Map of China-North Vietnam Boundary Area, created by CIA, 1967. From Library of Congress.

Geography of the China-Vietnam border

During the period we are concerned with in this study, China’s border with Vietnam ran along three provinces, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan. (Today, the border runs along Guangxi and Yunnan only; the coastal part of the border, formerly a part of Guangdong, is now part of Guangxi.) Although I make occasional reference to the sections of the border in Guangdong and Yunnan, my main focus in this study is the Guangxi section.

Much of northern Vietnam and Guangxi is covered by karst limestone, punctured by river valleys. In northern Vietnam, the limestone midlands end to the south at the Red River Valley. North across the border, the limestone terrain is punctured by the catchment area of the West

River system, forming a plain around the city of Nanning before the rivers flow eastward toward Guangdong. From a topographical point of view, the China-Vietnam border is based on a large limestone formation, grooved and punctured by waterways, small valleys, and narrow, winding canyons. In addition, it seems that this area was heavily wooded in the past. Unlike the river plains to the north and south, the border area is a natural barrier, recognized as such for centuries by the Chinese and Vietnamese states when they thought about the movement of armies and the reach of state control.

For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as with today, the two largest and most important cities near the China-Vietnam border were Thang Long (today's Ha Noi), the Vietnamese capital, and Nanning, a prefectural city on the west end of Guangxi. In fact, the two cities were roughly the same distance from the border, 214 km from Nanning and 170 km from Thang Long.⁶

The border itself runs from, in the east at the coast, Mong Cai/Dongxing, to the Youyi Pass at the middle of the Guangxi section, near Lang Son on the Vietnamese side and Pingxiang on the Chinese side. The border then continues to the northwest along Yunnan until it reaches the third major border portal today, Lao Cai/Hekou. The China-Vietnam border ends somewhat further to the west, where Vietnam's border with Laos begins.

⁶ Based on distances along modern roads, as indicated by Google Maps, accessed 18 February 2017.

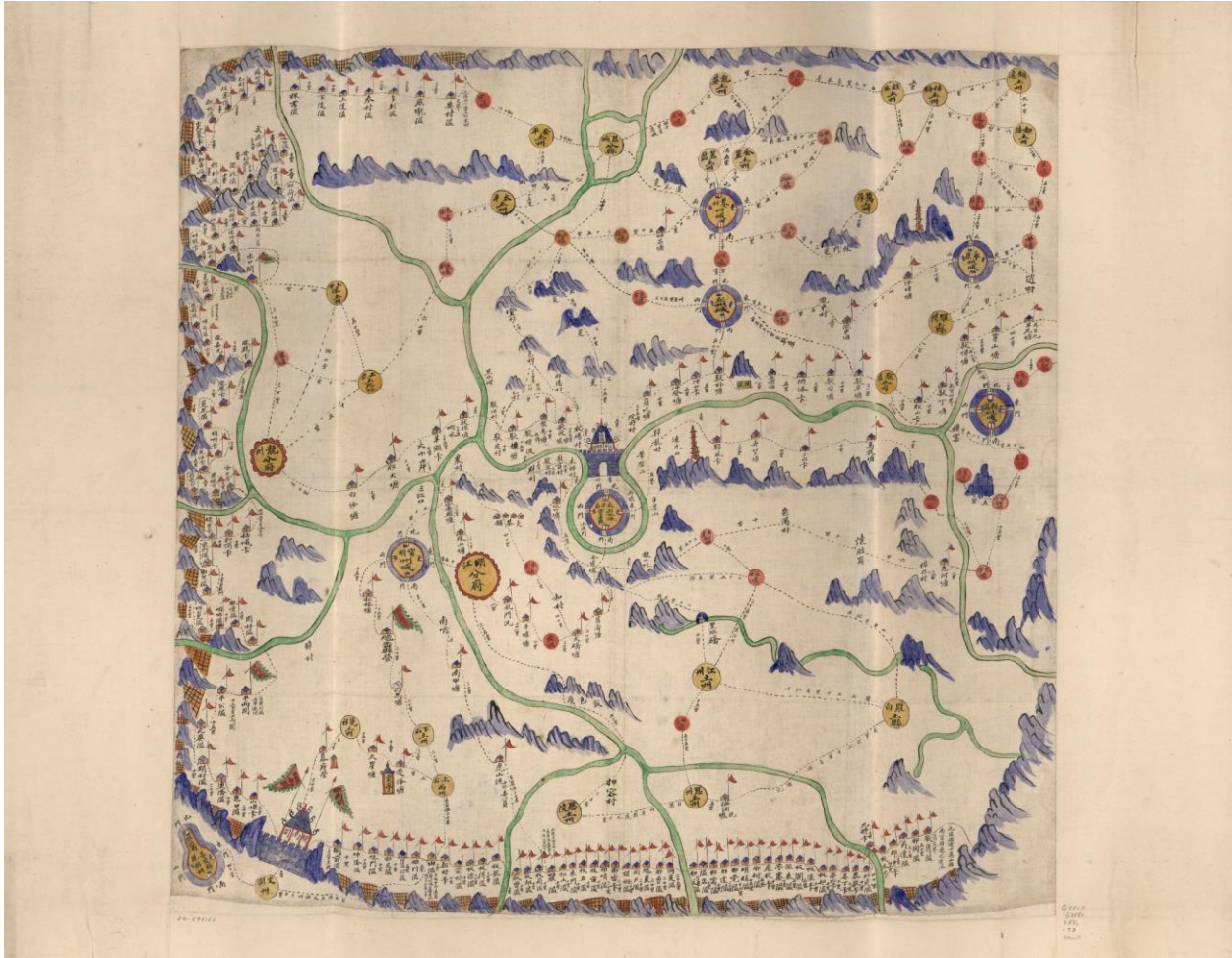


Figure 2 Chinese map of Taiping prefecture, Guangxi, adjacent to the Vietnam border; 1886. Library of Congress. Note the many passes (ai) and gates (guan) along the bottom, left, and top-left borders of the map.

Borders and international relations in early modern East Asia

Recently, historians working on the modern period have made signal contributions to the study of borders. Eric Tagliacozzo has written about how trade became criminalized as smuggling as the British and Dutch colonial states attempted in the early twentieth century to create and impose borders in maritime Southeast Asia.⁷ Adam McKeown has focused more on borders as state regulators of identity and movement rather than as territorial entities. He argues

⁷ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

that white settler nations' attempts to restrict and regulate Asian migration around the Pacific in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided the origin for the modern international system of passports and the consequent state attempts to control individual identity and movement.⁸

Although less has been written about the role of borders in the early modern period, some scholars of an earlier generation have made significant contributions to this subject. Thongchai Winichakul proposed the idea of a geo-body, i.e. a conception of territory that underlay imagined communities, as a way to understand how Siam developed new ideas about borders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Central to his argument was the idea that modern and premodern notions of territory were drastically different; that premodern Siam imagined space as a hierarchy of proximity to a center rather than a bounded, homogeneous territory.⁹ Peter Sahlins (1989), on the other hand, has demonstrated that there was a great deal of continuity and development from early modern to modern borders in Europe. He argued that, rather than as impositions from state centers, communities at borders often successfully turned borders to use in their local agendas.¹⁰

The common premise of the studies above is that borders are modern phenomena and associated with European origins. This in turn is related to the larger question about the nature of international relations or a world order. Here, I want to turn to examining a number of paradigms of premodern international relations in so far as they address the phenomenon of borders. Let me

⁸ Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁹ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Sahlins, *Boundaries* (1989).

begin by mentioning briefly the Westphalian model. This is the long-established, somewhat caricatured, and standard paradigm for modern international relations, especially as far as Europe is concerned. Westphalia refers to the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, which marked the end of the Wars of Religion in Europe. Historians and political scientists have long seen in this settlement the origins and model of modern international, or inter-state, relations. The defining feature of this system is that states were considered sovereign within their territorial bounds and autonomous to pursue their individual goals in foreign relations with other states, without reference to third parties. In fact, current scholarship in the fields of European history and international relations has largely questioned this interpretation of the Peace of Westphalia and the utility of the Westphalian model of international relations.¹¹ I will not discuss this large and significant body of recent scholarship except to point out that the existence and functioning of state borders is a basic premise to the Westphalian model.

One of the oldest and most well-known paradigms in East Asian studies, as least as far as it is practiced in North America, is that of tributary relations, first articulated by John King Fairbank.¹² Put simply, the tributary relations paradigm is a center-periphery model of international relations, a Sino-centric hierarchy of states, where peripheral states such as Korea and Vietnam oriented themselves toward China, acknowledged the latter's superiority, cultural and otherwise, and generally accepted Chinese suzerainty. Central to Fairbank's conception of such a tributary relations model was the ritual or cosmic role of the Chinese emperor (as

¹¹ Some examples are Darel E. Paul, "Sovereignty, Survival and the Westphalian Blind Alley in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (Apr., 1999): 217-231; and Andreas Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth," *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (Spring, 2001): 251-287.

¹² There are several versions of Fairbank's tributary relations, but here I am relying on his 1942 article: J.K. Fairbank, "Tributary Trade and China's Relations to the West," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol.1, no.2 (1942): 129-49.

perceived by China and its East Asian neighbors). The emperor was understood as performing a vital cosmic role, not only in mediating between heaven and earth, but also in mediating between civilization and the barbarians. Furthermore, the emperor had a role of attracting barbarians to his court and civilizing them.¹³ This, then, was a vision of a universal empire. There is not much room in this vision for legitimate limits, conflict, or disagreement between states, i.e. between China and its neighbors, except in the framework of punitive action by China against recalcitrant barbarians. By extension, it is hard to see how borders fit into this version of tributary relations. There is another, well-known aspect of Fairbank's model that suggests one way that borders might figure here, which is the way that Fairbank suggests that there is a gap between appearances and reality, between the rhetoric of tributary relations and the reality of trade and other phenomena of international relations. This is famously captured in the phrase, "trade under the guise of tribute."¹⁴ This dualism suggests that Fairbank's model might deal with borders as exceptions, as one aspect of the reality that the appearances of tributary relations ignored.¹⁵ I will return to this idea of borders as falling into a residual category when I discuss John Will's work.

The tributary paradigm has more recently been revisited indirectly and directly by some scholars of East Asia. In his study of envoy poetry by Vietnamese envoys traveling to the Qing court in the premodern period, Liam Kelley has argued against some of the critics of traditional

¹³ Fairbank, 1942.

¹⁴ Fairbank, 1942; This is one aspect of the dualism that Fairbank has often been criticized for (the other being the dualism of rational, pragmatic Westerners and Chinese focused on appearances and ritual). See discussion in James Hevia, "Tribute, Asymmetry, and Imperial Formations: Rethinking Relations of Power in East Asia," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16, no.1/2 (2009): 69-83.

¹⁵ For discussion of the role of legal anomaly or exception in early modern European legal ideas about sovereignty, see Laura Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

models of Sino-centric tributary relations.¹⁶ Through his examination of their poetry, Kelley finds a largely shared worldview between the Vietnamese envoys and other East Asian scholar-official elites from China and other East Asian states such as Korea. For Kelley, who has some discussion on the experience and thoughts of these Vietnamese envoys as they cross the Vietnam-China border, East Asian borders were political borders but not cultural borders. However, there is a sense of cultural difference here, in that Kelley shows that these envoys also thought of their relationship to China as a cultural hierarchy, where they found Vietnam's degree of culturedness or civilizedness to be inferior or lacking compared to China's.¹⁷

For a more explicit revisiting of the tributary relations paradigm, I turn to David Kang's work, which in several places draws on Kelley's work. Kang's book, *East Asia before the West*, explicitly attempts to defend, update, and modify the tributary relations model.¹⁸ He addresses several areas of international relations in this book, including diplomacy, trade, etc., but a central argument in the book is that East Asia, i.e. China, Japan, Korea, Ryukyu, Vietnam, etc., had a shared set of Confucian cultural values and social structures, including a sense of hierarchy, and this shared cultural and social world made possible the acceptance of Chinese hegemony. In turn, David Kang argues, this hegemony allowed for a high level of interstate harmony, as Chinese hegemony was largely accepted while conflicts could be mediated through the shared Confucian cultural and social worlds. Hence, he says, this accounts for premodern East Asia's low incident of interstate conflict, compared to the same period for Europe. The issue of borders does not

¹⁶ Liam C. Kelley, *Beyond the Bronze Pillars: Envoy Poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies & University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

¹⁷ Kelley, *Beyond the Bronze Pillars*, 33-36.

¹⁸ David Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

figure prominently in Kang's book,¹⁹ but his more general argument suggests that his version of the tributary relations model would see state borders as inconsequential or at least not a source of tension, conflict, or controversy. Borders become insignificant since the ruling philosophy of states on both sides of the border was largely the same (broadly Confucian) and Chinese hegemony was largely undisputed. Much of Kang's book depends on his observation that East Asia experienced far less war in the half millennium before the Opium War than Europe did in the same period.²⁰ I will not attempt to dispute this comparison here, but simply say that, in my opinion, war and interstate conflict played a greater role or had a greater significance in East Asia during the period in question than Kang allows.

To conclude my discussion of the tributary relations paradigm, I want to turn to the work of the late John E. Wills, Jr. Much of Wills' career engaged various questions and aspects of China's premodern foreign relations and the tributary relations model in particular. Wills completed his PhD under Fairbank but I think it is fair to say that Wills' relationship to Fairbank's work is one of loyal opposition. Even in his early publications, Wills often questioned the tributary relations model and probed for modifications and alternatives.²¹ I want to mention a recent article by Wills entitled, 'Functional not fossilized,' in which he examined Qing attempts to deal with diplomatic crises and border issues in relation to Siam and Vietnam.²² The title is a

¹⁹ Kang, *East Asia Before the West*, does have a chapter on frontiers, however.

²⁰ Kang, *East Asia Before the West*, 1-2.

²¹ See for example the articles he edited for a special issue on "From 'Tribute System' to 'Peaceful Rise': American Historians, Political Scientists, and Policy Analysts Discuss China's Foreign Relations" in *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16, no. 1 / 2 (Spring-Summer 2009). See also James Hevia's discussion of the role of Wills' scholarship in *Cherishing Men From Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1995), 13ff.

²² John E. Wills, Jr., "Functional, Not Fossilized: Qing Tribute Relations with Dai Viet (Vietnam) and Siam (Thailand), 1700-1820," *T'oung Pao* 98 (2012): 439-478.

reference to China's tributary relations and Will's general argument here is that this system of foreign relations was still capable, in the eighteenth century, of coping with the border issues and diplomatic crises that arose. What I find interesting and telling here is that, in fact, tribute or tributary missions to the Chinese court are virtually absent from this account. What Will means here by 'tributary relations' is the more general sense of 'China's premodern international relations.' And, I think the reason for the shift or slippage from the original Fairbankian definition to Will's usage has to do with the role of borders or frontiers. I gather from this that the tributary relations paradigm tends to have a difficult time in accounting for borders in part because the model has a very weak sense of territoriality and in part because borders are precisely the key sites of conflict for premodern states, and, as mentioned earlier, the tributary relations model is not particularly well-suited to explaining interstate conflict.

Next, I want to move to considering a second paradigm of premodern East Asian international relations, what I call the Eurasian empire paradigm. This is a paradigm that is closely related to what has been called the New Qing studies or New Qing history of the last two or three decades.²³ While there is much scholarship that I could categorize under this label of the Eurasian empire paradigm, I think Peter Perdue's work, especially as culminating in his *China Marches West*, is a typical and exemplary example of this paradigm.²⁴ In Perdue's work, he builds on the foundation of New Qing history, by focusing on aspects of Qing rule that are distinctly Manchu or Inner Asian, but adds to this a comparative and world history dimension by placing Qing expansion in relation to contemporaneous Eurasian empires. Very much like Laura

²³ For a definition and discussion of the New Qing scholarship, see Evelyn S. Rawski, "Presidential address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The significance of the Qing period in Chinese history," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 04 (1996): 829-850.

²⁴ Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2005).

Hostetler's earlier work, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, Perdue sees the Qing, Romanov, and Zunghar states competing with each other over empire in Inner Asia, using similar technologies and strategies that were circulating in Eurasia in the early modern period, for example, Jesuit advisors and their cartographic technologies, gunpowder/artillery, multi-lingual/multi-cultural rule, etc.²⁵ Quite unlike in the tributary relations paradigm, borders are prominent in the Eurasian empire paradigm.²⁶ The borders in question tend to be 'new' borders, or at least borders that are being defined in new ways. In particular, there is a great emphasis in the Eurasian empire paradigm on cartography as a new scientific technique, imported by Jesuits, and used as a kind of standard language of empire across Eurasia. Cartography thus becomes a way to stake claims, to negotiate and compete with other Eurasian empires. The classic example of this kind of inter-imperial engagement is the Treaty of Nerchinsk, signed between the Qing and the Romanovs, and negotiated through the means of the new cartography as well as Jesuit advisors acting for both sides.²⁷ (I should point out here that, in addition to the explicit argument that new forms of cartography defined a distinctly early modern Eurasian imperial contest, there is also another, implicit argument here that has an early modern angle, which is the link with studies of modern border-making in generally colonial contexts, such as that of Eric Tagliacozzo.²⁸) In the Eurasian empire paradigm, borders are seen as products of imperial expansion and competition, newly created in many cases, and done so through new technologies such as cartography. Despite the

²⁵ Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

²⁶ Examples include Perdue in *China Marches West*, and his "Boundaries and trade in the early modern world: negotiations at Nerchinsk and Beijing." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 43, no. 3 (2010): 341-356; Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*; and note the prominence of border and cartography in Evelyn S. Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia: Cross-Border Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²⁷ Perdue, "Boundaries."

²⁸ Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders*.

utility of this paradigm for understanding certain borders in East Asia, it does not work very well for long-established borders, e.g. borders between China, Korea, Vietnam, Japan, etc.

In the instance of the China-Vietnam border in this study, for example, there are very few instances of maps depicting a boundary line between the two countries prior to the nineteenth century. This is not to say that there was no sense of demarcation or separate territories, as I will demonstrate in Chapter One. However, cartography in this instance did not play the critical role it did in the cases examined in the Eurasian empire paradigm. In the Ming-era map (c. sixteenth century) below, no lines or distinct shading distinguishes China from Vietnam (or from Korea or other countries). (The red lines are roads; note also that lines in the bottom left of the image are creases in the manuscript.)



Figure 3. Detail, Guangxi map, Ming Atlas (*Da Ming yu di tu*), 16th c. LOC.

Approach and contributions of the present study

Although my work is informed by the tributary relations and Eurasian empires paradigms, my approach departs from them in significant ways. First, this study decenters the focus on the ritual space of the Chinese court common in the tributary relations approach, and makes the border and, to a lesser extent, the Vietnamese court the scenes of the story. In contrast to the Eurasian empires paradigm, too, this study represents a study of the Qing empire's foreign relations far from the Inner Asian steppe.

Secondly, this study highlights the role of tension, conflict, and negotiation between courts in early modern East Asia. Although I do not dispute that China-Vietnam relations involved power asymmetry and hierarchy, I emphasize the possibilities of resistance to hegemony, fluctuation in power relations, the need for collaboration, and the role of interests rather than shared cultural understandings in shaping diplomatic relations. This orientation corrects a tendency toward cultural determinism in some versions of the tributary relations paradigm. Similarly, my understanding of the border as related to ideas of limit sets my study apart from many case studies of Qing expansion. Rather than a tool of expansion, the border is often seen in my case study as a limit to empire, a defensive strategy, a means to limit state commitments, and a regulatory mechanism.

Thirdly, unlike many studies of borders that emphasize the demarcation process, including cartography, my approach has highlighted the role of the past for “old,” established, and stable borders. I argue that imperial legacy, in this case the legacy of Ming empire, shaped the China-Vietnam border and intercourt relationship by providing the institutions and rules of East Asian intercourt relations, i.e. the tributary system, by setting diplomatic precedents, and by shaping the options open to the Qing in the borderlands, e.g. Siming. In this sense, I argue that the concrete, immediate past mattered to East Asian international relations rather than a transhistorical, culturally essentialized tradition. And, I further argue that, intercourt relations in seventeenth and eighteenth century East Asia were governed by established rule-based behavior, supported by partially-independent sources of authority, such as the Ming statutes, classical scholarship, and diplomatic precedent. Intercourt relations were not simply the extension of each court’s ambitions, power, or negotiated agreements.

Fourthly, by looking at China-Vietnam relations over a period of two centuries, and with a focus on the border, my study illustrates how diplomatic relations could form cycles. Scholars of early modern international relations in East Asia have too often focused narrowly on events or broadly on homogenous, static characteristics. In contrast, my work suggests two examples of cycles of intercort relations: a) diplomatic relations from the turn of sixteenth century to early eighteenth century; and b) border governance from the 1740s crisis and the creation of the passport system to the curtailment of the passport system in the 1770s and ultimately the collapse of Le rule.

Fifthly, this study of the China-Vietnam border argues for the existence and significance of several facets of international relations in early modern East Asia. These include sovereignty, extraterritoriality, and governance. Both in terms of diplomatic exchange and territoriality, my study shows that, alongside the inclusive nature of suzerain-vassal relations, there was also a dimension of egalitarian, bilateral relations that entailed exclusive claims and recognition of sovereignty. This manifested itself in arguments over diplomatic ceremony between the two courts, in the discrete nature of territory on both sides of the border, among others.

Correspondingly, in the Qing passport system, I show how the Qing state had a conception of extraterritoriality and regulated rather than prohibited the movement of their subjects abroad.

Another surprising facet of early modern international relations in East Asia was how the border was approached as an issue of governance. Unlike issues of domestic governance for the Qing and Le states, border management required international collaboration.

I would like to also mention here the recent work on the China-Vietnam border of several fellow scholars whose scope of inquiry helped shape the particular focus of my work, if not my approach or the questions I have asked. Bradley Davis has studied bandits in the China-Vietnam

borderlands in the late nineteenth century as Chinese and Vietnamese state power was receding from the area.²⁹ Vu Duong Luan has studied various issues in the China-Vietnam borderlands for both the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but has most recently been focusing on the role of mining in the nineteenth century.³⁰ Sun Hongnian's study of China-Vietnam tributary relations remains an essential entry-point for the subject.³¹ My study covers much of the same ground as Sun's, but our approach, narrative, and audience differ significantly. Kathlene Baldanza has written on China-Vietnam relations, the border, and the Mac dynasty of Vietnam, thus covering the period immediately before my study.³² Finally, my study reframes and answers some of the questions John Wills raises in his "Functional not fossilized" article (mentioned earlier), published several years before his passing.

Political context of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

The period this study covers is the seventeenth and eighteenth century. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, three regimes existed in Vietnam. The Le-Trinh had just regained control of the Red River Delta in northern Vietnam and would remain the recognized rulers of northern Vietnam until the end of the eighteenth century. Heretofore the ruling regime was the Mac, now taking refuge in the borderlands of Vietnam and Guangxi. The Mac would continue to be a significant contender for control of northern Vietnam until the end of the seventeenth century, and Mac restorationists would be active briefly in the borderlands in the middle of the

²⁹ Bradley Camp Davis, "States of Banditry: The Nguyen Government, Bandit Rule, and the Culture of Power in the post-Taiping China-Vietnam Borderlands" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 2008).

³⁰ VU Duong Luan, "The Politics of Frontier Mining: Local Chieftains, Chinese Miners, and Upland Society in The Nong Van Van Uprising in the Sino-Vietnamese Border Area (1833-35)," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 11 (June 2014): 31-58. (E-Journal URL: <http://cross-currents.berkeley.edu/e-journal/issue-11>)

³¹ SUN Hongnian, *Qingdai Zhong Yue zongfan guanxi yanjiu* (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006).

³² Kathlene Baldanza, "The Ambiguous Border: Early Modern Sino-Viet Relations," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

eighteenth century. The third regime in Vietnam during the period covered in this study was the Nguyen in Cochinchina, in the central coast of today's Vietnam. The Nguyen had previously been part of the Le forces that retook northern Vietnam in the sixteenth century, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, increasingly became an independent competitor of the Le to the south. Focused as it is on the border with China, this study does not address the Nguyen or the Le relationship with their southern neighbor, but it is worthwhile knowing relations between the two states were antagonistic for most of this period.

On the Chinese side this period sees a transition from Ming to Qing rule. Prior to the period covered in this study, the Ming dynasty had had a tumultuous relationship with Vietnam. Relations with the Vietnamese court deteriorated at the turn of the fourteenth century for a number of reasons, including the imperial aspirations of the Ming, political reform in Vietnam, and the increasingly unstable political situation in Vietnam. The result in any case was the Ming invasion of Vietnam, ostensibly to restore the legitimate Vietnamese ruler after the throne had been usurped. The Ming occupied Vietnam for a decade and a half, until its position became politically, militarily, and fiscally untenable, and Chinese rule was withdrawn. Diplomatic relations with Vietnam improved after that but remained cold and distant. In the early sixteenth century, the Mac family ousted the Le and the Ming again threatened to invade Vietnam. This time, however, the Ming was less eager to engage in the same enterprise and accepted the Mac gesture of submission, allowing Vietnam to remain independent but nominally a vassal of China.

This study, beginning at the turn of the seventeenth century, examines another pivotal moment in Ming relations with Vietnam. In the seventeenth century, Ming attention to the border with Vietnam waned, especially once the Manchu threat on the northeast border began to loom large. The Manchus invaded China in 1644 but were not able to assert full control of the Chinese

empire until the 1680s, when several competing forces in the southwest and the coast were defeated. It was in this mid-century context of competition and unrest that the Qing first established relations with Vietnam. In the eighteenth century, diplomatic relations and border governance involving the two states became increasingly close and routinized.

My study ends in the late eighteenth century. In Vietnam, a new political force arose in southern Vietnam, the Tay Son. By the 1780s, the Tay Son had already conquered the southern, Nguyen kingdom, and were on their way to conquer the north as well. The turn of the nineteenth century saw first the replacement of the Le by the Tay Son, and after a short Tay Son reign, the conquest of both the north and south by a scion of the Nguyen royal house, who founded the Latter Nguyen, the last dynasty of Vietnam. The Qing took several different approaches to these political developments in Vietnam. These approaches were to some extent influenced by the political transitions in Qing China. For much of the mid- and late-eighteenth century, the Qianlong emperor dominated political life and policy. By the 1790s, although Qianlong continued to rule, his health and ability to make astute decisions declined, aggravated by factionalism and corruption at court. The situation was made even more complex with the retirement of Qianlong, the ascension of his successor, the Jiaqing emperor, albeit with Qianlong still holding the reins. With Qianlong's death, Jiaqing asserted his control and attempted to solve looming problems in the empire.

Thus, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, both China and Vietnam had undergone significant political transitions and were settling into new patterns, patterns which would face new challenges in the middle of the nineteenth century. The pattern of diplomatic relations and border governance, however, owed much to the developments in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 acts as prologue for the dissertation by narrating the origins of the Qing-Le diplomatic relationship through first-person and biographical accounts of Chinese frontier officials and envoys to Vietnam. In addition to introducing the landscape and characters of this border history, I also engage in a careful reading of Chinese accounts in relation to a Vietnamese court chronicle to illustrate the complexities of reading a border history from distinct source bases.

In chapter 2, I examine Qing accounts of embassies to Le-Trinh Vietnam to perform ceremonies of investiture and sacrifice as part of the tributary relationship between the two courts. Eschewing a focus on tributary relations at the Chinese court, I examine diplomatic negotiations at the Vietnamese court through first-person accounts of Chinese envoys. By analyzing such routine elements as envoy travel, the ceremonies, tokens of office, and disputes that surrounded these elements, I argue that Qing-Le tributary relations had a distinct character due to an implicit historical relationship to the earlier, Ming tributary system. I also argue that dispute was a routine element in Qing embassies to Vietnam and describe the basis of these conflicts.

Chapter 3 is concerned with the local history of hereditary rulers called *tusi* in the borderlands between Guangxi province in China and northern Vietnam. It challenges current approaches to frontier and ethnohistory in Southwest China. Rather than native chieftains resisting Chinese imperial expansion, the *tusi* of Western Guangxi are best understood as imperial intermediaries. From this vantage point and utilizing local history materials recently made available, I demonstrate that the transition from indirect to direct Qing regulation of the

border was a long-term process of change within a system of imperial administration, rather than a simple story of imperial conquest.

Chapter 4 traces the evolution of a border crisis in the 1740s as a result of political instability in Vietnam. This crisis was precipitated in part by cross-border political entrepreneurship by a former Vietnamese ruling family who had been given refuge in Qing territory. The involvement of Qing subjects in the political situation in Vietnam and the problems of refugees, trade regulation, and defense that the crisis engendered led the Qing court and provincial administration to create and expand new forms of border regulation upon existing border institutions.

Chapter 5 describes the passport system that Qing authorities used to regulate trade and movement across the border in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In chapter 6, I examine the translocal society of a Vietnamese town near the border, Lang Son in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I argue that translocal and transborder relations were created and maintained through religious associations, often Buddhist associations. Increased Chinese trade, the passport system, and Vietnamese administrative expansion did not disrupt this framework but rather worked within it.

Chapter 7 covers border incidents in the second half of the eighteenth century and their effect on the Qing-Le diplomatic relationship. I show how regulation of the border had become a central issue for Qing-Le diplomatic relations. The Qing court was committed to a good diplomatic relationship with the Le in order to guarantee governance of the borderlands. In turn, the Qing saw their good faith and success in border regulation as vital to maintaining that diplomatic relationship.

In Chapter 8, I examine the controversy over mines in the borderlands in the second half of the eighteenth century and Qing and Le responses to it. Governance of the mines did not fit neatly into the regulatory regime, in large part because both courts found it to their benefit to turn a blind eye to the accompanying irregularities. Eventually, when unrest at the mines exposed the failure of the regulatory regime and the trust between the two courts, the regulatory regime was scaled back and the border became closed again.

Conventions

Although I use Ming, Qing, Le, and Le-Trinh often in this study to refer to the dynastic states of the period, I also make use of the terms China and Vietnam to refer to the countries on the two sides of the border. I do not intend these terms to indicate a teleological relationship to the modern (multi-)nation-states nor a timeless nation. Rather, I justify the use of the terms and find them useful in these senses: a) the demarcated border remained relatively stable throughout this period; b) historical actors used language that indicated persistent and distinct polities separated by a border, quite apart from the various dynastic regimes that ruled; c) the identity of the two countries relied in part on oppositional definition rather than entirely on continuity or change over time. I use the term “country” to indicate a sense of a polity beyond a dynastic definition. Furthermore, although not a nation-state, this sense of country extends beyond the political to include cultural, social, and geographic content.

Readers will also notice that I use the term “Annan” often throughout this study. It is not the most agreeable term, for its associations with imperialism and because it was not likely a term used by Vietnamese actors amongst themselves. However, it is the most often used common term used by Chinese, Vietnamese, and other actors when they interacted with each other. Moreover, as for better or worse my sources in this study predominantly come from the

Chinese side, “Annan” is the term most often used in those sources to refer to the country and kingdom across the border. Curiously, it is also a term that shows up in Lang Son inscriptions in Vietnam (see Chapter 6).

I use the term “gate” to translate the term *guan* 關 and the term “pass” to translate the term *ai* 隘. This usage differs somewhat from other English-language scholars, e.g. James Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, where “pass” translates *guan*.³³ I believe my translation is more accurate and helpful for the China-Vietnam border. *Ai* were natural gaps or lowlying terrain between ridges and hills that had been traditionally used by local inhabitants in the borderlands to cross the mountainous terrain that formed the border. During the period of this study, representatives of the state guarded and patrolled these passes. *Guan* were *ai* or passes that had been designated as portals for communication or movement across the border. These often had infrastructure such as walls, towers, gates, etc. that served defensive or surveillance purposes. There were only a limited number of such gates but a far more extensive number of passes. The key distinction between gates/*guan* and passes/*ai* was that the former served as controlled portals of access while the latter were at best unauthorized means of crossing the border and for the most part were officially closed for movement.

For the most part, I use *pinyin* and *quoc ngu* Romanization for proper nouns of persons and places under the jurisdiction of China and Vietnam respectively. This is somewhat artificial for a number of reasons but is preferable to using one or the other exclusively. Regrettably, I am not proficient in Zhuang or other Tai languages in the region to attempt to use them to represent the names of *tusi* and other inhabitants of the borderlands. Furthermore, not enough is known

³³ James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

about the ethnic and linguistic history of the region to make the attempt convincing, even if I was technically capable of it.

Although the following are used in a variety of ways by different scholars, in this study: “Border” means where one country’s jurisdiction ends and another country’s begins; this transition is sometimes marked, defended, and regulated by the countries involved. “Borderland” refers to the locales or regions in which the border exists.

CHAPTER 1

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE LE-QING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIP: THE LE-MING DÉTENTE OF THE 1590S AND THE QING ASSUMPTION OF THE MING TRIBUTARY PORTFOLIO IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

There are many episodes to choose from to begin a history of Sino-Vietnamese relations in early modern times. We could adopt the convention of a dynastic cycle and begin, as many Ming specialists might, with the establishment of the Ming dynasty in 1368 and the proclamations sent by its founding emperor to neighboring kingdoms. If we follow twentieth-century Vietnamese historians of a nationalistic bent and their Western counterparts in choosing the turn of the fifteenth century as our starting point, we would not be treading too far off a well-worn path, as Vietnamese and Chinese writers of the early modern period have themselves dwelt often on this episode, with different perspectives, of course. The Ming invasion, occupation, and withdrawal from Vietnam in the years 1407-1427 has the added advantage of marking the end of Tran dynasty rule (1225-1400), the brief tenure of the Ho dynasty (1400-1407), and the rise of Le Loi, whose descendants would play the role of ruler of Vietnam until the end of the eighteenth century.

Some recent scholarship has brought into focus a relatively unknown episode in Sino-Vietnamese relations in the early sixteenth century. Fuma Susumu, in his article on “punitive expeditions” waged by China against Vietnam, discusses an expedition sent by the Ming court in the early sixteenth century against the recently established Mac dynasty in Vietnam, whose legitimacy was questioned by the Chinese. The expedition was withdrawn before it entered Vietnam, when the Mac ruler came to an agreement to “surrender” to the Chinese, acknowledge his political crimes, and declare his allegiance and submission to the Ming emperor, in exchange

for Chinese recognition and acquiescence.³⁴ Kathlene Baldanza has explored this episode more fully in her dissertation on the Mac dynasty (1527-92). In addition to analyzing the heated debates over intervention at the Chinese court, she describes the elaborate negotiations between the Ming and Mac representatives at the China-Vietnam border and the ceremony of Mac submission that was held there immediately following these exchanges.³⁵

In this chapter I want to turn to a previously-unremarked episode, the Le-Ming détente of the 1590s, as a starting point for this study of Sino-Vietnamese relations at the border. This diplomatic encounter turns our attention away from the Chinese court and redirects it to interactions at the border. It also highlights the specific historical legacy of the Ming in relations between Le and Qing, which are the focus of this study. By the end of the sixteenth century, Mac rule over Vietnam had waned and they were locked in a losing battle with a resurgent Le dynasty over control of the capital at Thang Long (today's Hanoi). In the early 1590s, the Le dynasty, supported and controlled by the powerful ministerial family of the Trinh, had succeeded in taking Thang Long and driving the Mac remnant to the north, to the border with China. The concern of the Ming court and the competition between the two Vietnamese ruling houses came to a head as the Le attempted to reestablish relations with the Ming. Previously, in the early sixteenth century, the Ming had acquiesced to Mac usurpation of the Le throne on the condition that the Le remnant would be allowed an existence on the periphery of the kingdom. Now, as the tables were turned, the Ming court would retain this "two-state" solution but invert the roles, recognizing Le legitimacy while protecting Mac existence in the borderlands.

³⁴ Fuma Susumu, "Ming-Qing China's Policy towards Vietnam as a Mirror of Its Policy towards Korea: With a Focus on the Question of Investiture and 'Punitive Expeditions'," in *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, no. 65 (2007), 1-33.

³⁵ See chapter four of Kathlene Baldanza, "The Ambiguous Border: Early Modern Sino-Viet Relations," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

While the outcome of this diplomatic episode would be clear to anyone perusing the standard sources, the first-person account of an actor at the center of these events sheds light not only on an episode that until now has been virtually unknown in the secondary literature but also on broader issues of how relationships between China and its neighbors were conducted, on the ground, at the border. The interactions between the Ming, the Le, and the Mac that shaped the outcome of this diplomatic *détente* did not take place in the rarified atmosphere of the imperial court at Beijing. Rather, as our informant Yang Yinqiu tells us in his account, they took place at the border. While accidental causes such as the ongoing fighting between the Le and Mac could have determined the site of the diplomatic interchange, as we will see, there were security, historical, and ceremonial reasons for making the border the meeting place of Ming and Le representatives. At the same time, the various actors and their movements in Yang's account show us that "the border" was a complicated and multi-sited geographical reality.

At the time of the *détente*, the Ming imperial official Yang Yinqiu 楊寅秋, was serving in the position of *ancha fushi* (Surveillance Vice Commissioner)³⁶ in Zuojiang, whose office was located at Nanning, the largest imperial city on the western frontier of Guangxi province. Yang was from Taihe 泰和 in Jiangxi province and had the distinction of being a descendent of Yang Shiqi 楊士奇 (1364-1444), one of the three famous Yang-surnamed Ming ministers of the fifteenth century.³⁷ This connection is mentioned in Yang Yinqiu's account and is important for several reasons, not least of which was Yang Shiqi's influential role in proposing the withdrawal

³⁶ Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Taiwan edition (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, 1985), p.103, entry 10, *ancha fushi*: "principle aide to a Surveillance Commissioner (*anchashi*) of... Ming-Qing Province (*sheng*). From early Ming to 1735... assigned as Circuit Intendants (*daotai*) to Circuits (*dao*) with prescribed geographic or functional jurisdictions"

³⁷ For a history of Taihe county and its significance during the Ming, see John W. Dardess, *A Ming Society: T'ai-ho County, Kiangsi, Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

of Ming occupying forces from Vietnam in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Shiqi's descendant, Yinqiu, however, has not been as well-known to modern historians, but we should point out that the eighteenth-century compilers of the massive Qing imperial library collection, the *Siku quanshu*, included Yinqiu's collected works, *Lin'gao wenji* 臨臯文集, in the imperial collection and pointedly remarked on the value of Yinqiu's writings on "frontier strategies" (*bian luo* 邊略). The *Siku quanshu* editors also provide us with a brief résumé for Yinqiu: before taking up the post in Guangxi, Yinqiu had held posts in Guizhou and Yunnan. Yinqiu's reputation for statecraft and "frontier strategies" is confirmed by the inclusion of a piece of his writing in the late Ming statecraft compendium, *Huang Ming jingshi wenbian*. This piece of writing pertained to an imperial campaign against a *tusi* hereditary official in Guizhou in the early seventeenth century, illustrating Yang Yinqiu's continued involvement in frontier matters after his role in diplomacy with Annam.

The text that will be the focus of this chapter is entitled "Sui Jiao ji 綏交記," "An account of pacifying Jiaozhi of the third, *sui* zone,"³⁸ and is found in Yang Yinqiu's collected works, *Lin'gao wenji*.³⁹ By following Yang's first-person narrative of the diplomatic affair conducted at

³⁸ *Sui* can mean "pacifying" in a general sense, but it is also the name of the third zone in the five-zone concentric worldview expressed in the "Tribute of Yu" chapter in *Shangshu*. The other zones of this scheme include the innermost *dian* zone, representing a zone of direct, royal rule; the second *hou* zone, representing a zone of rule by royal vassals; the fourth *yao* zone, representing remote, peripheral lands; and the outermost fifth zone of *huang*, representing a wasteland of barbarians. Yang may have chosen this for the title of his account based on an understanding of *tusi* as represented by the *hou* zone and the areas of mainstream administration as represented by the *dian* zone.

³⁹ Yang Yinqiu, "Sui Jiao ji," in *Lingao wenji*, j1p43bff, reprinted in *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1983-86), v. 1291, 619-626. As with most publications of this sort, i.e. reprinted collections of the writings of an individual (*ji*; *wenji*; *quanji*), the contents are arranged by genre. Therefore, the careful reader finds that several related items are also included in *Lin'gao wenji*. These include two separate letters to the Lingnan provincial authorities, in which Yang updates his superiors on the evolving situation and explains his policy ideas and actions. Moreover, Yang's collected works also include letters by Yang to the putative Le king and to the leader of the Mac remnant, informing them of the decisions taken regarding their relations with the Ming, and a letter or notice to the *tusi* hereditary officials of the Ming borderlands, cautioning them against interference.

the Ming-Annan border, we will get a concrete sense of how diplomacy was worked out, the nuances of relationships between states as well as between persons of various status and position, and, more broadly, a more informed understanding of the many elements that we will need to pay attention to as we continue our study of the evolution of early modern Sino-Vietnamese relations. An added bonus for listening to Yang tell his story is that, at the beginning of our investigation, we will be introduced to a range of actors active in the China-Vietnam borderlands and, along the way, get an introduction to the lay of the land. We will also turn to the court chronicles of the Ming and the Le, namely the Ming *Veritable Records* (*Ming shilu* 實錄) and the *Complete Book of the History of the Great Viet* (*Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* 大越史記全書, hereafter *DVSKTT*),⁴⁰ to supplement and contrast with Yang's account. It is undoubtedly awkward and frustrating, especially for a reader who comes with an interest in Vietnam's history, to find that there are no comparable accounts from the Mac or Le actors. The brief entries in the *DVSKTT*, however, allow us to hear a Vietnamese voice, understand some sense of the Vietnamese interpretation of events, and give room for a contested story of Sino-Vietnamese relations. Finally, as we begin moving to another defining moment in Sino-Vietnamese relations, in the late seventeenth-century, we will consider briefly two Chinese diplomatic missions to the Le court in the middle of the seventeenth century. The first is a mission from the embattled Southern Ming regime, who sought aid from the Le in their struggle to defeat the invading Manchus. In the second instance, the new imperial rulers in China, the Manchu Qing dynasty, sent their first official envoy to Annam, which inaugurated a new series of Chinese diplomatic missions to Vietnam. These two episodes, while told from the point of view of Chinese envoys,

⁴⁰ I follow Keith Taylor's translation of the title of *DVSKTT* in *A History of the Vietnamese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

help us to see that the Vietnamese court was also a space for Sino-Vietnamese diplomacy. Here, Chinese envoys did not have “home” advantage, so to say, and often had to negotiate their roles cautiously vis-à-vis their hosts.

Yang Yinqiu’s account

Let us now turn to Yang Yinqiu’s account, written in 1598. Yang recounts that, in the sixth month of the *yimei* year of the Wanli reign (1595), he rode out alone to stabilize a turbulent situation in central Guangxi. Upon his success, the senior imperial officials in Guangxi commended him in a memorial to the throne.⁴¹ Over a month later, two representatives from the Le claimant, Le Duy Dam 黎維潭, arrived at Nanning from Vietnam.⁴² In a letter written in his own hand, the ranking Guangxi imperial official, *zongdu* Chen Dake, requested Yang to take charge of the emerging situation in Annan, a situation touching on “the renown of the state and the defense of the frontier (國威邊防).”⁴³ To encourage Yang in this endeavor, Chen reminded him of his illustrious ancestor, Yang Shiqi, and Mao Bowen 毛伯溫, an official who had been involved in the Jiaping reign campaign against Annan, whom Chen identifies as being from Yang’s native place.⁴⁴ Yang accepted his commission.

⁴¹ This was a triumvirate commonly known at the time as the *santai*. In Guangxi, these positions were held by Yang’s superiors, *zongdu* Chen Dake 陳大科, *xunfu* Dai Yao 戴耀, and regional inspector (*xun’an yushi*) Huang Jixian 黃紀賢.

⁴² The Le representatives were Le Tao Dung 黎早用 and Pham Ngan 范彥.

⁴³ “Sui Jiao ji,” in *Lingao wenji*, j1p44a (*Siku quanshu*, v.1291, 620).

⁴⁴ Mao Bowen hailed from Jishui in Jiangxi. For more on the Jiaping debates over intervention and expedition, in addition to the previously mentioned chapter in Baldanza, “Ambiguous Border,” and Fuma, “Punitive Expeditions,” see also James Geiss’s chapter on “Chia-Ching reign” in *Cambridge History of China* (1988), and Wang Gungwu’s chapter on Ming relations with SE Asia in *Cambridge History of China* (1998).

After receiving his orders, Yang turned to the “institutions of the ancestral court (祖宗朝制)” and familiarized himself with the imperial laws and statutes to formulate his approach to dealing with Annan.⁴⁵ In the meantime, a representative from the Mac arrived at Nanning and began lobbying their case. There were now competing offers of allegiance from the Le and the Mac. Wishing to take stock of the situation, Yang sought the counsel of his colleagues among the Ming imperial officials. There was no consensus on how to approach the matter. Some opined that the Le overture was a ruse. They feared a punitive campaign from China and were trying to play for time. Others, citing the words of the Mac envoy, said that the Mac commanded a force of no less than ten thousand soldiers and were taking up positions along the routes to China. Yet others were suspicious of Le Duy Dam’s claim to be a descendent of Le Loi, fearing that he was an imposter put forth by the Trinh lord, Trinh Tung 鄭松. Even if he were a true descendent of Le Loi, these men argued, Le Loi himself had been devious in his dealings with China in the early fifteenth century. The Le should not be allowed to practice their deceptions again this time.

Yang responded to each of these concerns. Yang dismissed the reports of the Mac massing their forces, pointing out that if they truly were in such a good position, they would not have sent their envoy in such haste to argue their case to the Chinese. In response to the issue of Le Loi’s duplicity, Yang reminded his colleagues that Le Loi had been pardoned by the Ming emperor at the time. He also argued that it did not really matter whether Le Duy Dam was a descendant of Le Loi. On the one hand, “barbarians” (*man yi*) change their ruling dynasty like

⁴⁵ Yang Yinqiu, “Sui Jiao ji,” in *Lin’gao wenji*, j1p45a (*Siku quanshu*, v.1291, 620); the full phrase is “cai zuzong chao zhi yu Annan zai zai lingjia zhe shu ce zhi (採祖宗朝制馭安南載在令甲者熟筴之).” The reference to *zuzong chao*, “the ancestral reigns” arguably could be a reference to the reigns in which Yang Yinqiu’s ancestor, Yang Shiqi, served, which would imply an adoption of the pacifist policies of the Xuande reign (1426-35).

the pieces change in a game of *qi* chess,⁴⁶ so it did not signify much if Duy Dam was not actually of the Le house. On the other hand, assuming that Duy Dam was indeed a legitimate descendant of Le Loi, then things had simply evened themselves out. First, the Mac usurped the Le throne, and now the Le were retaking it. It was all one and the same in Yang's mind.⁴⁷ Yang determined that the course he would take was to accept the Le while not abandoning the Mac.

Yang thus wrote letters to both the Le and the Mac. Yang made several demands in his letter to the Le. First, Yang reminded Le Duy Dam that he had committed an unpardonable crime, that of "killing without permission" (*shan sha zui* 擅殺罪). (This was in reference to the Le killing of the Mac king of Annam, Mac Mau Hop, during the Le-Trinh forces' capture of the capital area at Thang Long.) Duy Dam would have to present himself in the manner previously used when the Mac ruler submitted to the Ming in the early sixteenth century. Duy Dam would have to come bound to the Zhennan gate, in the manner of a defeated monarch, to acknowledge his capital crime, and make an effigy of himself for substitutionary atonement.⁴⁸ Yang also

⁴⁶ The metaphor here seems to be in reference to the way the black and white pieces, and the territory they claim, can change rapidly and successively in a game of *qi* 棋, or *weiqi* or *go* as the game is referred to in the modern Chinese and Japanese contexts.

⁴⁷ Yang has certainly acknowledged that there is a gap between the rhetoric of legitimacy and investiture and the realities of descent and usurpation, but the fact that he recognizes this argues against thinking about the Chinese approach in terms of fictions or illusions, as John Wills has in his *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, 1984), see esp. pp. 12-13 (in regard to the Song), 19-22 (in regard to the Ming), & 37. Admittedly, on page 37, for example, Wills also describes the outlook and expectations of the European diplomatic missions as illusions, too. (In his recent article, however, Wills wants to say Qing tribute relations could be functional; see John E. Wills, Jr., "Functional, Not Fossilized: Qing Tribute Relations with Dai Viet (Vietnam) and Siam (Thailand), 1700-1820," *T'oung Pao*, no. 98 (2012), 439-78.) Regarding Song approaches to relating the realities and rhetoric of inter-state relations, see Wang Gungwu, "The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations with Its Neighbors," in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 47ff. See also Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive*, trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Berkeley: University of California, 2012).

⁴⁸ The phrase here is *fan shen shu zu xian bi yang guan qing si* 範身束組銜璧仰關請死. *Xian bi* was a phrase used in pre-imperial China to describe the submission of a defeated ruler to the victorious ruler. See *Gu dai Hanyu cidian* (Commercial Press, 2007) definition of *xian bi*; cites usage in *Zuozhuan* (Sixth year of Duke Xi).

mentioned two other areas of concern: first, how Duy Dam would prove his descent from Le Loi and show that he was not an imposter put forward by the Trinh, and second, a proposal to allow the Mac to settle somewhere peacefully as the Le had previously been allowed to take refuge at Tat Ma Giang (漆馬江; “Lacquer Horse River”).⁴⁹ To the Mac, Yang wrote to urge them to accept the reality that they had no chance of regaining the kingdom at this point and that they should focus their concern on retaining a place of refuge for themselves.

Yang then began preparing for the Le party by calling in the “certifying officials” (*kan guan* 勘官) and put them under a stern oath to uphold the state’s dignity. These two individuals were members of the Ming imperial administration, stationed locally near the border. One was a military commander, Wu Huairen, and the other was a subprefectural magistrate, Yang Jixian.⁵⁰ As we discover later in Yang’s account, these certifying officials were tasked with confirming that the Le were compliant and had taken all the necessary steps in preparation for the surrender ceremony. They were, in effect, Yang’s representatives, just as he was a representative of the Ming emperor. The stern oath that Yang made the certifying officials swear, with a consequence, upon breaking the oath, of being “torn apart (*pou shen* 剖身),” reflects the potential for duplicity and the important and delicate role these officials needed to play.

At this point in Yang’s account, he tells us that he suddenly received reports from the *tusi* jurisdictions on the Chinese side of the border. *Tusi* were offices of territorial administration in the borderlands hereditarily held by prominent local clans. The *tusi* of Anpingzhou 安平州, Longzhou 龍州, Xialeizhou 下雷州, Longying 龍英, and Guishun 歸順 successively reported

⁴⁹ Location unclear, possibly in the western highlands towards Laos.

⁵⁰ Yang tells us here that, for one of the *kan guan*, he had to replace a certain magistrate Sun, who had recently been transferred away, with Yang Jixian 楊繼顯, magistrate of Zuozhou 左州, a jurisdiction near Nanning.

that villages in their territory had been attacked by the Le. Yang was aghast. But it was not the Le that he was taken aback by. He reasoned that it must have been the Mac taking refuge in these *tusi* jurisdictions who had made the attacks. He thought, it does not make sense that the Le would attack these villages now, at the moment when they are requesting to restore their relationship with the Chinese court through the surrender ceremony, when they had ample and better opportunity to do so when they earlier drove the Mac to the border. Yang inquired about the matter and discovered that there was a symbiotic relationship between the Mac and the *tusi*: the *tusi* gave refuge to the Mac in exchange for their military support in attempts to claim the lands of their neighboring *tusi*. Yang immediately sent word to the senior imperial officials, requesting that they order the Mac to leave Chinese territory and to warn the *tusi* that those who attempted to provoke the parties involved would face severe punishment.

Yang tells us that the Mac then fled to That Nguyen Dong (七源崗), adjacent to Longzhou, just across the border on the Vietnam side. In this movement, the Mac were given protection by troops from Longzhou. Soon after, the Mac leader Mac Kinh Dung 莫敬用 arrived with a military escort of several hundred soldiers at the Zhennan gate to meet with the certifying officials. The certifying officials expressed dismay and worry when they saw such a force, but Yang dismissed their worry. He expressed his doubt that these forces were truly loyal to the Mac; rather, he saw them as a large but motley band of opportunists. Yang then received a letter from Mac Kinh Dung, delivered by the *tusi* of Anpingzhou, in which Kinh Dung expressed the pitiful state he found himself in. Yang also received, via one of the certifying officials, a written oath given by Mac Kinh Dung and other members of the Mac, expressing their willingness and desire to be given the Vietnamese province of Cao Bang as refuge, so that they could regroup and attempt to avenge themselves against the Le, as Goujian, king of Yue, had done against the

kingdom of Wu during the Warring States period (fifth to third century BCE) in China.⁵¹ This statement of Mac intent reminded Yang of the inflated claim about Mac forces that he was presented with earlier, and Yang saw that the Mac now had a realistic appraisal of their situation.

The Le also sent their representative, a commander stationed at Lang Son 諒山, a settlement on the Vietnam side of the border, to meet with the certifying officials.⁵² The Le representative inquired about the time-frame the Le had to bring the *kuan* (款), “sincerity,” gift to the rendezvous at the Zhennan gate. This gift, which the Le court chronicle suggests may have been a payment of a thousand taels of silver, was meant as proof of Le bona fides and willingness to restore relations with the Ming.⁵³ Yang gave a date of the second month of the following year. Furthermore, Yang cautioned the Le on a couple of points. First, he cautioned them not to trust the local hereditary officials in the area (*tu mu*), lest they stir things up and cause delay. Second, he cautioned the Le to respect the use of proper language in their communications and not to attempt to achieve parity in their communications and thus exceed their status as a “border lord” (*fan chen* 藩臣).

Yang then wrote to his superiors to make requests regarding personnel and resources. He requested that the finest troops of the *tusi* be called to arms and deployed at strategic points near

⁵¹ Goujian, king of the Yue kingdom in the Lower Yangzi delta during the Warring States period, was defeated by his neighbor the kingdom of Wu. The king of Wu did not kill Goujian, keeping him under arrest at Huiji Hill, and eventually releasing him. In ten years’ time, Goujian gathered his resources and defeated the kingdom of Wu, becoming a cautionary proverb against allowing your enemy an opportunity for a comeback, not matter how sorely he is defeated in the first place.

⁵² The Le representative is identified as Le Trung Hoa 黎重華 in Yang’s account.

⁵³ I am not aware of studies of the role of *kuan* in Ming foreign relations or in traditional Chinese foreign relations more generally. The figure of a thousand taels of silver can be found in *DVSKTT*, v.3, p.907, entry no.3 (Quang Hung 19, Wanli 24 (1596), first month, 29th day). The entry also mentions a hundred catties of gold, but I suspect this referred to the gold effigy that Le Duy Dam was required to submit as an atoning substitute for his crimes.

the Zhennan gate, under the command of the Ming imperial military commander.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Yang requested the presence and assistance at the ceremony of a number of Ming officials who held posts in the borderland prefectures of Nanning and Taiping.⁵⁵ Moreover, Yang requested that a certain amount from the provincial fund collected from the commercial taxes (*shang shui* 商稅) be released to pay the soldiers. These requests were approved by Yang's provincial superiors. The *zongdu* Chen Dake took the additional step of releasing part of the fund for paying troop salaries at Wuzhou (the *zongdu* regional administration headquarters) to supplement the pay of the soldiers and to cover any expenses of purchasing the objects used in the ceremony, instructing Yang not to besmirch the dignity of the state by skimping on these expenses.

In the first month of the following year, the *bingshen* year (1596), Yang arrived at Taiping prefecture, the Ming prefecture closest to the Zhennan gate.⁵⁶ Once he had arrived, Le Duy Dam sent word by his representatives⁵⁷ that the Le party was waiting at Lang Son, prepared with a genealogical chart to prove Duy Dam's legitimate descent, documents pertaining to previous Le investiture by the Ming, and the Ming seal of office they had received then. At the same time, the Ming *tusi* began arriving in the area of the Zhennan gate with their forces. Yang told the *tusi* that he would give special recognition to any of them who was willing to assist and bring the *détente* at hand to completion. The first to respond to this overture was Huang Chengzu 黃承祖, the hereditary prefect of Siming, who reported that the forces of Mac Kinh Trang 莫敬

⁵⁴ *Canrong* commander Li Feng 李鳳.

⁵⁵ These included the prefects of Nanning and Taiping, Su Minhuai 蘇民懷 and Wu Dashen 吳大紳, the vice prefect of Nanning, Huang Cong 黃淙, and the *tuiguan* judges at Nanning and Taiping, namely Lu Shi 盧碩 and Huang Xizhi 黃喜之.

⁵⁶ Yang mentions that the *canzheng* Lin Zhen 林震 was with him.

⁵⁷ The Le representatives were Do Uong 杜汪 and Pham Ngan.

章, one of the Mac remnant who had been active in the Hai Dong 海東 area, had been destroyed.⁵⁸ In an aside to the reader, Yang tells us that he was aware of Huang Chengzu's eagerness to distinguish himself for the following reasons: one, Chengzu needed to redeem himself for an earlier misdeed (not explained by Yang); two, he had a long-standing feud with the *tusi* of Longzhou. Yang intended to capitalize on Chengzu's eagerness and encouraged him.⁵⁹

But the *détente* was not to go as smoothly as Yang might have wished. He received word from the certifying officials that the Le representatives were taking an arrogant and recalcitrant stance. Concretely, the Le representatives argued that to model the *détente* on the example of Mac Dang Dung would be unfair to the Le, since the crime that Dang Dung conceded then was not that which Le Duy Dam had committed. (The idea here seems to be that Le Duy Dam was guilty of killing a tribute-paying vassal, i.e. Mac Mau Hop, while Dang Dung was guilty of usurping the Le throne.) Moreover, the certifying officials expressed their suspicion that although Le Duy Dam had agreed to subject himself to the surrender ceremony, he was secretly planning to send another member of the Le clan as his substitute.

In response to this news, Yang sent the Siming *tusi*, Huang Chengzu, and some of his lieutenants to take his written exhortation (*xi*) to Le Duy Dam. In these orders, Yang emphatically asserted that “either you come as a vassal of the Celestial Court or, if you don't come, you will only become a prisoner of war!” At the same time, showing some understanding of Le Duy Dam's anxieties, Yang gave Duy Dam permission to bring an armed guard to the

⁵⁸ Hai Dong here may refer to Hai Duong.

⁵⁹ It is not clear what misdeed is being referred to here. One possibility is suggested in the Wanli-era Guangxi provincial gazetteer: In WL10 (1582), Chengzu was involved in a territorial dispute with the hereditary domain of Simingzhou (not to be confused with Chengzu's own domain of Simingfu), which led to Chengzu's role in a conspiracy to kill the Simingzhou hereditary official, see (*Wanli Guangxi tongzhi* (hereafter *WLGXTZ*), j32p40-41, Ming dai fangzhi xuan, no. 6-7, Zhongguo shixue congshu, v. 15 (Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng shuju, 1965), 654-55 and my discussion in chapter on Siming.

ceremony. Yang also took some of the Le representatives who knew some Chinese (*Han yu*) aside and admonished them to convey his message to Duy Dam.⁶⁰ They were moved by this personal approach and pledged to convey Yang's exhortations to Duy Dam.

These measures seemed to have some effect on Duy Dam, who responded to Yang's queries systematically.⁶¹ Duy Dam expressed his innocence,⁶² as for the crime of killing Mac Mau Hop without permission from the Chinese court, he was prepared to offer an effigy of himself made of gold to stand in for himself for the punishment of death. He would come to the ceremony with his ministers and elders. In response to Yang's concern about the authenticity of the seal, Duy Dam acknowledged that the seal had been manufactured as a provisional measure. He promised that it would be destroyed and requested that a new, genuine seal be made for him. As for the matter of a place of refuge for the Mac, Duy Dam insisted on calling the Mac traitors, but expressed his willingness to comply with the arrangements the Chinese had suggested for allowing the Mac to remain in Cao Bang, according to the precedent of the Le taking refuge at Tat Ma Giang.

Yang was satisfied that the matter could go ahead and headed to the border, where he took up quarters at the *mufu* complex of buildings near the Zhennan gate.⁶³ But new delays were to arise. The Le representative reported to Yang that the Le camp were suffering illness and a shortage of food and requested a delayed date for the ceremony. This Yang agreed to. A few

⁶⁰ Pham Ngan is specifically mentioned here in Yang's account.

⁶¹ Yang Yinqui, "Sui Jiao ji," *Lin 'gao wenji*, j1p48b (*Siku quanshu*, v.1291, 622).

⁶² Alternatively, Duy Dam is saying that "huang chen 荒臣" (i.e. "ministers beyond the pale") cannot be held accountable for crimes.

⁶³ The *mufu* 幕府 complex of buildings appears to have been constructed for the occasion of the Mac submission in the early sixteenth century.

days later, however, the Le said that the surrender memorial and the *kuan* gift were not ready yet. They asked to return south in order to make preparations to resettle the Mac. The Chinese side was dumbstruck by this development. Yang responded by checking and repairing the border gates and passes and giving orders to these border posts to refuse any entry or overture from the Le. He sent word to the provincial authorities about this latest development.

At this point, the certifying official Wu Huairen, who held an imperial military post in the area, gave some advice to Yang. He said that the Le's flighty actions were due to the *tusi* fanning Le fears. He predicted that the Le would repent of their hasty pulling out of the negotiations and send word to request to reestablish relations again. When that happens, he advised, Yang should make a show of refusing before finally agreeing. Furthermore, he told Yang that Huang Chengzu, the Siming *tusi*, had a deft understanding of how the Le operated and commanded the respect of the other *tusi*. The military officer urged Yang not to distrust Huang Chengzu but to work with him. Convinced by this advice, Yang spoke to Huang Chengzu and the two found a basis of commonality and became fast friends.⁶⁴

Yang sent word to the provincial authorities that the situation had taken a new turn, in reference to the Le withdrawal and the renewed optimism of Yang. However, it seems that at the same time, the Annan affair had become a subject of discussion at the Ming court and other parts of the bureaucracy, with voices opining that matters had been bungled. Yang tells us in his account that at this point, one of the senior imperial officials in Guangxi⁶⁵ memorialized the throne against a military solution. He took up the example of the Yongle occupation, arguing that

⁶⁴ Yang Yinqiu, "Sui Jiao ji," j1p49a, *Lin 'gao wenji* (*Siku quanshu*, v.1291, 622). The phrase in Yang's text is "liang ren yi ci shen xiang jie na 兩人以此深相結納."

⁶⁵ Censor/regional inspector Huang Jixian.

given the results of that venture and the costs it incurred, it made better sense to continue seeking a peaceful, diplomatic solution. He urged the court to give the negotiations more time. After some deliberation, the Board of War approved this course of action.⁶⁶

As Wu Huai ren had predicted, within a month Le representatives had returned, requesting to be allowed to submit the sincerity gift and proceed with the ceremony. Yang refused their overtures, in regards to which the Le representative explained that earlier the Le camp at Lang Son had run out of food and were suffering illness; they had to return south to prepare the memorial and the ransom, i.e. the gold effigy. The Le representatives insisted that they were not deliberately causing delay. The certifying official Wu Huai ren and *tusi* Huang Chengzu, on the Chinese side, gave support to the Le and vouched for the sincerity of their plea. Soon after, the provincial authorities issued an order to the Le authorizing them to approach the Zhennan gate with the ransom.

On the eve of the lunar New Year, Yang received report from Wu Huai ren at the border that a Le representative, Do Uong, and a translator⁶⁷ had arrived at the Zhennan gate, sent from Le Duy Dam with the sincerity gift. Yang recognized that the opportunity had to be seized and rushed back toward the border. On the way, he heard that Huang Chengzu had escorted the Le representatives with an inventory of the sincerity gift and arrived at Nanning. But Yang also found that rumors were running wild, and that some of the *tusi* were pillaging on the Annan side

⁶⁶ The excerpt of the memorial (by censor/regional inspector Huang Jixian) preserved in the *Ming shilu* differs somewhat from what Yang relates, although the overall thrust and effect was the same. The *Ming shilu* excerpt distinguishes the Annan situation from the contemporaneous Wokou crisis that the Ming faced; Huang urged the Ming court to use a “halter-and-bridle” (*jimi*) political solution rather than the military solution used against the Wokou. Entry for *jimao* day, intercalary eighth month, WL24 in *juan* 301, *Ming shilu*, as excerpted in *Ming Shilu lei zuan, she wai shiliao juan* (Wuhan: Wuhan cbs, 1991), p.803.

⁶⁷ Yang Yinqiu, “Sui Jiao ji,” j1p51a, *Lin’gao wenji* (*Siku quanshu*, v.1291, 623). The translator is identified as Tang Shitian in Yang’s account but nothing more is known of him, e.g. to which party in the Le-Ming détente he belonged, or what his cultural and political identity was. Provisionally, I have transliterated his name according to *pinyin*. The last character in Tang Shitian’s 唐世田 name has a *huo* 火 radical on the left.

of the territory on the pretext of Mac presence, who were lodged in That Nguyen on the Annan side. Furthermore, it was said that these *tusi* were planning to attack the Le representatives. Yang heard that Huang Chengzu, Wu Huairen, and the Le representatives were halted at the river that served as Nanning's moat and had not been allowed to enter the city. The whole diplomatic venture seemed on the verge of dissipating: the Le representatives were milling about aimlessly, Wu Huairen was in despair, and Huang Chengzu, in dismay, seemed on the point of returning home.

Yang Yinqiu rushed to Nanning to encourage Wu Huairen, halt the disintegration of the Le embassy, and exhort Chengzu not to give up on the endeavor. The next day, Yang entered the city of Nanning and met with his friend and fellow official, Lin Daonan 林道楠, to ask his opinion of the situation. Lin was an imperial censor, traveling in Guangxi to investigate a separate matter.⁶⁸ After hearing Yang discuss the Annan affair, Lin asked some pointed questions about the Le: 1) the Le murdered a tribute-paying vassal without authorization from the Chinese court; didn't this amount to usurpation?; 2) were the items that comprised the sincerity gift appropriate for giving to the Chinese emperor?; 3) since the Ming side had not received word whether the Mac had been given Cao Bang as a place of refuge, could the Le be attempting to deceive the Ming? On the first count, Yang explained that the Le held to a notion of righteous vendetta as expressed in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and thus should not be considered as attempting usurpation. He also pointed out that even in the more clear cases of usurpation of Le Loi and Mac Dang Dung, the law (*lü* 律) made allowance for it. On the second count, concerning the propriety of gifts included in the sincerity gift, Yang explained that, while the items and amounts for tribute gifts were clearly stipulated, this was not a tribute mission but

⁶⁸ Yang Yinqiu wrote a biography (*zhuanji*) of Lin Daonan.

rather a mission offering a sincerity gift, something that was not clearly stipulated in the statutes. On the last count, on what was to be done to the Mac, Yang explained that the Le took the Warring States period story of Goujian as a stern cautionary tale,⁶⁹ and thus were duly anxious about letting their sworn rivals attempt a return to power from a place of refuge such as Cao Bang. These answers, Yang tells us, satisfied Lin.

Yang then held an audience with the Le representatives, where he impressed upon them the benevolence and sternness of the Chinese emperor and gave various gifts to the members of the embassy. The Le representatives were overjoyed and were sent back to urge Le Duy Dam to arrive at the Zhennan gate at the agreed time. Yang then tells us that the *tusi* that had been making threatening noises and gathering forces at the border gave up their schemes and dispersed upon hearing of these developments.⁷⁰ At the same time, a minor imperial Chinese functionary arrived from the *tusi* domain of Longzhou, in quite a fluster, and reported that Mac forces had cut off communication with Thang Long.⁷¹ Yang suspected the machinations of the Longzhou *tusi* here and proposed to capture him and bring him to justice. Wu Huairan warned Yang that a move against the Longzhou *tusi* could discourage the Le from continuing to move in the direction of détente. Yang saw the wisdom of his words, and simply requested to have a military officer and troops take up position against any further maneuvers of the *tusi* forces.

⁶⁹ See note 21 of this chapter for more on Goujian.

⁷⁰ Yang also notes at this point that Mac forces seemed to be getting involved in a local dispute between the Huangs and the Zhaos over the “four *dong*” border area of Qinzhou (a Chinese jurisdiction at the coastal border between China and Vietnam). Chapter 5 of Baldanza (2010) addresses the history of the four *dong* in the early sixteenth century.

⁷¹ In fact, Yang says that communication was cut off to the east of the Ghost Door gate (*Guimen guan*). Thang Long here is probably thought of as to the east, rather than to the south, of the Ghost Gate pass; the idea seems to be that the Le party at Lang Son had been cut off from the capital.

Shortly, the Le representatives arrived with a draft of the surrender memorial for Yang's approval. Yang appears to have been a bit irritated at what he perceived as Le Duy Dam's overly light and easy attitude expressed in the memorial. Upon asking the Le representatives about the progress of preparations, they told him that they had brought the *kuan* gift in the twelfth month of the preceding year, but as they put it, "your esteemed country was preoccupied," and they were forced to transport the goods back to Tho Xuong 壽昌, midway back to Thang Long. The Le representatives thus asked for yet another postponement of the ceremony. Exasperated with all these delays ("They're really putting me at their beck and call!"), Yang nonetheless saw that they had a legitimate excuse and gave them a new date for the ceremony.⁷² Yang nonetheless sent a member of his staff, Wang Jianli 王建立, to escort the Le representatives back to the border with the added intention of keeping an eye on their progress.

Subsequently, one day, Wu Huairan reported that the Mac had gathered over a thousand desperados and had set fire to the Le camp at Lang Son and that some of the Le generals had died in the flames.⁷³ Yang treaded carefully and questioned whether it was really the work of the Mac. He sent two spies across the border, one through the Ping'er pass 平而隘 and one through the Bakou pass 峒口隘.⁷⁴ The Chinese officials around Yang were shaken by these acts of intimidation. One of their number advised that this was an opportune moment for the Chinese to withdraw before it was too late. In contrast, the assistant magistrate at the *tusi* domain of Shangshixizhou 上石西州 sent a report, assuring Yang that the Le party was intact and remained

⁷² *DVSKTT* in fact has an entry (p.907, *bingshen* 1.29) about the Le emperor going to the Zhennan gate; it says that the Le faced delays from the Chinese and attempts to extort bribes, so the Le party finally had to withdraw.

⁷³ I am not certain about the identification of the Polei Gate, but it seems to have been a checkpoint on the Vietnamese side of the border, near the Zhennan Gate.

⁷⁴ This second pass may be the precursor to the Shuikou gate mentioned in later sources.

near the border, and urged Yang not to abandon the venture. Yang was overjoyed to hear this news. He immediately put the pessimistic official under arrest and warned his colleagues that anyone who continued to urge retreat would be subject to severe punishment. He then wrote to the provincial authorities and requested that they give orders to the officials who were stationed in *tusi* domains to exhort the *tusi* to behave during the current diplomatic juncture with Annan. These officials were to tell the *tusi* that the current diplomatic dealings were not simply for the purpose of normalizing relations with Annan, but also in the interests of the *tusi*. Yang warned that the Chinese court had laws for punishing those that tried to sabotage the affair in their own interests against the common good. Yang tells us that the *tusi* took this warning seriously.

A few days later, the certifying officials departed for the Zhennan gate. Yang Yinqiu and a Chinese military officer, departed for the *mufu* complex. At the *mufu*, Yang put all the Chinese (*Han*) and *tusi* forces on oath and then assigned them to take up various positions. He ordered the *tusi* of Qianlongdong 遷隆崗, Huang Zhaoji 黃兆基, to take his force of fifteen hundred and guard the Bakou pass. He ordered the Siming 思明 *tusi* heir apparent, Huang Yinglei 黃應雷, to station his twelve hundred soldiers at the Qiang Village pass 強村隘. Huang Yingsu 黃應宿, the *tusi* of Shangshixizhou, was given the responsibility of holding the pass at Juan Village 絹村 with his five hundred soldiers. (Yang explains parenthetically that Huang Yinglei and Huang Yingsu were the sons of Huang Chengzu, while Huang Zhaoji was Chengzu's son-in-law.) As for the Ping'er pass at Longzhou, Yang ordered a squad leader (*bazong*) of the imperial army to lead three hundred imperial troops and join the nine hundred *tusi* soldiers at Longzhou to defend this pass.⁷⁵ At this point, the son of the Longzhou *tusi*, Zhao Yuanbi 趙元璧, requested that he be

⁷⁵ Yang's account identifies the squad leader as Zhou Dalun 周大倫.

allowed to join Yang's entourage. Yang granted this request, but warned him and the other members of the entourage that the sincerity gift belonged to the imperial treasury and that they would be held responsible if anything happened to it.⁷⁶

A day later, the certifying officials, assistant magistrates Huang and Li, returned from the Zhennan gate and reported that everything was in order. Regarding the ancestry of Le Duy Dam, they had received sworn testimony from the Annan officials and elders that Duy Dam was a legitimate descendant of Le Loi. The only potential difficulty was that it appeared that Duy Dam was chafing at the prospect of having to go to the Zhennan gate and grovel before the Chinese officials. Yang discerned that Duy Dam was leery of exposing himself to the treachery of the *tusi* and, in response to Duy Dam's request, ordered the *tusi* forces to withdraw a distance away from the Zhennan gate. Yang then repeatedly sent word to Duy Dam impressing on him the necessity of coming to the Zhennan gate and performing the ceremony. Having expressed his willingness, Duy Dam asked for a specific date for the ceremony, and Yang fixed the date as the tenth of the fourth month and sent written instructions for performing the Chinese ceremony (*Han yi* 漢儀) and the ceremony of greeting (*xiang jian li* 相見禮) for Duy Dam and his officials to rehearse.

On the day of the ceremony, Yang took Zhao Yuanbi, the son of the Longzhou *tusi*, as he promised, and departed for the Zhennan gate. Climbing the Zhaode Platform (昭德臺) within the gate complex, Yang set up the Dragon Pavilion (龍亭), representing the presence of the emperor, and ascertained that the ceremonial objects and the guard were all in order. Yang and the Chinese military officer then greeted their Chinese colleagues and assumed their prescribed

⁷⁶ Yang Yinqiu, "Sui Jiao ji," in *Lin'gao wenji*, j1p53b-54a (*Siku quanshu*, v.1291, 624-25).

positions. The gate was then opened. The Le envoys entered first, carrying the sincerity gift. Then came the Le military officers leading their guardsmen and formed flanks on each side. Finally, Duy Dam appeared, in the guise of a prisoner, wearing a black or “slave” cap (*zao mao* 皂帽), a white or “funeral” gauze/silk robe (*gao yi* 縞衣), barefoot, and tied at the wrists with a white cord. Duy Dam led his ministers and Annan elders into the gate and they all prostrated themselves on the ground, facing north. The cords binding Duy Dam’s wrists were untied and, upon hearing the call, he prostrated himself five times and touched his forehead to the ground three times (*wu bai san kou tou* 五拜三叩頭).⁷⁷ In turn, Duy Dam submitted his substitute effigy made of gold and his memorial of submission to punishment (*fu zui shu* 伏罪疏) as well as a memorial in the name of the Le ministers and Annan elders pleading for merciful treatment of Duy Dam and Annan. The Chinese assistant magistrate and certifying official, Huang Yu, read the imperial proclamation of pardon for Duy Dam. Duy Dam again performed the prostrations and touched his forehead to the ground as before.

After the Dragon Pavilion was ceremoniously removed, the encounter became one between the Ming officials and the Le officials. The Le party requested that the rituals used be that of “master and guest” (*zhu bin li* 主賓禮). Yang refused, saying that today was a ceremony of receiving surrender, not an investiture.⁷⁸ The Le party again requested that Yang come down from the platform in dealing with them, so as to achieve greater parity in the relationship. Yang replied that he was acting on behalf of the emperor and thus could not come down to meet with

⁷⁷ Yang Yinqiu, “Sui Jiao ji,” in *Lin’gao wenji*, j1p54b-55a (*Siku quanshu*, v.1291, 625). Note: this is probably the origin of the *wubai* ritual insisted upon by the Le in their dealings with Qing envoys, see chapter 2 of this dissertation.

⁷⁸ Is the alternative that Yang is insisting on the *xiangjianli* mentioned earlier? What would the advantage for the Le of using the *zhubinli*?

them. Huang Chengzu interjected loudly at this point, saying, “You’re getting a bargain in getting your kingdom back and you’re quibbling over four prostrations?!” Yang tells us that the Le party then immediately began performing the prostrations enthusiastically.

Yang then got down to business. He instructed the Le that the Mac lineage could not be snuffed out yet and that the Le must yield Cao Bang to the Mac. Yang also promised to the Le that the Chinese *tusi* would not dare harbor the Mac. Yang tells us that Duy Dam agreed to these terms. The Vietnamese party was then fêted and Yang sent the Le liaisons,⁷⁹ Do Uong *et al*, to send his thanks to the Vietnamese party for participating in the ceremony. When everything was completed, the Zhennan gate was closed again.

Yang pauses here in his narrative and gives an assessment of the matter. He was impressed with Duy Dam’s performance: With the Zhennan gate bristling with armed guards, Duy Dam did not lose his composure once and performed the ceremony satisfactorily. Yang also remarked that no commotion was caused even though the forces from both sides gathered at the gate amounted to nearly fifty thousand strong. He was relieved that, despite the Mac threat that had been rumored in the area, the Mac seemed not to have tried to make a move on the ceremony. Yang further reflected that the smooth going of the day may have had something to do with him having brought along Zhao Yuanbi.⁸⁰

Returning to his narrative, Yang tells us that, after the ceremony, on the same day, he sent a report to the provincial authorities. He also saw off a convoy led by an imperial Chinese commander and made up of the forces of the *tusi* to take the sincerity gift and depart for the

⁷⁹ The text refers to these Le representatives as *houming* 候命.

⁸⁰ It is not entirely clear to me what Yang’s thinking is here. The idea here seems to be that Longzhou was a potential threat but since the heir of the Longzhou *tusi* was under Yang’s watch, Longzhou did not dare to do anything. But it was Longzhou that requested that Zhao Yuanbi to be included.

capital. Yang then rewarded and fêted the *tusi* with silver, beef, and wine, and was answered by a hearty celebration. On the road heading east through Guangxi, Yang was met everywhere by old, wizened men thanking him for preventing a conflict, and recounting tearfully the hardships of campaigns of yesteryear. Yang led the Le envoys from Guilin to the regional headquarters at Duan 端.⁸¹ At Duan, Yang recounted the events of the affair to the provincial authorities and noted all the contributions that each circulating official and *tusi* made to its success. Yang Yinqiu himself received special recognition from the throne. Yang noted that in these words of praise, the Wanli emperor described his efforts as continuing the tradition of his ancestor, Yang Shiqi, as the senior Yang had been responsible for proposing that the Ming withdraw from Vietnam in the second quarter of the fifteenth century.

In the fifth month, after crossing the Geng 庚 range separating the Lingnan region from the Yangzi River watershed, the Le envoy, Phung Khac Khoan 馮克寬, and his entourage arrived at Yang's hometown of Taihe county in Jiangxi. Here the Le embassy sacrificed to the spirit of Yang Yinqiu's ancestor, Yang Shiqi, who was buried there.⁸² Yang tells us that the residents crowded around the shrine to see the Vietnamese envoys and watch the sacrifice. In the eighth month, as the emperor celebrated his birthday, Phung and his party presented the sincerity gift to the emperor. The emperor was pleased with them and the gift and concurred with the recommendation of the Ming court to grant Le Duy Dam the seal of "Commandant (*dutongshi*) of Annan, in charge of the affairs of the kingdom." Yang also recounts that the emperor gave gifts of gold and textiles to the senior imperial officials in Guangxi. Yang himself had his rank

⁸¹ The text simply refers to this place as "Duan." It is possibly a reference to Duanzhou, a district today in Zhaoqing. Zhaoqing, of course, was the governor-general headquarters in the Qing, so this may be a Ming precursor.

⁸² Specifically Yang says in the text that they sacrificed at Baixa 白下, the name of a post station in Xichangzhen 西昌, county seat of Taihe.

raised by one grade, and the remaining circulating officials and *tusi* who contributed in the Annan affair were variously promoted and rewarded with gifts.

A Vietnamese perspective on the events

Although there is no Vietnamese account of the Ming-Le détente that parallels Yang Yinqiu's, we can get some sense of the Vietnamese perspective and version of events from entries in the Le court chronicle, the *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (*DVSKTT*; 大越史記全書). In addition to some curious factual inconsistencies that arise from a comparison of the *DVSKTT* and Yang accounts, we will see that there are certain lacunae in the *DVSKTT* account, such as a lack of any mention of a sincerity gift, which must be understood as a function of Le efforts to protect and reinforce the legitimacy of the regime. At the same time, the *DVSKTT* relates some things that are absent in the Yang account, and perhaps which Yang intentionally left unsaid. Less tantalizing yet nonetheless important is the way that the *DVSKTT* account confirms the significance of certain facets of Yang's representation of the affair, in particular the significant role of the *tusi*.

One glaring and mysterious point of difference between the Yang and *DVSKTT* accounts is the complete absence of Yang Yinqiu. Rather, the primary actor on the Chinese side in the *DVSKTT* account is a certain Chen Dunlin, identified in *DVSKTT* as a vice commissioner of the provincial surveillance commission (*tixing ancha fushi*), posted to the commission's Zuojiang branch office at Nanning.⁸³ Chen does appear in Chinese sources, such as the *Ming shilu* and the Wanli-era edition of the Guangxi provincial gazetteer, but his appointment to posts in Guangxi,

⁸³ For example, see *DVSKTT*, 907, entry no. 3 (*bingshen* year, 1st month, 29th day; 1596). The Zuojiang branch office was a *bingxundao*, a "military defense and general surveillance circuit." According to Hucker, 383, entry no. 4675, this was an amalgamation of two more common types of branch office, *bingbeidao* ("military defense circuit") and *fexundao* ("general surveillance circuit"). Hucker also says that this type of amalgamated office appears to only have existed in Guangxi, where there were one each in Guilin, Nanning, and Binzhou.

according to those sources, did not take place until 1601 at the earliest, after the events of the Ming-Le détente.⁸⁴ It would appear that the compilers and editors of *DVSKTT* made an understandable and minor mistake at some point in the process of the creation of the chronicle, possibly taking Chen's name from a Chinese text where Vietnamese accounts only registered the position of this official. We also find in the *DVSKTT* account frequent mention to Wang Jianli as a representative of Chen Dunlin and the Chinese more generally.⁸⁵ Wang appears in Yang Yinqiu's account as a subordinate of Yang's and thus we may content ourselves that the Chen Dunlin in the *DVSKTT* account was actually Yang Yinqiu.

A less glaring, yet perhaps more significant, slippage concerns the Le representative who appears in Yang's account as Pham Ngan 范彦 (*pinyin*: Fan Yan). In *DVSKTT*, a certain Phan Ngan 潘彦 (*pinyin*: Pan Yan) appears as an important Le military commander, who among other accomplishments, is responsible for defeating and capturing one of the Mac leaders operating in the borderlands, Mac Kinh Trang, mentioned in Yang's account when Huang Chengzu reports on Mac movements to Yang.⁸⁶ Although this Phan Ngan does not appear in *DVSKTT* as directly involved in the Le's diplomatic dealings with the Ming, it seems likely that this is in fact the Pham Ngan that appears in Yang's account as a Le representative. As one of the Le-Trinh military commanders, Phan Ngan's loyalties would have been primarily to the Trinh lord, Trinh

⁸⁴ In the *Ming shilu* (accessed from Scripta Sinica), Chen is transferred to the post of *canyi* of the right on WL29.5.wuwu (1601) and promoted to vice commissioner stationed at the Zuojiang branch office of the provincial surveillance commission on WL33.8.bingwu (1605). In *WLGXTZ*, Chen is listed as appointed to *canyi* of the right in WL30 (1602; j7p38; p174 of modern reprint) and to vice commissioner in WL33 (1605; j7you46; p178 of modern reprint).

⁸⁵ For example, in *DVSKTT*, 917, entry no. 31 (*wuxu* year, 12th month, 15th day; 1599), where Wang Jianli is identified as a "Ming envoy" (*Minh su*; 明使). See also p.12n41 of this chapter for mention of Wang in Yang's account.

⁸⁶ See page 8 and 17 of this chapter.

Tung. His role in the diplomatic dealings with the Ming would have been to act as the Trinh lord's eyes and ears, to supervise the other Le-Trinh representatives, including the Le king Le Duy Dam, and to act as commander in case of the need for military action. Phan Ngan's dimly-perceived role in relation to the Trinh in Yang's account and his absence in the *DVSKTT* account are probably due to the Trinh's attempt to conceal their role in Le affairs at this critical juncture.⁸⁷

But, aside from these interesting and puzzling particularities of the two accounts, the different perspectives of the Yang account and the *DVSKTT* account emerge when the *DVSKTT* account is considered as a whole. On the whole, the *DVSKTT* presents the Le and the Ming courts as peers, even though the Ming is given slight seniority, while the Le is also sometimes portrayed as contesting or resisting Ming impositions. At the same time, the *DVSKTT* also gives a more ambiguous or mixed view of the Ming than in Ming sources like Yang's account. It presents the Ming as more active in seeking to establish relations with the Le than is seen in Ming accounts. At times, the Ming appears to be acting out of less than magnanimous intentions, and Ming officials are also portrayed as being drawn into the Le sphere of influence.

There is a certain artificiality to presenting the events of the Le-Ming détente as recorded in the *DVSKTT* as an abstracted, successive narrative, since these represent excerpts scattered between other entries in a court chronicle or annals. But this is perhaps not anymore artificial than ignoring the thematic connections. Certainly, the editors or compilers of the *DVSKTT* encourage us to read these entries relating to the Le-Ming détente together, when, as in the entry for the sixth day of the twelfth month of the *wuxu* year (early 1599), they include a lengthy

⁸⁷ It should be noted that, after the events of the Ming-Le détente described in this chapter, Phan Ngan turned against the Trinh in 1600 and was killed in battle in the same year. See *DVSKTT*, p.923, entries no. 2 & 3 (*gengzi* year, sixth month; 1600).

recounting of earlier events in the year to situate the event of the arrival of the Le envoys returned from Beijing.⁸⁸

The earliest entry that mentions the role of the Ming in the changing political situation in Vietnam at the end of the sixteenth century is from an entry in the spring of 1594, when the *DVSKTT* mentions that, at the time, the Ming frequently sent their representatives to find out about the situation in Annam.⁸⁹ Two years earlier, in the spring of 1592, the Le had captured Thang Long and had continued to battle the Mac in the northern, borderland provinces.⁹⁰ After the death of the Mac king in the battle for the capital region, a scion of the Mac, Mac Kinh Cung, led a remnant of the Mac forces to the Ming border and took refuge in the *tusi* domain of Longzhou. From there, the *DVSKTT* tells us, Mac forces and their Longzhou allies conducted raids on the area around Lang Son in the summer of 1594 until the Le-Trinh forces drove these raiding parties back to Longzhou.⁹¹ In the spring of 1596, Le-Trinh forces, led by Phan Ngan, defeated and captured another Mac scion, Mac Kinh Trang, in the coastal border area, an event which is mentioned in the intelligence report that Huang Chengzu gives Yang Yinqiu.⁹²

At this time, in the spring of 1596, the *DVSKTT* records that the Mac were attempting to turn Ming opinion against the Le. They argued that the so-called Le forces did not represent a Le restorationist movement and argued that those behind the campaign were not actually descendants of the Le house. The Mac portrayed the Le attacks as a self-interested Trinh attempt

⁸⁸ *DVSKTT*, 916-17.

⁸⁹ *DVSKTT*, 900, entry no. 3 (*jiawu* year, 1st month; 1594).

⁹⁰ For a summary of these events, see Keith Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 249ff.

⁹¹ *DVSKTT*, 902, entry no.16 (*jiawu* year, 5th month).

⁹² *DVSKTT*, p.905-06, entry no. 1 (*bingshen* year, 1st month).

to seize territory and accused the Trinh of murdering tribute-bearing vassals of the Ming and descendants of the Mac house more generally. Thus, the *DVSKTT* tells us, the Ming sent emissaries across the border to inquire about Le descendants and demand that the new regime come to the Zhennan gate at an appointed date and present proof of the Le king's descent.⁹³

The *DVSKTT* then relates that, on the twenty-ninth day of the first month (the spring of 1596), the Le-Trinh regime responded by sending Do Uong and Nguyen Van Giai 阮文階 to go and “await Ming instructions” (*hau minh* 候命) at the Zhennan gate, where they initiated correspondence with Chen Dunlin, the Zuojiang vice commissioner whom we have shown above to be Yang Yinqiu, using a “humble and acquiescent tone” (*tu da khiem ton* 辭多謙遜). Soon after, the Le-Trinh commander Hoang Dinh Ai 黃廷愛 arrived at Lang Son with his troops to provide any needed military assistance. The Le-Trinh also sent a diplomatic party to the Zhennan gate to meet with the Chinese officials to show proof of Le Duy Dam's legitimacy. The party included Phung Khac Khoan, the Le envoy we met in Yang's account, Le Nganh 黎梗 and Le Luu 黎榴, identified as “clan heads” (族目 *toc muc*) and elder brothers of Le Duy Dam. As evidence of Le Duy Dam's legitimacy, the party brought along the seal of “Office of Commandant of Annan,” an ink impression of an older seal of “King of Annan,” gold weighing one hundred catty (*jin*), a thousand taels of silver, and a group of “state elders” (國耆老 *quoc ky lao*) to testify to the Le king's legitimacy.

However, on the first day of the second month, the *DVSKTT* continues, the Chinese official Yang Yinqiu (aka Chen Dunlin) demanded that Le Duy Dam come personally to the meeting at the Zhennan gate. At this juncture, the *DVSKTT* presents a version of events that

⁹³ *DVSKTT*, p.907, entry. no.2 (*bingshen* year, 1st month).

contests Yang Yinqiu's account. On the fifth day of the second month, the *DVSKTT* records that Le Duy Dam, escorted by Le-Trinh commander Hoang Dinh Ai, senior Le-Trinh officials Nguyen Hoang 阮潢,⁹⁴ Nguyen Huu Lieu 阮有僚, and Trinh Do 鄭杜, and a force of over ten thousand soldiers and elephants, arrived at the Zhennan gate. In contrast to Yang Yinqiu's account, where the delays in the spring of 1596 were attributed to the recalcitrance, foot-dragging, and last-minute withdrawal of the Le and the involvement of the *tusi*, here the *DVSKTT* account portrays the Ming as the party causing delay. The *DVSKTT* records that the Ming party would not attend the meeting at Zhennan gate because they made unwarranted demands for the Le to present a gold figure and a gold seal.⁹⁵ With reference to Yang's account, the gold figure here undoubtedly refers to an effigy in gold of Le Duy Dam, demanded as a substitute in atonement for the crime of killing a tribute-paying vassal of the Ming, and the "spurious" seal of "King of Annan" that Yang demanded be turned over. In Yang's account, after Yang applied pressure through a letter to Le Duy Dam, the Le king agreed to melt down the seal of "king of Annan" and to present a gold effigy.⁹⁶ Yang appears somewhat mystified when the Le left the Zhennan gate to return to Thang Long after reporting illness and a shortage of food in their camp.

In early 1597, the Le-Trinh made a second attempt at détente with the Ming. In the preceding year, the *DVSKTT* tells us, two statues, one of gold and one of silver, several silver

⁹⁴ Nguyen Hoang later turned against the Trinh and established the beginnings of the Nguyen Cochinchina kingdom that has been written about by Li Tana in *Nguyen Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1998) and by others. The *DVSKTT* begins its account of the Nguyen Hoang-Trinh Tung split on page 923, entry no. 2 (*gengzi* year, fifth month; 1600). See also Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese*, 255-56.

⁹⁵ *DVSKTT*, p.907, entry no.3 (*bingshen* year, 1st and 2nd month).

⁹⁶ There seems to be some uncertainty about whether the seal was destroyed, melted down, or turned over to the Ming.

vases and incense jars, some local textiles and other tributary gifts (*cung hien chi vat* 貢獻之物) were prepared by the Vietnamese in anticipation of a possible embassy to the Ming.⁹⁷ In the twelfth month (early 1597), Do Uong and Trinh Vinh Loc 鄭永祿 brought the gold and silver figures and the tributary gifts to Lang Son, near the Zhennan gate, to await word from the Ming side. The *DVSKTT* says, however, that the Longzhou *tusi*, having been bribed by the Mac, interfered and caused the Le overture to be rejected by the Ming. Do Uong and Trinh Vinh Loc then returned to Thang Long.⁹⁸ Later in the spring of 1597, Do Uong and Nguyen Van Giai, returned to the Zhennan gate, with a military escort, to see if there was any word from the Ming side. The *DVSKTT* tells us, however, that this attempt had to be aborted, as the party was attacked by a Mac loyalist force. Do Uong and Nguyen Van Giai barely escaped with their lives and took refuge in the nearby hills.⁹⁹

Later in the spring, in the third month, the Ming sent an official, Wang Jianli, to the Le capital to “hurry on the tribute.” After much debate at the Le-Trinh court, Le Duy Dam left for the Zhennan gate with an escort of similar composition as that of the year before, including Hoang Dinh Ai, Nguyen Hoang, Nguyen Huu Lieu, and Trinh Do and arrived in the vicinity of the Zhennan gate on the twenty-eighth of the third month. The escort differed from the 1596 attempt in that the *DVSKTT* does not mention Duy Dam’s brothers Le Nganh and Le Luu, but mentions a group of seven or eight additional military commanders (都督 *do duc*). Moreover, the force of soldiers and elephants brought by the Vietnamese was greater than in 1596, *DVSKTT* estimating the 1597 force at fifty thousand.

⁹⁷ *DVSKTT*, p.908, entry, no.16 (*bingshen* year, intercalary eighth month; 1596).

⁹⁸ *DVSKTT*, p.908-09, entry no.19 (*bingshen* year, twelfth month; 1597).

⁹⁹ *DVSKTT*, p.909, entry no. 2 (*dingyou* year, second month, 19th day; 1597).

The *DVSKTT* account then changes to a celebratory tone. On the tenth day of the fourth month, the *DVSKTT* reports, Le Duy Dam passed through the Zhennan gate and met with Yang Yinqiu and the various officials of Siming, Taiping, Longzhou, and Pingxiang (the *tusi* jurisdiction in which the Zhennan gate was located). There was a “great show of ascertaining” (*dai hanh hoi kham* 大行會勘) and the parties performed a “ceremony of exchange” (*giao tiep le* 交接禮). Significantly, there is no mention of a ceremony of submission as described in Yang’s account nor any mention of a *kuan* sincerity gift in the *DVSKTT* account. Rather, the *DVSKTT* continues: “Both parties celebrated and congratulated each other; since that time, relations between the Southern State and the Northern State were restored.” Following the successful détente, Phung Khac Khoan and Nguyen Nhan Thiem embarked on a tribute mission to the Ming capital, where they would also request investiture for Le Duy Dam.

The *DVSKTT* entry on the successful détente concludes with the following vignette: The Le envoys’ stay in Beijing coincided with the celebration of the Ming Wanli emperor’s birthday. Phung Khac Khoan wrote thirty poems of congratulations on the occasion, which were included in a collection of birthday poems presented to the emperor. The *DVSKTT* records the Wanli emperor’s comments on the collection: “Virtue and talent is found in all lands. Upon perusing this poetry collection, We discern Phung Khac Khoan’s sense of loyal dedication and his sincerity, which is deeply deserving of praise and appreciation.” The poetry collection, the *DVSKTT* tells us, was published and distributed throughout the Ming realm.¹⁰⁰ In another entry,

¹⁰⁰ *DVSKTT*, p.909-10, entry no. 5 (dingyou year, third month; 1597). Phung Khac Khoan’s embassy and his poetry have been discussed in Liam Kelley, *Beyond the Bronze Pillars: Envoy Poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship* (Honolulu: AAS & University of Hawaii Press, 2005), pp.75-76 & 184-86. Focused as he is on Vietnamese envoys, Kelley attributes a larger diplomatic role to Phung Khac Khoan’s embassy than the sources used in this chapter—including the *DVSKTT*—suggest: “Once the Le regained the kingdom, however, it was imperative for them to make the truth [regarding the Mac] known to the North if they were to obtain its official recognition. The burden of this task fell largely on Phung Khac Khoan, who was to reestablish relations....” 75. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, based on Chinese sources and the *DVSKTT*, Ming recognition had been achieved

the *DVSKTT* also records that on the twentieth day of the third month (spring 1597), Le Duy Dam returned to the Le capital and held court, where the Trinh lord Trinh Tung led the court in congratulating the Le king on his success in restoring relations with the north.¹⁰¹

In some later entries however, the *DVSKTT* presents the détente in a less conclusive or satisfactory light. In an entry describing the return of Phung Khac Khoan's embassy to the Le capital, the *DVSKTT* recounts another vignette of Phung's embassy in Beijing, one that strikes a very different tone than the previously recounted one about the birthday poems. After arriving in the Chinese capital with the "substitutionary gold effigy" (*dai than kim nhan* 代身金人) and sundry gifts, Phung's embassy made an official request to re-establish a regular schedule of tribute missions. The *DVSKTT* says that the Ming emperor was overjoyed to hear this. In response, to use the words of the *DVSKTT*, the Ming emperor (Minh de) invested "the emperor [i.e. Le Duy Dam] with the title of 'Commandant of the Office of the Annan Commandery,'" entrusted with the responsibility of governing the land and subjects of the Southern State. To this purpose, the Ming emperor issued a seal of silver with the inscription of "Office of the Commandant of Annan," to be carried by Phung Khac Khoan, along with an imperial edict, back to the Le court.

Then an exchange ensued between Phung Khac Khoan and the Ming emperor. Phung Khac Khoan presented a memorial to the throne, in which he disputed the fittingness of the title of Commandant given Le Duy Dam:

My master the Le clan—who are the descendants of the kings of Annan—enraged by the

at the Zhennan Gate prior to Phung Khac Khoan's embassy, which was in fact a tribute mission predicated on the successful détente. Kelley is correct, however, in associating Phung Khac Khoan with a petition for the title of "King of Annan" during his mission to the Ming court.

¹⁰¹ *DVSKTT*, p.910, entry no. 7 (dingyou year, third month, twentieth day; 1597).

usurpation of their throne by the traitorous minister Mac, burdened by a millennial vendetta, have patiently waited and schemed—as the proverb puts it: “sleeping on firewood and savoring gall”¹⁰²—constantly thinking of the restoration of their ancestral kingdom, in order to restore the memory of their ancestors. These Mac, who had been a family who served the Le family as ministers, killed their monarch and usurped his kingdom. In truth, the Mac thus committed crimes against Your esteemed country, but he deviously obtained from Your esteemed country the title of “Commandant.” I must ask, therefore, why my master has been presented with the same title the Mac received, seeing as he did not commit crimes of the same magnitude as the Mac have? I humbly desire that Your Majesty take notice of this.

The Ming emperor, laughing, replied,

“It is true that your master is not to be compared to the Mac. But your master has just recently recovered his kingdom and the hearts of his subjects are undoubtedly still unsettled. Therefore accept the title of ‘Commandant’ for the time being, and later, We may grant the title of ‘King’ to your master. Act in obedience to this decision and see that you do not stubbornly resist.”¹⁰³

In the same entry, describing the return of Phung Khac Khoan’s embassy from Beijing with a Ming representative, the *DVSKTT* again deflates the euphoria of the détente. The Ming representative was Wang Jianli, identified in this entry alternatively as an “official deputized by the Ming official at Zuojiang” and as a “Ming envoy,” whom we have seen earlier in both the

¹⁰² The proverb again makes reference to the story of Goujian, which we have seen in Yang’s account as a cautionary tale the Le representatives used to express their concern for the consequences of allowing the Mac to take refuge in Cao Bang.

¹⁰³ *DVSKTT*, pp.916-17, entry no. 31 (twelfth month, wuxu year, 1599).

Yang and *DVSKTT* accounts as a subordinate of Yang Yinqiu. Phung Khac Khoan and his party arrived at the Zhennan gate on the fifteenth of the twelfth month of the *wuxu* year (1599) and were joined by Wang Jianli. Phung and Wang then proceeded to Bo De 菩提, on the northeast bank of the Red River across from Thang Long, where Le Duy Dam met them and received the Ming envoy and the imperial Ming edict (*zhao* 詔) he carried. Wang was then taken to the Le court, where, in a ceremony involving Trinh Tung and senior civil and military officials, the imperial letter of appointment (*chi shu* 敕書) was read aloud. It was then discovered that the “silver seal” presented to the Le king was a rather a seal made of copper. After discussion, the Le court decided to send a letter to the Ming about the matter and entrusted Wang with the task of passing on their memorial to the Ming emperor.¹⁰⁴

The *DVSKTT* also reports at the same time that Ming *tusi*, having taken bribes from the Mac, also memorialized the Ming throne to allow the Mac to take refuge in Cao Bang as well as in the neighboring northern Vietnamese province of Thai Nguyen.¹⁰⁵ This seems to be the first mention in the *DVSKTT* account of the issue of allowing the Mac to take refuge in Cao Bang. Here, rather than as a condition for reestablishing relations with the Ming that the Le reluctantly agreed to in negotiations at the border, the *DVSKTT* attributes the necessity of granting Mac refuge to *tusi* support for the Mac. We should also note that a month before Phung Khac Khoan and Wang Jianli’s arrival in Vietnam, Le-Trinh forces had made forays against Mac forces and

¹⁰⁴ *DVSKTT*, pp.916-17, entry no. 31 (twelfth month, *wuxu* year, 1599).

¹⁰⁵ *DVSKTT* p. 917, entry no. 32 (twelfth month, *wuxu* year, 1599).

settlements in the Cao Bang borderlands, seemingly without respect to the agreement to give Mac refuge in Cao Bang, as Yang's account describes.¹⁰⁶

Finally, in what appears to be the last episode recounted in connection with the Le-Ming détente, the *DVSKTT* informs us of a rather unexpected move by Yang Yinqiu, one whose absence in Yang's account is telling. In the third month of the jihai year (1599), the *DVSKTT* tells us, the Ming official at Zuojiang, Yang Yinqiu (here again misidentified as Chen Dunlin), sent Wang Jianli to Trinh Tung with gifts of a quality steed, a jade belt, and a “sky-thrusting crown” (chongtian guan 衝天冠), to request “neighborly relations” with him. Quite apart from the royal or imperial overtones these gifts imply—which may represent a Trinh gloss as much as a meaning intended by Yang—this entry suggests that diplomatic relations across the Guangxi-Vietnam border may have functioned along informal, local, and unofficial channels that existed outside of the orthodoxies of tributary relations. It is understandable that a Ming official stationed at the edge of the empire and faced with local *tusi* politics that involved powers on the other side of the border would want to ensure the friendship of those powers regardless of the theoretical niceties that the distant Ming court insisted on. It is equally clear, however, that these sorts of informal diplomacy were a topic that a Chinese frontier official like Yang Yinqiu was not eager to make public. The *DVSKTT* entry also states that, along with the gifts for Trinh Tung, Yang sent two letters, which contained a poetic phrase of congratulation: “Glorious restoration of the legacy of your ancestors/You stabilize the realm, becoming the leading minister of merit” (*guang xing qian lie ding guo yuan hun* 光興前烈定國元勳).¹⁰⁷ The *DVSKTT* only mentions

¹⁰⁶ *DVSKTT*, p.915-16, entry no. 25 & 28 (eleventh month, wuxu year, 1598). This may lend weight to the “fictional” interpretation of tributary relations (e.g. Fuma 2007), but it may also suggest that, before the Le-Trinh received the Ming edict that Wang brought, the agreements made with Yang Yinqiu may not have had binding force.

¹⁰⁷ *DVSKTT*, p. 918, entry no. 7 (third month, jihai year; 1599).

Trinh Tung and not the Le king in this entry, but since two letters are sent and the first part of the congratulatory phrase could apply at least as well, or better, to Le Duy Tam as Trinh Tung, we should be careful not to simply conclude that Yang had cynically or blithely acquiesced to the de facto political situation in Vietnam, where the legitimate ruling family was dominated by a ministerial family. Nonetheless, we are on safer ground to conclude that Chinese officials utilized unofficial, informal diplomatic gestures that existed outside and in counterpoint to official protocol and diplomatic form, to achieve practical goals not provided for within those orthodoxies. These informal diplomatic gestures could, at the same time, be manipulated by political figures such as the Trinh lord to construct and confirm the legitimacy of their political order.

In comparing the account that the *DVSKTT* gives for the Le-Ming détente with a Chinese account like that of Yang Yinqiu's, we begin to see differences in perspectives on interstate relations on either side of the border. While Yang's account assumes Ming hierarchical superiority and authority over the Le, the *DVSKTT* presents the two courts as peers, albeit with some acknowledgment of Ming seniority. Moreover, the *DVSKTT* presents Le representatives as contesting or resisting Ming demands while casting an ambiguous light on Ming representatives and Ming intentions. The divergence of perspectives hinted at here will be developed more fully in Chapter Two of this study.

The tables turned

A half century after the Le-Ming détente of the 1590s, control of the Chinese empire was up for grabs and the Le-Trinh court at Thang Long found itself hosting emissaries of more than one party in the conflict. After the capture of Beijing in 1644, Manchu forces soon occupied

north China and began nearly four decades of battles to defeat a number of Ming loyalist regimes operating in the south and the maritime zone. As part of the Ming loyalist regimes' attempts to gain support against the Manchus, several Ming scholar-officials-turned-diplomats made voyages to neighboring polities, such as Le-Trinh Vietnam, Nguyen Cochinchina, and Tokugawa Japan, to persuade these countries to contribute to the Ming loyalist war efforts.

Probably the most well-known of these Ming activists is Zhu Shunshui 朱舜水, who eventually settled in Japan as a Confucian teacher in 1659.¹⁰⁸ Not having been an official in the Ming before the Manchu invasion and declining appointments in the various Ming loyalist regimes, Zhu remained interested and sporadically engaged with the loyalist resistance against the Qing. While Zhu's activities during the Ming-Qing transition primarily focused on the Jiangnan, Fujian, and Taiwan coastal areas as well as Japan, he did make a sojourn in Hoi An, the major port of Nguyen Cochinchina. Zhu's purpose in this sojourn is unclear—Lynn Struve has suggested that he was attempting to secure supplies for Regent Lu, who headed one of the Ming loyalist regimes, while Chen Chingho portrays him as a merchant—but whatever his actual purposes in the maritime Vietnamese kingdom, the account he has left of his sojourn, “A record of events while I served in Annan (*Annan gong yi ji shi* 安南供役紀事)” illustrates to some extent the tensions felt by a representative of an embattled Ming empire who is forced to operate within the constraints of an alien polity that appeared as both upstart rival and potential ally.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ An English-language account of Zhu Shunshui's career, with an emphasis on his Japan connections, is provided by Julia Ching, “Chu Shun-shui 1600-82: A Chinese Confucian Scholar in Tokugawa Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 177-191.

¹⁰⁹ Lynn Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict, 1610-1683: A Historiography and Source Guide* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 1998), 278. Chen Chingho, *Historical Notes on Hoi-An (Faifo)*, (Carbondale, IL: Center for Vietnamese Studies, Southern Illinois University, 1974), 36. Zhu's account of his time in Nguyen Cochina, can be found in his collected works, first published in Japan in the late seventeenth century: “Annan gong yi ji shi,” in *Zhu Shunshui ji*, v. 1, ed. Zhu Qianzhi (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 14-34. Apart from my unpublished paper,

An example of a Ming loyalist who did hold office in one of the Ming loyalist regimes and found himself at a Vietnamese court in the course of official travel was Xu Fuyuan 徐孚遠 (1599-1665). Xu is far less well-known to posterity than Zhu Shunshui as, in contrast to the career Zhu established in Japan after the failure of Ming resistance, Xu ended his years in disappointment and frustrated obscurity in the Chaozhou area in Guangdong, where one of his biographers tells us that until his dying moment he would regularly cry out to “the Gao Emperor,” i.e. the founder of the Ming dynasty Zhu Yuanzhang, and genuflect toward heaven.¹¹⁰ Xu also differs from Zhu in another way, more significant for our purposes. While Zhu sojourned in Nguyen Cochinchina, which he calls “Annan” in the title of his account, Xu wrote a series of poems entitled *Jiao xing zhai gao* 交行摘稿 during his stay in Thang Long, the capital of the northern Vietnamese kingdom. In 1651, Xu, along with two other officials from the Ming loyalist forces associated with the Regent Lu and Zheng Chenggong (Coxinga), made a journey from Taiwan, which had recently been occupied by Zheng Chenggong, to the Le-Trinh court in Thang Long.¹¹¹

“Small states and maritime connections: Ryukyu and Nguyen Cochinchina, fifteenth through eighteenth century,” I am not aware of any extended discussion of Zhu’s account of his stay in Nguyen Cochinchina.

¹¹⁰ Wang Yun, “Donghai xiansheng zhuan,” p19b, appended to Xu Fuyuan, “Jiao xing zhai gao (A collection of poems written during my journey to and from Jiaozhou),” extant in Wu Shenglan’s Qing-era collectanea, *Yi hai zhu chen*, reprinted in Yan Yiping ed., *Bai bu congshu jicheng*, ser. 35, v.109 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1968).

¹¹¹ The details and purpose of this mission are unclear and fixing the date turns out to be somewhat complicated. Lynn Struve identifies Xu’s journey as taking place in 1658, which accords with the date given by Wang Yun (“Donghai xiansheng zhuan,” p.18b, *Bai bu congshu jicheng*), and claims that Xu was attempting to reach the Southern Ming Yongli emperor, who appears to have been in Nanning, via the Le kingdom. However, there is no mention of Ming representatives of any sort at that time in the *DVSKTT*. Lin Huo, another biographer of Xu (“Xiao zhuan,” p. 14a-b, appended to Xu, “Jiao xing zhai gao,” *Bai bu congshu jicheng*) dates Xu’s mission to Thang Long as taking place in 1651. Entries in *DVSKTT* for 1651 mention Ming envoys sent to the Le king (pp.952-53, entries 2 & 4, *xinmao* year, second and tenth months; 1651), but these are clearly envoys sent from the Yongli emperor in Nanning. Thus, the issue may require further checking with Lynn Struve’s history of the Southern Ming and contemporary accounts of the Ming resistance to establish the date and purpose of the mission.

The poems Xu has left us in his *Jiao xing zhai gao* reveal glimpses of his experiences, observations, and sensibilities during his time in Thang Long. It does not say very much, however, about his mission or his encounters, if any, at the Le-Trinh court. Both his biographers, Lin Huo and Wang Yun say that while he was in Thang Long, Xu “contested over protocol” (*zheng li* 爭禮) with the “king of Annan” (who may very well have been the Trinh Lord, in this instance) and that his mission did not achieve its goals.¹¹² Lin Huo provides us with the text of a letter written by Xu to the king of Annan soon after his arrival in Annan. The contents of the letter suggest that Xu’s mission was to notify Ming loyalist forces on the continent of Zheng Chenggong’s plans to attack the Qing. The stop in Thang Long may have been part of an itinerary that sought to enter China from the China-Vietnam border. What I want to draw attention to here are the issues of protocol and propriety that Xu raises in the letter to the Vietnamese ruler:

For the two hundred years that my country has sent ambassadors to your honored country, it is recorded in the state statutes that only the ceremonial protocol of “guest and host” (*bin zhu li*) was used. This has been known to the former king¹¹³ of your honored country and its virtuous ministers. Last year, the ceremonial protocol of “prostration” (*bai li* 拜禮) was used when the princes of Qin and Lu sent ambassadors to your court. Exalted as they

¹¹² Lin Huo speaks of the “Western King of Jiaonan (*Jiaonan xi wang*)” (p.14b) while Wang Yun says that he was the “Stablizing King of Annan (*Annan ding wang*)” (p.18b). The Trinh Lord, Trinh Tac, had been given the title “Western Stabilizing King” (Tay Dinh Vuong 西定王) in 1652 by the Le court; DVSKTT, v. 3, 954, entry 6. In describing the failure of the mission, Lin Huo says that Xu’s letter to the king of Annan “did not repay (*bu bao*)” and further quotes from a letter Xu wrote to Lin Huo after the mission, which contained the phrase “the failure of the journey to Jiaozhou to achieve its goals (*Jiao xing zhi bu de da* 交行之不得達).” “*Bu de da*” is also used by Wang Yun to describe the failure of Xu’s mission, which suggests that Wang may have had access to this letter or to Lin’s biography.

¹¹³ Possibly Le Duy Huu, r. 1643-49, if Xu is speaking of the Le king. The Le king at the time of Xu’s visit would have been Le Duy Ky, r. 1619-43 and again 1649-62.

may be, these two princes are nonetheless servant-ministers of the Great Ming, of equal status (*di ti* 敵體) as your honored country, and the ambassadors they sent were insignificant errand-running military officers, who do not possess aristocratic rank to be numbered in the Celestial Court and whose names are not known among the alleys of the commoners. Your former king entertained and supplied these ambassadors richly before he sent them on their way. In contrast, the commander Zhang that has come before you now holds an exalted post, one not to be compared to those ambassadors, and has been entrusted by Zheng Chenggong with the responsibility of carrying a letter to the Ming emperor; thus, it would be completely in accordance with ritual propriety to give him an audience through the ceremonial protocol of the *bai*. Moreover, I, Fuyuan, unworthily hold a ministerial post and (Shi)zhong is on official business for the emperor. If there is anything in what I say that is short of correct and judicious, I humbly ask that your majesty choose one or two of your senior officials to explain things to us, that we should both benefit from your teaching and not fall short of our duties toward the Ming court, so that we would not become the subject of derision all over the world and for all generations to come. To instruct us thus would be a great kindness of your majesty and the utmost desire of my companions and me.¹¹⁴

Finally, Xu appealed to the Le king's vanity:

The social intercourse of famous worthies as they travelled beyond their country (*ming xian jia dao er cheng jing wai zhi jiao* 明賢假道而成境外之交) have always become the subject of admiring conversation. I do not dare say any more than I have already said, fearing your majesty may find my words tedious, but I humbly hope that your majesty

¹¹⁴ Lin Huo, "Xiao zhuan," 15b-16a.

keeps in mind the sincerity of Fuyuan and my companions and the well-being of the world (*tian xia zhi shan yi* 天下之善一). If you would treat us with ritual propriety and quickly send us on our way, it would not only be Fuyuan and my companions that would benefit from your virtue, but the Ming emperor would also have opportunity to raise your rank and shower you with gifts, and all the princes of the Ming would be filled with boundless admiration of your righteousness.¹¹⁵

Lin Huo, one of Xu's biographers and personally acquainted with him, tells us that this letter did not move the Vietnamese ruler and Xu had to return to Fujian (*Min dao*).¹¹⁶ Lin quotes from a letter Xu wrote to him concerning the mission: "The failure of the journey to Jiao was not a matter of chance. There are several things that cannot be conveyed in writing, but Old Ji Shi can tell you about it."¹¹⁷ Although the purpose and details of Xu's mission thus remains somewhat mysterious, his letter suggests that ceremonial protocol and debates over it were important elements in shaping the course and outcomes of diplomatic encounters. We see that precedent and the statutes were important touchstones of authority while the choice of stipulated "registers of social intercourse" indexing relative status and relationship was a serious issue. At the same time, the personal qualities of the diplomatic representatives were also important. Xu and his companions were not simply extensions of the sovereign or court they represented but moral and social agents in their own right. The matters and dignity of state that Xu and his companions were entrusted with were transacted and shaped by their personal virtues and those

¹¹⁵ Lin Huo, "Xiao zhuan," 16a.

¹¹⁶ The text refers to *Min dao* 閩島. I have not been able to identify this place. In a personal communication, Guillermo Ruiz-Stovel suggested the possibility that it may be a collective reference to the islands of Fujian rather than a single island.

¹¹⁷ Lin Huo, "Xiao zhuan," 16a.

of their interlocutors, the ruler of Annan and his court. This personal dimension, which comprised moral qualities, social intercourse, cultural refinement, and sensibilities, will show up again in the future accounts of Chinese envoys that we look at in later chapters.

A new start

As Xu Fuyuan was to learn later, it was not only his mission to Annan that was to fail but the entire cause he served. Even before the final defeat of the Ming loyalist forces on the mainland and later of the Zheng forces on Taiwan, the ascendant Manchu Qing dynasty sought to capture the loyalties of the Le court. When the Manchus captured Fujian in 1647, it found tributary missions from various countries who had come to present tribute to the Ming, including one from Annan. The Qing court seized the opportunity to send these embassies back to their respective countries, promising to welcome future tribute missions to the new rulers of China and to issue new patents and seals in return for the surrender of the Ming patents and seals.¹¹⁸ The Le did not respond immediately to Qing overtures, choosing to maintain their allegiance to the Ming, who, under the Yongli emperor not only invested the Le king in 1646-47 but also recognized the Trinh lord Trinh Trang as “Assistant King” (*fu guo wang* 副國王) in 1651.¹¹⁹ By 1660, however, the Le had decided to switch their allegiance to the Qing, a decision which may have been influenced by the Mac pledge of allegiance to Qing forces earlier in the year.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Yunnan sheng Lishi yanjiusuo, ed. Qing shilu Yuenan, Miandian, Taiguo, Laowo shiliao zhai chao (Qing shilu excerpts relating to mainland Southeast Asia, hereafter QSL SEA excerpts), v.1 (Kunming: Yunnan renmin cbs, 1985), 3, entry for SZ4.6.dingchou (1647). The entry does mention Annan, but there is some possibility that this tribute mission was from Nguyen Cochinchina; DVSKTT does not record the Le court receiving an overture from the Qing at this time.

¹¹⁹ DVSKTT, 950, entry no. 4 (*bingxu* year, possibly second month; 1646); 951-52, entry no. 1 (*dinghai* year, fifth month; 1647); 953, entry no. 4 (*xinmao* year, tenth month; 1651).

¹²⁰ QSL SEA excerpts, v.1, 3, entry for SZ16.12.bingwu & SZ17.9.guichou (1660).

In 1664, then, the Qing sent their first official embassy to the Le court on a mission to sacrifice to the recently deceased Le Duy Ky, who had been king when the Le court pledged their allegiance to the Qing court in 1660. The two Qing officials chosen to be chief and vice envoy were Wu Guang 吳光, a junior compiler in the Palace Secretariat Academy, an early Qing precursor of the Hanlin Academy and Grand Secretariat, and Zhu Zhiyuan 朱志遠, an office manager in the General Services Office of the Board of Ritual, respectively. There does not seem to be an extant first-person account of this mission, but Wu Guang wrote poems on the various locales he passed and the sights he saw while on the long journey from Beijing to Thang Long and collected them in a volume he entitled *A collection of poems written during an embassy to Jiao* (*Shi Jiao ji* 使交集).¹²¹ The collection includes poems written at many stops in famed scenic spots within the territory of China. Curiously, however, Wu Guang has left very few with sights or locales in Vietnam as their subject.

Let us pick up Wu Guang's itinerary, as it is marked through his poems, at the Wumeng rapids at Hengzhou in central Guangxi. A famous temple to the "Wave-calming general" Ma Yuan stood at this dangerous crossing. Ma Yuan, of course, was the Han general famous for defeating a rebellion in northern Vietnam, whose story prompted Wu Guang to muse on universal rule.¹²² Wu Guang's next poetic stop was the state hostel at Taiping prefecture, followed by three poems written during the journey from Siming prefecture to the Zhennan gate,

¹²¹ Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, [reprinted along with two texts by Wu Jingxu and Shen Shude] (Beijing: Wenwu cbs, 1987); the edition used here is the print edition issued by Liu Chenggan's Jiayetang and includes two afterwords by Liu dated 1921 and 1922.

¹²² Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, 13a. For a discussion of the veneration of Ma Yuan, see Donald Sutton, "A Case of Literati Piety: The Ma Yuan Cult from High Tang to High Qing," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (CLEAR) 11 (Dec., 1989): 79-114.

which Wu Guang calls the Zhaode gate.¹²³ After passing through the gate, Wu Guang jots a poem en route through the Vietnamese border province of Lang Son, which brings him to the Ghost gate, prompting him to remember in verse other Chinese poets who passed through this point dividing the uplands from the lowland plain.¹²⁴ Wu Guang then writes two poems on his travels by boat down the Cang 昌 (Thuong) River and the Fuliang 富良 (Phu Luong; i.e. Red River) River respectively.¹²⁵ Two poems follow that appear to be written at a way-station in Annan, where Wu Guang admires a scenic site.¹²⁶ This may have been on the return journey to the border because the next poem is again on the subject of the Zhennan gate.¹²⁷ His poetic journey then takes him to Simingzhou and back to Taiping, where we will leave him to continue his journey back to Beijing.¹²⁸

Two prefaces and a short biography of Wu adorn his collection of poems. The prefaces were written in 1667 by Yan Hang of Yuhang, Zhejiang, and in 1668 by Yan Wosi in Hangzhou.¹²⁹ Like Wu Guang, the writers of these prefaces had been distinguished in the civil examinations held by the Qing soon after the conquest and awarded positions in the imperial bureaucracy. Yan Wosi had a further connection with Wu as they both hailed from the same native place of Gui'an in Zhejiang. The writer of the short biography of Wu, Li Xian'gen, also a

¹²³ Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, 13a-14a.

¹²⁴ Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, 14a-b.

¹²⁵ Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, 14b.

¹²⁶ Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, 14b-15a.

¹²⁷ Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, 15a.

¹²⁸ Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, 15aff.

¹²⁹ The two prefaces are found at the beginning of the Jiayetang print edition of Wu Guang's *Shi Jiao ji*.

jinshi graduate of the Qing civil examinations, came from Sichuan.¹³⁰ He nonetheless shared a link to the eastern coast, as his father had moved to Sichuan from Jiangsu. Li shared a closer bond with Wu, though, as they placed second and third respectively in the 1661 metropolitan examinations.

The prefaces are perhaps unremarkable in their appreciation of Wu's poems on travel and landscape. It is worth pointing out, however, that on the whole they paint a condescending but optimistic picture of potential for cultural attainment in Vietnam. Yan Hang states in his preface, "Customs and mores are changed through the action of human beings; since there is a shared teaching that transcends Chinese and foreigners, who can say that as these poems written along the kingly way are transmitted in China and abroad they don't cause culture to bloom beyond China?"¹³¹

In contrast, Li Xian'gen's biography presents an antagonistic picture of Wu's experience of China-Vietnam diplomacy, one that depicts the Vietnamese as "having no sense of propriety" (*bu zhi titong* 不知體統).¹³² Even the climate and terrain was daunting; Li describes Wu as "traversing steep mountains, going past the Ghost Door Gate, and making his way through wind, frost, and miasmatic pestilence."¹³³ After arriving at the Vietnamese capital, Wu submitted guidelines for the protocol to be used when the Qing imperial edict was proclaimed. In response, however, the Vietnamese inquired about the social protocol of expressing sympathy to a

¹³⁰ Li's biography of Wu, "Taishi Changgeng gong zhuan," is included towards the beginning of the Jiayetang edition of Wu's *Shi Jiao Ji*, following the two prefaces but preceding the poems. Neither the biography itself nor other sources suggest what exactly the relationship was between it and Wu's poetry collection.

¹³¹ Yan Hang, preface to Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*, 2.

¹³² Li, "Taishi Changgeng gong zhuan," 1b, in Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*.

¹³³ Li, "Taishi Changgeng gong zhuan," 1a-b, in Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*.

neighboring country experiencing internal strife (*wen shou xu zhi li* 問受恤之禮).¹³⁴ This was an allusion to an expression of sympathy used in the Han dynasty text, *The Rites of Zhou*, in reference to relations between friendly states, one of which was suffering rebellion.¹³⁵ There were thus two implications to this allusion, first, that Qing China and Le Vietnam could be considered as peers, and secondly, that China had just undergone internal rebellion, in contrast to the peaceably-ruled Vietnam.

Li Xian'gen records Wu's response: "The Celestial Court certainly has its established statutes. The edict will be proclaimed facing south. Your sovereign and chiefs, heading your followers, will listen to the proclamation facing north. The protocol as recorded in the statutes is thus!" Li Xian'gen tells us that the Vietnamese glared at him. Eventually, someone—it is not clear if it was one of the Vietnamese or of Wu's party—tried to soften Wu's approach by appealing to "advantages and disadvantages" (*li hai zhi shuo* 利害之說), i.e. of Wu's situation at the mercy of the Vietnamese. Wu retorted, "Envoys are given a title and entrusted with a mission; my life already belongs to my country."¹³⁶

This effected a sharp change in the Vietnamese attitude, as Li reports: "This struck a fearful chord of respect and dread among the Vietnamese rabble. In the end, they gave up their resistance and performed in accordance with the protocol."¹³⁷ Li also tells us of Wu's attitude towards gifts and the exchange of poetry. The Vietnamese customarily rewarded visiting envoys

¹³⁴ Li, "Taishi Changgeng gong zhuan," 1b, in Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*.

¹³⁵ See Lin Yin, annotator, *Zhouli ji zhu jin yi* (Taipei: T'ai-wan shang wu yin shu k'uan, 1983), "Zongbo" chapter, p.192, "yi xu li ai kou lin 以恤禮哀寇亂."

¹³⁶ Li, "Taishi Changgeng gong zhuan," 1b, in Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*.

¹³⁷ Li, "Taishi Changgeng gong zhuan," 1b, in Wu Guang, *Shi Jiao ji*.

with gifts (*kui wu* 餽物), which Wu categorically rejected. When he was offered a piece of paper and entreated to compose a poem on it, Wu is recorded as saying, “I was entrusted with the duties of an envoy. To recite song and compose and exchange poetry is not a way to demonstrate the weightiness of this task. Besides, there can be no private exchanges when one is in foreign territory (*yue jing wu si jiao* 越境無私交).”¹³⁸

There is thus a significant difference in tone between the poetry of Wu Guang’s collection and the prefaces by the two Yans, dated to 1667 & 1668, on the one hand, and Li Xian’gen’s biography of Wu, on the other hand. It is clear, too, that what stood out to Li about Wu’s diplomatic mission was the standoff over protocol, for he mentions nothing else. The difference in tone probably has at least something to do with Li’s own experience as an envoy to Vietnam. In 1669, shortly after the prefaces by the two Yans were composed, Li was sent to Thang Long to proclaim an edict that was a hard pill for the Vietnamese to swallow. Li’s mission involved a great deal of negotiation, much of which centered around issues of protocol. As Wu was reported having done, Li also resisted engaging in poetic exchange with the Vietnamese and has not left any poetry from the mission at all.¹³⁹

Conclusion

This chapter opens up new vistas for a consideration of interstate relations between China and Vietnam. Contrary to a conventional view of China’s relations with its neighbors, where the Chinese court is the center and tribute is the main theme, Yang Yinqiu’s account of the late sixteenth century Le-Ming détente places the border at the center of encounters between

¹³⁸ Li Xian’gen, “Taishi Changgonggong chuan,” 1b.

¹³⁹ Li Xian’gen, *Annan shi shi jiyao*, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu*, shi bu, v.56 (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua, 1996), 79-116. I have discussed Li’s embassy and account in my unpublished manuscript, “Negotiation and irredentism: special embassies and frontier officials in Qing engagement with Annan, late seventeenth century.”

representatives of both states. The primary actors on the Chinese side are not the emperor or senior court officials, but rather frontier officials of the mainstream administration, such as Yang Yinqiu, and the hereditary officials known as the *tusi*. We see that deliberations of policy and their execution involved not so much the empire as a whole but rather the provincial administration, including the supreme commander and the grand coordinator, and the censors as a sort of liaison between the provincial administration and the Ming court. Ceremony and protocol were important for establishing diplomatic relations and making diplomatic transactions, but these ceremonial elements were conducted at the border. This was not only for the obvious practical reasons, but also because the border was a recognized locus with precedent. Only after establishing a diplomatic relationship through these ceremonial means was it possible to carry on tributary relations that brought Le envoys to the Ming court.

Another distinctive feature of border diplomacy was the role of the *tusi*. Frontier officials such as Yang Yinqiu relied on these holders of hereditary office to maintain peace and govern local populations on the western frontier of Guangxi. During a diplomatic episode such as the Le-Ming *détente*, the internal and external politics of *tusi* could play a significant role in determining the outcome of the negotiations. What was the relationship of the *tusi* to the border? The existence of the Zhennan Gate and the relations between the Chinese and Vietnamese courts suggest that there was a real sense of a threshold or boundary. In another sense, the local borders of the *tusi* domains loyal to the Chinese court formed the border extending beyond the Zhennan Gate. While we do not yet see a comprehensive, imperially-governed border in the Guangxi-Vietnam borderlands, it is clear that there was a sense on the side of the Ming officials and the *tusi* that *tusi* domains were territorial and formed a space beyond which was Vietnamese territory.

The significance of the *tusi* was that they could provide the necessary manpower and local authority in times of interstate diplomacy and defense. But to command and coordinate this patchwork border defense, it was necessary for frontier imperial officials to adroitly play the politics of the borderlands. Officials like Yang Yinqiu understood that imperial authority and force had its limits. They were forced to rely on the internal conflicts between *tusi* to contain potentially unruly elements of the border defense. This is clearly seen in the competition between the Siming *tusi* Huang Chengzu and the *tusi* ruler of the Longzhou domain. From the perspective of grand strategy of the Ming empire, at moments like the 1590s, when the empire was facing significant threats in Ningxia and from Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Choson, frontier officials like Yang Yinqiu had to tread carefully and probably could not expect additional military support from the court.¹⁴⁰

Furthermore, this chapter brings to the fore some of the interpretive difficulties that a study of interstate relations, the border, and diplomacy poses. While our sources are predominantly drawn from Chinese actors, it is not always necessary to rely solely on Chinese accounts. Entries in the Vietnamese court chronicle *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu*, though fragmentary, not only shed light on Vietnamese responses but also amend, challenge, and reveal elements unspoken in the Chinese account. With some careful textual analysis and cross-referencing, it is possible to gain a sense of how the Vietnamese perceived and acted in relation to their Chinese counterparts.

Finally, the experiences and accounts of Xu Fuyuan and Wu Guang—and their commentators' perceptions of them—show that there was an important personal dimension to

¹⁴⁰ For strategic considerations of the Ming court in the face of Hideyoshi's invasion, see Kenneth M. Swope, "As Close as Lips and Teeth: Debating the Ming Intervention in Korea," in *Debating War in Chinese History*, ed. Peter A. Lorge (Leiden: Brill, 2013). On the Ningxia mutiny, see Kenneth M. Swope, "All Men are Not Brothers: Ethnic Identity and Dynastic Loyalty in the Ningxia Mutiny of 1592," *Late Imperial China* 24, no. 1 (June 2003): 79-129.

early modern diplomacy. They also demonstrate that, in the arena of inter-court relations, Chinese representatives were not always in a position of strength. This cautions us against understanding the Sino-Vietnamese relationship as predetermined on account of the vast size, resources, and authority of the Chinese empire. The economies of scale did not always obtain at the level of court-to-court diplomacy and in consideration of the costs and benefits of border policy. And, as far as authority went, Vietnamese and Chinese representatives debated over interpretations of a trans-national corpus of classics, including the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Representatives of the Chinese court might feel themselves superior to their Vietnamese counterparts in terms of classical education, but the issues had to be argued and the Chinese could not take it for granted that their view would prevail with their interlocutors.

The accounts of Yang Yinqiu, Xu Fuyuan, and Wu Guang's dealings with the Vietnamese court gave us a taste of the kind of negotiations that Sino-Vietnamese diplomacy could entail. In the following chapter, we will see how the Le and the Qing shared a close but fraught diplomatic relationship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

CHAPTER 2

THE BORDERS OF AUTHORITY: IDEOLOGY AND INTER-STATE RELATIONS IN ROUTINE QING EMBASSIES TO ANNAN, 1664-1761

Scholars have held—and continue to hold—that inter-state relations in premodern East Asia took place in a China-centered framework of suzerainty, better known as the tributary system. As an analytical framework, the tributary system has had its proponents and detractors among modern historians but has continued, in modified forms, to be the basis for understanding how China and its neighbors related historically. Central to the idea of tributary relations was the act of submitting tribute, which entailed China’s vassal states regularly sending embassies to the Chinese court to present gifts as a token of their loyalty and submission.

Much of modern scholarship on the Chinese world order has been directed towards understanding the gap between rhetoric and reality implied in this idealized system. Surprisingly little effort, however, has been made to understand China’s interstate relations as they took place beyond the Chinese court, where tribute was presented. Two areas of research are the exception to this statement. First, research by Ronald Toby and others have shown that Tokugawa Japan constructed a rival and overlapping tributary system in Northeast Asia that engaged the Chinese system indirectly through Korea and Ryukyu.¹⁴¹ Secondly, ongoing research into the Inner Asian dimensions of Qing China’s Manchu rulers has directed attention toward elements, such as

¹⁴¹ Ronald P. Toby, “Reopening the Question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the Legitimation of the Tokugawa Bakufu,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 3, no.2 (1977): 323-63; Ronald P. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); KAZUI Tashiro, and Susan Downing Videen, “Foreign Relations during the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 8, no.2 (1982): 283-306.

courtly receptions in secondary capitals such as Rehe, that do not fit neatly into the traditional tributary model.¹⁴²

But there is an area of tributary relations that has been largely overlooked until now, namely the activities of Chinese envoys at the courts of tributary vassal states. These diplomatic visits differed significantly in a crucial aspect: the scene of action was the court of the vassal state, where Chinese envoys were honored guests, but guests nonetheless. This partial reversal of roles—for the status hierarchy of the suzerain-vassal relationship still framed the events of these embassies—points to a relatively unexplored theme in studies of the tributary system, namely the limits of universal rule.

In this chapter, I will focus on routine or typical elements in Qing embassies to Annan in the seventeenth and eighteenth century to illustrate the ideologies of the Qing and Le states and how these ideologies interacted with each other. I rely on an extensive embassy account written by Zhou Can 周燦, a Qing envoy sent to Annan in 1683. The 1683 embassy was in many ways a celebration for both states. The Qing had recently defeated the Sanfan Rebellion (1673-81) in the Chinese southwest, while, in recognition of Le support against the rebels, the Qing had acquiesced to Thang Long's campaign against the Mac. Thus, from the perspective of the richness of the account and the nature of the political context, the 1683 embassy can be considered an exemplary embassy. To supplement and qualify Zhou's account, I draw from accounts of other embassies in the seventeenth and eighteenth century preserved in Qing and Le court chronicles, local gazetteers, and biographical sources. This approach will hopefully

¹⁴² James Millward et al, ed. *New Qing Imperial History: the Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde* (London: Routledge, 2004).

combine the virtues of the particular and the general in a composite picture of state ideologies as they existed internally, in relation to each other, and at the microhistorical level.¹⁴³

The relationship between early modern Chinese empires and their agrarian and maritime neighbors was undoubtedly an unequal one in most instances, but this is not to say that it was a unilateral one. Although our sources, Qing embassy accounts, remain a view from the Chinese side, they allow us to turn our attention to the Vietnamese side of the diplomatic relationship. Following on our introduction to the Guangxi-Vietnam borderlands in chapter one, this chapter sketches the outline of the diplomatic relationship between the two courts that formed the framework for their collaborative border regime in the eighteenth century.

Despite the focus of this chapter on diplomatic relations between the two courts, the itinerary of the Qing embassies as they progressed to the Vietnamese court ensures that we do not lose sight of the border. Beyond the literal demarcation of space and sovereignty at the border, I argue that we uncover other, less tangible limits of Qing imperial rule by looking at accounts of Qing embassies in the Le kingdom. In their accounts, we find that Qing envoys had to work in a context where Qing imperial fiat was delimited by classical textual and legal authority, bureaucratic procedure, informal diplomacy, and surprisingly, even in the realm of ritual and ceremony. Despite the Sinic imperial rhetoric of universal rule, the unequal nature of tributary relations, and the differences in capacities between the Le and the Qing, this chapter demonstrates that there was a regularly contested and reinforced boundary of authority between the two courts.

¹⁴³ Microhistory is most closely associated with Carlo Ginzburg's scholarship. For useful introductions to the microhistorical approach, see Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It," trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi, *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 10-35; Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History," *California Italian Studies* 2, no.1 (2011).

The embassies

Beginning with Wu Guang's embassy in 1664, discussed in chapter one, the Qing regularly sent embassies to Annan on the occasion of the death of the Le king and the succession of his heir. In contrast to the Annan tribute missions to the Qing court, which occurred on a stipulated and regular schedule, Qing embassies, therefore, were neither frequent nor regular. Nonetheless, in the century following Wu Guang's embassy, there were no less than ten Qing embassies sent to Thang Long, occurring in the years of 1666, 1669, 1683 (a double embassy), 1720, 1728, 1734, 1737, and 1761. In addition to routine embassies for sacrifice to the deceased Le king and investiture of the new king, embassies such as those in 1669 and 1728 were sent to deliver imperial Qing decisions on particular controversies between the Qing and Le courts. Regardless of their purpose, the embassies listed above were official delegations sent directly from the Qing court.

Occasionally, Qing and Le representatives transacted official business at the border. For example, in 1666 Qing provincial officials delivered an edict ordering the extradition of bandits.¹⁴⁴ These transactions, similar to the Le-Ming détente discussed in chapter one, differed from the embassies discussed in this chapter in that they involved a) provincial officials instead of court or capital officials; b) acted as representatives for various provincial authorities or central ministries instead of the Qing emperor; and c) transacted business with Le ministers and local officials at the border instead of proceeding through Annan territory to Thang Long. Most significant amongst these distinctions is that official Qing embassies represented the Qing

¹⁴⁴ *QSLSEA excerpts*, KX5.5.yiwei (1666.6.17), p.7.

emperor himself. In this mediated sense, an embassy visit to the Le capital constituted a “courtly encounter” between two rulers.¹⁴⁵

No.	Year	Objective	Envoys	Sources
1	KX3 (1664)	Sacrifice to deceased Le king	Wu Guang 吳光, Zhu Zhiyuan 朱志 遠	<i>QSL</i> , Zhou afterword, Wu acc., Li bio. of Wu, <i>Wenxian tongkao</i>
2	KX5 (1666/67)	Investiture of Le king	Cheng Fangchao 程 芳朝, Zhang Yibi 張 易賁	<i>QSL</i> , Zhou afterword, <i>Wenxian tongkao</i>
3	KX7-8 (1669)	Edict to return Cao Bang to Mac	Li Xian’gen 李仙根 Yang Zhaojie 楊兆 傑	<i>QSL</i> , Zhou afterword, <i>Wenxian tongkao</i>
4a	KX22 (1683)	Investiture of Le king	Mingtū 明圖 Sun Zhuo(xing) 孫卓行	Zhou acc., Cheng acc., <i>Wenxian tongkao</i>
4b	KX22 (1683)	Sacrifice to 2 deceased Le kings	Wuhei 鄔黑 Zhou Can 周燦	
5	KX58 (1719)	Sacrifice and invest	Chengwen 成文 Deng Tingzhe 鄧廷 喆	<i>YZTPFZ</i> j50, <i>DVSKTT</i>
6	YZ6 (1728)	Edict concerning Dulong mines	Hang Yilu 杭奕祿 Ren Lanzhi 任蘭枝	<i>QSL</i> , <i>LQJW4T</i> , <i>Wenxian tongkao</i> , <i>DVSKTT</i>
7	YZ12 (1734/35)	Sacrifice and invest	Chunshan 春山 Li Xueyu 李學裕	<i>Wenxian tongkao</i> , <i>DVSKTT</i>
8	QL2 (1737)	Sacrifice and invest	Songshou 嵩壽 Chen Tan 陳倓	<i>Wenxian tongkao</i> , (no record in <i>DVSKTT</i>)
9	QL26 (1761/62)	Sacrifice and invest	Debao 德保 Gu Ruxiu 顧汝修	<i>Wenxian tongkao</i> , <i>DVSKTT</i> , <i>QSL</i>
10	QL53 (1788/89)	Invest Le Duy Khiem	Sun Shiyi 孫士毅	<i>Xu wenxian tongkao</i> , <i>QSL</i> , <i>DVSKTT</i>

Table 1: Qing embassies to Annan, 17th-18th centuries

¹⁴⁵ Recent scholarship on early modern interstate relations has begun to add focus to the subject by conceptualizing these interactions in terms of courts and courtliness. See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012). Although he prefers the term “interdomainal relations,” James Hevia is interested in reinterpreting a famous diplomatic encounter by focusing on court culture in *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

Le-Trinh and Qing ideologies

Much has been written about state, or rather imperial, ideology in the Qing. Far less work has been done on the Le-Trinh. Together, a comparative or connective study of the ideologies of these two states would demand at least the scope of a book.¹⁴⁶ Here, I want to sketch out some salient features of the Le and Qing ideologies that bear weight on interstate relations.

There is good reason to use the appellation “Le-Trinh rule” when speaking of the kingdom of Dai Viet, or Annam, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. After being overthrown by the ministerial family of Mac in the early sixteenth century, a branch of the Le royal family was returned to the throne and took possession of Thang Long by the end of the century with the support of a coalition of the Trinh and Nguyen families. Soon after this victory, the coalition split, with the Nguyen going south and forming an autonomous state on what is today the central Vietnamese coast over the course of the seventeenth century. This left the Trinh with mastery of the traditional northern territories of the Dai Viet kingdom. Through the period we are looking at, concluding with the conquest of the north by the Tay Son armies at the end of the eighteenth century, the Trinh remained content with de facto military and political power while continuing the Le family’s role as Dai Viet sovereign.

Contemporary observers and modern scholars have offered several descriptions and explanations of this Le-Trinh dyarchy. Some have explained it as an expedient for the Trinh to avoid Chinese intervention.¹⁴⁷ This theory holds that it was a tenet of Chinese foreign policy,

¹⁴⁶ As has been done for the nineteenth century: Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1988).

¹⁴⁷ This view appears as an unquestioned premise in many works on the Le period, but a typical example of a contemporary observer is the seventeenth-century Samuel Baron, whose account of Tonkin is discussed later in this chapter, while an example of a recent historian’s echoing of this view can be found in K.W. Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 340.

especially in the Ming, to intervene in vassal or tributary states to protect the rulers it recognized against usurpers. Thus, in the early fifteenth century, the Ming invaded and occupied Vietnam in response to the overthrow of the Tran dynasty. Again, in the early sixteenth century, the Ming threatened invasion in response to Mac usurpation of Le rule, which was avoided only after Mac submission to Ming suzerainty and fulfillment of Ming conditions. Given this history, the theory goes, the Trinh felt compelled to retain the legitimacy of the Le royal house to avoid a possible Chinese intervention and to compete diplomatically against the Mac in garnering Chinese support. This view holds that the Le-Trinh dyarchy was a passive result of Chinese foreign policy and that the Le king simply served as a ceremonial figurehead for dealing with the Chinese, with no real power or authority of his own.

This view of Le-Trinh dyarchy can be considered of a piece with arguments in other contexts about the set of interstate relations variously known as “the Chinese world order” and “the tributary system.” These arguments have tended to distinguish between actual relations and a veneer of rhetoric and symbols that did not correspond closely with the realities. This is the premise of the volume edited by John Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order*, but it also informs much of the important work done by Japanese scholars on Ryukyu-China relations.¹⁴⁸ It has long been known to modern scholars that the Ryukyu kingdom came under the domination of Satsuma and indirectly the Tokugawa shogunal government beginning in the seventeenth century. Despite this loss of autonomy, the Ryukyu kingdom was compelled by the Japanese to keep up the appearances of independence to avoid jeopardizing relations with China, for which Ryukyu had become one of the few channels the Japanese had for intelligence and trade with China after

¹⁴⁸ John King Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

official diplomatic relations had been severed.¹⁴⁹ More recently, Watanabe Miki has shown that there was a concerted policy between Satsuma and Ryukyu to disguise and conceal actual relations by instructing Ryukyans to dissimulate in case they became castaways on the Chinese coast.¹⁵⁰ Kenneth Swope has also described Sino-Japanese diplomacy in the context of the Imjin War (1592-98) as informed by deceit.¹⁵¹

This view of diplomatic relations is undoubtedly correct as far as China's relations with Japan, Korea, and Ryukyu goes, but it must be remembered that this set of relations was informed by a rather tenuous relationship with Japan that began before the rise of Tokugawa Ieyasu and lasted for at least as long as Tokugawa rule did, a tenuous relationship plagued by such issues as Wokou piracy and the Imjin War. It is not clear to me that lessons drawn from the set of diplomatic relations (or lack thereof) that characterized the maritime zone between China and Japan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be generalized broadly. Fuma Susumu, who has worked extensively on Ryukyu-China relations, has recently argued that Ming and Qing relations with Vietnam "involved a high degree of fictitiousness," although his larger point is the need for comparative research and concrete case-studies.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Robert K. Sakai, "The Ryukyu (Liu-Ch'iu) Islands as a Fief of Satsuma," in John King Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order*, 112-34. See also Gregory Smits, *Visions of Ryukyu: Identity and Ideology in Early Modern Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

¹⁵⁰ WATANABE Miki, "Shin ni taisuru Ryu-Nichi kankei no impei to hyochaku mondai," *Shigaku zasshi* 114, no. 11 (2005): 1-35.

¹⁵¹ Kenneth Swope, "Deceit, Disguise, and Dependence: China, Japan, and the Future of the Tributary System, 1592-96," *The International History Review* 24, no. 4 (2002): 757-82.

¹⁵² FUMA Susumu, "Ming-Qing China's policy toward Vietnam as a Mirror of Its Policy towards Korea: With a Focus on the Question of Investiture and 'Punitive Expeditions,'" *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, no. 65 (2007): 27. Here he refers specifically to the policy of investiture, but in the rest of the article, it is clear that investiture represents tributary relations between China and Vietnam more generally.

To return to the question of the nature of the Le-Trinh dyarchy, we should point out a number of phenomena that the theory that the Le king's role was simply that of a ceremonial figurehead misses. The most significant of these is the clear ideological role Le kingship played within the Dai Viet kingdom. Since at least as early as the Ly dynasty (1009-1225), the royal family of Dai Viet had styled itself as *hoang, de*, and *hoang de* (c.f. Chinese *huangdi*), or emperor. By the sixteenth century, both Mac and Trinh made reference to the fifteenth-century Le dynasty in legitimating their political goals.¹⁵³ Mac overthrow of the Le dynasty and declaring rule in its own name, but with reference to continuation, or “restoration” (*trung hung*), of Le institutions was one way to legitimacy. The Trinh, and their erstwhile Nguyen allies, followed a different political agenda, that is, to continue the orthodox succession (*chinh thong*) of the Le royal house and thus achieve a restoration (*trung hung*) of legitimate rule. It is not clear, from current scholarship, what the causal relationship between Trinh politics and the aura of the Le royal house was before the seventeenth century, but a Chinese visitor to Annam in 1688 could report an explanation offered by local Vietnamese about Trinh rule vis-à-vis the Le: “The Trinh took possession of the country after finding that there were no descendants of the Tran or Le royal houses. Later, the country was struck by strong winds, thunder, and pestilence, so the Trinh reinstated a descendant of a Le branch as Son of Heaven and served him as a minister.”¹⁵⁴ This account goes on to describe the Le king as under virtual house arrest by the Trinh, emerging from the palace only for the annual new year court audience with the officials and to receive Qing envoys, but it is clear there was a general sense within the Dai Viet kingdom that in

¹⁵³ John K. Whitmore, “Chung-hsing and Cheng-t’ung in Texts of and on Sixteenth-Century Viet Nam,” in *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*, ed. K.W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University), 116-36.

¹⁵⁴ Pan Dinggui, *Annam ji you*, Baibu congshu jicheng, ed. Yan Yiping, series 36, v. 94 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1965-68), 22a. Reprint from Qianlong-era collectanea edited by Ma Junliang, Longwei mishu.

addition to the instrumental function of the Le royal house, a sort of divine mandate surrounded the Le king.

The theory of Le kingship as a sort of diplomatic ruse is problematic even from the perspective of the very sources that have given rise to this theory. Virtually every Chinese text from the sixteenth through eighteenth century that discusses Annam is aware of the complicated relationship between the Trinh and the Le and very often discusses it in terms of either a diplomatic ruse to avoid Chinese intervention or as an expression of Vietnamese self-aggrandizement.¹⁵⁵ We should take these accounts with a grain of salt. At the very least, we have to wonder how much credence to give the idea of Vietnamese dissimulation when they were obviously failing at it.

There is no need to dismiss the idea that there was a certain distance between rhetoric and reality in Dai Viet's relations with China as well as within the kingdom itself. Rather, I would like to turn to some evidence in the Vietnamese historical record that suggests the nature of the Le-Trinh dyarchy. While the *Complete Book of the History of the Great Viet (Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu; DVSKTT)* represents a retrospective court chronicle edited in its final form in the late eighteenth century, it is worth consulting it for its representation of political relations within Le-Trinh Dai Viet and in relation to China. In the *DVSKTT*, there appears to be no dissonance, as there clearly is in the Chinese texts, in the idea of parallel and equal political orders, headed by "emperors" (*de*) in Vietnam and China. An entry in the *DVSKTT* on Phung Khac Khoan's embassy to the Ming court in 1598, discussed in chapter one, serves as a striking example.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ In addition to Yang Yinqiu's 'Sui Jiao ji' (discussed in chapter one) and Pan Dinggui's 'Annan ji you', there is also the account in the well-known *Dong xi yang kao* by Zhang Xie in Xie Fang, ed., *Xiyang chaogong dianlu jiaozhu & Dong xi yang kao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 8.

¹⁵⁶ Chen Chingho, *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (hereafter *DVSKTT*) (Tōkyō: Tōkyō Daigaku Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, Fuzoku Tōyōgaku Bunken Sentā, 1984-86), v. 3, 916n31.

There, we find the language of parallel and equal status coexisting with the language of hierarchical, imperial relations. On the one hand, we find an idiom of north and south, “emperor” (*de* or *di*) used to refer to the sovereigns of both countries, and “capital” (*kinh* or *jing*) to designate the capitals of the two countries. On the other hand, this entry describes a tribute mission to the Chinese court and the Ming emperor’s investiture (*zhao feng*) of the Le king with the title of “Commandant of Annan.” Phung Khac Khoan makes his request to the Ming emperor by submitting a *biao* communication and receives, in addition to a seal of office for the Le king, an edict to be delivered to the Le king. As a preliminary interpretation, it appears that for the compilers of the *DVSKTT*, it was possible to conceive of independent and parallel political orders in the language of “emperor (*de*)” and “state (*quoc*),” while at the same time accepting and working with a hierarchical and encapsulating theory of foreign relations held by China. Rather than dissimulation, I see here a form of political relativism.

Similarly, the compilers of the *DVSKTT* do not seem to see any incongruence with the Le-Trinh court operating in an imperial language within their own political sphere. For example, as a prelude to the opening of hostilities between the Le-Trinh and the Nguyen in CochinChina in 1627, the Le-Trinh court sent an admonishing “imperial edict” (*sac/chi* 勅) to the Nguyen leader.¹⁵⁷ More specifically in relation to the Trinh, time and again, each time a member of the Trinh line officially took power and office, it was recognized by the Le king in the form of “investiture” (*sach/ce* 策) as a prince or king (*vuong/wang* 王).¹⁵⁸

Finally, let us return to the hyphenated nature of the Le-Trinh regime. I am not aware of any study of the kinship relations between the Le royal family and the Trinh, but some evidence

¹⁵⁷ *DVSKTT*, 938-39n1.

¹⁵⁸ Trinh Trang’s (r. 1623-57) investiture, for example: *DVSKTT*, 937n9.

suggests that they were closely related. As a preliminary hypothesis, it appears that Le kings often took Trinh daughters as consort, resulting in heir-apparents born of Trinh mothers. In 1664, for example, a Trinh daughter was made primary consort of the Le king.¹⁵⁹ The inverse does not seem to be the case, though. Trinh lords appear to have chosen consorts from a number of ministerial families in addition to the Le royal family. Baron relates that the Trinh lords married an official consort later in life, often a Le woman, but that prior to this marriage, they typically took a great number of concubines, from whom their heirs were born.¹⁶⁰ If this hypothesis proves accurate, Trinh lords were typically maternal uncles, cousins, or nephews of Le kings. While this arrangement would not add much credibility from a patrilineal point of view—and may have damaged credibility if, say, a Chinese observer had the role of affines in the Eastern Han in mind—it certainly argues for a compact, tightly-knit regime based on marriage alliance, an arrangement that may have appeared very natural to a Vietnamese society where bilateral kinship was the norm.¹⁶¹

To sum up, the Le-Trinh regime of seventeenth and eighteenth century Dai Viet was a dyarchy composed of Le kingship and a senior ministerial role of the Trinh. Although it was content to conform to Chinese expectations of foreign relations within a tributary framework, the Le-Trinh court projected an ideology of sovereign authority within Dai Viet by using languages and practices of authority drawn from the pan-Sinic imperial heritage. The close relationship between Le kingship and the Trinh was probably not as problematic to Dai Viet society as it has

¹⁵⁹ *DVSKTT*, 979n24.

¹⁶⁰ Samuel Baron, *A Description of the Kingdom of Tonqueen*, reprinted as *Views of Seventeenth-Century Vietnam: Christoforo Borri on Cochinchina and Samuel Baron on Tonkin*, introduced and annotated by Olga Dror and K.W. Taylor (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, Cornell University, 2006), 248-49.

¹⁶¹ See Insun YU, *Law and Society in Seventeenth and Eighteenth century Vietnam* (Seoul: Asiatic Research Center, Korea University, 1990).

been seen by Chinese observers and possibly some Confucian-minded Vietnamese scholars. The language of *de* sovereignty allowed the Le-Trinh regime to draw on the legitimating legacy of the fifteenth-century Le dynasty while articulating two distinct positions of rule, one of temporal power represented by the Trinh lord and the other the authority of orthodox succession (*chinh thong*) represented by the Le king. When translated into the context of relations with China, the dyarchy was presented as a relationship between a prince or king (*wang*) and a senior minister (*chen*).

Two additional elements of Le-Trinh ideology should be mentioned. The first was the ideology of vendetta or restoration. In supporting a restoration of Le royal rule, the Trinh-Nguyen coalition and later the Le-Trinh regime of the seventeenth and eighteenth century made it a central and persistent agenda to destroy the Mac as punishment for their treachery against the Le. The second element of Le-Trinh ideology was a fluctuating but abiding punitive campaign against the Nguyen in Cochinchina. The Le-Trinh sent five campaigns against the Nguyen between 1627 and 1672. After the ensuing century of a *de facto* peace, the Le-Trinh again attempted an invasion in 1774 upon the collapse of Nguyen rule and the beginning of the Tay Son movement. Arguably, these two strands of Le-Trinh ideology represent prime examples of the working of the dyarchy. These were territorial, military, and political enterprises driven and justified by a theory of transcendent imperial authority and its secular agent.

We may proceed lightly over the more familiar ground of Qing ideology as it bore on its imperial enterprise and interstate relations. By any accounts, the Manchus were quite willing and able to combine multiple sources of authority in an imperial ideology as they expanded and came to rule over various culturally-distinct subject peoples. While proponents of the so-called New Qing history and of a Sinicization paradigm have debated the relative merits of these positions, it

seems that, as implied in the notion of “simultaneity” used by Pamela Crossley, the Qing took possession of different ruling legacies and were comfortable and deft enough to employ them in relation to their different audiences, or constituencies, as Crossley puts it.¹⁶²

While it is clear that the Manchus’ relationship to Chinese culture was nothing if not complicated, it does seem clear, perhaps even too obvious for remark, that in conquering the Ming empire, they appropriated Ming ruling institutions, state apparatus, and ideology for their own use. An element in the Ming portfolio inherited by the Qing that has received less remark is the tributary system. While Qing relations with Mongols, Uighurs, and Tibetans had a distinct Inner Asian character, the Qing largely continued Ming relations with Choson, Ryukyu, and Annan within the tributary system framework. This was an established institution that allowed the Qing to retain the Ming status quo without having to redirect Qing energies and resources that were needed for the Inner Asian frontiers.¹⁶³

A couple of elements are worth noting in relation to Qing management of the Ming tributary portfolio. First, protocol and precedent represented the lever of authority when Qing envoys dealt with the states of Choson, Ryukyu, and Annan. As we will see in the embassy accounts discussed in this chapter and the next, the Ming (and later, Qing) *Statutes (huidian)*, scripted ceremonies, official written communications, and precedents from previous embassies formed important sources of authority and consequently grounds for dispute. Of course, protocol

¹⁶² See Evelyn S. Rawski, “Re-envisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996): 829-50, and Ping-t’i Ho, “In Defense of Sinicization,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (1998): 123-55, for the classic debate. Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 11.

¹⁶³ But there was innovation in this area by the Qing, particularly in decoupling foreign trade from tributary relations and more generally paying attention to and allowing forms of foreign trade, using arrangements transplanted from Qing experience in Inner Asia, see Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean: Chinese Maritime Policies, 1684-1757* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013); C. Patterson Giersch, “Commerce and empire in the borderlands: How do merchants and trade fit into Qing frontier history?” *Frontiers of History in China* 9, no. 3 (2014): 361-83.

and precedent are familiar themes in Chinese governance, but the stakes were higher in the Qing case because of the inherited nature of tributary relations. The “barbarian” origins of Qing rule was never forgotten by its neighbors and as much as tributary states were measured by Sinic measures of civilization, so the imperial center was measured in so far as it lived up to the ideals it claimed to represent.¹⁶⁴

Complementing the sphere of authority and competition that protocol and precedent represented was a dynamic relationship between Qing universal rule and its governance of relations with other states in the tributary portfolio. There was no hard and fast policy governing border or diplomatic disputes with Annam. Rather, there was a sort of “good cop, bad cop” approach to these disputes, where Qing provincial officials tended to go by the book, leaving room for the emperor to give concessions to tributary state rulers on the principle that the concessions remained within his universal rule through the indirect governance of a tributary state ruler.¹⁶⁵ Far more important than any particular diplomatic protocol or territorial concession, the principle object of Qing-Le diplomatic relations was the maintenance of the social and political bond of these two rulers.¹⁶⁶

Interstate relations was a significant arena of politics and ideology for the Le and Qing courts. For the Le-Trinh regime, their complex political structure and ideological aspirations made relations with the Qing complicated. It was necessary to deal with the Northern Court, but

¹⁶⁴ See Evelyn S. Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia: Cross-Border Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); for primary source example, see Pak Chiwon, *The Jehol Diary*, trans. Yang Hi Choe-Wall (Kent, UK: Global Oriental, 2010).

¹⁶⁵ John E. Wills, “Functional, Not Fossilized: Qing Tribute Relations with Dai Viet (Vietnam) and Siam (Thailand), 1700-1820,” *T'oung Pao* 98 (2012): 457ff, esp. pp.460-61 for Wills’ explicit suggestion of the possibility of such a “good cop, bad cop” approach.

¹⁶⁶ Kim Seonmin reaches this conclusion in the case of the Qing-Choson border, see Kim Seonmin, “Ginseng and border trespassing between China and Choson Korea,” *Late Imperial China* 28, no. 1 (June 2007): 33-61.

Le representatives had to finesse a vassal role in relation to the Qing while maintaining the strong claims of the regime within Vietnam. As for the Qing, their relations with Vietnam were a relatively minor element in their grand strategy, but management of the Ming imperium they had laid claim to necessitated a corresponding care in cultivating their predecessor's traditional alliances and crafting a credible claim to suzerainty. At the same time, given their other ideological and strategic considerations, the Qing also pursued a strategy of differentiation that sought to elevate Qing suzerainty above the Ming example. One important dimension of this strategy was an attempt to develop personal ruler-to-ruler relations between the Qing emperor and his vassal lords.

The envoy route and the demarcation of sovereign space

After surveying the various facets of the ideologies of the Le-Trinh, the Qing, and their manifestation in inter-state relations, we can turn here to a prime example of the workings of these ideologies, the 1683 Qing embassy to Annam. For much of the 1670s, the diplomatic route between the Qing and the Le had been cut off as a result of the Sanfan Rebellion, which was centered in Southwest China. When peace returned after Qing victory, the court sent two pairs of envoys to the Le court to perform the ceremonies of investiture of the current Le king, which included the bestowal of a seal of office, and sacrifice to the two Le kings who died during the hiatus in diplomatic relations.

As was the case with virtually all Qing embassies—and reflecting the general pattern of appointments in the Qing bureaucracy—the double mission of the 1683 was composed of an equal number of Manchu and Han envoys, with Manchus holding the post of senior envoy and the Han member that of junior envoy. For the task of investiture, the Qing court sent Mingtu 明圖 and Sun Zhuo 孫卓 while Wuhei 鄒黑 and Zhou Can, the author of our embassy account,

were given the responsibility of presenting sacrifice to the deceased Le kings. The four envoys traveled together to Guangxi, but Sun died of illness before arriving at the border, illustrating one of the reasons for sending pairs of envoys on each mission.

Contrary to what we might expect from the notions of universal rule implied in Sinic rhetoric of empire¹⁶⁷—and more generally in contrast to some modern notions of premodern territoriality¹⁶⁸—there was a clear demarcation between Chinese and Vietnamese territory. More concretely, in lieu of a strong tradition of cartographic demarcation at the China-Vietnam border, we may conceptualize this demarcation, effected by the travel of envoys, as a diplomatic demarcation of sovereignty. Liam Kelley is certainly correct in arguing for a shared cultural world that existed among Vietnamese envoys and other literati of the Sinic world in East Asia.¹⁶⁹ We will see evidence of this in the travels of Chinese envoys such as Zhou Can who retrace the same envoy route and pay homage to the same landmarks as their Vietnamese counterparts. Despite these commonalities, Qing envoys and their Le interlocutors nonetheless existed in a world of separate states and their respective demarcated space.

Zhou Can's embassy crossed into Annam on the twenty-eighth day of the ninth month of the twenty-second year of the Kangxi reign (16 November 1683) through the Nanling Gate 南陵

¹⁶⁷ For a sweeping survey of post-Qin notions and practices of universalism and empire in East Asia, see Charles Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia, 221B.C.-A.D.907* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawaii Press, 2001). For a study of Tang rhetorics of empire, see Jack W. Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010).

¹⁶⁸ A recent example of the limited notions of premodern territoriality in modern scholarship is Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen, *Borders: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Diener and Hagen distinguish between ancient polities (chapter 2) and the modern state system (chapter 3). The former include everything from prehistoric hunter-gatherers to Sumerian city-states to (non-European) early modern empires while the latter is generally any contemporary or historical examples of the Westphalian model of interstate relations, mostly examples from Europe.

¹⁶⁹ Liam Kelley, *Beyond the Bronze Pillars: Envoy Poetry and the Sino-Vietnamese Relationship* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

關 in Longzhou 龍州.¹⁷⁰ In accordance with standard procedure, the envoys met with Qing local officials at the border gate. The gate was opened to allow Vietnamese officials waiting on the other side to enter the gate area, where they paid their respects to the Dragon Pavilion (*longting*).

The Dragon Pavilion was a canopied carriage that represented the emperor's presence and was used to transport the imperial edict to the Le court. This symbol of imperial presence was not unique to embassies; it was used in all cases where an imperial edict was delivered to an official or vassal of the emperor, within or without the territorial scope of the Qing empire. As we will see in the rest of Zhou Can's account, the Qing emperor was constantly present during the embassy in the form of symbols, proxies and written communications.

The Le officials then paid their respects to the Qing envoys and submitted their name-cards, identifying themselves within the Le hierarchy. After these introductions, the Qing local officials made a record of the envoys' servants and functionaries and searched their luggage for smuggled or contraband goods.¹⁷¹

The envoys' party then exited the gate area into Annan territory and received an Annan escort of twelve elephants and three thousand soldiers in addition to the Le officials they had already been introduced to.¹⁷² Zhou Can was pleasantly impressed by the elephants and soldiers; from later remarks in his account and other sources, it appears that Le-Trinh reception during this embassy visit was intentionally ostentatious.¹⁷³ Not all Qing envoys were so favorably impressed,

¹⁷⁰ Typically, Qing embassies to Annan would cross the border further to the southeast at the Zhennan Gate 鎮南關 in Siming, but for an unexplained reason, Zhou's party crossed at the Nanling Gate instead.

¹⁷¹ Zhou Can, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, reprinted in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu, jibu*, v.219 (Tainan xian, ROC: Zhuangyan wenhua, 1996), 3a-4b; 263-64. All references to the text will be to this edition, with fascicle and page numbers of the original manuscript and of the facsimile reprint indicated.

¹⁷² Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 5a; 264.

¹⁷³ See Baron's description, for example, 239.

though. The Le military escorts for the 1723 and 1761 embassies were smaller than this one, but the Qing ambassadors on those occasions saw the escorts in a threatening light.¹⁷⁴

The envoys stayed in a small settlement near the border, Van Uyen Chau 文淵州, that night. The next day the party arrived at Lang Son town, the main fortified Le-Trinh settlement in this part of the borderland. From here the envoys sent communications onward to the Le court, giving instructions on the particulars of their mission and to notify them of the death of one of the envoys in Guangxi. They also instructed one of the Le officials to send advance notice of the embassy so as not to frighten the residents along the route. On the second day of the tenth month, the embassy convoy left Lang Son to begin the journey to Thang Long. From here on, the party would spend each night at one of the official postal stations (*dich* 驛) along the route to the capital.¹⁷⁵

Two days later, the envoys and their entourage passed the Ghost Door Gate 鬼門關. This was a famous point along the route. The envoys made a sacrifice to the spirit of Ma Yuan at his shrine near the gate. As Liam Kelley has documented, Vietnamese envoys also paid homage at this shrine, illustrating the shared cultural world of Chinese and Vietnamese literati.¹⁷⁶ At Tien Le 先麗 postal station, the envoys were delayed a day as one of the accompanying Le officials issued warnings to be posted in advance along the route, warning the porters in the convoy and

¹⁷⁴ The envoys of the 1723 and 1761 missions were Ren Lanzhi and Gu Ruxiu, respectively. For Ren Lanzhi's comments, see Ren Zhaolin's *shendaobei* biography of Ren Lanzhi in *Beizhuan ji*, reprinted in Zhou Junfu, ed., *Qing dai zhuanji congkan* (hereafter *QDZJCK*) (Taipei: Ming Wen, 1985), v. 107, 696. For Gu Ruxiu's comments, as quoted by Qianlong, see Yunnan sheng Lishi yanjiusuo, ed. *Qing shilu Yuenan, Miandian, Taiguo, Laowo shilliao zhai chao* (*Qing Venerable Records excerpts relating to mainland Southeast Asia*; hereafter *QSL SEA excerpts*) (Kunming: Yunnan renmin cbs, 1985), v.1, 67 (QL27.4.gengyin).

¹⁷⁵ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 5a-6b; 264-65.

¹⁷⁶ Kelley, *Bronze Pillars*, pp.98-107.

residents along the route against communicating with each other and against causing any sort of trouble.¹⁷⁷

On the sixth day of the tenth month, the envoys reached Tra Son 茶山, a place known colloquially as “Gegan” (which Zhou Can tells us means “door” in the local language),¹⁷⁸ where the rocky and forested uplands ended and the envoys were treated to a view of lowland paddies spreading ahead of them. From this point on, according to Zhou’s account, the envoys passed through villages and towns where they were greeted by cheering crowds of onlookers.¹⁷⁹

The next day, the envoys arrived at Tho Xuong 壽昌 postal station, where they were met by a delegation of military officials sent by the Le king. The party arrived at the official embassy hostel on the ninth, located on the northeastern bank of the Red River, opposite the Le capital city. The hostel would be the envoys’ residence and headquarters during the visit. Upon their arrival, the Le king sent a second delegation of Le officials, this time civil rather than military, to greet the Qing emissaries. In both occasions, the Le officials offered gifts to the envoys, which were refused politely.¹⁸⁰

The location of the hostel deserves some comment. The Red River was a major element in Thang Long’s defenses and had served as the last defense in Vietnamese defense against invaders from the north. The envoys were thus held at arms-length from the Le court. Zhou Can did not complain of the arrangements, but a Qing ambassador of the 1761 embassy—who also

¹⁷⁷ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 6b-7b; 265.

¹⁷⁸ The Chinese characters that Zhou Can writes for the name are 格甘. The first syllable, *ge*, may represent the Vietnamese word for door, *cua*, but beyond this, the name is obscure to me.

¹⁷⁹ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 8a; 266.

¹⁸⁰ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 8a-9b, 266.

found the Le armed escort threatening—experienced his stay at the hostel as a sort of house arrest.¹⁸¹

It is fair to say that Qing envoys were guests in the domain of the Le king. There was a clear demarcation of space at the border between two distinct realms and the envoys were at the mercy of their hosts during their mission. At the same time, the envoys were guests who commanded a limited authority both in their role as representatives and messengers of the Qing court and in their role as mediators of the Qing emperor's symbolic presence.

The ceremonies

Although the Qing emissaries arrived at the official embassy hostel on the ninth of the tenth month, the investiture and sacrifice ceremonies that were the *raison d'être* of the 1683 mission did not take place until the fifteenth and sixteenth days respectively. During the interval, the envoys had a series of exchanges with their Le counterparts in which they determined the details of the ceremonies. In addition to choosing the dates for the ceremonies, the Qing and Le representatives spent most of this time arguing over what protocol to follow for the ceremonies. On first sight, this would appear to be one of the few ripples to mar the otherwise smooth course of what I have suggested was an exemplary embassy. But, comparison with accounts of other embassies to Annan in this period suggests that argument over the form of the ceremonies was virtually routine. So, here we will jump ahead in Zhou's account to the performance of the ceremonies and return at the end of this chapter to consider the question of these debates.

Zhou's account of the ceremonies—and, indeed, in all Qing embassy accounts of missions to Annan—reflects a strong sense of protocol among both parties. This should not come

¹⁸¹ The ambassador I am referring to here is Gu Ruxiu of the 1761 embassy. See *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, p.67, QL27.4.gengyin (1762.5.20).

as a surprise to even the most casual student of premodern East Asia, although it should be stressed that neither is the emphasis on ceremony absent from European diplomacy of the period or contemporary international relations.¹⁸² But there remains a question of what the point of reference was for the Qing and the Le. The Qing court had not yet produced a version of *Statutes* at the time of the 1683 embassy.¹⁸³ Zhou Can's account does not address the issue, but a comparison of his description of the ceremonies with the sixteenth-century Ming *Statutes* suggests that the protocol followed in 1683 was based on the Ming *Statutes*.¹⁸⁴

Regardless of the accuracy of this identification, Zhou's perception of the ceremonies was guided by a sense of protocol. At more than one point in his account, he describes what happened and records that it took place "according to protocol" (*ru yi* 如儀). Even at moments of dispute between the Qing envoys and the Le officials, both appealed to a sense of protocol in justifying their actions during the ceremonies.

Despite the rigid, structured nature of the investiture and sacrifice ceremonies, Qing embassies were also occasions for Qing emperors to cultivate ruler-to-ruler relations with the Le king. The 1683 embassy was undoubtedly a special occasion, coming upon peace and the restoration of tributary relations between the two courts, but in a special gift for the Le king and in the descriptions by the Qing ambassadors of their sovereign, we can see an attempt by the Qing emperor to establish a ruler-to-ruler relationship of a personal nature.

¹⁸² This is a central point in Hevia, *Cherishing*, see especially chapters 1, 3, and 10. For a classic and pioneering discussion of ceremony in early modern European diplomacy, see William Roosen, "Early modern diplomatic ceremonial: a systems approach," *Journal of Modern History* 52 (Sept. 1980): 452-76.

¹⁸³ See footnote 76 of this chapter for more on Qing *huidian*.

¹⁸⁴ See Shen Shixing et al, eds., *Ming Huidian: Wanli chao chongxiu ben* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), *juan* 58, p. 362.

On the morning of the fifteenth, the Qing envoys set off for the Le court from the hostel. They crossed the Red River to the other bank, where they were met by three Annan officials. Then, Le Duy Chan 黎維禎, the Le heir apparent, came out of the city gates and stood to the right.

At this juncture, there was a brief moment of tension and uncertainty. The Qing envoys ordered Le Duy Chan to perform the receiving ceremony (*yingjieli* 迎接禮). This order was communicated to the heir apparent by the Le officials, including Nguyen Danh Thuc. The heir apparent said nothing, but it appeared to the Qing envoys that he was giving his assent by nodding his head. A Le eunuch interjected, “The ceremony will be performed in due course at the hall (*dien* 殿). This is not the place for it.” The Qing envoys began explaining, “The ceremony performed upon arriving at the hall is the *canjian* 參見 audience ceremony. Here, it is the receiving ceremony that is to be performed.” But the heir apparent had already kneeled and was performing the *koutou*. Zhou says in his account that this silenced the Vietnamese officials.¹⁸⁵

At the hall, the senior envoy, Mingtu, placed the *gaoming* edict and the other objects on the table (*an* 案). The Qing envoys stood on the right side of the hall. Le Duy Chan led the Vietnamese in performing the *canjian* audience ceremony “according to protocol.”

After this ceremony had been completed, the Qing envoys presented a special gift from the Qing emperor, a piece of calligraphy of the phrase, “Preserving the country in loyalty and filial piety” (*zhong xiao shou bang* 忠孝守邦), written in the emperor’s own hand. Zhou describes a scene of surprise and rejoicing, in which Le Duy Chan and the Le officials were

¹⁸⁵ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 13a-b; 268.

ecstatic over the gift. One of the translators reported the words of the Le heir apparent to the envoys, “The new King says, ‘The imperial calligraphy has spirit and style (*huu than huu phat* 有神有法). Looking at it, it is as if I am beholding the Celestial Visage. This shall be a hereditary state treasure of Annan, to be passed on to ten thousand generations.’ This is why he is reluctant to put it down.”¹⁸⁶

After an extended moment, Le Duy Chan resumed his position, where he knelt to hear the proclamation of the *gaoming* 誥命 edict. In addition to mentioning the recently-won peace, the edict contained a few strains of relatively conventional sentiment, alluding to the universal rule and transforming influence of the Chinese court and the suzerain and tributary elements of the China-Vietnam relationship. The centerpiece of the edict was the suzerain’s charge to his vassal:

While you [Le Duy Chan] were in your capacity as heir, you sent to ask for your mandate. Not only was this in accordance with past practice, but it deserved additional recognition and favor. Therefore, I [Kangxi] have sent Hanlin academy reader-in-waiting (raised three grades), Mingtu, and compiler Sun Zhuo to invest you with the title of King of Annan. Preserve the fief that has been granted you and serve me as a hedge (*fan* 藩)... Do not set aside the mandate I have bestowed upon you!¹⁸⁷

The Qing emperor used the occasion of the edict to emphasize the vital political bond between him and the Le ruler.

Following the proclamation of the edict, the senior envoy Mingtu bestowed the edict, the seal, and the imperial calligraphy upon Le Duy Chan. Duy Chan received them, kneeling, and

¹⁸⁶ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 13b-14a; 268-69.

¹⁸⁷ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 14b-15a; 269.

handed them to an attendant. Le Duy Chan expressed his gratitude, “again, according to protocol.” He then moved to a lower position on the right side of the hall, where he performed the “greeting ceremony” (*xiangjianli* 相見禮) with the envoys.¹⁸⁸

The Qing envoys congratulated him, saying, “Now that you have received investiture from the Son of Heaven, you are a true prince of the Celestial Court.” Overjoyed, Duy Chan replied, “The Sagely Favor of the Son of Heaven is high and deep; I cannot repay even a ten-thousandth part. Your honored sirs, you have traversed ten thousand *li* to come here. We thank you for honoring us with your presence.”

The envoys then brought up the issue of the seal. They reminded Duy Chan that the Qing Ministry of Rites had notified Annan that, with the bestowal of the new seal, the old seal should be returned. Duy Chan replied, “This day of receiving investiture from the Son of Heaven is a day of rejoicing for the entire country because of this favor that has been shown. It would seem disrespectful to exchange the seals immediately. I will have the seal sent to you another day.” Zhou records that the envoys granted this request without argument.¹⁸⁹

The envoys then exited the hall. Duy Chan accompanied them to the Vermillion Bird Gate 朱雀門 (probably the main gate on the south side of the citadel), where they were asked to stay for tea. The envoys declined on account of a leg complaint of the senior envoy, Mingtu. Duy Chan continued with them to the Doan Gate 端門, where they parted. The Le Ministry of Rites invited them to a banquet, which was also declined by the envoys. The Le officials accompanied

¹⁸⁸ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 14b-15a; 269. Note that this *xiangjianli* is the same as performed during the Le-Ming détente involving Yang Yinqiu, see chapter 1, p.21, of this dissertation.

¹⁸⁹ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 15b; 269.

the envoys to the riverbank. The envoys gently dismissed them, crossed the river and returned to the hostel, where Duy Chan had ordered food prepared for them.¹⁹⁰

The following day, the sixteenth, was the day of the sacrifice ceremony. Wearing their ceremonial dress (*gong fu* 公服), the envoys placed the scroll containing the sacrifice text in the Dragon Pavilion and began the procession. All the Vietnamese civil and military officials, soldiers and minor functionaries wore mourning dress (*su fu* 素服). Zhou tells us that they were received as they had been the day before. The Le King came out of the city gates to meet the envoys. Upon reaching the Vermillion Bird Gate, the Dragon Pavilion was properly positioned and the Le king led his officials in the *canjian* audience ceremony, “according to protocol.”¹⁹¹

The procession then reached the hall. A table, or altar, was placed at the center of the hall, where the sacrifice text was placed. Two empty tables were placed behind it, on the west side of the hall. The sacrificial textiles and animals were arranged behind the two tables. Mentioning the lack of ancestral tablets (*bu she zhu* 不設主) and the placing of the sacrificial items behind the table, Zhou interpreted these as expressing a sense of circumspection (*bu gan zhi yi* 不敢之意).

The envoys took up their positions, standing and facing west. Leading his officials, Le Duy Chan took up a position slightly lower [i.e. farther from the imperial position, towards the bottom of a northerly oriented diagram] than the envoys and knelt, facing east.

Wuhei, the senior envoy for the sacrifice mission, stepped forward and presented the sacrificial text for Le Duy Hy to the Vietnamese official. Wuhei then went up and offered incense, poured out a libation, and returned to his position. The Vietnamese official read aloud

¹⁹⁰ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 15b-16a; 269-70.

¹⁹¹ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 16a; 270.

the sacrifice text. Next, junior envoy Zhou Can presented the sacrifice text for Le Duy Dinh to the Vietnamese official and repeated Wuhei's actions. The sacrifice text was read. The two sacrifice texts were then burned in front of the two tables. Le Duy Chan and his officials expressed their gratitude. The King and his officials came before the two empty tables and, in Zhou's words, "performed the rite of that country," namely the "five prostrations rite" that we will return to later in this chapter.¹⁹²

Having resumed his position in the hall, Le Duy Chan said to the envoys,

We have now been granted both investiture and sacrifice from the Son of Heaven. Truly, this grace bestowed on my country is great. Meager as droplets and dust, the efforts of the living cannot repay it. Amid the springs and dirt of the netherworld, the dead benefit from this grace. Earlier, I was exceedingly ashamed when I received the communication from the Ministry of Rites. This is a small country at the ends of earth, where the soil and the people are poor. The tribute sent last year did not meet the regulation standards (*bu zhong shi* 不中式), yet the Son of Heaven was tolerant and received a portion of the tribute.¹⁹³ For this, this entire country was overwhelmed with gratitude.

The envoys replied,

Ever since our Celestial Court began its rule, your country has never caused trouble. You have experienced, with gratitude, the encompassing great favor of the Celestial Court and have turned your hearts and minds to its transformative

¹⁹² Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 16a-18b; 271.

¹⁹³ Qing sources indicate that there in fact had been an issue over Annan's tribute in 1682, see *QSLSEA excerpts*, v.1, p.11, KX21.11.xinhai (1682.12.6).

influence. As a result, you have endeavored to respectfully submit your exotic goods as tribute. You, the King, have said yourself that the tribute was not according to regulation standards. To redeem yourself, you need only be more careful in the future.

Duy Chan gave his assent and expressed his gratitude.

The envoys exited the hall and were accompanied and sent off as the day before. Vietnamese officials accompanied them to the hostel before turning back. As on the day before, the Le King sent food to the envoys at the hostel.¹⁹⁴

The ceremonies of investiture and sacrifice conducted over the space of two days were routine events in a long history of premodern Sino-Vietnamese relations. But this routine aspect should not be taken for granted. As Zhou Can's refrain of "according to protocol" reflects, Qing and Le representatives were jointly concerned with fulfilling authoritative guidelines for the symbolic orchestration of diplomatic relations. What we see in this description is the outcome of an agreement that the two parties arrived at after several days of negotiation, an episode which we will return to later in this chapter. But we should also note that, as seen in the gift of imperial calligraphy and the brief discussion of tribute, there was a Qing strategy of crafting suzerain-vassal relations, a topic to which we turn to now.

Promoting suzerainty and tribute

Following the ceremonies, there was a brief exchange between Le officials and the Qing envoys, which demonstrates the Qing notion of the role of the emperor and the ideology of tribute. Even in a context where the Qing emperor was not physically present, the Qing embassy and the special gift of calligraphy they presented became an opportunity not only to consolidate

¹⁹⁴ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 18b-19a; 271.

the ruler-to-ruler relationship at the center of Le-Qing diplomacy but also for the Qing envoys to promote the image of the Manchu sovereign as excelling in the arts that the Vietnamese would have appreciated as classical culture.

Zhou reports that on the seventeenth, the day after the sacrifice ceremony, the envoys received a visit from Le officials sent from the King. The Le officials remarked on the gift of the imperial calligraphy, saying, "It was quite an occasion the other day, to behold the imperial calligraphy. The entire country, from monarch to vassal, could not stop their amazement and rejoicing. It is utterly unprecedented!" The envoys replied, "Our emperor, when he is not minding the myriad affairs of the world, never ceases to have a book in his hand. He is able to commit to memory anything he lays his eyes on. There is no book, ancient or modern, that he does not peruse; there is no affair under Heaven that he does not comprehend in its fullness. This gift of imperial calligraphy is but a fraction of his erudition. In truth, no emperor or king from antiquity to the present can equal the Sagacious learning of our Emperor."

At the same time, the Qing court promoted an ideology of tribute that emphasized the magnanimity of the Qing emperor. Echoing the Le king on the day of the sacrifice ceremony, the Le officials brought up the issue of tribute: "Indeed, the perspicacity of the Son of Heaven extends to lands ten thousand *li* distant. Last year, the Son of Heaven accepted only a portion of our tribute goods and waived the rest. The entire country, king, vassals, and the people, had no end of gratitude." The envoys responded,

The sending of tribute was not originally demanded by the Celestial Court. It came about as an expression of the sincerity of foreign countries. As an expression of sincerity, tribute must conform to regulation standards. Besides, the offices of the Ministry of Rites scrutinize tribute goods very strictly; you cannot be careless in the least. As far as what

you say of the Emperor, his light shines on a myriad of countries and the hearts of all the earth submit to him. China is self-sufficient in all goods. The Emperor has no interest in exotic goods. He only desires that all who draw breath obey the Kingly Law (*wang zhang* 王章), that all who abide under his dispensation content themselves in this peaceful and prosperous age (*huari* 化日). What does it matter if you come to the audience hall empty-handed? In your case, some of your tribute was accepted, some was not. In what was accepted, the Emperor sees your sincerity. In declining a portion of your tribute, he sympathized with the straits you were in. The Emperor is the lord of vassals and subjects of ten thousand domains (*guo*), yet he deigns to empathize with your country to such an extent. Thinking on this, your country should endeavor to carefully circumscribe your behavior to conform to the laws and extend your sincerity in order to repay Heaven's favor.¹⁹⁵

The Le officials assented, thanked the envoys, and departed.

The notions of tribute outlined by Zhou and his colleagues bear a striking similarity to the spirit of Qianlong's famous letter to George III of England in conjunction with the Macartney embassy of 1793: "We have never placed great value on unusual and rare things. You have sent gifts from a long distance and offered them with profound sincerity; therefore, I specially ordered my officials to accept them. In fact, because Our fame is known throughout the world, many other kingdoms, who also made difficult journeys, have sent valuable gifts to us."¹⁹⁶ The circumstances of the Macartney embassy were quite different, but Zhou's 1683 embassy

¹⁹⁵ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 20a-b; 272.

¹⁹⁶ Translated and quoted in Hevia, *Cherishing*, 188.

suggests that the ideology of the magnanimous Qing emperor had been established early in the Qing assumption of the Ming tributary portfolio.

This ideology involved at least three elements and can be documented as early as the Shunzhi reign (1644-61). First, the Qing emperor did not seek tribute. Rather, it was on the initiative of kingdoms seeking a relationship with him that tribute was presented. The Manchus had conquered China, after all; what goods could the emperor possibly want? Secondly, as a symbolic expression of a tributary ruler's sincerity in seeking a relationship with the Qing emperor, it was necessary for tribute to conform to detailed regulations. Thirdly, the charismatic emperor had the power and magnanimity to waive the regulations as a gesture of favor and goodwill to the tributary state.

While this may strike one as a rather generic picture of the ideal, magnanimous emperor, the early Qing ideology of tribute had a special relationship to the Ming tributary portfolio. This can be illustrated by two incidents in the 1660s. In response to Le assistance to the Qing, the Qing Ministry of Rites proposed in 1661 to reward the Le King "according to precedent" (*zhao li*). The Shunzhi emperor was not satisfied with the gifts proposed, chiding the ministry for "making proposals based on the condescending rites (*beishi waiguo zhi li* 卑視外國之禮) of the former Ming."¹⁹⁷ Several years later, the Ministry of Rites complained that Annan's tribute gifts did not accord with the regulations in the (Ming) *Statutes* and requested that the kingdom be ordered to comply in the future. Kangxi responded, "Foreign countries bring tribute because they desire to participate in civilization. Their tribute gifts should simply be accepted. It is not necessary to follow the regulations in the *Statutes*."¹⁹⁸ Thus, the early Qing ideology of tribute

¹⁹⁷ *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, 4 (SZ18.4.jiashen; 1661).

¹⁹⁸ *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, 6 (KX3.1.wuyin; 1664).

was more than simply generic magnanimity. It was a statement that the Qing emperors were capable of filling the suzerain role of the Ming emperors and were superior to them.

Relations with the Trinh lord

Informal relations with the Trinh lord were a routine part of Qing embassies to Annam. As demonstrated in chapter one, the Ming had been aware of the role of the Trinh family in Le affairs, with varying degrees of clarity, practically since the emergence of the Le Restoration movement and certainly by the Le-Ming détente of the late sixteenth century. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Southern Ming, in their bid to gain Le-Trinh support, went as far as formally investing the Trinh lord with the title, “Secondary King” (*fu guowang*), complete with an edict of investiture and seal.¹⁹⁹

The Qing never formally recognized the role of the Trinh lord as the Southern Ming had. Surprisingly, given the persistent suspicion of usurpation in Le-Ming relations and in contrast to the strenuous strategy of concealment practiced by Ryukyu and Edo, the Le-Trinh regime were not shy about the status and role of the Trinh lord, short of identifying him by the title of “king” (*vuong*) he used internally. Qing envoys seldom took the initiative in engaging the Trinh lord, but they were quite receptive when he reached out to them.

There was, moreover, an important structuring component to this “informal” diplomatic channel. It would be surprising not to find a rationale for envoys’ dealings with the Trinh lord in what were often public, published embassy accounts. As implied in the Zhou Can account, Qing envoys operated on the idea that the Trinh lord was a prominent minister of the Le King and thus indirectly a vassal of the Qing Emperor. Thus, they were able to frame dealings with the Trinh

¹⁹⁹ *DVSKTT*, v.3, 953n4 (xinmao.10; 1651/52).

lord in terms of an extenuated set of relationships between masters and servants, or suzerain and vassal.

The Zhou Can embassy of 1683 stands as a classic example of this kind of engagement. On the eighteenth, two days after the sacrifice ceremonies, Le officials came to present a petition on behalf of the Le King regarding the Trinh lord. Previously, the Trinh lord had sent a certain eunuch Phan to the envoys to apologize on behalf of the Trinh lord for not paying a visit on the envoys, explaining that his master was in mourning for his father. On the eighteenth, then, the Le officials came to request that the envoys sacrifice to the deceased Trinh lord, saying, “Your honored sirs, the chancellor (*phu chinh*) of this country, the Trinh, have given the King counsel and support for generations and have achieved distinct merit. The aged chancellor has died recently. In fact, his body and coffin has not been buried yet, lying in the Trinh ancestral hall during the period of mourning. It is fortunate that this coincides with the visit of the Celestial Envoys. If you would deign to make sacrifice to the deceased chancellor, not only will the dead and living of the Trinh house be grateful, but our King would also be honored.”

The envoys assented, saying, “Your country has served the Celestial Court in the same spirit throughout. If the Trinh have performed the service of counsel and support, then they have assisted your King in turning toward the Celestial Court; how could we deny his request to sacrifice to the Trinh chancellor? You may choose a day for the sacrifice and notify us.” A date was proposed on the twentieth and the envoys distributed thirty taels of silver to purchase and prepare the items used in the sacrifice.

On the twenty-second, the day chosen for the sacrifice to the Trinh chancellor, the envoys sent a delegation led by Ministry of War functionary Li Wencan to sacrifice to the deceased chancellor, complete with a sacrifice text. Over the course of the next few days, the Le King and

the current Trinh chancellor sent gifts to the envoys in gratitude for this sacrifice, which the envoys eventually accepted in part.

Other late seventeenth-century observers have expressed the view that Qing envoys never gave audience to the Trinh lord. Pan Dinggui, the Chinese castaway mentioned earlier in this chapter, held this view, based on testimony from local Vietnamese during his sojourn in Annam. In his view, the Le king was used as a sort of screen between the Trinh lord and Qing envoys.²⁰⁰ Baron agrees that Qing envoys did not meet with the Trinh lord: “the ambassador did not deign to visit his highness [i.e. the Trinh lord]; as indeed no ambassadors of that empire ever do, making of him no other account than as of a plebian usurper, obscure in comparison of their emperors.”²⁰¹

As Zhou’s embassy account attests, Qing envoys did not hold a personal meeting with the Trinh lord. But the account also suggests that Qing envoys did not hold a condescending or derogatory view of the Trinh lord. At the very least, Qing envoys were capable of recognizing the importance of dealing with the Trinh lord and pragmatically responding to Le-Trinh overtures.

Ren Lanzhi’s experience as a Qing envoy in 1728 reflects the other pole of dealing with the Trinh lord. As recounted in Ren’s biography, the 1728 embassy got off to a bad start when Ren and the Trinh lord clashed over a letter purportedly written to the envoys with both the Le king and the Trinh lord as undersigned, leading Ren to accuse the Trinh lord of usurping the throne in all but name and the Trinh lord retaliating by urging the Le king to insist on the use of Le instead of Qing rites (more on this below). Ren (or his biographer) prefaced his narration of

²⁰⁰ Pan Dinggui, *Annam ji you*, 22a.

²⁰¹ Baron, 239.

this exchange with an explanation: “There is a certain State Duke Trinh (*Zheng guo gong*) in Annan, whose family has held military power for generations. All matters great or small are decided by the Trinh; the Le are king in name only.” The account later takes a dramatic turn after Ren and the Le king come to a stalemate during the ceremony for reading the imperial edict. Suddenly, the account tells us, the doors of the hall slam shut and “several thousand foreign chiefs and soldiers surround the hall with weapons brandished.” After some persuasion by Ren, the Le king comes to his senses and performs the Qing rites, and the crisis is resolved. There is no direct implication in the account that the Trinh lord orchestrated the ambush, but on the whole, we are left with a sense of tension and antagonism between the Qing envoys and the Trinh lord.

It is hard to say how much credence should be given this account. The dramatic sense almost makes one think that the account was crafted with popular martial arts tales in mind. Also, obviously, there is a difference between a first-person account such as Zhou Can’s and an indirect narrative written almost twenty years later, whose purpose was undoubtedly to laud and embroider Ren’s feat.²⁰² Curiously, in many of the official biographies of Ren Lanzhi, the biographer refers the reader to the biography of Hangyilu, the senior envoy in the 1728 embassy, for the embassy episode. While these biographies of Hangyilu do mention debate over rites, it is portrayed as being resolved quickly and smoothly, and there is no mention of the role of the Trinh at all.²⁰³ If we do give any credence to the colorful version of Ren’s embassy, at the very

²⁰² *QDZJCK*, v.107, 694. The text has a date of 1747 (QL 11), but internal evidence contradicts this date, giving a date of 26 years after the death and burial of Ren Lanzhi, which should be considerably later than 1747. [The format of the *shendaobei* text reproduced in Li Huan’s *Guochao qixian leizheng chu bian*, v.143 of *QDZJCK*, 731 suggests that the date of QL11 may have been the year Ren died, with the “26 years later” referring to the date of the composition of the *shendaobei* biography.]

²⁰³ For Hangyilu’s official biographies, see, for example, Ji Yun et al, eds., *Qinding baqi tongzhi* (hereafter *DBQTZ*) (Changchun: Jilin wen shi cbs, 2002), v.5, 3049-3050; *Manzhou ming chen zhuan*, v.46 in *QDZJCK*, 247-54; *Congzheng guanfa lu*, v.53 of *QDZJCK*, 41-47; *Qingshi gao liezhuan*, v.90 of *QDZJCK*, 783-84; *Qingshi liezhuan*, v.98 of *QDZJCK*, 3-5; *Guochao qixian leizheng chu bian*, v.144 of *QDZJCK*, 180-84. For biographies of Ren Lanzhi that refer to the entry for Hangyilu for the embassy episode, see, for example, *Guoshi liezhuan*, v.36 of

least we must say that official Qing biographers seem to have found it awkward and evaded discussing it.

Fortunately, in Li Xian'gen's account of the 1669 embassy to Annan, we have a first-person account written by a Qing envoy who did not hold a high opinion of the Vietnamese generally and who was involved in tense debates with Le officials. Li's account gives us a more convincing picture of Qing envoys' approach to the Trinh lord, even under antagonistic circumstances. At the beginning of Li Xian'gen's and Yang Zhaojie's time at the Le capital, prior to the proclamation of the edict they had been sent to deliver, the Qing envoys argued with Le officials over the status and privileges of the Trinh lord, bearing some similarity to Ren's stance against the Trinh lord. Read carefully, however, it becomes apparent that Li and Yang were primarily concerned with rebutting Le excuses for delay in proclaiming the edict.²⁰⁴ Following the proclamation of the edict, the envoys, like the envoys of the 1683 Zhou Can embassy, offered sacrifice to a recently deceased member of the Trinh household.²⁰⁵ They also wrote more than one letter to the Trinh lord, appealing for his help in persuading the Le court to accept the terms of the Qing edict. In their account of the embassy, Li and Yang explain that they took these actions because they understood the influence of the Trinh lord in Le affairs.²⁰⁶

In Qing envoys' missions to Annan, they did not hesitate to use informal channels to lubricate their diplomatic work. The Trinh lord's paramount power in Annan was common

QDZJCK, 866; *Qingshi gao liezhuan*, v.90 of *QDZJCK*, 773; *Qingshi liezhuan*, v.98 of *QDZJCK*, 280; Li Huan's *Guochao qixian leizheng chu bian*, v.143 of *QDZJCK*, 725. [This last is attributed to "Guoshi guan ben zhuan."]

²⁰⁴ Li Xian'gen, *Annan shi shi jiyao*, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu*, shi bu, v.56 (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua, 1996), j1p6a-9a, pp.85-86.

²⁰⁵ Li Xian'gen, *Annan shi shi jiyao*, j2p1b-3a, pp.90-91.

²⁰⁶ Li Xian'gen, *Annan shi shi jiyao*, j2p20b-22b, pp.99-100.

knowledge to the envoys even if it was not an officially recognized or approved reality. Without impinging on the orthodox understandings of tributary relations, Qing envoys pragmatically negotiated Annam politics by reaching out to the Trinh lord through social rather than state channels. The status and role of the Trinh lord nonetheless remained a gray area for envoys, prompting responses ranging from Zhou Can's cordiality to Li Xian'gen's pragmatism to Ren Lanzhi's intransigence. Significantly, however, we see that relations with the Trinh lord were not simply ad hoc, last ditch efforts when negotiations ground to a halt, as the 1669 embassy account might suggest. As we see in the 1683 Zhou Can account, relations between Qing representatives and the Trinh lord were actively cultivated even in what I have suggested were "ideal" conditions.

The seal and bureaucratic channels of redress

The kings of *Tonqueen* have likewise their *chaop*, or seal, from the *China* emperor as a mark of their dependency. And tho' this formality be a mere piece of *Chinese* vanity, they make no little ado about it.

Samuel Baron, *A Description of the Kingdom of Tonqueen* (1685)

Seals were, of course, tokens of office used throughout imperial China's bureaucracy, the Sinic world and beyond. From the lowliest county magistrate to the most powerful court officials and the emperor himself, all offices in the Chinese empire signified their authority and executive power through the use of a unique and carefully guarded seal. Just as the Chinese tributary relations were modeled in part on bureaucratic officialdom, so was the authority the Chinese emperor delegated to his vassal signified in a seal. While the approval of the Chinese court was seldom sufficient for either creating or maintaining an otherwise unpopular tributary ruler, the

Chinese seal often became an element in the symbols of authority in the courts of tributary states, as it had in the case of Le Vietnam.

One of the tasks of Zhou and the other Qing envoys was to bestow a new seal of office on the invested king and to retrieve the seal previously given to the deceased Le king. The seal in question was, it seems, the first seal issued to the Le by the Qing. Earlier, the Yongli regime of the Southern Ming resistance, during the time it was based in Nanning, had invested the Le king and issued a seal to him in 1647.²⁰⁷ Undoubtedly, the newly established Qing court in the middle of the seventeenth century was eager to replace Ming symbols of authority with their own.

Reading Qing accounts such as the *Veritable Records* alone, it is easy to get the picture that the Le were either being ignorant or intentionally recalcitrant when it came to Qing demands that they return previous seals for newly issued ones. In 1661, one year after the Le had sent a letter and tribute to the Qing court to initiate relations between the two courts, Qing ministers complained that the Le king had not made a request to submit his existing seal, namely the one from the Southern Ming regime, for a new one from the Qing. When pressed, the Le king wrote to the Qing court that “according to the old regulations, edicts of investiture and seal were not returned for new ones.”²⁰⁸ A few years later, in 1666, a year when Annam was scheduled to present tribute, the Qing Ministry of Rites again complained that the Le king had not returned the Southern Ming seal, despite repeated requests. They reported that, after insisting that there was no precedent for returning seals, the Le king had proposed delegating an official to have the seal destroyed at the border in the presence of Qing officials, an idea which the Ministry dismissed as “completely at odds with respecting the rituals of the Celestial Court.” Seeing as it was a tribute

²⁰⁷ *DVSKTT*, v.3, 950n4 (bingxu; 1646) & 951n1 (dinghai; 1647).

²⁰⁸ *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, 5 (SZ18.i7.gengzi; 1661).

year, the Ministry suggested that Qing court threaten to deny entry of Le envoys if the seal was not returned.²⁰⁹ This may have proved effective, as later in the year, the Le king complied and submitted the Southern Ming seal.²¹⁰

Le actions take on a different hue if we look at some of the Ming precedents the Le court may have had in mind. Here again, we encounter the implicit authority of the Ming *Statutes*. First, the Ming *Statutes* does in fact provide for the retention by tributary states of tokens of office bestowed on them. In the sections on protocol for issuing an edict and for issuing seals and other tokens of office in the last edition of the Ming *Statutes*, namely the Wanli edition, there is an emendation dated to the Zhengde reign (1506-21) that stipulates: “When envoys go to countries such as Annan to deliver an edict, if the king requests to retain the edict as a state treasure, the envoys shall grant this request.”²¹¹ Although the emendation does not specifically cover seals, it suggests that there was a precedent—incidentally including Annan by name—allowing foreign rulers to retain tokens of office bestowed on them by the Ming. Secondly, as we saw in chapter one, the idea of destroying the seal as a means of nullifying its symbolic authority had existed as early as the late sixteenth century. In the Le-Ming détente of 1595, the Le king, Le Duy Dam, had promised his Ming interlocutors that he would destroy the seal he had been using as a condition for receiving Ming recognition and a new seal. The Ming officials supervising the diplomatic exchange did not seem to have any objections to this way of dealing with a previous,

²⁰⁹ *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, 6-7 (KX5.2.jimao; 1666).

²¹⁰ *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, 7 (KX5.5.renyin; 1666).

²¹¹ SHEN Shixing et al, eds. *Ming Huidian: Wanli chao chongxiu ben* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1989), j58, p.362.

nullified seal.²¹² Contrary to Qing expectations, Le requests in the early Qing to retain or destroy a seal had well-established precedents.

This context clarifies and adds significance to the exchange during the 1683 Qing embassy to Annan over the matter of the old seal. During the investiture ceremony, the Qing envoys had mentioned turning over his old seal after having received the new seal to the Le king. On the twenty-second, the envoys summoned the Le officials and inquired why the old seal had not been turned over. The Le officials explained, “The old seal was bestowed on our deceased king. This was an honor for him during his lifetime; to return it now would bring posthumous ignominy on him.” The envoys rejoined, “Your deceased king was honored during his lifetime by the imperial investiture. Now, he has received sacrifice from the Emperor, which represents additional posthumous honor. What disgrace would there be?”

The Le officials persisted, though: “Upon the death of our preceding king, the seal and patent issued to him by the Celestial Court was placed in front of his ancestral tablet as a family heirloom to be held in perpetuity. If the seal is returned, the royal family would not be able to hold it as a family heirloom.” The envoys replied,

That is so, but, although the royal family must return the old seal, they have received a new seal and have been entrusted with the responsibility of preserving this fief. The new seal is proof enough of the authority that has been delegated to them. That you have one seal and not two is to demonstrate the exclusivity of the object of devotion. Henceforth, for as long as the Celestial Court rules in perpetuity, your country will serve as vassals and receive new seals generation after generation. There is no reason why this cannot continue indefinitely; why be concerned with this single seal as a family heirloom?

²¹² Herr, diss., chapter 1, p.9.

Zhou reports that, with this answer, the Le officials assented and departed.²¹³

But it was not the end of the matter. On the twenty-fourth, the envoys received a memorandum (*ziwen* 咨文) and a bond (*ganjie* 甘結) from the Le King regarding the seal. Zhou quoted from the memorandum:

The preceding king of this country served the Celestial Court in exclusive loyalty and devotion. This is known to the Emperor. It is now demanded that the seal be returned. May it not be that what is given in life is taken away after death. Upon inquiry into the old *Statutes* (*jiu dian* 舊典), no regulation could be found that stipulated the return of the old seal upon the bestowal of a new one. It is hoped that the return of the seal be stopped in order to demonstrate the Court's favor and trust.

Zhou quoted from the bond: "A seal is proof during a vassal's lifetime of the responsibility entrusted to him to preserve his border-fief; after death, it becomes a family heirloom to be passed on to future generations in perpetuity. Regarding the old seal, a memorial will be submitted to request an edict on this matter." On the next day, the twenty-fifth, the Le King sent the envoys a memorial of petition (*shenwen* 申文) on the matter of the seal, to be delivered to the Qing Ministry of Rites.²¹⁴

In this exchange, then, we see that the Le position drew on the authority of precedent, specifically existing regulations in what must have been the Ming *Statutes*, as the first Qing edition of the *Statutes* had yet to be drafted, let alone issued.²¹⁵ The idea of keeping a seal as a

²¹³ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 22a-23a; 273.

²¹⁴ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 24a-25a; 274.

²¹⁵ The first Qing *Statutes* was the Kangxi *huidian*, a project which was begun the year after the Zhou Can embassy, in 1684, and not completed and printed until the 1690s. Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000), 946.

family heirloom, which at first sight may seem to us an ad hoc rationalization on the part of the Le and to the Qing envoys a somewhat silly request, turns out to have had a long pedigree, and it is rather the Qing envoys that seem to be coming up with ad hoc rationalizations. Whether as an expression of magnanimity in the Qing ideology of tribute suggested above or as a reflection of the envoys' caution in proceeding on what they realized might be slippery bureaucratic grounds, the Qing envoys ultimately consented to allow the Le to defer the matter of the seal to the higher authority of the Qing Ministry of Rites. This suggests that, although the Qing held the diplomatic upper hand in hierarchical tributary relations, there were bureaucratic channels of redress that tributary states such as Annan could deploy, with the support of sources of authority such as the *Statutes*.

Arguing over ceremony: *wubai* vs. *sangui*

The T'ang monk said, "If all of you are going inside, you must not be rowdy. Let's go through the proper ceremony of greeting a ruler before we do any talking." "If you want to go through that," said Pilgrim, "it means that you have to prostrate yourself." "Exactly," said the T'ang monk, "we have to undertake the grand ceremony of five bows and three kowtows [*wubai sankou*]."

Wu Cheng'an, *Journey to the West (Xiyou ji)*, sixteenth century²¹⁶

Despite my characterization of the Zhou Can embassy as an exemplary embassy, there was nonetheless one area of dispute that came up, namely a disagreement about which rites to use for the investiture and sacrifice ceremonies. For several days before the ceremonies of investiture and sacrifice, the Qing envoys and the Le officials argued over whether the Qing rite

²¹⁶ Translation by Anthony C. Yu, *The Journey to the West*, vol. 2, chapter 39 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 220.

of “three kneelings and nine kowtows” (*sangui jiukou* 三跪九叩) or the Le rite of “five prostrations and three kowtows” (*wubai sankou* 五拜三叩; or, commonly, just *wubai*) would be used. Eventually, the Vietnamese relented and the Qing envoys’ demand that the *sangui jiukou* be used was respected. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that this dispute over rites was aberrant or that the settlement in 1683 was conclusive. The *sangui jiukou* and the *wubai* were the ultimate rites of fealty at the Qing and Le courts respectively. In the premodern courtly worlds of East Asia, where social and political relations were created, signified, and ratified through formal gestures, these two distinct rites were an acknowledgement of sovereign authority. The weighty significance of these rites and the difference between them created an enduring friction in the Qing embassies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For practically all embassies for which we have substantial accounts of, the Qing envoys and Le representatives revisited this debate again and again.

Before looking at Zhou Can’s narrative and other narratives, a few points can be made about the rites of the Ming, the Qing, and the Le. As we saw in Yang Yinqiu’s account of the reestablishment of Le-Ming relations in chapter one, the rite of *wubai sankou* was used as an expression of loyalty and submission to the Ming emperor. Certainly, this rite can be found in the *Ming Statutes*, for example in the rites used during the bestowal of imperial edicts and seals, and more generally in the literature of the Ming era, such as in the novel *Journey to the West*.

As we will see in Qing embassy accounts such as Zhou’s, at some point the Le adopted the *wubai sankou* rite for use in their court ceremony. I have not been able to document mention of this rite in the *DVSKTT*, but it does appear ubiquitously in an undated manuscript held by the

Institute of Han Nom Studies in Hanoi, which purports to be a copy of the *Le Statutes*.²¹⁷ The seventeenth-century observer Samuel Baron mentions a rite used in relation to the funeral of the Trinh lord involving five prostrations, which may be a reference to the *wubai sankou*.²¹⁸ It is not clear exactly how or why the Le adopted the Ming rite. In some of the Qing envoy accounts, the *wubai sankou* used by the Le is described as “the country’s rite,” i.e. a particular Vietnamese rite. None of the envoys seem to have connected it to Ming practice. In fact, it appeared exotic enough to Zhou Can to warrant a description of the rite, as it was performed by the Le king and his officials to pay respect to the deceased Le kings after the Qing rites had been performed during the sacrifice: “The rite is performed thus: After bowing with hands clasped in front (*yi* 揖), they kneel and prostrate themselves and touch their forehead to the ground once, and then rise. This is repeated, until on the fifth time, they touch their forehead to the ground four times. This is what is known as the ‘rite of the five prostrations (*wubai li*).’”²¹⁹ Two possible origins of the use of the *wubai sankou* occur to me. Either it was adopted as a universal practice in the Sinic world of the Ming era, or more specifically, the Le-Trinh adopted it and retained it following the establishment of their regime at the conjuncture of establishing relations with the Ming. In either case, as reflected in the Qing envoy accounts, the *wubai sankou* had been naturalized as a distinctly Vietnamese rite.

The *sangui jiukou* is, of course, well-known as the kowtow and discussed by many authors in relation to the late eighteenth-century Macartney embassy, most recently by James

²¹⁷ *Le trao hoi dien*, ms., Institute of Han Nom Studies, A52.

²¹⁸ Baron, 270.

²¹⁹ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 18b; 219-271. Note that four *koutou* are mentioned. It is not clear to me how to explain this except that it appears to be a modification of the original *wubai sankou*. Possibly the *koutou* of the first five *bai* involved three *koutou*.

Hevia. The *sangui jiukou* was the Qing rite used in relation to the Qing emperor. It was required of officials and subjects within the Qing empire, but also of rulers of tributary states in their relationship with the Qing emperor. It is not clear, however, what the origins of this rite was.²²⁰ It appears in the pre-conquest Qing *Veritable Records*, often referred to as a rite for the veneration of Heaven.²²¹ Possibly the rite existed among the Jurchen tribes prior to Nurhaci's state-building efforts at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In any case, the Manchus did not adopt the Ming *wubai sankou* upon their conquest of China, but retained the *sangui jiukou* as the rite used to express loyalty and submission to the Qing emperor.

The *sangui jiukou* was demanded of rulers of tributary states such as Choson, Ryukyu, and Annan in their dealings with the Qing. In the Ryukyu case, it seems that the transition from the *wubai sankou* to the *sangui jiukou* was smooth and uneventful, with the Ryukyans accepting the new rite without dispute. In 1533, the Ming envoy Chen Kan recorded that the Ryukyans performed the *wubai sankou* rite during the investiture of their king.²²² By the 1660s and 1680s, during the first two Qing embassies to Ryukyu, the Ryukyans were performing the *sangui jiukou* without dispute.²²³

In the case of Annan, however, disputes over whether the *wubai sankou* or the *sangui jiukou* would be used became a regular—one might almost say expected—feature of seventeenth and eighteenth century Qing embassies. Apart from a few brief and uninformative mentions in

²²⁰ Curiously, Hevia (1995) does not seem to discuss the origins of the rite.

²²¹ *Manzhou Veritable Records*, j8, Tianming 11.6.6, for sealing an alliance, c.f. account in *QSL, Taizu shilu*, j10, Tianming 11.6.dingchou; *Taizong shilu*, j3, Tiancong 1.4.jiayin, where victorious Manchu commanders salute Heaven. Accessed in Scripta Sinica [database online] (Taipei: Academia Sinica [cited 15 August 2014].)

²²² Chen Kan, *Shi Liuqiu lu*, Harada Nobuo annotated (Ginowan-shi, Okinawa: Yōjusha, 1995), 180.

²²³ Zhang Xueli, *Shi Liuqiu ji*, ann. Harada Nobuo (Ginowan-shi, Okinawa: Yōju Shorin, 1998), 96. Wang Ji, *Shi Liuqiu za lu*, in *Ō Shū sakuhō Ryūkyū shiroku sanpen [Wang Ji cefeng Liuqiu shi lu san bian]*, ann. Harada Nobuo (Ginowan-shi, Okinawa: Yōju Shorin, 1997), 336.

the *DVSKTT*, the sources for these debates are from accounts by Qing envoys or their biographers. This raises an issue of interpretation, namely how we are to evaluate a two-sided encounter based on one-sided accounts. In one sense, there is an advantage to the interpreter of these accounts in that Qing envoys were motivated to portray themselves as loyally and vigorously defending Qing interests and honor in these exchanges. But this obviously does not do away with the problem entirely. There is much to be gained by reading these accounts “with the grain” to understand how the Qing court more generally and their envoy representatives more specifically understood, experienced, and acted in diplomatic engagements with the Le. We may also, as some have attempted to do so, “read against the grain” by analyzing the accounts on the basis of what we know of Qing and Le agendas to hypothesize what the Le representatives may have been thinking and attempting.²²⁴ Here, without disavowing either of these readings, I want to draw attention to the silences in the Qing accounts, namely the silence on the Le *wubai* rite’s connections with the Ming imperium and its *Statutes*.

In the following debates, as preserved in the Qing envoy accounts, we will see protracted and repeated disputes over which rite, the *wubai* or the *sanguì jiukou*, would be used in the ceremonies conducted during the embassy visits. These rites were the sovereign rites of the two courts and we should ascribe the deadlock this issue caused as much to the exclusive and incompatible nature of the two rites as to any manipulative attempt to use these rites to renegotiate status and relationship between the two courts. Undoubtedly, as we will see, some of the arguments made by both sides were ad hoc and instrumental. The tributary or suzerain

²²⁴ For examples of “with the grain” interpretive strategies, see Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries*, especially pp.19-20. A classic example of the “against the grain” strategy is Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992). See also the discussion in Kelley, *Bronze Pillars*, chapter 1 for how these different readings have been applied in the case of Vietnamese history.

framework of the diplomatic relationship was unquestioned. Rather, it was a tension between conflicting commitments to sources of political authority that brought Qing envoys and the Le court again and again to this debate. We will see in the Qing accounts that neither side made explicit the basis or origins of their sovereign rites, but their arguments for the use of their respective rites revolved around issues of pragmatism, classical textual authority, socio-political values inherent in tributary or suzerain relations, and, less tangibly, the balance between political universalism and relativism.

Li Xian'gen's account of the 1669 embassy gives us the first account of a dispute over *wubai sankou* versus *sangui jiukou*.²²⁵ Li and his party had arrived at the official embassy hostel and had fixed a date with the Le representatives for the reading of the imperial edict. Before the day of the reading, the Qing envoys stipulated that the edict was to be received by the Le king using the *sangui jiukou*. The Le representatives demurred, citing the Le precedent of the *wubai* rite. The Qing envoys dismissed this suggestion by pointing out that the Le king had pledged to be the vassal of the Qing emperor and was thus obligated to follow the rites of the Qing court, as expressed in the *Statutes (huidian)*.²²⁶

It is not entirely clear here what the *huidian* refers to, since the first Qing edition, the Kangxi edition, had yet to be published. I suspect the *huidian* here was a modified version of the Ming *Statutes*, the latest edition published in the late sixteenth century, where the *sangui jiukou* had been inserted in the text instead of *wubai sankou*. In any case, the dispute in Li's embassy pitted a Le argument based on precedent against a Qing argument based on the necessity of

²²⁵ Neither the 1664 nor the 1666 embassies have left any account of either a discussion over rites or the ceremonies themselves, although Li Xian'gen in his biography of Wu Guang mentions somewhat obscurely some tension over the rite of "guest and host," as we have seen in chapter one.

²²⁶ Li Xian'gen, *Annan shi shi jiyao*, Siku quanshu cunmu congshu, shi bu, v.56 (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua, 1996), j1p13b; 88.

accepting Qing rite as part of accepting Qing suzerainty. In the case of Li's embassy, the representatives on both sides had far greater issues of contention to deal with and the dispute over the rite to be used did not feature very prominently. The Le representatives accepted the Qing position with little dissent.

The Zhou account of the 1683 embassy features a more protracted exchange over five days that revolved around the limits of political relativism and the universality of Qing suzerainty. Here we see a turn, on the part of the Le, to argue for the use of the *wubai sankou* rite on pragmatic grounds. On the day after Zhou and the other envoys of the 1683 embassy arrived at the official embassy hostel,²²⁷ Le officials came to see the envoys. They submitted two protocols (*yizhu* 儀注) for the investiture and sacrifice ceremonies, respectively, and two memorandums, in which the Le heir apparent said the Le court was not familiar with the Qing rites and requested that the ceremonies be conducted in accordance with the Le rites. The Qing envoys responded roughly along the lines of the 1669 embassy. They asserted that Qing rites were followed within the empire and abroad (*hai nei wai* 海內外). As the Vietnamese had requested investiture and sacrifice from the Qing, they should follow Qing rites. Zhou does not give us the Le officials' response, but he reports that they argued for some time before retiring. The Qing envoys returned the protocols and memorandums from the Le heir apparent.²²⁸

On the following day, the Le officials returned with yet another memorandum from the Le heir apparent, wherein the Le again put forth an argument on pragmatic grounds against using the Qing rite. This time, they buttressed the argument by what may be a reference to the

²²⁷ The tenth day of the tenth month of the twenty-second year of the Kangxi reign (27 November 1683).

²²⁸ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 9a-b; 266.

Confucian classic, the *Record of Rites (Liji)*, and by framing the pragmatic argument in terms of not wanting to create an offense against Qing state dignity.²²⁹ The Le heir apparent wrote,

The Sages did not change custom but followed custom. The investiture of the current king and sacrifice to two preceding kings are major ceremonies that rarely occur. To perform the ceremonies, it would involve instructing and gathering together over a thousand officials of varying rank and ability. I fear that if the rites of the Celestial Court are used, the participants will not be able to perform the ceremonies uniformly and may thus cast disrespect on state dignity, which would be a serious offense.

The Qing envoys said to the Le officials,

Rehearsing the ceremony is a simple matter. Didn't the two of you perform the ceremonies of the Celestial Court impeccably last year when you came to the capital to present tribute? Moreover, the various officials at the Nanling Gate, Tho Xuong postal station, and at the official embassy hostel also performed the ceremonies ably. It cannot be that the rest of the officials of your country are dimwitted, can it?

The Le officials gave no answer and retired.²³⁰

Two days later, after the Qing envoys had chosen dates for the ceremonies and informed the Le king, Le officials came again to persuade the envoys to allow the use of the Le rite. The envoys were enraged because the Le officials had come to see the envoys without a memorandum from the Le heir apparent to authorize their audience. Instead of turning away the officials, Zhou says the Qing envoys debated with them from the morning until past noon. He

²²⁹ The possible reference may be to the statement in the second part of the Quli 曲禮下 chapter in the *Record of Rites* 禮記, "In performing the rites, the noble person does not seek to change customs" (君子行禮不求變俗).

²³⁰ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 9b-10b; 266-67.

goes on to tell us that the Le officials repeatedly found themselves at a loss for words. Ultimately, the Qing envoys said,

If you have something to say, say it. Let's not have you leave today feeling that your conversation was plugged up and you were at a loss for words, just for you to return tomorrow and speak offensively again. Then, even you will feel ashamed of yourselves.

After some discussion amongst themselves, the Le officials said,

It is not that our country is brazen enough to act in resistance. In all honesty, it is because we are not familiar with the rites of the Celestial Court that we have beseeched you to allow us to use our own rites. As you, the Celestial Envoys, have not permitted this, we will of course obey and follow the rite of the Celestial Court and not cause further offense.

With this, the Le officials departed.²³¹

The debate over rites during the 1683 embassy came to a close on the following day, when two eunuchs, probably from the Trinh lord, and a fresh set of Le officials were sent to see the envoys. One of the eunuchs apologized,

Nguyen Cong Vong et al [i.e. the earlier group of Le officials] gave offense to you, the Celestial Envoys, yesterday. Our king has sent different officials to come apologize. Our king is whole-heartedly devoted to serving the Celestial Court with respect and submission. Naturally, we will follow the rites as set forth in the *Statutes* with no transgression.

Here, the eunuch returned to the pragmatic theme:

²³¹ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 10b-11a; 267.

But in a small country such as ours, there are many dimwitted people. We will rehearse the rites but at short-notice like this, it will be hard to avoid some minor mistakes. The king hopes that you will be forgiving.

The envoys replied,

Forgiveness is ever in my Emperor's mind. When envoys from various foreign countries come to seek an audience with the Emperor and make minor mistakes, the Emperor smiles tolerantly and does not pursue the matter. As for the present case, firstly, if your country makes any major mistake during the ceremonies, this Academy and Ministry [i.e. the envoys]²³² will simply order you to perform it again. And, secondly, we will rely on the Emperor's benevolence and be tolerant of each other's faults. It is not hard, is it?

The Trinh eunuch thanked the envoys and, later in the day, the envoys received assent from the Le king to hold the ceremonies on the days chosen by the envoys.²³³

It was over thirty years since Zhou Can's embassy when the Qing sent another embassy in 1720 to perform sacrifice and investiture on the occasion of a new reign in Annan, yet both sides seemed quite prepared to resume the debate over ritual, or "ritual debate," as it were. In fact, the account of this embassy, preserved in the Taiping prefectural gazetteer of the late 1720s, reveals what is probably the most extensive series of exchanges over this issue.

In January of 1720, soon after crossing into Annan territory, the Qing envoys Chengwen 成文 and Deng Tingzhe 鄧廷喆 sent a letter ahead of them to the Le court. In this notice, the envoys informed the court of their entry into Vietnam, proposed dates for the two ceremonies

²³² "This Academy and Ministry" (*ben yuan bu* 本院部), referring to the two Qing government units the envoys held rank in, the Hanlin Academy (Wuhei and Mingtu) and the Ministry of Rites (Zhou Can).

²³³ Zhou, *Shi Jiao ji shi*, 12a-13a; 268.

(the first and second day of the twelfth month), and gave detailed instructions on how to perform the ceremonies. Significantly, they specified that *sangui jiukou* should be used.²³⁴

Sometime later, presumably after the envoys had arrived at the official embassy hostel near Thang Long, the Le court sent two officials with a letter from the Le king and three “documents” (*ce* 冊) detailing the protocol for the ceremonies. The Le officials requested to see (*canbai* 參拜) the investiture text and sacrifice text and see (*canjian* 參見) the envoys in order to personally give them the letter and documents. Here, the envoys stood on ceremony, as it were. They informed the Le officials that “to see” (*canbai*) the edict—that is to say, gain an audience with the object that represented the presence of the Emperor—required a *sangui jiukou* while “to see” (*canjian*) or gain an audience with the envoys required a *yigui sankou*, i.e. the rite used for officials in the graduated Qing system of rites.

Undaunted by these demands, the Le officials offered three dissenting arguments, conveyed to the envoys in writing, it would seem. In addition to the familiar argument on pragmatic grounds, the Le officials returned to an insistence on precedent and a novel argument based on a comparison with other tributary states. They told the envoys that, where such ceremonies were concerned, only Vietnamese rites have ever been used. They also claimed that they were aware of Ryukyu using their own rites on the occasion of Qing investiture and sacrifice.²³⁵ Finally, they protested that it would take ten to twenty days to rehearse the Qing

²³⁴ (Qing Yongzheng reign) *Taipingfu zhi* (hereafter *YZTPFZ*), Gugong zhenben congkan, vol. 195 (Haikou: Hainan cbs, 2001), j50p18a-b.

²³⁵ There does not seem to be any basis for this claim in accounts by Qing envoys to Ryukyu.

ceremonies. They were concerned that an extended stay in a foreign place would be detrimental to the envoys' health.²³⁶

In their response, the envoys ignored the question of the precedent of using Le rites. They also seemed to feel that they needed to dodge the claim about the Ryukyu case, possibly because they were themselves not clear about the facts and perhaps as a means of positive persuasion through flattery. The envoys said that Ryukyu belonged in the *huang* (“wastelands,” 荒) zone and was thus not cognizant of ceremony and righteousness (*li yi*).²³⁷ Vietnam was culturally superior to Ryukyu, the envoys argued, and should not compare itself to that kingdom. Moreover, in response to the pragmatic argument, envoys insisted that they were not concerned for their health.

Whatever the effect of these arguments, there was a temporary respite in so far as the envoys granted an audience (*rujian* 入見) to the Le officials. The latter took this opportunity to present the Le king's letter and the documents about ceremony. They reiterated the request to use the Le rite during the ceremonies. The envoys returned the letter and documents and explained in writing that *wubai sankou* ceremony used by the Le was for vassal princes (*fan wang* 藩王), while the Celestial Court's *sangui jiukou* was for the Son of Heaven.²³⁸

The envoys then turned to the pragmatic argument. They argued that the Qing ceremony was easy to perform and had been performed by Le envoys on tribute missions in the past. The

²³⁶ *YZTPFZ*, j50p18b-19a.

²³⁷ Compare this with Yang Yinqiu's identification of Jiao (Vietnam) as being in the *sui* zone. See chapter 1.

²³⁸ There is also an oblique accusation by the envoys that the Le were “grossly misinterpreting” (*da mei* 大昧) the significance of the Spring and Autumn period. This seems to be a reference to a state of affairs where there was no sovereign authority but where individual polities competed in an anarchic arena. Implicitly, the Qing envoy's position would be that the Qing had put an end to the anarchic condition and had inherited the Mandate of Heaven.

Qing envoy also chided the Le for waiting to the last minute to learn the ceremony. Rather, they should have had their tribute envoys and translators instruct and rehearse the ceremonies as soon as they had made a request to the Qing for investiture and sacrifice. Echoing the Qing envoys of the 1683 embassy, Chengwen and Deng Tingzhe assured the Le officials that any mistakes in performing the ceremony would be overlooked. In addition, they exhorted the Le officials, in their role as scholars (*erdeng ju xi dushuren* 爾等具係讀書人), to instruct the heir apparent that he might not “lose the way of obeisance” (*shi gongshun zhi dao* 失恭順之道).²³⁹

On the following day, the Le king again sent his officials with a letter to argue for the use of Le rites in the ceremonies. The letter stated that during the embassy of 1683, Vietnam was allowed to use the *wubai sankou*. (As we may recall, according to Zhou’s account, the *wubai sankou* was not used except when the Le king and officials paid their respects to the deceased Le kings.) More interestingly, the letter also offered an explanation of the meaning of the *wubai sankou*. The letter stated that the *wubai sankou* was the most solemn used in Vietnam and was used to venerate Heaven.²⁴⁰ Thus, the Le king argued, using it would accord the greatest respect to the Qing emperor. Finally, the pragmatic argument was repeated, saying it would take ten to twenty days to rehearse the *sangui jiukou*.

In response, Chengwen and Deng Tingzhe gave the Le officials a point-by-point rebuttal in writing. As a preliminary, they flat-out denied the Le claim that there had been precedent for

²³⁹ *YZPFZ*, j50p19a-b.

²⁴⁰ The accounts of the 1728 Qing embassy to Annam, as preserved in official biographies of the senior envoy Hangyilu and a *shendaobei* biography of the junior envoy Ren Lanzhi, also report this Le explanation of the meaning of the *wubai sankou* as associated with the veneration of Heaven. For Hangyilu, see *QDBQTZ*, v.5, 3050, for example, and for Ren Lanzhi, see *Beizhuanji*, in *QDZJCK*, v.107, 697.

use of Le rites during previous embassies. They stated that there were Qing Ministry of Rites' records for the 1683 mission, showing that the Qing rite had been used.

The Qing envoy's rejoinder then turned to the issue of relativism. They dismissed as irrelevant the Le explanation of the nature of the *wubai sankou*, countering that the *sangui jiukou* was the most respectful rite used by the Qing. Moreover, they accused the Le of attempting to “replace that which is Chinese with that which is of the barbarians (*yong yi bian xia* 用夷變夏).” Then, with reference to the idea of “following local custom (*cong su* 從俗),” the envoys insisted that the prostration (*bai*) was not a matter that could be left to local custom. The envoys pointed out that the Qing did honor the principle of “following local custom” in allowing the Vietnamese to their country's style of dress in coming to Chinese territory and while performing the *sangui jiukou*.²⁴¹ They explained that insisting on the *sangui jiukou* in audiences was an instance of “rites following what is fitting (*li cong yi* 禮從宜).” While this phrase suggests that there can be adjustment to the needs of the moment, they argued, it does not mean that the essential meaning of the rites could be ignored.

The envoys finally take the opportunity to turn the pragmatic argument of the Le on its head. Explicating the phrase, “praising the able and having compassion on the unable” (*jia shan er jin bu neng* 嘉善而矜不能), Chengwen and Deng Tingzhe told the Le officials that Annan will be praiseworthy if they sincerely perform the Qing rites and will be excused if there are imperfections in the performance. They suggested that the issue now was not that Annan was

²⁴¹ In his introduction of Zhang Xueli's *Shi Liuqiu ji*, 6, Harada Nobuo remarks on the Qing envoys' allowing the Ryukyuan to retain Ming-style dress.

unable to perform the Qing rite but that it was unwilling. On their part, the envoys said that they were willing to wait ten to twenty days if that was what it took to rehearse the ceremony.²⁴²

Although the envoys received Le assent to use the Qing rite after this exchange, a further challenge was made a couple of days later, on the day of the ceremony itself. On the way from the official embassy hostel to the royal citadel, the envoys were met by Le officials who reported an objection to the envoys: When the heir apparent assembled the court to rehearse the *sangui jiukou*, the Le ministers all insisted that it was true that the preceding Le kings had not performed the *sangui jiukou*.

The enraged envoys wrote a reply, drawing a parallel between loyalty to ruler and filial piety to parents. Notwithstanding records showing that the *sangui jiukou* was used during the 1683 embassy, the envoys said, to perform the Qing rites in obedience to the emperor would be to fulfill filial piety even supposing the Qing rites had not been used then.²⁴³

According to the Qing envoys, the Le officials were overjoyed with this answer, saying that they had been enlightened about the “essential meaning” and returned to the heir apparent with the envoys’ answer. The ceremony then proceeded.²⁴⁴

Despite the seeming closure of the debate over rites during the 1720 embassy, the issue would resurface at least two more times over the course of the Qing-Le relationship, in 1728 and 1761. In neither case were detailed accounts of the disputes preserved, but we are told that in both cases, the Le court insisted on the use of the *wubai* before acquiescing in performing the

²⁴² YZTPFZ, j50p20b-21b.

²⁴³ 幹蠱用馨光昭前烈...變通從宜克全忠孝之道. It is worth noting that Qing accounts of the 1761 embassy mention that the envoys cited the 1728 embassy as a precedent where the Qing rite had prevailed and had been used in the ceremonies, see *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, p.66 (QL27.3.jihai; 1762).

²⁴⁴ YZTPFZ, j50p21b.

sangui jiukou at the end of each embassy.²⁴⁵ Following the 1761 embassy, to prevent any further potential for misunderstanding or deviation, Qing emperor Qianlong instructed the Qing Ministry of Rites to notify the Annan king that the *sangui jiukou* should be used henceforth, which simply underlines how routine this dispute had become by that point.²⁴⁶ We cannot tell how effective Qianlong's measures were, since the 1761 embassy was the last routine embassy sent by the Qing to the Le court. The next time Qing representatives would deal with the Le in Thang Long would be under the threat of the armies of the Tay Son, as discussed in chapter seven.

Thus, a century after the Le and the Qing had established diplomatic relations, both courts continued to insist on their distinct rites. While the Qing court ultimately held the diplomatic upper hand and insisted that its sovereignty as expressed in rites prevail, debate over this issue with the Le court had become routine, a pattern reinforced as much by scholar-official legend as institutional forgetfulness.

The significance of the ritual debates

Ceremony was important for both the Le and the Qing courts. More specifically, it was important to Qing envoys and their interlocutors in the Le kingdom. While the exact function and meaning of the *wubai sankou* for the Le is unclear, by the late seventeenth century, it had undoubtedly become a central rite at the Le court and was important enough for the court and its literati representatives to insist upon it to certain lengths. As we have seen, there is some evidence, as found in texts such as the Le *Statutes* and Baron's account, that the rite was used to denote the highest respect in the kingdom, with the rite observed in use for the Le king, the Trinh

²⁴⁵ For the debates over rites in the 1728 mission involving Ren Lanzhi, see *QDZJCK*, v.107, p.696-97. Reference For Qing court discussion of the insistence by Qing envoys in the 1761 embassy on issues of rites, see *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, pp.65-68, excerpts from QL27.3.jihai (1762.3.30)-QL27.4.gengyin (1762.5.20).

²⁴⁶ *QSL SEA excerpts*, v.1, p.66-67 (QL27.4.yiyou).

lord, and in the veneration of Heaven. Complicating this picture is the possibility that the rite was adopted from the Ming, possibly even in the context of the Le-Ming détente discussed in chapter one. At the very least, it seems plausible to suggest that the rite became current at the Le court because it was widely used throughout the Sinic world of the Ming era or because of its historic association with fifteenth-century Le rule. Furthermore, we may speculate that the Le-Trinh regime would have understood the *wubai sankou* as the time-honored rite to be used in relations with the Northern Court.

The origins of the *sangui jiukou* of the Qing are likewise shrouded in obscurity, but there is no doubt that prior to the conquest of the Ming imperium, it had already become the most important rite of fealty in the Manchu state and would remain so through the existence of the Qing empire. In respect to my hypothesis that Qing relations with Annan, Choson, and Ryukyu (among others) were shaped by an understanding that the Qing had inherited the Ming tributary portfolio, the *sangui jiukou* created the potential for friction between the Qing court and the tributary courts of the Ming portfolio. In the case of Ryukyu's relations with China, which has been rightly described in many recent studies as a situation where Satsuma and Edo attempted to minimize friction in order to maintain this trade and intelligence portal, the Ryukyu court quickly exchanged the old rites for the new, with seemingly no dissent on the use of the *sangui jiukou*.

The approach taken by the Le court to the new rulers of China was quite different. The Le-Trinh situation was different than Ryukyu: it was not dominated by another state with significant baggage as far as relations with China were concerned. Paradoxically, it may be that Vietnam's tumultuous experience in dealing with the Ming, combined with a relatively forward policy in attempting to respond to Ming policy, made them more invested in the existing relationship with China (witness their support of the Southern Ming) and more tenacious in

dealing with the Qing. An additional difference was that the Le realm was far from the areas of strategic concern for the Qing. Western Guangxi, for example, paled in significance when compared with Inner Asia or the eastern seaboard.

Unlike Ryukyu, therefore, the Le court was confident enough to make an issue of the rites used in ceremonies conducted by Qing envoys. In theory, of course, the Qing and the Le were in a relationship of suzerainty, which neither side disputed. However, because of the centrality of the *wubai sankou* rite in the Le polity, this domestic rite intruded into diplomatic exchanges between the two courts. More specifically, as the Qing envoys were fond of pointing out, Le representatives were perfectly willing to perform the Qing rites during tributary missions, but it seems that in Qing embassies to the Le, the framework of suzerain relations collided with the framework of sovereign states, evident in the language of *guo* (state) and *wang* (king) on the part of the Qing and the internal ideology of the Le-Trinh *de-vuong* (emperor-king/prince) relationship on the part of the Vietnamese.

More specifically, it seems that the debates over ceremony owed their existence and persistence to the role of the envoys and their Le literati interlocutors. The envoys, as agents of the Qing emperor, and especially the non-bannermen envoys perhaps, faced high stakes. They were tasked, in effect, with persuading tributary states to accept the Manchus, from the periphery of the tributary system, as legitimate rulers of China. It is perhaps telling that all the accounts we have of these embassies are from the junior, Han envoy. As I have suggested above, the *sangui jiukou* would have been a particularly awkward problem for the envoys, seeing as it was the very rite that bound the envoys to their sovereign yet at the same time being glaringly incongruous with the Ming tributary system whose mantle the Qing was claiming.

The Le scholar-officials would have also had strong motivations to argue on behalf of their masters. Scholars-officials under the Le-Trinh regime had a circumscribed role in politics. The interlocutors of the Le-Qing diplomatic exchanges held advisory roles to the real power of the Trinh and other military families. Their success as officials depended in part on their performance on tributary missions and in dealing with Qing envoys, for the two roles were often performed by the same men, which is understandable given the specialized linguistic, diplomatic, and literary skills needed. Furthermore, Le scholar-officials also held to Confucian ideas of right and wrong, which had an influence in the realm of court ceremonial. This Confucian mindset contributed in part to an acceptance of sinocentrism but it also emboldened Le scholar-officials to raise the issue of ceremonial propriety against their suzerains in China, as we have seen in the example of Phung Khac Khoan in chapter one, bearing similarity to the stance that Chinese scholar-officials could take against their rulers in China, such as Fang Xiaoru's stand against the usurping Yongle emperor in the early fifteenth century.²⁴⁷

But beyond trying to explain the persistence of this diplomatic exchange or the motivations and circumstances involved, we should note that the debates evolved over time, suggesting that both sides relied on a more or less accurate sense of precedent to anticipate their interlocutors and prepare for the encounter. Li Xian'gen seems to have been surprised and unprepared for the Le request for the use of the *wubai sankou*, but both sides seemed to have anticipated an exchange by the 1683 mission that Zhou Can was part of. The 1720 mission involved such an extended debate that Qing envoys opened the first salvo as soon as they had crossed over the border, sending instructions about the ceremony onward to the Le court, while

²⁴⁷ Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 98-99. See also Ji, Xiuzhu, *Ming chu da ru Fang Xiaoru yanjiu* (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1991).

the Le continued to argue the issue even into the day of the ceremony. Moreover, both sides made claims based on precedent from earlier embassies. There were some constants, however. On the Qing side, the envoys invariably fell on the argument that, as vassals of the Qing, the Le had to follow the Qing rite. The Le side, on the other hand, frequently invoked the pragmatic argument—that it would save everyone time and hardship if the expedient of the Le rite was used—and the argument that, as the *wubai* was used for venerating Heaven, it would be adequate for a rite of fealty to the Qing.²⁴⁸

Conclusion

The Qing court sent multiple embassies to Annam during the 1660s to the 1760s. Most of these were what can be considered routine diplomatic missions, concerned with routine tributary matters such as the investiture of a new king and the offering of sacrifice to deceased rulers in the tributary kingdom. In this chapter, we have considered issues pertaining to routine elements of these Qing embassies, which, when considered in relation to the ideologies and structures of rule to the two states involved, reveal the ideologies of inter-state relations that governed diplomatic relations.

Le-Trinh rule in seventeenth and eighteenth century Vietnam was a complex matter that has not received as much attention as it deserves. While the actual political supremacy of the Trinh lord is clear in the views of contemporary observers and modern scholarship, the roles of Le kingship and scholar-officials have often been explained away as irrelevant. Rather than a simple ceremonial figurehead, I have argued here that Le kingship occupied an important ideological position in the Le-Trinh regime. The Le-Trinh was a dyarchy of the Le king and the

²⁴⁸ In this light, the Qing curiously come across as particularistic in contrast to a universalism implied in the *wubai*.

Trinh lord, which was expressed in the post-Qin imperial idiom of emperor (*de*) and prince (*vuong*).

This political relationship articulated with three distinct elements in Le-Trinh ideology. First, as expressed in the *DVSKTT*, the Le-Trinh state saw their relationship with China through the lens of political relativism. The compilers of the *DVSKTT* had no trouble accepting two parallel and distinct imperial structures in China and Vietnam while at the same time realistically acknowledging the power relations between the two and the resulting hierarchical diplomatic relations. Secondly, the ideology of Le kingship articulated with an ideology of vendetta against usurpers, specifically the Mac. Thirdly, the ideology of Le kingship articulated with a longstanding punitive campaign against rebel subjects, namely the Nguyen in Cochinchina.

In none of these dimensions was the ideology of Le kingship crafted as a diplomatic ruse to placate China. Qing envoys generally were aware of the complexity of the Le political structure and understood the need to deal with the Trinh lord.

The Le's counterpart, the Qing, was an equally complex polity. In addition to referring to well-known notions of the Qing state, such as "multiple constituencies" and "simultaneity," I have illustrated here a notion of imperial legacy, which I have called the Ming "portfolio," and more specifically, the Ming "tributary portfolio." As part of the conquest of the Ming imperium, the Qing inherited and assumed the suzerain role that the Ming occupied and the existing tributary relations.

The Ming became a measure of Qing performance in more ways than one. By the late seventeenth century, the Ming *Statutes* and precedents had become authoritative for the Le and became, implicitly, the basis for questioning and dissenting from Qing diplomacy.

During the seventeenth century, it could not be taken for granted that the Ming tributary states would acknowledge the new suzerain. Thus, the Qing had to position itself carefully in relation to the Ming legacy. On the one hand, this involved convincing the tributary states that, despite its “barbarian” origins, the Qing measured up to the Ming. On the other hand, it involved the Qing distinguishing itself from Ming practices and claiming superiority to their predecessor. These tensions between the Qing and the Ming “tributary portfolio” they had inherited can be seen in the Qing ideology of tribute and the *sangui jiukou*.

The Qing ideology of tribute posited a magnanimous Qing emperor who was sympathetic to tributary states. The Qing insisted on the demands of the Ming tributary system but was willing to waive these demands, thus creating opportunity for placing Qing suzerainty over that of the Ming.

The microhistorical approach of looking at embassy accounts to understand Le-Qing relations highlights the crucial role of envoys such as Zhou Can. Qing envoys had to rely on their instructions, their wits, and their patience as they proceeded as guests in a foreign land, where, in addition to the explicit tasks of the embassy, they were entrusted with the task of promoting a magnanimous image of the Qing suzerain.

But the Qing court’s reliance on these agents can be seen from another direction as one of the many limits to explicit or implicit Qing claims to universal rule. We have seen that, contrary to some notions of premodern territoriality, Qing embassies traveled along a route that was clearly demarcated and ruled by two separate polities. Qing protection and jurisdiction ended at the border gate.

Ritual, or ceremony, with the textual and legal authority that legitimated it, surprisingly also appears as a limit to imperial claims. Contrary to a picture of tributary relations where the

Northern Court held all the cards and ritual was merely a codification of power relations, ritual in Zhou's account becomes a point of contention between the representatives of the two courts. Moreover, while Qing envoys, such as those of the 1683 and the 1720 embassies, attempted to ground their disputation on textual and legal authority, these attempts were only partially successful. We have noted that Qing envoys appear to be ignorant or silent about the obvious basis of Le rites in the Ming Statutes, which is perhaps the surest indication that ritual and classical authority could present a limit to Qing imperial claims.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE BORDERLANDS: THE *TUSI* OF WESTERN GUANGXI AND *GAITU GUILIU*, 1600-1730

This chapter explores political change in the China-Vietnam borderlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In chapters 1 and 2, I showed how the China-Vietnam border had a dual nature: On the one hand, Chinese and Vietnamese territory was clearly demarcated at the envoy route that connected the two courts, and the representatives of each court sought to impose or defend the sovereignties of each state in the realms of diplomatic ceremony. On the other hand, local rulers called *tusi* held power in the areas along the border. In this chapter, I turn the focus toward these local rulers and political change in their domains.

A common binary in analysis of borders is the opposition between the border as a zone and the border as a line.²⁴⁹ The boundary and zonal aspects of borders very often coexist in all examples of borders. However, a common narrative about modern borders is that they are the result of a movement from a vaguely-defined zonal border to a clearly-demarcated boundary line. If the existence of a clearly-defined threshold of territory along the envoy route points to the linear quality of the China-Vietnam border, then the role of *tusi* suggests a simultaneous zonal dimension. In turn, *tusi* and the zonal dimension of the border leads to additional models and phenomena of borders, including frontier, buffer, and borderland.

Tusi are conventionally associated in Chinese historiography with the narrative of *gaitu guiliu*, “the conversion of hereditary domains into mainstream jurisdictions.” The *gaitu guiliu* narrative can be understood as a version of the transition from indirect to direct imperial rule or even straightforward imperial conquest. Some scholars have understood *tusi* as representing

²⁴⁹ See Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 4ff.

indigenous populations confronted with Chinese frontier expansion and eventual imperial conquest. While other studies of *tusi* have focused on questions of ethnicity, in this chapter I focus rather on imperial-local relations.

It is possible to date the transition from indirect to direct imperial rule on the Chinese side of the China-Vietnam border to the early eighteenth century. This period saw the disenfranchisement of a number of *tusi* domains in western Guangxi and the direct administration of these territories and populations. As a result, the Qing state increased its administrative presence near the border. This was significant for the history of the border, since this development would put the Qing state in a position to respond to a major political crisis in Vietnam in the 1740s (see chapter 4).

In this chapter, I will examine the process of transition from indirect to direct imperial rule through a case study of Siming prefecture. Siming was the most important *tusi* domain in southwest Guangxi and adjacent to the border. In the early 1730s, much of its territory became incorporated into direct imperial rule. I make two distinct but interrelated arguments here. First, I argue that, beyond the immediate causes in the 1730s, the long-term causes of Siming's political transition can be found in the seventeenth century. I do not claim that these seventeenth century events determined the later outcome, but I do suggest that they shaped the political context. Secondly, I argue for understanding *tusi* and these political transitions in the framework of empire. This contrasts with conventional interpretations of *tusi* as representing indigenous peoples in relation to Chinese frontier expansion. Rather, I see *tusi*, in the western Guangxi context, as imperial intermediaries and their relationship to other Ming imperial representatives as a relationship between different segments of an empire. The administrative, educational, and fiscal changes I will examine in seventeenth century Siming took place within the context of an

existing imperial polity. The Qing for the most part inherited the Ming imperial repertoire, and Siming's disenfranchisement in the 1730s represents as much an outworking of existing imperial logics as a novel, exogenous conquest of the frontier.

Early modern empires and intermediaries

Early modern empires were not simple structures of rulers and ruled. A vital element that defined empires and made them work were intermediaries. As the Persian term *shahhanshah*, "king of kings," suggests, emperors made claims of rule over other, lesser rulers. These intermediaries, rulers of realms in their own right, related to the various early modern empires in a variety of ways, determined in parts by the policies of the empire, the political landscape of their own realm, and by the choices and strategies employed by the actors in this empire-intermediary relationship. In some cases, intermediaries might give allegiance and have obligations to more than one empire. While it is customary to think of empires as vertically structured hierarchies, in a very important sense early modern empires were defined as much horizontally over space and segmented populations as it was through vertical chains of command. Early modern empires were networks of power, involving negotiation at practically every level between actors of asymmetrical status.

In relation to Qing emperor Yongzheng's reign (r.1723-35), a sizeable literature on imperial intermediaries in China's southwest has been produced, where historians have pointed to Yongzheng's policies as the historic turning point when these intermediaries were removed and replaced by the state's direct rule.²⁵⁰ The intermediaries that this literature speaks of, *tusi* 土

²⁵⁰ The *locus classicus* in English-language scholarship is the chapter on aboriginal chieftains in Pei Huang, *Autocracy at work: a study of the Yung-cheng period, 1723-35* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, for the International Affairs Center, 1974); 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, Conn.: Shoe String Press,

司, were historical products of the interaction between imperial expansion and local power in southwest China.²⁵¹ This region, through the Yuan, Ming, and Qing eras, was largely composed of *tusi* domains of various size, as well as areas that were under direct imperial rule. Many authors on *tusi* have cautioned against understanding *tusi* rule as a system, and have rightly pointed out that local and regional variations as well as the particular historical moment of each *tusi* office's creation defy any generalization of this institution.²⁵² From this point of view, historians must treat each *tusi* domain independently. However, earlier scholarship, largely by Chinese scholars, has treated *tusi* as an institution, with local variations, but largely generalizable.²⁵³

Tusi can be seen from the point of view of a *negotiated, bureaucratic style or repertoire*. All across the Southwest, and across the time of several centuries, the empire, and by extension the emperor's representatives, liaised with local power within the language and practices of bureaucracy. Thus, studying any given *tusi*, in addition to helping us understand its particular history, also sheds light on the parameters and possibilities of action across the *tusi* zone of the southwest.

Gaitu guiliu, "The incorporation of *tusi* domains into mainstream administration"

1954); Kent Clarke Smith, "Ch'ing policy and the development of Southwest China: Aspects of Ortai's governor-generalship, 1726-1731" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1970).

²⁵¹ This would be northern Zomia. For a discussion of the geographical concept of Zomia, see James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

²⁵² See, for example, C. Patterson Giersche, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 11.

²⁵³ Li Shiyu, *Qing dai tusi zhidu lun kao* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue cbs, 1998) is an example of this institutional approach, where *tusi* appear as a historical category with general applicability.

In the early eighteenth century, many *tusi* domains in the Chinese Southwest were disenfranchised and converted into mainstream jurisdictions of the Qing empire. This moment of change, often referred to as *gaitu guiliu*, “incorporation of *tusi* domains into mainstream administration,” and associated conventionally with the Yongzheng reign (1723-35) of the Qing dynasty, turns out to be less conclusive than is conventionally assumed.

Su Guanchang has compiled dates for *gaitu guiliu* of various *tusi* in Guangxi during the Qing period.²⁵⁴ Based on his list, *gaitu guiliu* in Guangxi can be periodized in the following way: 1) the Kangxi reign preceding the Three Feudatories rebellion (1673-81): Zhen’an prefecture (1663), Xilong *zhou* and Shanglin *zhangguansi* (1666); 2) the Kangxi reign after the Three Feudatories Rebellion and during the early Yongzheng reign: Tuoling *xian* (1689), Siming *zhou* (1719), and the demotion and split of Longzhou (1725); 3) Yongzheng reign after Yongzheng’s 1726 edict against *tusi*: Sicheng (1727), Guishun *zhou*, parts of Donglan *zhou*, Xialong (1729), Fengyi *zhou* (1732), and Siming prefecture (1732); 4) Qianlong reign: Xiao Zhen’an *tuxunjian* (1766); and 5) Guangxu reign and following: the remaining *tusi*. Thus, while a significant number of *tusi* were disenfranchised in the Yongzheng reign, such events happened both before and after this period, and *tusi* remained a feature of western Guangxi well into the late Qing period.

The origin of *gaitu guiliu* as a historiographical concept can be traced to Wei Yuan’s (1794-1856) *Shengwuji*, which describes and celebrates the taming of the Southwest by the Yongzheng emperor and the senior minister E’ertai. Recent scholarship has revised the conventional account in two ways, by attempting to tell history from the point of view of the *tusi*

²⁵⁴ Su Guancheng. “Qing dai Guangxi tuguang zhidu gailiu shu yi,” *Guangxi minzu yanjiu* 1990, 1: p. 45.

domains and by displacing the Yongzheng reign as the single, decisive moment of change in *tusi*-imperial relations.²⁵⁵

The Yongzheng reign remains, however, an important moment of change for many of the *tusi* domains in the Southwest. Most importantly for this dissertation, the changes summarized as *gaitu guiliu* during the Yongzheng reign made the imperial administration responsible for direct management of the border with Vietnam, in a way that it had not been before. As we have seen in the chapter on the 1597 Ming-Le détente, the border in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was largely subject to the administration and military might of the *tusi*, notwithstanding the coordinating role that imperial representatives such as Yang Yinqiu played at pivotal diplomatic moments.

The *gaitu guiliu* story of Siming in the Yongzheng reign can be easily told. In 1732, the Siming *tusi* applied to the provincial authorities for part of his domain to be incorporated into mainstream administration. This met with some resistance on the part of local headmen, but after some relatively minor efforts of persuasion and policing by the provincial authorities, a large part of the domain came under direct imperial rule.

There are a few unexpected and significant twists to this story, which suggests the ambiguity of this historical transition and provides a clue for understanding a longer trajectory of change. First, the empire initially intervened in the *tusi* domain on behalf of the hereditary official, Huang Guanzhu 黄觀珠, against a threat to local order. A group of bandits, operating from an area near the Annan border called the Four Zhai and Six Tuan, had terrorized the countryside for years. This lawlessness led finally to a large, and ultimately successful, imperial

²⁵⁵ John Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China's Colonization of Guizhou, 1200-1700* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007) is an example of both these trends.

campaign in 1731 to eradicate the bandits. Secondly, it was Huang Guanzhu who initiated the political transition to mainstream administration in 1732, claiming that he felt he did not have the ability to govern the territory effectively. Thirdly, at the end of the day, the *gaitu guiliu* of Siming in 1732 involved only a part of the territory of the former hereditary prefecture. The Huangs continued their existence as holders of a hereditary territorial office, albeit one diminished in size.

Moreover, the prefectural school of Siming, established in the early seventeenth century and rebuilt in the early 1700s after the destruction of war, was maintained in large measure on taxes collected from the Four Zhai and Six Tuan, the very same area that was plagued by the bandits. In the early 1700s, the area called the “Four Zhai and Six Tuan” had a tax obligation of 156 taels to be submitted annually, a sum earmarked for the expenses of the prefectural school. This sum was three times the total amount collected from other areas in the prefecture.²⁵⁶

This is not to say that the Four Zhai and Six Tuan area necessarily came under a heavier tax burden than the areas under the governance of the hereditary official, since these areas had other tax and service obligations due the hereditary official in addition to the tax amount collected for remitting to the provincial authorities, but it does open up the possibility of considering a different story of empire-*tusi* relations and the causes of *gaitu guiliu* in the Yongzheng era.

Rather than tell a story of imperial conquest in the Yongzheng reign, I would rather in this chapter focus on what seems to me the more interesting and instructive events of the early seventeenth century. I am going to tell the anomalous, alternative, and perhaps even exceptional

²⁵⁶ Gao Xionzheng, “Yi bing zhufang Siming yi (cheng Taiping fu),” in (*Yongzheng*) *Taipingfu zhi*, j38p14, Gugong zhenben congkang series, v.195 (Haikou: Hainan cbs, 2001), 243. Interestingly, this document did not get reprinted in Jin Gong’s Yongzheng-era provincial gazetteer of Guangxi.

story of Siming's transition from "indirect to direct rule." While some of the long term consequences of this story do not mature until the 1730s, as described above, I will focus here on the early seventeenth century because I believe it is at this time that we see the most important changes to local order in Siming. This story will involve local unrest as well as the fiscal and political consequences of a cultural program supported by imperial officials and the local elite. The long-term consequences of these events combined with the frontier activism of the 1720s and 30s to create a situation where the imperial administration, led by attentive and industrious Qing emperors, took up direct management of the border with Vietnam. As this statement suggests, there existed a bi-directional causal relationship between *gaitu guiliu* and the assumption of direct management of the border. But, first, an excursion into understanding how early modern Chinese empires related to *tusi*.

Nature and origins of *tusi* in late imperial China

Tusi were locally-based powerholders that could be found throughout the frontier Southwest of late imperial China. They were at the same time local rulers of relative autonomy and imperially-sanctioned state representatives.²⁵⁷ As much of what is known of *tusi* in late imperial times comes from Chinese sources representing imperial Chinese perspectives, this dual nature of the *tusi* means that it can sometimes be difficult to know how independent these powerholders were. *Tusi* could in reality represent anything between de facto independent polities and extensions of imperial territorial rule. Significantly, however, at least from the imperial Chinese point of view, these local rulers were not identified as kings or princes (*wang*)

²⁵⁷ Jennifer Took, *A Native Chieftaincy in Southwest China: Franchising a Tai Chieftaincy under the Tusi System of Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 66 emphasizes this Janus-faced characteristic of *tusi*.

and their territory was not recognized as a kingdom (*guo*).²⁵⁸ In the worldview of the Chinese court, therefore, *tusi* lay at one remove from the provinces, prefectures and counties that were administered by the imperial bureaucracy but in closer relationship to imperial rule than foreign countries (*guo*). *Tusi* were areas that the Chinese empire exercised partial power over, while foreign kingdoms, identified as *guo*, represented polities where there was sovereign rule by foreign potentates.

The origins of *tusi* as an imperial institution are typically traced to the thirteenth-century Mongol conquests of Dali and other non-Han kingdoms in what is now southwest China.²⁵⁹ However, this belies antecedents of the institution in earlier Chinese empires and the evolving nature of the institution as it waxed and waned in geographical scope and in terms of the nature of the relationship between *tusi* and the imperial court. The *tusi* institution has been linked to the “halter-and-bridle” policies of the Tang and Song dynasties, preceding the Mongols.²⁶⁰

In much of the English-language historiography on *tusi*, the term has been translated as “native official.” I do not fault this translation on linguistic grounds, but I prefer a translation of “hereditary official.” *Tusi* were not always indigenous to the area they ruled; or, at the very least, there was a wide range of purported origins and cultural affiliations among the families that held these posts. The common denominator and essential trait of these offices was that they were passed on from generation to generation within a local family instead of regularly appointed by

²⁵⁸ But, historically, certain geographic areas, peoples, or polities have shifted between the category of *guo* and *tusi*. Myanmar (Miandian), for example, had been understood as a *tusi* in Yuan and Ming times but had been accepted as a *guo* in Qing times.

²⁵⁹ See, for example, Herman, *Amid Clouds and Mist*, 11.

²⁶⁰ Lien-Sheng Yang, “Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order,” in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China’s Foreign Relations*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 31-33.

the central, imperial government. In this dissertation, for the most part, I identify *tusi* as “hereditary officials.”

Aspects of the *tusi* office

Leo Shin has described the Ming institution of *tusi* as an alliance of the Chinese empire with the native chieftains.²⁶¹ More accurately, the *tusi* institution should be understood as a *strategy or institution of alliance*, on the part of the empire. This alliance was not a relationship between equals but rather one between partners of unequal status. This relationship was renewed, in times of dynastic change, by the submission of seals of office to the new dynasty. The new dynasty issued new seals of office to mark the imperial transition.²⁶² The relationship of alliance between the empire and the *tusi*, in the Ming period at least, might be compared to the relationship of the Holy Roman Empire to its vassals in the European Middle Ages. As in the situation in medieval Europe, on the one hand, the Chinese empire held a position of legitimacy and authority over the *tusi*, undergird by political ideology, economic relations, and inter-court social relations; on the other hand, on occasion, the empire came into conflict with some individual *tusi* and attempted, with better or worse results, to achieve its will through military intervention, often involving, necessarily, joint operations with *tusi* forces that remained loyal to the empire.

While there were occasions when certain *tusi* gained enough resources, power, ambition, and prestige to potentially defy the empire and create an autonomous state, unifying some, if not

²⁶¹ Leo K. Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 56ff.

²⁶² Seals of office were not unique to the *tusi*. Mainstream imperial officials were entrusted with the seal of their office for their tenure. Rulers of tributary kingdoms likewise held seals of office from the imperial Chinese court. New dynasties often demanded the return of the seal issued by the previous dynasty in exchange for issuing a new seal. It seems to have been a general rule that seals were to be reissued if there was a transition in either the imperial dynasty, the status of the office, or the hereditary lineage that held the office.

all *tusi* in the area, historically this was rare.²⁶³ This was the case for several possible reasons: a) political culture: As Edmund Leach argued in his discussion of the *gumsa* and *gumlao* political orders of highland Myanmar and James Scott more recently in his postulation of a proto-anarchism among upland populations in Southeast Asia more generally, *tusi* may have preferred a distant overlord that allowed for local autonomy over a nearby state that subjected *tusi* to its demands;²⁶⁴ b) economic ties to the Chinese empire that could be threatened by the formation of an independent state (for example, exports of rare goods, such as medicinal herbs, etc.); c) identification of *tusi* with the empire—to the extent that *tusi* might have understood themselves as descendants of the Chinese conquest forces and as frontier representatives of the empire; d) cultural ties that might be threatened by rejection of imperial rule: these included the empire's sending of education officials to *tusi* domains, who often helped found and taught at Confucian schools, opportunities to send *tusi* heirs to the National University (*Guozijian*) in Beijing, and opportunities of poetry and other exchange with Chinese officials appointed to the province or within *tusi* domains. I have described the stakes involved in seeking an independent and unified state in western Guangxi in terms of direct relations with the empire, but there were additional, informal ties represented by Han/Chinese travelers, migrants and merchants in *tusi* domains.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ The Trung sisters in Han-era Jiaozhi (i.e. northern Vietnam) and Nong Zhigao in Song times were brief and abortive exceptions to this rule. These examples, however, underline the ultimate will and capacity of the Chinese empire to suppress these attempts. The tenth-century success of the Vietnamese in creating an independent kingdom, which remained independent from Chinese imperial rule for virtually all of its subsequent history, could shed light on why western Guangxi, in contrast, did not form an independent and unified state. See Keith Weller Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 37ff, for the Trung sisters and James Anderson, *The Rebel Den of Nung Tri Cao: Loyalty and Identity along the Sino-Vietnamese Frontier* (Seattle & Singapore: University of Washington Press & NUS Press, 2007) for Nong Zhigao.

²⁶⁴ Edmund R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1964); James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*.

²⁶⁵ I am assuming here that the typical scenario in *tusi* domains was the one that prevailed in much of Southeast Asia's history—frontier conditions of sparse population, placing value on labor over land, and resulting in some instances in various forms of bonded labor. These conditions would make *tusi* want to attract greater in-migration, to

Within this relationship between *tusi* and the empire, *tusi* were expected to participate in imperial campaigns against rebellious *tusi* and other threats in the Southwest and even in other parts of the empire. From descriptions of the behavior of *tusi* forces on campaign, it seems that there was a tacit understanding on the part of the empire that *tusi* forces could be rewarded through plunder. But *tusi* were rewarded for their role in campaigns in more formal, legitimate ways as well. Like imperial officials and military officers, *tusi* often had their rank increased and were given symbolic signs of favor and status, such as caps, sashes, as well as monetary and other gifts by the Chinese court.

Participation in imperial campaigns seems to have been the major duty of *tusi* in Ming times. In many cases, *tusi* in the Ming period also had quotas of tribute that were due the Chinese court. These could be any number of rare plants, horses, various animals, and other items. In the Ming and Qing periods, it is clear that *tusi* were obliged to pay assigned tax quotas to the provincial administration and hence to the empire.²⁶⁶

Tusi also had the duty of maintaining order in their domain. Unrest that threatened to spill beyond a *tusi* domain could be grounds for an imperial campaign to restore order and possibly to remove the negligent *tusi*, replacing him with another from his family, with another family, or to abolish the *tusi* office altogether and implement direct imperial rule. During the Ming period, there seems to have been relatively little formal or systematic effort to evaluate *tusi* performance in this respect, perhaps a reflection of the failure of the empire to consistently appoint imperial

the extent that the *tusi* could claim ownership or rights over the arable land in his domain and wanted to increase his income. However, the political costs of Han migration might have made *tusi* reluctant to admit migrants, and in any case, Han migration is only a possible factor for deterring independence, as migrants might join with *tusi* in wanting independence from imperial rule.

²⁶⁶ Leo Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State*, 72-73. Evidence of tax quotas for *tusi* domains in the Qing can be seen in the relevant sections in gazetteers such as *YZGXTZ* and *JQGXTZ*.

officials to fill assistant and supervisory posts in *tusi* domains. Censure and intervention were unsystematic and usually a response to a situation of *tusi* failure or disloyalty that had gotten out of hand.²⁶⁷ During the Qing, particularly evident during the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns, *tusi* were subject to a more systematic and strict evaluation of their governance. While maintaining social and political order within their domains remained an important criterion of *tusi* performance, the Qing emperors increasingly measured *tusi* performance in terms of not exploiting the subject peasant population in their domain.

Particularities of Guangxi as an imperial frontier and border area

Guangxi, considered as part of the Southwest, exhibited certain particularities. It became incorporated into the empire at a relatively early date. In fact, to the extent that it is customary to date the beginning of the Chinese empire to the third century BCE, Guangxi became part of the empire at its inception and represents the first wave of imperial expansion of a distinctly Chinese empire. However, unlike areas such as the Lower Yangzi delta, the Pearl River delta, or coastal Fujian, Guangxi remained throughout the late imperial period a remote and only partially integrated part of the empire. Many reasons could be cited for the persistence of peripherality, but one in particular can be highlighted here. Prior to the tenth century, the Chinese empire extended south of Guangxi to include parts of what eventually became Vietnam. Following Vietnam's independence from China in the tenth century, Guangxi became a border area. The rise of a political movement by a chieftain in the border area in the eleventh century who threatened to create a new state between China and Vietnam was eventually suppressed jointly by China and Vietnam. Cultural differences and logistical realities may have impeded the

²⁶⁷ However, it should be pointed out that the Ming did attempt to regulate *tusi* succession through requiring the compiling and submission of *tusi* genealogies, monitoring succession, and intervening in perceived breaches of rules of succession.

integration of Guangxi into the Chinese empire, but the border context played an important role in the persistence of *tusi* intermediaries.

Paradoxically, the border context may also have put some Guangxi *tusi* in a privileged position to take advantage of imperial culture and participate in imperial enterprises. Partially a legacy of this “truncated empire” after the tenth century,²⁶⁸ Guangxi’s territorial structure of imperial rule was divided into two core areas. Guilin, and later Wuzhou as well, lay on the eastern edge of the province and connected it to the rest of the network of imperial administrative nodes in the middle Yangzi region and Guangdong.²⁶⁹ Yong, or Nanning as it later came to be called, lay in the western half of the province. At the inception of empire in the third century BCE, Nanning had been created as an imperial node between Guilin and Guangzhou to the east and the flourishing society in the Red River delta in what is now northern Vietnam. Its role was to facilitate communication between these larger but distantly separated imperial nodes, as well as to maintain military control over the intervening territory. Nanning was thus an urban center of the commandery type as described by Paul Wheatley.²⁷⁰ For most of the imperial period, Nanning was a frontier outpost where collaboration and accommodation between settlers and representatives of the imperial state, on the one hand, and indigenous or local elites was necessary. Thus, in the western half of the province, where the majority of *tusi* were found, there

²⁶⁸ This recalls Wang Gungwu’s ‘lesser empire’ in reference to the Northern Song in “The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations with Its Neighbors,” in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 47ff.

²⁶⁹ Arguably, Guilin remained a relatively isolated outpost itself, as its communication to the nodes in the middle Yangzi had to overcome the watershed between Lingnan and the Yangzi river system. Wuzhou at least was proximate to the Pearl River delta and in fact developed as an imperial node because of its command of the West River system that fed into the delta. Thus, the grand coordinators of the Ming and the governors-general of the Qing were headquartered in Wuzhou and Zhaoqing respectively.

²⁷⁰ Paul Wheatley, *Nagara and Commandery: Origins of the Southeast Asia Urban Traditions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Committee on Geographical Studies, 1983).

developed a ‘middle ground’ or creole culture in which *tusi* had a long-standing and complexly integrated relationship with the empire.²⁷¹

Of course, such relations were not always cordial; Nanning after all was a military outpost. But even the military character of the region lent to the close relations between empire and *tusi*. While dismissed by some modern scholars as spurious, as early as the fifteenth century many of the *tusi* in Guangxi were claiming descent from imperial forces that came to the province to suppress the eleventh-century rebellion mentioned earlier.²⁷² Whether the family origins of *tusi* should be understood as indigenous or exogenous, it is clear that both *tusi* and imperial representatives understood *tusi* as part of imperial defense and war-making.

Regarding the ethnicity of Western Guangxi *tusi* rulers and the population in their domains, very little can be said with certainty. I am inclined to understand the population of Western Guangxi to be Tai-speakers of long residence in the area, but beyond that I hesitate to go. It is conventional in modern studies of *tusi* in the Ming and Qing to assume these rulers and their populations to be indigenous, distinct from the rest of the empire, and having a distinct ethnic identity that can be related to modern populations in the same area. While many recent studies have pioneered examinations of historical notions and practices of ethnicity in late imperial China, there are still far too many questions about this issue in general and how things developed in different parts of China. In Guangxi, the ethnic category of Zhuang (the current

²⁷¹ See Giersche, *Asian Borderlands*, 3-4, for discussion of the concept of “middle ground,” which he defines as “places of fluid cultural and economic exchange where acculturation and the creation of hybrid political institutions were contingent on local conditions.” A classic statement of the idea of “middle ground” is Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²⁷² Took, *A Native Chieftaincy*, 50-53, tends to think that these claims of descent were fictive and dated from the Qing period, but Xie Jin 解縉’s (1369-1415) epitaph for the early fifteenth-century Siming *tusi* Huang Hudu in Xie’s collected works already contains a claim to descent from the eleventh-century campaign forces; see Xie Jin, *Wenyi ji*, j14p5-6, in *Siku quanshu*, jibu biejilei, v.1236 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji cbs, 1987), 881.

ethnonym for the indigenous residents of this autonomous region) was reformulated in a new way in the twentieth century.²⁷³ The application of the term Zhuang in late imperial texts, for example, tended to refer to indigenous populations on the *east* side of the province, rather than the west side, where the majority of the *tusi* were located. A further complication is that *tusi* ruling families themselves claimed descent from immigrants from eastern China rather than as indigenous residents; these *tusi* families were likely bilingual and bicultural in the late imperial period.

During the Mongol Yuan dynasty and the early part of the Ming dynasty, roughly the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries, the *tusi* filled a role that could be described as armed frontier magnates, who played a significant role in border defense and in imperial campaigning, somewhat similar to that of Joseph Fletcher's "surrogate nomads," political and military leaders of non-nomadic societies whom nomad empires enlisted in their strategies of conquest and rule.²⁷⁴ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, these armed frontier magnates increasingly came to be understood as *tusi*, that is, native political leaders who were rooted in a particular locale and culturally different from Han Chinese. To a certain extent, this reflected a growing disarticulation of the *tusi* in their role as surrogate nomads with the changing nature of the Chinese empire in the seventeenth century. Put simply, the late Ming empire of the seventeenth century had shifted its attention to the eastern maritime zone, and the new dynasty of the Manchus had been forged in the northeast of the empire, arriving in south China with a fully formed military machine. In the early eighteenth century, the *tusi* of Guangxi were only partially and indirectly affected by the Yongzheng campaigns against *tusi* in the region more generally.

²⁷³ Katherine Palmer Kaup, *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000).

²⁷⁴ See Jos J.L. Gommans, *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and Highroads to Empire, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 2002).

With some important exceptions, the *tusi* of Guangxi remained a significant frontier ruling elite through the end of the eighteenth century.

Some of these *tusi*, moreover, such as Siming, which will be discussed in detail in this chapter, abutted the border with Vietnam and formed part of the designated route for envoys of China and Vietnam as they travelled between the two courts. In this capacity, as well as in the capacity of temporary headquarters for Chinese commanders in times of border conflicts, Siming played host to various imperial representatives and cultural figures.



Figure 4. Map of Siming prefecture. Wanli 27 Guangxi gazetteer.



Figure 5. 1886 Chinese map of Taiping Prefecture (inset). LOC. Note: Mingjiang and Ningming were formerly the Siming prefectural seat and Simingzhou respectively of Ming times.

The hereditary domain of Siming in the Ming era

Siming prefecture, or the “hereditary prefectural-level domain at Siming” (Siming *tufu*), was located at the southwest corner of Guangxi province. Siming lay at the border with Annan; the diplomatic route connecting Beijing and Thang Long ran through its territory. Its origins as a territorial entity in the Chinese empire can be documented as early as the Yuan dynasty (1279-

1368), although the Huang clan that held the hereditary office of prefect of Siming traced its origins to a more distant past. At its greatest extent, in Yuan and early Ming times, Siming prefecture presided over seven subordinate jurisdictions, a variety of hereditary domains designated in administrative nomenclature as *xian* and *zhou*. These included Shangsizhou 上思州 to the east, near the coastal range that separated Guangxi and Guangdong; Zhongzhou 忠州 to the north, lying on the road to the nearest mainstream prefecture, Taiping; the eponymous Simingzhou 思明州, across the Ming river and to the west; Pingxiangzhou 憑祥州²⁷⁵ to the southeast, where the Zhennan Gate was found, through which envoys and official diplomatic correspondence passed; Shangshixizhou 上石西州; Luzhou 祿州; and Xipingzhou 西平州. Over time, however, these subordinate domains gained autonomy from Siming and came under the supervision of the mainstream prefectures at Nanning and Taiping, and two were annexed to Annan.²⁷⁶ This diminution of Siming's territorial authority did not alter the superior size and resources of Siming's home territory compared to other hereditary domains in the region. Siming was undoubtedly the most extensive, influential and perhaps richest domain in southeastern Guangxi and, after Tianzhou to the northwest, was usually counted as the second greatest hereditary domain in the province.

Political authority in Siming was divided between the administration and power of the Huang clan who held the hereditary office of prefect of Siming, on the one hand, and representatives of the imperial government, on the other. At its greatest extent, imperial posts at Siming included: vice prefect (*tongzhi* 同知), assistant prefect (*tongpan* 通判), registrar (*jingli* 經

²⁷⁵ Earlier termed a county (*xian*), Pingxiang was later termed a *zhou* after it was annexed to the mainstream prefecture of Taiping.

²⁷⁶ See (*Yongzheng*) *Taipingfu zhi* (hereafter *YZTPFZ*), j33p11, Gugong zhenben congkang, v.195 (Haikou: Hainan cbs, 2001), 209.

歷), record keeper (*zhaomo* 照磨), administrative clerk (*zhishi* 知事), proofreader (*jianjiao* 檢校), and postal relay station master (*yicheng* 驛丞). In addition, as we will see later, the education post of instructor (*jiaoshou* 教授) was also added to the lineup.²⁷⁷ Not unlike the gradual territorial diminution of Siming prefecture, however, the number of imperial government posts in Siming also atrophied after their initial establishment at the beginning of the Ming dynasty.²⁷⁸ By the turn of the eighteenth century, and probably much earlier than that, there were only three remaining circulating posts in Siming: *tongzhi*, *jingli*, and *jiaoshou*.

The administration of the hereditary office exhibited a mixture of bureaucratic and patrimonial principles. At the center of power was the office of prefect of Siming, hereditarily held by men of the Huang clan.²⁷⁹ The prefect presided over his administration from his yamen in the prefectural city of Siming. He commanded a number of functionaries at his yamen and other locations in his domain.²⁸⁰ In addition, the prefect had the authority to call to arms a certain number of the men of the domain who participated in local defense, campaigns against other hereditary officials in the region, and at times in imperial campaigns.²⁸¹ In the immediate vicinity of the city walls and scattered across the domain lay a number of villages and fortified villages

²⁷⁷ See, for example, (*Kangxi*) *Simingfu zhi* (hereafter *KXSMFZ*), j3p1ff (Nanning: Guangxi Renmin cbs, 2011), 129.

²⁷⁸ This diminishment of the circulating posts in Siming may correlate with the diminishment of Siming's territorial authority. *KXSMFZ*, j3p1, 129, states: "later in the Ming era, the *tusi* domains were subordinated to Taiping prefecture and all these positions, except for that of *tongzhi* and *jingli*, were eliminated." This suggests that the posts that were eliminated were associated with the *tusi* domains that ceased to be subordinate to Siming prefecture.

²⁷⁹ Concerning the principles of succession for the Siming hereditary official, primogeniture seems irregular at best, but there does seem to be a preference for sons by the primary wife rather than by concubines. Also, note that the sources often refer to the *guan zu*, "the clan of the hereditary official," i.e. the Huangs, but it is not clear to me how the concept of *guan zu* relates to a possible practice of kinship that links the various Huang-held hereditary offices in western Guangxi.

²⁸⁰ *KXSMFZ*, j3p1, 129. These functionaries included: *menzi* (doormen), *jinzi*, *tulao* (jailors), *zaoli* (yamen runners), *shushou* (scribes), *guan xu* (masters of the market), *mafu* (grooms), and *shuifu* (boatmen).

²⁸¹ *KXSMFZ*, j3p1, 129 gives a regular quota of 200 soldiers and an additional quota of 400.

(*zhai*). Headmen from these settlements represented village interests, on the one hand, and carried out the orders of the prefect, on the other.

Beyond the formal structures of political authority, Siming's social landscape featured merchants, local gentry—defined here as individuals who had entered prefectural schools or had gained degrees in the imperial civil service examinations—and the occasional fortified village that practiced banditry. Local gentry seem to have largely come from headmen families, while merchants were most often sojourners from the neighboring provinces of Guangdong, Hunan, and Jiangxi.²⁸² The fortified villages of Denghengzhai and Anmazhai are examples of villages that resisted the established political authorities in the domain for extended periods of time.

Dual administration and fiscal arrangements in Siming

The dual administration of Siming arose from the fact that Siming lay within the Ming empire but was governed through a hereditary office held by a prominent local family. The imperial posts created there to be staffed by circulating officials were a means to maintain oversight, communication, and supervision by the imperial government. The historical circumstance that created this situation was the Ming conquest of the Yuan empire, although precedents from the Song and earlier dynasties undoubtedly shaped the institutions and choices available for the new dynasty.²⁸³

The ranking imperial official in Siming was the vice prefect (*tongzhi*). Charles Hucker's *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* gives several definitions for the term *tongzhi*. In all cases, a *tongzhi*, as the literal meaning suggests, was an assistant, associate, or secondary

²⁸² Merchants from Jiangxi appear often in documentation for this part of Guangxi as well as the Southwest more generally. Sometimes these sojourners practiced other trades, such as the geomancer from Jiangxi employed by Su Rideng, see *KXSMFZ*, j4p4ff “jianxue yuanyou,” 184ff.

²⁸³ The Huangs had held the office of *zongguan* of Siming circuit in the Yuan.

executive post in a given territorial jurisdiction. In this chapter I will use Hucker's suggested translation of "vice prefect" for *tongzhi*, but I will stress that this position was subordinate to the circulating prefect at the nearby mainstream prefecture of Taiping, not the hereditary prefect, i.e. *tusi*, at Siming. Hucker also points out that it could designate administrators detailed with specific functional duties.²⁸⁴ In addition to the general duties of oversight, communication and supervision of the hereditary official, therefore, it is not surprising to find that the *tongzhi* post at Siming was associated with a particular functional office as well. The office of the *tongzhi* was called the *qingjunting* 清軍廳 or, to use Hucker's translation, "troop-purifying office."²⁸⁵ Troop-purification offices were responsible for making sure the prescribed troop strength in a given area was maintained.²⁸⁶ The actual duties of the troop-purifying office in Siming is not described in the sources, but the presence of this functional office at Siming was undoubtedly due to the prefecture's military importance.

The circulating officials posted to Siming appear to have been directly subordinate to the nearby mainstream prefecture to the north, Taiping. It is perhaps not inappropriate to think of the circulating officials of Siming as liaisons for Taiping. At the beginning of the Ming, there was a neat division of expenses for the upkeep of the circulating officials: the empire—more specifically the provincial authorities, or perhaps Taiping—paid their salaries, while the

²⁸⁴ Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*, Taiwan edition (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1985), 553, entry no. 7471.

²⁸⁵ Here I have used "subprefecture" as a translation for *ting*, following the Qing usage (see Hucker, 511, entry no.6748). However, in the same entry, Hucker provides another, more general definition of *ting* as an office or bureau. It is possible that the Qing *ting* subprefectures evolved from Ming troop-purification offices.

²⁸⁶ Hucker, 174, no.1264.

hereditary official of Siming was responsible for supplying miscellaneous expenses such as kindling, horses, labor, and monthly food allowances (*chai ma yi shi* 柴馬役食).²⁸⁷

As we will see shortly, the territory of Siming domain came to be divided into two administrative and fiscal zones. An area that came to be known as the Four Zhai and Six Tuan, located across the Ming River near the border with Annan, was administered and taxed by the *qingjunting*, i.e. the circulating officials, while the rest of the domain was governed and taxed by the prefect.²⁸⁸ Among the productive lands governed by the hereditary official, an area called the Six Shao 六哨 was designated for providing the kindling and monthly food allowances that were due the circulating officials. This practice of designating particular productive areas for particular revenue and expense lines appears to have been common in hereditary domains, and certainly echoes early Ming practice more generally.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, the revenue from the Six Shao designated for the expense lines of the circulating officials included taxes on the butchering of oxen and the sale of poultry, as well as various grain quotas.²⁹⁰

The Lu You rebellion and its consequences

²⁸⁷ *KXSMFZ*, j3p1, 129 & j2p3aff, 95. By the early Qing, the salaries and some expenses of the circulating officials were paid as fixed amounts, stipulated in the *Fuyi quanshu*, collected from several nearby *tusi* domains, such as Longzhou, Guidezhou, Silingzhou, Luobaixian, Pingxiangzhou, Shangshixizhou, *KXSMFZ* j3p1ff, 129. This may have been the arrangement before the Qing, to the extent that the *Fuyi quanshu* was based on existing fiscal arrangement.

²⁸⁸ *KXSMFZ*, j2p2ff, 94. The source cited in the *KXSMFZ* for this information is “shangfuce”; possibly a reference to the Yellow Registrar tax document required to be submitted in the Ming. If so, it is possible that this division of administrative and fiscal zones existed in early Ming times.

²⁸⁹ See Took (2005) for documentation and discussion of this practice as it appeared in Anping domain. Heretofore, however, most scholars, including Took, have not associated this practice with revenues due circulating officials.

²⁹⁰ See the text of Huang Daiqian’s stele inscription, *SMFZ*j2p3ff; the terms used for these items are: *niupan* (“butchering of oxen”), *yashui/jiyashui* (“tax on chickens and ducks”), *daliang* (“large grain”), *siliang* (“private grain”), and *yuemi* (“monthly rice”). A tax on butchering oxen is also found, I believe, in Le-era Hanoi.

“In the *jiazhen* year of the Wanli reign [1604/05], headman Lu You, commanding four fortified villages and three villages, rebelled,” begins an account of “the Siming affair” in a seventeenth-century Guangxi gazetteer.²⁹¹ The uprising and its suppression are perhaps not particularly noteworthy, but the documentation that has been preserved reveals some of the social and political dynamics of Siming. Moreover, the reconstruction efforts after the uprising created arrangements that would have long-term consequences for Siming.

Lu You was a headman in Siming prefecture, possibly from the village of Anma, which lay on the other side of the Ming River, away from the prefectural city in the direction of the area that would come to be known as the Four Zhai and Six Tuan. In his capacity of headman, Lu would have had authority over the village of Anma and perhaps over additional settlements in the area. Certainly he wielded significant authority in Siming after he usurped the seal of the prefectural office, with which he was said to have used to command the loyalty of “the four *zhai* and three villages.”²⁹²

Lu You’s uprising was occasioned by his role in the machinations of inter-domainal politics. To the south of Siming prefecture, at the border with Annan, lay Silingzhou, a hereditary domain held by the Wei family. One of the headmen of the domain had been sentenced to death by the Wei hereditary official. This headman engaged Lu You to arrange a way to rescue him. Lu You thus went across the border to hire a hereditary official in Annan to forcibly evacuate the condemned Silingzhou headman. This operation was so successful that in

²⁹¹ (*Wanli*) *Guangxi tongzhi* (hereafter *WLGXTZ*), j39p51, *Ming dai fangzhi xuan*, no. 6-7, *Zhongguo shixue congshu*, v. 15 (Taipei: Taiwan Xuesheng shuju, 1965), 826.

²⁹² Upon the imminent failure of Lu You’s uprising, he fled to Anma village and committed suicide there, which suggests it was his home village; see *WLGXTZ*, j39p52ff, 826. Yang Fang’s memorial mentions that Siming prefect Huang Yinglei issued a prefectural seal to Lu You; see *WLGXTZ*, j39p46, 823 & *KXSMFZ*, j6p8, 283.

addition to rescuing and offering asylum to the Silingzhou headman, the Annan official also took captive the Silingzhou hereditary official and his seal of office.

This prompted a response from the Ming provincial authorities, who demanded that the Annan hereditary official hand over the offending Silingzhou headman, the Silingzhou official, and his seal of office. These were duly returned but Lu You remained at large within Siming prefecture and resisted arrest from a hill area that he and his followers had occupied. The provincial authorities sent a large force to apprehend Lu You and, after a bloody battle which involved the deaths of more than eleven hundred of Lu You's followers, the uprising came to an end.²⁹³

Consequences of the Lu You rebellion: a vice prefect regency

In the reconstruction carried out by the provincial authorities that followed, unsurprisingly, the blame was placed on the negligence of the Siming prefect for failing to restrain Lu You. However, this moment of local-imperial negotiation and collaboration also became the occasion for addressing a number of existing concerns. There were three main consequences of the Lu You uprising and its aftermath. These were a) assumption of the hereditary official's duties and authority by the circulating official during a period of regency; b) the establishment of a prefectural school at Siming; and c) the creation of a special tax and administrative zone in the "Four Zhai and Six Tuan" area of Siming.

The provincial authorities of Guangxi attributed the outbreak and escalation of Lu You's uprising to the negligence of the prefect of Siming, Huang Yinglei 黄应雷. He was faulted with failing to discipline Lu You and for abetting him by allowing him to make use of a prefectural seal of office. Huang's failure to keep order in his domain was punished by stripping him of his

²⁹³ WLGXTZ, j39p52, 826.

office and limiting him to the control and revenue of several settlements in Siming. While the provincial authorities had the option of disenfranchising the Huang clan's rulership of the domain, they chose to uphold the Huang clan and appoint the younger brother of Yinglei, Huang Yingpin, as the new hereditary official of the prefecture.

Huang Yingpin was only 7 years old, far below the stipulated 15 years that was required for administering the domain. Therefore the provincial authorities proposed that the circulating official, the vice prefect, administer Siming as regent until Yingpin came of age.²⁹⁴ Yingpin lived until he was at least 15 years old and was able to take charge of the seal and duties of office, but he died soon after, leaving an heir still in the womb, the future Siming prefect Huang Daiqian.²⁹⁵ This vice prefect regency, which extended through Daiqian's years as a minor, complicated the fiscal arrangements of Siming prefecture. As Daiqian later put it, the vice prefect's engrossment of revenue streams "disrupted the ancestral system (*zuzhi* 祖制)."²⁹⁶

The revenue in question was drawn from an area in Siming called the "Six Shao."²⁹⁷ It was from this area in Siming prefecture that the revenue designated for miscellaneous expenses of the circulating officials was drawn. In the fiscal arrangement that seems to have been established since the beginning of the Ming, the provincial authorities provided the salaries of the circulating officials while the hereditary official was responsible for providing such miscellaneous expenses as firewood, horses, corvee labor, and food allowances.

²⁹⁴ *WLGXTZ*, j39p46, 823 & *KXSMFZ*, j6p8, 238. By "years old," I mean age by Chinese reckoning, i.e. 1 years old at birth.

²⁹⁵ *KXSMFZ*, j2p3aff, 95.

²⁹⁶ *KXSMFZ*, j2p3aff, 95.

²⁹⁷ The six settlements that formed the Six Shao are named in Daiqian's stele text in *KXSMFZ*, j2p3aff, 95: Bojiang, Zhibei, Nalu, Shiba, Haiyuan, and Donglü.

At some point prior to the Lu You rebellion, the vice prefect had based himself in the Six Shao area, perhaps as an expediency in light of the revenue that was drawn from there.

Following the rebellion, the provincial authorities proposed, as part of their reconstruction program, to officially establish the vice prefect's yamen at the Six Shao; once the regency was completed and it would no longer be necessary for the vice prefect to preside over the hereditary official's yamen in the prefectural city, he could return to his own yamen in the Six Shao.²⁹⁸

Moreover, it seems that there had been a petition by the inhabitants of the Six Shao area to be incorporated into mainstream administration. Voluntary incorporation into mainstream administration was not unheard of in western Guangxi. A well-known frontier official and writer, Tian Rucheng, described a disputed area in this region that was given the opportunity to decide which administration they wished to be governed by. After holding a plebiscite, the area decided to place itself under the administration of the mainstream prefecture of Nanning.²⁹⁹

The provincial authorities rejected the petition by the Six Shao to be incorporated into mainstream administration. They reasoned that the petition was occasioned principally by the misgovernment of Huang Yinglei and could be remedied by the new administration of the succeeding hereditary official. More concretely, the provincial authorities were influenced by the argument made by the headmen and populace of Siming prefecture against incorporating the Six Shao area into mainstream administration. Apparently, the entirety—or at least a significant portion—of the annual tax payment of Siming prefecture was assessed and collected from the

²⁹⁸ Fourth item in reconstruction program, *WLGXTZ*, j39p46, 823 & *KXSMFZ*, j6p8, 238.

²⁹⁹ Tian Rucheng, "Si du ji lue," *WLGXTZ*, j39p8, 805; see also Zhongzhou entry in *WLGXTZ*, j32p8ff, 638 and Simingzhou entry in *WLGXTZ*, j32p40ff, 654.

Six Shao area. The representatives of Siming prefecture complained that if the prefecture was deprived of the tax revenue of the Six Shao, it would not be able to meet its tax obligations.³⁰⁰

During the vice prefect regency while Huang Yingpin and Huang Daiqian were minors, therefore, the Six Shao remained part of the domain of the hereditary official, provisionally administered by the vice prefect in the name of the hereditary official and continuing to provide the revenue for the miscellaneous expenses of the circulating officials. This was how it was to work in theory. In reality, however, according to Huang Daiqian, the circulating officials began annexing various revenues from the Six Shao for themselves. In 1635-36, Huang Daiqian erected a stele that served to publish a ruling he had obtained from the provincial authorities. A dispute had erupted between the hereditary official and the circulating officials already in 1610-11—possibly around the time Huang Yingpin came of age and took charge of the seal of office—when the provincial authorities made a ruling on the division of territories in Siming administered by the hereditary and circulating officials. This ruling gave the hereditary official the administrative and fiscal rights to the Six Shao.

According to the stele inscription, Huang Daiqian took charge of the seal of office in 1632-33 and came into conflict with the vice prefect, Liu Chaosheng, over various revenues collected from the Six Shao area. Liu would not relinquish certain revenues, claiming that these revenue accounts were for paying special salaries for circulating officials.³⁰¹ These revenues, according to Huang Daiqian, had been designated in the original fiscal system for paying the miscellaneous expenses of the circulating officials in the division of fiscal obligations between

³⁰⁰ Fifth item in reconstruction program, *WLGXTZ*, j39p48b, 824 & *KXSMFZ*, j6p10aff, 287.

³⁰¹ Liu is referring to *yanglian* money. Lands set aside in border jurisdictions to support imperial appointees during the Ming were called “integrity-supporting fields” (*yanglian tian*); personal communication from Richard von Glahn. Specifically, the revenues the Liu refused to relinquish were the butchering fee (*niupan*), the tax on chicken and ducks (*yashui/jiyashui*), the large crop (*daliang*), the private crop (*siliang*), and the monthly grain (*yuemi*)

the provincial authorities and the hereditary official. Since the hereditary official had already collected these taxes and fees to pay for the circulating officials' miscellaneous expenses, Liu was in effect double-dipping (*yi liang liang zheng* 一糧兩徵).

Because of Daiqian's resistance to this fiscal arrangement, Liu accused him of rebellion, robbery, and driving away an appointed official. The vice prefect enlisted the support of the local *shengyuan* students and proposed to relocate the office that he commanded, the *qingjunting*, to the Six Shao area.³⁰² This standoff between the hereditary official and circulating official was eventually resolved in Daiqian's favor. As portrayed in Daiqian's inscription, Liu Chaosheng's actions provoked unrest amongst the populace and soldiers and nearly led to catastrophe. More concretely, Daiqian made a request to the provincial authorities to publish the provincial authorities' ruling (*ti ding cheng an*) of 1610-11 to settle the matter and preclude any future disputes between the hereditary and circulating officials. The provincial authorities ordered an investigation into the petitions and accusations made by Liu and the *shengyuan* students; the provincial authorities then ruled that the office of the *qingjunting* would not be relocated to the Six Shao, and the associated revenue accounts would be returned to the hereditary official. Finally, Liu was removed from office, and the prefect of Taiping took provisional charge of the affairs of the *qingjunting*.³⁰³

The Lu You rebellion, therefore, occasioned a shift in the balance of power between the hereditary official and the circulating official in Siming. This shift proved to be temporary, however, when the hereditary official was able to successfully assert his claims to fiscal and

³⁰² Apparently, the proposal in the post-Lu You reconstruction program to relocate the *tongzhi* to the Six Shao area had not been put into effect, see *WLGXTZ*, j39p48a, 824 and *KXSMFZ*, j6p10a, 287.

³⁰³ *KXSMFZ*, j2p3aff, 95.

administrative power by framing them in terms of an established system (“the ancestral system”), an appeal not unfamiliar in the Ming polity, thus gaining the support of the provincial authorities against the claims of a circulating official and his *shengyuan* associates. This episode illustrates the conflicting fiscal pressures on areas like Siming that were under dual administration. Also, the role of *shengyuan* students in this dispute shows how local elites in a hereditary domain like Siming could put their support behind the empire.

Consequences of the Lu You rebellion, continued: establishment of a prefectural school

Despite ranking as a prefecture, Siming did not acquire a prefectural school until the early seventeenth century. Proposals for establishing such a school had been circulating for some time earlier, but it was the Lu You rebellion and the reconstruction effort following it that gave an added urgency to these designs.

Siming was not without its traditions of education, however. Huang Guangcheng 黃廣成, a hereditary official of Siming in the early Ming, was said to have established an academy (*shuyuan*) that a famous Ming scholar and official, Xie Jin, had visited.³⁰⁴ Beyond the family of the hereditary official, moreover, there seems to have been a practice by the prominent families in the prefecture of hiring learned men to teach their young men.³⁰⁵ At the beginning of the sixteenth century, in the Jiajing reign, there had been separate requests from local gentry and the circulating officials to establish a community school (*shexue*). Despite creating a couple of education (*jiaoxun*) and ritual (*xiangyinsizheng*) posts, it appears that a community school had not been established before the Lu You rebellion.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ See, for example, *KXSMFZ*, j4p2a, 179.

³⁰⁵ *KXSMFZ*, j4p3a, 181.

³⁰⁶ *KXSMFZ*, j4p3b-4a, 182-83.

During Huang Chengzu's tenure as prefect of Siming, at least one petition for establishing a prefectural school had been made by Chengzu to the provincial authorities. Chengzu was Siming *tusi* during the Le-Ming détente (see chapter 1) and was the father of Huang Yinglei and Huang Yingpin. Chengzu was an enterprising and successful hereditary official who showed a particular interest in promoting Confucian education in the prefecture, as attested by two texts attributed to him and his mother exhorting members of the Huang clan to study.³⁰⁷

The Siming prefect may have also been influenced by prominent local families to push for the establishment of a prefectural school. Before acquiring a school of their own, *shengyuan* students had been studying at the prefectural school in Taiping. There were reports of harassment of the Siming students by the Taiping students, in part because of competition over a limited quota of stipendary student positions at Taiping.³⁰⁸

In 1585, Huang Chengzu, acting in concert with the vice prefect, petitioned the vice education commissioner of Guangxi for permission to establish a prefectural school for Siming.³⁰⁹ Chengzu proposed to site the new school in Shangshixizhou, a jurisdiction that was administered by a circulating official who nonetheless answered to the hereditary prefect of Siming.³¹⁰ As this area was already administered by a circulating official, it would be a suitable place for circulating officials to conduct examinations of students. Thus, Chengzu proposed to

³⁰⁷ Huang Chengzu, "Jiao zidi du shu"/"Xun du" and Huang mother text in *KXSMFZ*, j6p50aff, 367ff & *YZTPFZ*, j41p31ff, 294ff.

³⁰⁸ *KXSMFZ*, j4p6a-7a, 187-89.

³⁰⁹ Date of Chengzu's proposal stated in *KXSMFZ*, j4p7a, 189; Huang Shijun mentions his involvement in such a petition but does not provide a date, see his "Simingfu jian xue ji," dated WL37 (1609/10), in *KXSMFZ*, j6p15, 291 and *YZTPFZ*, j40p12, 266.

³¹⁰ The editors of *WLGXTZ* regarded the subordination of a circulating official to a hereditary official an anomaly, see Shangshixizhou entry in *WLGXTZ*, j32p54, 661.

eliminate the existing post there and create a new circulating post of education official. He offered to designate the rent collected from prefecture-owned lands in Shangshixizhou to pay for certain ritual expenses at the school and to take responsibility for providing the students' stipends.³¹¹

This proposal was rejected, however, on account of there being too few *shengyuan* students in Siming to justify the enterprise. There were a mere four or five students from the prefecture itself and none from any of the subordinate jurisdictions. These students, therefore, continued to board and study at Taiping.³¹² An additional reason for rejecting this proposal may have been the location of the proposed school. Although it had the advantage of being already under mainstream administration, Shangshixizhou was at a significant distance, eighty *li*, away from the prefectural seat. Moreover, this remote area was sparsely populated, making it a hardship post and unlikely to attract candidates.³¹³

Reconstruction after the Lu You rebellion gave occasion for another proposal—successful this time—for establishing a prefectural school in Siming. Several texts exist that illustrate the process of proposing and implementing the establishment of the school, which suggest somewhat different agendas among the actors involved. These include a proposal made by Siming vice prefect Su Rideng 蘇日登 that quoted petitions made by Siming *shengyuan* students, as well as a memorial by the provincial authorities, which references Su's proposal, and an account of the establishment of the school upon its completion in 1609-10.

³¹¹ *KXSMFZ*, j4p6a & p9b, 187 & 194.

³¹² *KXSMFZ*, j4p6a, 187.

³¹³ *KXSMFZ*, j4p9b, 194.

Although the establishment of a prefectural school was eventually integrated into a program of reconstruction, designed to prevent the repeat of rebellion, the earliest impetus for it seems to have originated with the *shengyuan* students of Siming. Following the suppression of Lu You's rebellion, Su Rideng received two separate petitions calling for the establishment of a new prefectural school at Siming. A group of *shengyuan* students from Siming prefecture submitted such a petition. They gave two reasons in support of their proposal, firstly that the students of Siming were obstructed from studying at Taiping and secondly, that a poor state of cultural development was to blame for the outbreak of Lu You's rebellion. They cited, moreover, Huang Chengzu's earlier proposal in support of this enterprise.³¹⁴

A second petition was submitted soon after by *shengyuan* students from Simingzhou, a jurisdiction subordinate to Siming prefecture. Like the petitioners from the prefecture, these students had been forced to study at the existing school in Taiping. Likewise, they argued that a lack of educational opportunities in the area was part of the circumstances that led to the occurrence of Lu You's rebellion. As precedent for establishing a prefectural school in a hereditary domain, they cited the imperial Ming statutes that stipulated that schools should be established in each prefecture, subprefecture, and county.³¹⁵ A complication particular to Siming was also addressed in this petition. Simingzhou was nominally subordinate to Siming prefecture—the family that held the office of hereditary official at Simingzhou shared common ancestry with the Huangs who held the office of prefect—but at least since the time of Huang Chengzu, the two domains had come into conflict over disputed territory. The petitioners from Simingzhou acknowledged this conflict and the resulting estrangement of Simingzhou from

³¹⁴ *KXSMFZ*, j4p4a-b, 183-84.

³¹⁵ Su Rideng cites two precedents of establishing schools in hereditary domains in Yunnan, namely at Yuanjiang and Menghua, see *KXSMFZ*, j4p8a, 191.

Simingfu, but emphasized the close connection between the two domains (*yi mai qin zhi* 一脈親枝). They probably feared being left out of potential educational opportunities as they made a specific request that students from both domains should be eligible for study at the proposed school.³¹⁶

Following these petitions, and in concert with the wider program of reconstruction, Su Rideng submitted a proposal to the provincial authorities for establishing a prefectural school at Siming. In light of support from the local elite, as demonstrated by Huang Chengzu's plan and petitions from local students, it is perhaps not surprising that Su Rideng's proposal framed the issue as a question of financing rather than a political problem. The first matter to be addressed was the selection of a site and the construction of the school complex. Rejecting Shangshixizhou as an option, Su Rideng chose to site the school at a location within the prefectural city walls, following the advice of a geomancer.³¹⁷ Observing that the site lay in a well-wooded area, Su Rideng estimated that 300 taels of silver would be sufficient for wages for the necessary workmen, the raw materials being readily available. The provincial authorities, however, expressed some doubt at this estimate and requested that Su Rideng consult the local headmen and *shengyuan* students for a second opinion.³¹⁸ Accordingly, after consultation, Su Rideng increased the estimated cost of construction to approximately 429 taels.³¹⁹

³¹⁶ *KXSMFZ*, j4p4b-5b, 184-86.

³¹⁷ *KXSMFZ*, j4p9b, 194;.

³¹⁸ The provincial authorities seemed to be concerned that the building would not be dignified enough if its scope was limited by a stingy budget. Su Rideng lists itemized amounts for the costs of the construction after his consultation with the headmen and *shengyuan*, *KXSMFZ*, j4p10a, 195.

³¹⁹ *KXSMFZ*, j4p10a, 195; for some comparison, the construction costs of the *qingjunting tongzhi* yamen once proposed for the Six Shao area were estimated at 400 gold (*WLGXTZ*, j39p48a, 824 and *KXSMFZ*, j6p8, 238).

Su Rideng further proposed to establish the post of prefectural school instructor (*jiaoshou*) at the new school, with annual expenses and salary totaling eighty taels, which included the salaries of seven functionaries, each receiving six taels each year. In addition, he proposed to establish a quota of ten stipendary students (*linsheng*),³²⁰ each receiving an annual stipend of six taels, and an annual amount of thirty taels for spring and autumn sacrifices and the monthly candles. Furthermore, Su Rideng observed that when the posts of circulating official posts in Simingu were vacant, the funds allocated for their salaries and expenses remained in the prefecture rather than being forwarded to a higher administrative level. He proposed to designate these sums and any unused *linsheng* stipends as a fund for covering miscellaneous expenses of the school. This fund could also be used to cover the travel expenses of *gongsheng* students going to the imperial capital for examinations.³²¹ As an incentive to attract candidates to fill the post of instructor, Su Rideng proposed to grant some of the lands confiscated from Lu You to the new school, find tenants for the land, and designate the rents as a supplementary income for the education official.³²²

These proposals were approved by the provincial authorities, although it took some time for their implementation, the school being completed in 1609-10 under the direction of a later vice prefect.³²³ One further political, or social, issue that Su Rideng addressed should be mentioned here. Reflecting the sentiment expressed by all parties—the hereditary official, the

³²⁰ Su Rideng claims that this followed the precedent of Zuozhou and Yanglizhou, two former hereditary domains that had come under the mainstream administration of Taiping prefecture, *KXSMFZ*, j4p11b, 198.

³²¹ *KXSMFZ*, j4p11b, 198.

³²² *KXSMFZ*, j4p16a-b, 207-08; Su Rideng claims, somewhat inexplicably, that it had been difficult to find buyers for the confiscated lands; some had been sold, but a significant amount remained.

³²³ *KXSMFZ*, j6p12a-13a, 291-93, and *YZTPFZ*, j40p12, 266.

circulating official, the provincial authorities, and the local gentry—that education or cultural development was not sufficiently valued in Siming, Su Rideng proposed to put the new education post under the command of the circulating vice prefect rather than the hereditary prefect. Lacking a formal relationship of subordination or command, the education official and the hereditary official would relate as peers, according to the ritual relationship of guest and host (*bin zhu* 賓主). Moreover, the vice prefect recommended that the heir apparent of the hereditary official should be required to attend the school. These proposals, approved by the provincial authorities, were intended to elevate the value of education in the eyes of the populace of Siming, but they also appear to have been intended to insulate the education official from the hereditary official's control.³²⁴

The project of establishing a prefectural school at Siming illustrates that this kind of cultural program had broad support among many parties in Siming, including the hereditary official, the circulating official, the provincial authorities, and part of the local elite, represented by the *shengyuan* students. At the same time, these different parties had several distinct purposes for supporting the establishment of the school, ranging from the provincial authorities' concern for local order to local elites' desire for greater opportunities for advancement within the empire through the educational and examination systems.

Consequences of the Lu You Rebellion: incorporation of the Four Zhai and Six Tuan area

A third consequence of the Lu You rebellion was the incorporation of an area in Siming prefecture into the mainstream administration. In the southwestern part of the hereditary domain, across the Ming River and near the hills at the border with Annan lay an area called “the Four Zhai and the Six Tuan 四寨六團.” Prior to the Lu You rebellion, Siming prefecture and

³²⁴ *KXSMFZ*, j4p16aff, 207ff.

Simingzhou had been in dispute with each other over the administration of this area, which lay between their respective territories. It appears that, in addition to violent conflict that cost the lives of nearly seven hundred people, the dispute led to multiple petitions and memorials. Finally, the provincial authorities ruled that the area would be administered exclusively by the circulating officials of the *qingjunting* in Siming.³²⁵

Before this proposal was put into effect, the Lu You rebellion broke out and the area's incorporation into mainstream administration was put on hold. During the uprising, Lu You had occupied the area, making it impossible for the circulating officials to administer it and collect taxes.³²⁶ Following the suppression of the uprising, the vice prefect Su Rideng learned from the Siming headmen and *shengyuan* students that the Four Zhai and Six Tuan area had previously been a significant source of revenue to the hereditary officials, estimated at not less than a silver tael per registered male (*ding*).³²⁷

In his proposal to the provincial authorities for the establishment of a prefectural school for Siming, Su Rideng connected the incorporation of the area with the fiscal foundations of the school. He proposed that the Siming hereditary prefect should only be allowed to enlist the labor of the area for local defense and in times of campaign. Otherwise, the area should pay the commuted service amounts “in the manner of areas administered by Han officials,” according to

³²⁵ *KXSMFZ*, j4p12bff, 292ff; Lin Mengding claims that the area had been put under mainstream administration in WL23 (1595/96), which may reflect the decision of the provincial authorities to place the area under mainstream administration, but perhaps not the actual implementation of the decision, see *KXSMFZ*, j6p15a, 297 and *YZTPFZ*, j40p14, 267.

³²⁶ It is not clear exactly what Lu You's relationship was to the Four Zhai and Six Tuan, although it seems likely that there was one. Yang Fang claims that Lu You had control of “four zhai and three villages” (*WLGXTZ*, j39p51, 826), and it would make sense that Lu You would enlist the support of an area that had previously been disputed between Simingfu and Simingzhou.

³²⁷ It is not clear what revenue this is exactly, but the text suggests that it refers to miscellaneous taxes or levies collected by the hereditary official, much like the butchering fee and taxes on poultry collected on the Six Shao area.

the “single whip method,” with each registered male contributing annually 4 to 5 *qian*. Su thought this would be welcomed by the people in the Four Zhai and Six Tuan, suggesting that he thought the rate significantly cheaper than the one administered by the hereditary official. Su estimated, even taking into account the destruction during the Lu You rebellion, that over three hundred taels worth of taxes could be collected from this area. He proposed that the amount collected during the first year after incorporation be designated for the costs of constructing the proposed prefectural school, with the sums from following years used to pay the salary and stipends of the education official and the students, wages for functionaries, and other expenses. Any amount left over could then be used for standard expenses of the vice prefect or reported and assigned for other purposes.³²⁸

As we saw earlier, the construction of the prefectural school was not completed until several years later, under the leadership of a later vice prefect, Zhu Mingshi, and not with funds drawn from taxes collected from the Four Zhai and Six Tuan. According to Lin Mengding, another later vice prefect at Simingfu, a surcharge of 4 *qian* on each *fen* of land was assessed on the Four Zhai and Six Tuan area, in lieu of the military service and corvee previously demanded by the hereditary official, which had been waived after the area’s incorporation into mainstream administration. Contrary to Su Rideng’s expectation, the populace of the area continued the tax resistance they had shown to the hereditary officials. Finally, Lin Mengding lowered the surcharge to 3 *qian*, which satisfied the residents of the area.³²⁹ This, however, was after the construction of the prefectural school had been completed with other funds.

³²⁸ *KXSMFZ*, j4p12bff, 292ff.

³²⁹ *KXSMFZ*, j6p15a, 297 and *YZTPFZ*, j40p14b, 267; the text is dated to WL43 (1615/16), but Lin seems to suggest in the text that the change of the surcharge took place in WL41 (1613/14), eight years after the initial assessment in WL33 (1605/06).

The Four Zhai and Six Tuan area was an area with a complicated history. It had been an area of dispute between hereditary domains and had shown a willingness to contest taxation. The reconstruction program of Siming following the Lu You rebellion included the establishment of a new school, which was supported fiscally through taxes collected from the Four Zhai and Six Tuan area.

Epilogue

In the early 1700s, banditry was a serious problem in Siming 思明 prefecture, a jurisdiction on the Guangxi-Vietnam border. In particular, the settlement of Denghengzhai in the area called the “Four Zhai and Six Tuan”³³⁰ became notorious for its predatory activities. By 1730, the provincial authorities had grown tired of admonishing the bandits and acted in force. After a bloody campaign that took over half a year to complete, the imperial forces razed much of the settlement, killed or captured a large number of bandits, and arrested the remaining population of the settlement. Denghengzhai does not appear in the late nineteenth century gazetteer of the area.³³¹

Following the destruction of Denghengzhai, the hereditary prefect of Siming, Huang Guanzhu, petitioned the provincial authorities to allow him to cede part of the prefecture to mainstream administration, claiming he was incapable of keeping order throughout his domain. When word leaked out, the headmen and villagers of Siming stormed the offices of the hereditary prefect and demanded that their villages not be ceded to mainstream administration.

³³⁰ According to Kong Yuxun, the four *zhai* were Dengheng, Anma, Nalian, Leipeng; see , Kong, YZ5.11.16, in *Yongzheng chao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian*, v.11, 35, no. 26. This is different than the traditional four *zhai*, which included Gulian instead of Anma; Gulian in fact had suffered robbery by Dengheng, according to Kong in the same memorial.

³³¹ (Qing Guangxu reign) *Ningmingzhou zhi*, in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* series (South China, no. 123), (Taipei: Chengwen, 1970), 54ff.

Huang Guanzhu and his wife barely escaped the mob with their lives, while the imperial officials in Siming sent urgent word for reinforcements. Soon, additional imperial officials came to reason with the mob, representing the transition as something in the interests of the villagers. Soldiers deployed from the nearby imperial military base emphasized the consequences of continued resistance and quickly hunted down the ringleaders and instigators of the mob. After the villagers were calmed and returned to their villages, the provincial government completed the political transition, placing the former prefectural headquarters of Siming, Mingjiang, under the jurisdiction of the nearby mainstream jurisdiction, Ningmingzhou. Huang Guanzhu and his descendants continued to hold the position of hereditary official of Siming (now demoted from a prefecture to a *zhou*) but only retained political authority and fiscal rights over a zone of villages on the eastern side of the former prefectural territory.

Conclusion

There was a wide range of relationships of collaboration, negotiation, and conflict between hereditary officials and the circulating officials. Moreover, as in the case of Huang Daiqian, the provincial authorities at times sided with the hereditary officials against the circulating bureaucracy. More broadly, the case of Siming stands as a reminder that it is important to distinguish carefully between questions of ethnicity, the *tusi* institution, and political change in trying to understand the history of Southwest China.

The other conclusion I would like to emphasize is the historical depth of political change in *tusi* domains. Studies of *tusi* have largely moved away from the idea that *tusi* were done away with entirely in the 1720s and 30s as a result of the ruthless policies of E'ertai and the Yongzheng emperor. There have been studies of *tusi* and *gaitu guiliu* in the Ming and with different chronologies for the Qing. However, there remains a tendency to think of change in the

tusi areas as a result of intentional political action in a relatively short period of time. There were a series of events in the 1720s and 1730s in Siming that resulted in a significant change to the political landscape of Siming. But as I hope I have demonstrated in this chapter, the roots of the tensions that animated those changes can be traced back to the early seventeenth century.

This suggests not only that we need to consider a longer time frame in understanding change in *tusi* domains but more specifically that we need to reconsider how we model or contextualize the politics of these areas. *Tusi* such as Siming in the sixteenth and seventeenth century were very much part of the Chinese empire, and political change could take the form of internal adjustment within an existing *tusi*-imperial relationship. Significantly, impetus for change could come from local elites such as headmen and *shengyuan* and could be centered around institutions such as prefectural schools, which represented both a shared imperial culture and a means of advancement within the imperial system.

The *gaitu guiliu* transition of Siming prefecture in the early 1730s made possible a much more direct and close administration of the border with Vietnam in this part of Guangxi. As we will see in the chapter on the border crisis of the 1740s, Ningmingzhou, Mingjiang, and the Youcun pass figured importantly in economic management and strategic concerns of the border by the Qing court. The two former locales were in fact the renamed reincarnations of Simingzhou and Siming prefecture, which we have been introduced to in this chapter. While there is relatively little in the sources of the seventeenth century that tell us of the state of trade, migration, and local cross-border politics in this part of the border, it seems probable that these phenomena did not appear overnight following *gaitu guiliu* in the 1730s. Political unrest in the 1740s in Vietnam disrupted many of these patterns of life in the borderlands and coincided with

the new presence of Qing provincial administration at the border. This presented one of the first major challenges of Qing intelligence and administration of the border.

CHAPTER 4

BORDER AS DIPLOMACY AND GOVERNANCE: QING RESPONSES TO THE ANNAN CRISIS OF THE 1740S

The 1740s saw the conjuncture of two developments at the China-Vietnam border: A political crisis erupted in Annan as the Trinh lord and the Le king were caught up in a power-struggle and rebellion broke out across the kingdom. At the same time, following the incorporation of Siming prefecture in the 1730s, the Qing provincial authorities found themselves directly responsible for the law and order of the border with Annan.

The early years of the eighteenth century were a time of peace and prosperity in Le Vietnam, particularly under the leadership and reforms of the Trinh lord Cuong in the 1710s and 1720s. Cuong's son, Giang, however, did much to undermine the trust and legitimacy of the Le-Trinh court during his years as Trinh lord in the 1730s. In addition to Giang's alienation of the Le royal family and his blatant favoritism at court, the Le kingdom also suffered from an agrarian crisis. By the end of the 1730s, dissatisfaction grew at the capital to the point that Giang's own brother Doanh successfully launched a coup and took Giang's place as Trinh lord. Doanh was successful at consolidating his rule at the center of the Le-Trinh state but it took much of the 1740s for Doanh's forces to subdue several rebel movements in various parts of the Red River Valley. By the 1750s, the Le-Trinh regime had reestablished its rule over the kingdom and would remain in power until the late 1780s.³³²

Political crises in Annan were not unknown to the Chinese court. In fact, more than once the Chinese court had considered the state of this tributary kingdom and asked what, if any, response was necessary or appropriate. To name two, the Ming court had intervened and

³³² K.W. Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 343-60.

colonized Annan in the early fifteenth century and had threatened intervention in the middle of the sixteenth century. Under the Ming tributary framework, it was the suzerain's responsibility to protect and uphold the legitimate rule of a vassal dynasty. In both previously named incidents, the Ming ostensibly was reacting to the usurpation of the throne in Annan.

As I have argued earlier, the Qing inherited the Ming tributary portfolio when it conquered the Chinese empire. As part of this legacy, it was expected to come to the aid of the Vietnamese royal house when political unrest threatened it. The Qing in the 1740s, by dint of its suzerain obligations and its new position of direct rule of the border, was confronted with a growing political crisis in Annan and had to consider how to take action in the situation.

Evidence from the Qing *Veritable Records* shows that the Qing took a cautious and skillful approach to the situation. It attempted to balance the fulfillment, at least in appearance, of its suzerain obligations, on the one hand, with a persistent strategy of protecting its territories from unrest and avoiding a military intervention. The crux of this strategy was a constant monitoring of the situation, restraining from intervening except on definite news that the Trinh lord or others had acted in open rebellion and usurpation.

By the mid-1740s, however, the Qing came to realize that Qing subjects were involved in the political unrest in Vietnam. This, and the defense and humanitarian issues the containment strategy had engendered, led the Qing to develop a systematic approach to the border and passport control.

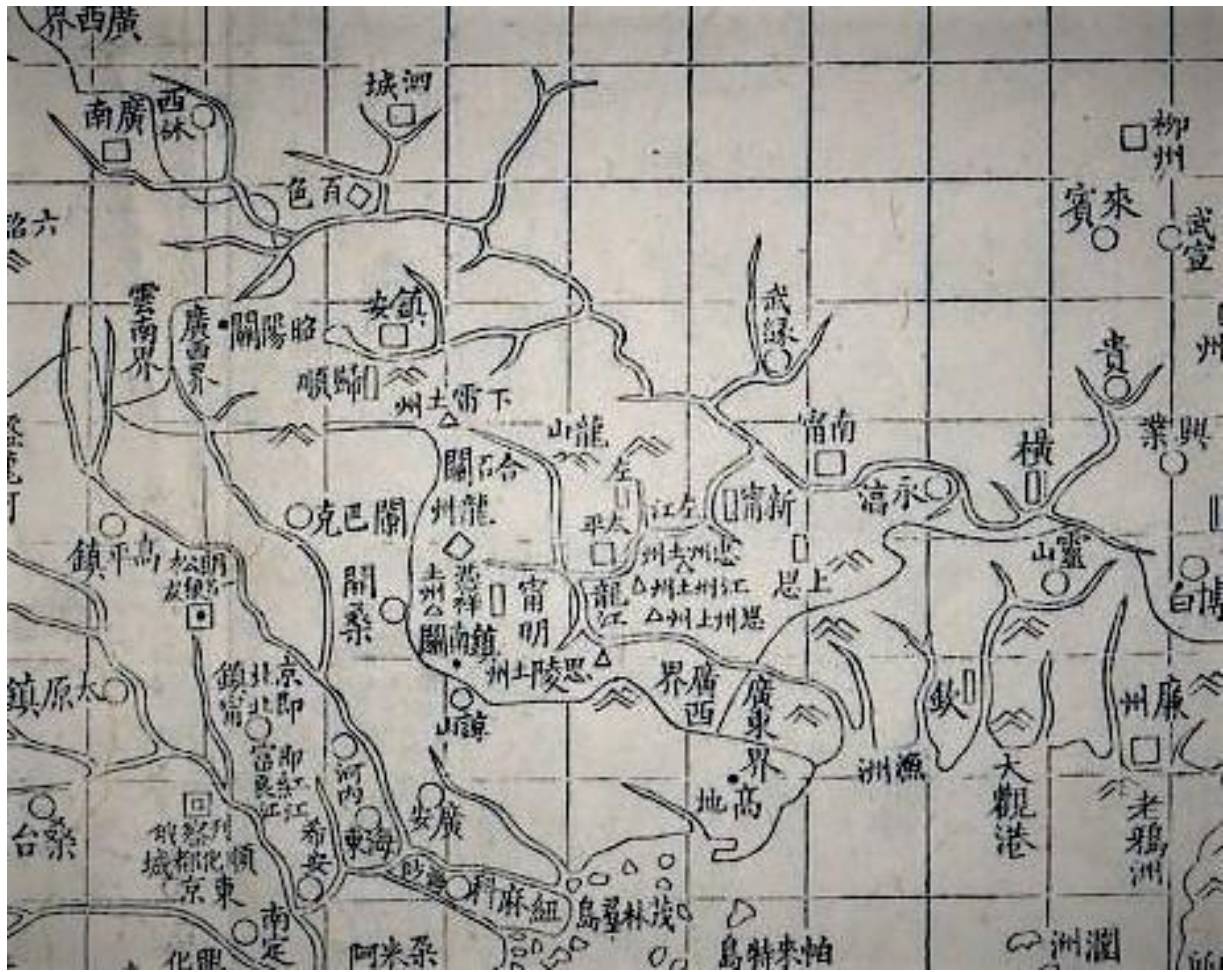


Figure 6. Detail, 1870 Chinese map of China-Vietnam border. LOC.

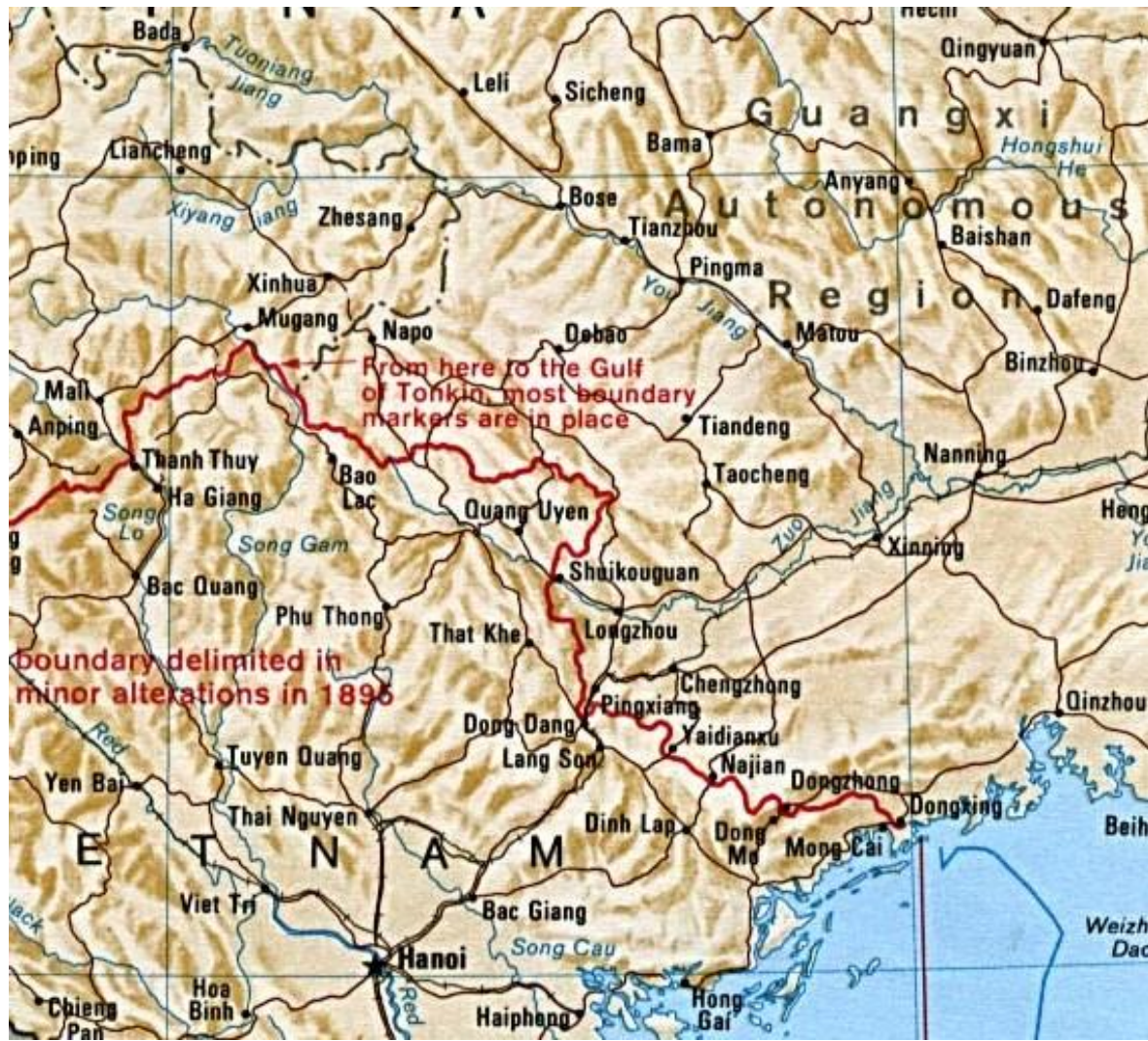


Figure 7. Detail, 1988 CIA map of China-Vietnam border. LOC.

A non-intervention policy

In the autumn of 1739, the Qing court received word of a rift between the Trinh lord and the Le royal family of Annam. Through the intelligence operations of Tan Xingyi, the provincial commander of Guangxi, it learned that a coup by the royal family against the pre-eminent ministerial family had failed. Some members of the royal family had fled to the southern coastal province of Thanh Hoa, where they had launched a campaign against the Trinh.

This probably did not come as a shock to the Qing emperor, Qianlong (r.1736-95) and his court, although Tan's report suggests some unfamiliarity on the part of the Guangxi commander with the court politics of Annan. Since the restoration of the Le as kings of Annan by the Trinh in the late sixteenth century, the Ming and then the Qing had been well aware of the relationship between these two families. While the Chinese courts publicly recognized the Le as the reigning kings of Annan, they understood the reality of Trinh dominance over the Le, even if the details were not always clear.

Tan's account presupposed an uncomplicated, conventional relationship between a ruling monarch and his subject minister. This account described the Trinh as usurping affines who had provoked a righteous campaign to return the legitimate rulers to the throne. Tan identified the Trinh lord as an uncle of the Le king on the latter's wife's side. When the Le king attempted to undermine his power, the Trinh lord struck back, killing the king, driving his sons into flight, and installing minor members of the Le family as puppets on the throne.

Based on this understanding, Tan assumed that military intervention was a possibility. He ordered additional drills for the entire province's military forces and reported that they would be prepared for action.

In contrast, Qianlong outlined a policy of non-intervention that emphasized caution and vigilance. He instructed provincial officials in Guangxi and Yunnan to continue to monitor and report on the situation, taking action only on explicit instructions from the throne. Qianlong explained his policy to the members of the Grand Council in terms of striking a balance between

upholding the integrity of the polity (*wu shang guo ti*) and avoiding border incidents (*wu wu bian shi*).³³³

Qianlong's fears of a border incident began to materialize when a local instance of rebellion arose in Lang Son in the winter of 1739. Lang Son was not only close to the Chinese border, it also was a major stop within Annan on the envoy route. The situation had become an issue of concern for some of the most senior members of the Qing court, including E'ertai 鄂尔泰 and the rest of the Grand Council. It is clear that E'ertai and his colleagues were very careful in their reading of the report of the Lang Son uprising and deliberate in their assessment of the situation. The Guangxi governor had reported that the walled town of Lang Son had been overcome and seized by a certain Vi Phuc Quan 韋福琯, identified as a native official in the area, and his soldiers. One can almost imagine E'ertai and his colleagues breathing a sigh of relief when they noted the Guangxi governor's description of the uprising as a movement to remove unscrupulous officials, calling for united action by the seven jurisdictions of Lang Son to kill the Trinh lord. The Grand Council could comfortably categorize the unrest as a sporadic reaction against bureaucratic malfeasance, a routine matter that fell within the prerogatives of the king of Annan. Besides, it was the Trinh lord who was under threat here, not the king of Annan. E'ertai and his colleagues explained that the main issue was whether or not the Trinh had acted treacherously and rebelled against the kings of Annan. Until more concrete intelligence on that matter surfaced, the provincial officials would have to remain vigilant and prepared.

While these instructions were prudent, they did not satisfy the concern of the Guangxi governor. He voiced the obvious concern for a field official: supposing the king of Annan does

³³³ *Qing shilu Guangxi ziliao jilu* [Excerpts from the Qing Veritable Records concerning Guangxi; hereafter *QSLGX excerpts*], v.1 (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1988), QL4.9.1.

flee to the border seeking aid, things may move too quickly for the field officials to ask for and await instructions from the court. E'ertai was perhaps too severe in ascribing to the governor an implied request for immediate intervention in Annan, but his response does indicate the sensitivity and stakes involved. E'ertai spelled out the complications that could arise if intervention, even something as minor as putting down an uprising just across the border, was pursued without a full understanding of the situation and the agreement of the king of Annan. Suppose we go to the aid of the Lang Son authorities on the pretext of eliminating rebels, and the authorities persuade the rebels to surrender and pardon them, then on what grounds would our involvement stand? How would the matter be resolved then?³³⁴ And, as it turned out, E'ertai was not too far from anticipating the response of the field officials in Guangxi: in a memorial which was yet to reach the court, the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi reported that he and the provincial commander would deploy their troops and declare war on the rebels if they received a plea for help from the Annan court.³³⁵

Taking Action

Although the Qing court had taken a course of non-intervention and restraint in dealing with the Annan crisis, there was nonetheless a sense that a measure of action was needed in order to be prepared for the eventualities. The potential outcomes the Qing court was concerned with probably included: the loss of a diplomatic partner, humanitarian crisis, unrest spilling over into Chinese territory, and the violation of the border. The measures taken by the Qing court included utilizing communication channels with the king of Annan, responding to refugee Annan officials

³³⁴ QSLGX excerpts, QL4.12.3.

³³⁵ QSLGX excerpts, QL4.12.29.

from Lang Son, deploying senior field officials to the border area, and enhancing the surveillance and defense capabilities of border areas.

While E'ertai and the court were analyzing the reports of the Vi Phuc Quan rebellion in the winter of 1739/1740, Antu, the Guangxi governor, and Ma'ertai 马尔泰, governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, were formulating provisional responses to the situation at the border while they awaited the Qing court's instructions. By this point, Antu had already written to the king of Annam to clarify the situation, but no reply had arrived yet.

At the same time, the Guangxi provincial officials were faced with the problem of what to do with the Annamese officials who had fled to the Qing border after being driven from Lang Son by Vi Phuc Quan and his followers. The refugees in question appear to have been specifically officials stationed at Van Uyen *chau*, the Lang Son jurisdiction closest to the main border gate, the Zhennan Gate, through which envoys from both courts passed. These officials had sought refuge outside, that is, on the Annam side, of the gate and were apparently making some sort of plea for aid from the Qing authorities. Upon receiving word of this development, E'ertai advised three measures of restrained action. First, additional troops should be sent to hold the border passes. Secondly, the refugee officials should be given succor. And, thirdly, the refugees should be questioned regarding claims of the rapacious behavior of the Annam king and the domination of the court by the Trinh lord.³³⁶

While E'ertai was formulating this response at court, the field officials had sent another memorial, making their own proposal for how to deal with the refugee Lang Son officials. Maertai, the governor-general, proposed that, once it had been ascertained that the uprising had been put down and things were under control, he would arrange to have the Lang Son officials

³³⁶ QSLGX excerpts, QL4.12.3.

escorted back into Annan and entrusted to the authorities there.³³⁷ E'ertai objected to this idea of escorting the Lang Son officials into Annan. There was no need for that, E'ertai said. The field officials already had instructions to keep the Lang Son refugee officials on the Annan side of the border. Since the Annanese officials had not entered Chinese territory, once the crisis passed, they should of their own accord return to where they had come from.³³⁸ It is obvious that E'ertai was intent on keeping the crisis in Lang Son indisputably on the Annan side of the border and keeping Qing representatives out of it, no matter their good intentions.

An underlying theme in the initial responses to the Vi Phuc Quan uprising in Lang Son was the need for speed in communicating the Qing court's instructions to its field officials, to circumscribe the limits of action carefully, and to proceed as discreetly and cautiously as possible. One measure to address this need was to have senior field officials, who served as the linchpin between the court and the field administration, close to the action. This would facilitate communication, especially in the case of the vast distances involved in Guangxi, and presumably it would allow cooler, that is, senior, heads to prevail in emergencies.³³⁹

In concrete terms, this involved dispatching the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general, normally headquartered in Zhaoqing on the west side of the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong, to Guangxi to oversee the situation. But even in what seems like a straightforward move, there was need for finesse. When the court first received word of the Vi Phuc Quan uprising and E'ertai had formulated the initial response, the Qianlong emperor, in approving the response, ordered

³³⁷ A possible interpretation of the term *guo* as the capital of a kingdom in the phrase “*ya hui gai guo*” in the *QSL* text suggests that Maertai may have had in mind escorting the Lang Son officials to the Annan capital.

³³⁸ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL4.12.29.

³³⁹ For reference, the distance (~325 miles) between Guilin, the provincial capital of Guangxi, on the east side of the province, and Taiping, the prefecture closest to the Annan border, is just a bit shy of the distance (~340 miles) between San Jose and Los Angeles, according to Google Maps (accessed 25 August 2013).

Maertai, the governor-general, to set up temporary headquarters in Guilin, the provincial capital of Guangxi.³⁴⁰ Reflecting the traditional eastern orientation of Guangxi's provincial administration, such a relocation would have put Maertai in direct communication with the provincial officials of Guangxi, but the frontier vastness of central and western Guangxi would still separate him from the scene of action near the Zhennan Gate.

Maertai's response to these instructions at the beginning of 1740 came after several exchanges with the court on the matter of the Vi Phuc Quan uprising and was well-tuned with the preference of the court for discreet, cautious action. Maertai aimed to keep the border crisis under wraps. His sudden relocation to Guilin would arouse suspicion and concern amongst the populace and soldiery, who might deduce that it was in response to a crisis on the frontier.³⁴¹ Therefore, the governor-general proposed that he cloak his agenda by planning a comprehensive inspection of the border and maritime military commands of both provinces under his command. He would begin the tour with Zuojiang command, which was responsible for the border with Lang Son, and deal with the matter there.³⁴²

By the time of Maertai's tour of the border and maritime commands, in the spring of 1740, several basic measures had been taken to enhance the Qing defense and surveillance capabilities at the border with Annam. In his response to the initial news of the Vi Phuc Quan rebellion, Maertai had recommended that soldiers near the border be deployed to guard the border

³⁴⁰ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL4.12.3. The distance between Zhaoqing, the governor-general's permanent headquarters in Guangdong, and Guilin, the provincial capital of Guangxi, is approximately 290 miles, according to Google Maps (accessed 25 August 2013), indicating a significant distance between the two cities, despite the eastern orientation of Guilin in relation to the rest of Guangxi.

³⁴¹ Maertai may have had in mind confrontations with *tusi* in western Guangxi, a significant political issue in the 1720s and 30s.

³⁴² *QSLGX excerpts*, QL5.1.29.

passes.³⁴³ Governor-general Maertai had also reported stepping up patrols and defense of the border, following a course of “covertly arranging comprehensive preparations while overtly demonstrating determined calm.”³⁴⁴ Presumably, these represented, in general, putting the existing infrastructure and personnel on alert.

But the provincial officials also attempted to alter and enhance the administrative and military resources available to meet the looming border crisis, something that was met with various responses by the court. It appears that on his tour of the border and maritime commands in Guangdong and Guangxi, Maertai strengthened the Qing military presence at the coastal border between Annan and Guangdong’s Lianzhou prefecture. This did not lie directly in the area of the uprising in Lang Son, but probably in light of the general unrest in Annan, Maertai thought it prudent to reinforce this area, traditionally a complicated area involving traders and pirates from both countries. In addition to secretly instructing the Qing commander in the area to step up patrol and defense at the main border passes, Maertai also noted the importance of Dongxing Bazaar (*Dongxing jie*), sited right at the border, and deployed four hundred soldiers to hold the area.³⁴⁵

On the other hand, the court remained concerned about the potential for suspicion and unrest that any administrative changes, however minor, might arouse in the populace in the border area near the Zhennan Gate. Yang Xifu 杨锡绂, provincial administration commissioner of Guangxi, had noticed a weak administrative point, namely the minor jurisdiction of Xialong. Xialong had been created when the Longzhou *tusi*, held by the Zhao clan and located on the

³⁴³ QSLGX excerpts, QL4.12.3.

³⁴⁴ QSLGX excerpts, QL5.1.29.

³⁴⁵ QSLGX excerpts, QL5.7.30.

Guangxi-Annan border just north and west of the Zhennan gate, had been split and replaced by two *xunjian* jurisdictions in the mid-1720s. Since then, the Zhao family member who held the Xialong half of the former *tusi* domain had in turn been removed, presumably on the basis of some malfeasance, and the jurisdiction was left under the supervision of the mainstream assistant magistrate (*tongpan*) stationed there. Yang argued that an assistant magistrate was not sufficiently senior to be left responsible for a section of the sensitive border with Annan and requested that the position be replaced by a department chief (*zhizhou*). The Qing Board of Personnel responded to this request by pointing to issues of protocol but the court's underlying concern was with stabilizing popular opinion in the area. The Board's records indicated that the *xunjian* jurisdiction had only temporarily been assigned to the mainstream assistant magistrate on account that no heir had been found for the deposed Zhao family member. No decision, however, had been made about the status of the jurisdiction itself. More importantly, the Board elaborated, if the jurisdiction was converted suddenly with no cause, it could easily instill suspicion and panic in the local populace.³⁴⁶

Assessing the situation: intelligence gathering and diplomatic communication

Up until this point, the measures pursued by the Qing court were largely defensive, stop-gap measures to a crisis whose scope, causes, and significance remained unclear to the court. The court continued a wait-and-see policy of non-intervention and restraint. What was both the most unclear and most important for making decisions of further action was the current status and relationship of the Le and Trinh houses. Did the Le still rule as the kings of Annan? Had the Trinh betrayed their nominal superiors? Was there any sign that the king of Annan was

³⁴⁶ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL5.5.16. It should be noted here that, while Yang refers to the implications for the Annan border, the Board of Personnel in fact places the issue in the context of approaches to administrating the 'Miao frontier,' rejecting Yang's proposal as not representing an approach that stabilized the Miao frontier.

requesting aid in the form of intervention from their suzerain, the Qing? Or, to ask these questions in another, more *realpolitik* way: How could the Qing determine the state of things without becoming explicitly obligated to intervene?

In the summer and autumn of 1740, the Qing court received several memorials from the senior provincial officials in Guangxi and Yunnan regarding the situation in Annam. These reports did not reflect new developments on the border. Rather, they were focused on intelligence about the situation at the Annam court. The recommendations of the field officials and the deliberations of the Qing court were directed toward determining a) the intentions and actions of the Trinh lord; b) the situation of the Le king; and c) the state of popular opinion and uprisings against the Trinh.

The earliest news on the situation at the Annam court came from the governor-general of Yunnan, Qingfu 庆复, who had been dealing with his Annam counterparts in relation to an earlier case of illicit transborder activity. It appears that through this connection, Qingfu obtained a written proclamation, authored by the Annam court and sent throughout the kingdom, that gave some clue to the state of things and the intentions of the Trinh. Earlier, in 1739, it seems, it had been reported that the Trinh lord Cuong had been killed and replaced by his brother. However, some phrases in the Annam proclamation that Qingfu had obtained suggested that Cuong was still alive. More importantly, the Qing court interpreted the language of the proclamation as indicating the possibility that the Trinh were preparing to remove the Le king and usurp the throne. The court requested that Qingfu continue to gather intelligence to determine the veracity of these suspicions.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁷ Qing shilu Yuenan, Miandian, Taiguo, Laowo shiliao zhai chao [Excerpts from the Qing Veritable Records concerning Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos; hereafter QSLSEA excerpts], (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1985), QL5.6.gengzhen.

From the Guangxi side, however, governor-general Maertai had little new to report and was inclined to downplay the situation. Despite noting that Vi Phuc Quan, the leader of the anti-Trinh, restorationist rebellion in Lang Son, had joined forces with a member of the Le royal family, and that together they had laid siege to the Annan capital, he pointed out that the Qing court had long been aware of the *lèse-majesté* of the Trinh and dismissed the current crisis as typical of politics in Vietnam. He reasoned that, until the king of Annan wrote for aid, he would continue as before, looking to the integrity and defense of the Qing realm. More concretely, he had continued to inspect the troops at the border and gather intelligence on the situation in Annan.

Maertai had been intermittently attending to the Guangxi border areas in person. At this point, however, he received word of Miao and Yao uprisings in the Guangxi-Hunan interprovincial border area. Maertai judged the evolving situation at the Miao frontier the more crucial and active of the two crises and returned to Guilin in haste.³⁴⁸

The provincial commander of Guangxi, Tan Xingyi, continued to monitor the situation in Annan. In the autumn of 1740, he reported that the Annan court had installed Buu, a son of the preceding Long Duc king, as the new king of Annan during the summer, with a new reign name of Canh Hung.³⁴⁹ Upon the ascension of the new king, a general amnesty had been declared and the court had bestowed new titles and positions on Vi Phuc Quan and other leaders in Lang Son. Despite this initiative on the part of the Annan court, rebel groups in the east and south of the Annan realm continued fighting against the court.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ QSLGX excerpts, QL5.6.29.

³⁴⁹ Qing intelligence appears to be mistaken here on the name of the new king. Canh Hung was indeed the son of Long Duc, but his personal name was Le Duy Dieu, not Buu. See Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese*, 357.

³⁵⁰ QSLGX excerpts, QL5.8.30.

Later in the autumn, the field officials in Yunnan forwarded a less comforting version of the coronation of the new king. Based on his intelligence reports, governor-general Qingfu interpreted the events at the Annan court as another instance of Trinh manipulation, wantonly deposing and installing puppet-kings and changing regnal names. Invoking the Qing's obligation to its vassal, Qingfu called for the court to send a letter of admonition to the Annan court, to frighten the Trinh from their traitorous plans. The court agreed with Qingfu that the Trinh had long been a tyrannical force at the Annan court and that the illicit removal of one king and establishing another called for a demonstration of disapproval.

However, the court held fast to its wait-and-see policy of non-intervention. It pointed to a large gray area in its understanding of the situation in Annan and projected two major problems with initiating communication with the Annan court. After all, Qingfu was calling for a new step to be taken. Previously, the Qing court and the field officials had discussed—and acted upon—sending a letter of inquiry to the king of Annan to learn the official position of the Annan court on the events that were being reported through unofficial channels. Qingfu now was suggesting that the Qing court take an official position of its own and, through communicating this position to the Annan court, intervene in the situation.

The Qing court, in response to Qingfu's memorial, pointed out that Qingfu's intelligence, however reliable it seemed, needed to be confirmed. And, specifically, there was still some ambiguity about the identity of the newly installed king. Regardless of the status of current intelligence on the situation, the Qing court argued, the effects of sending a letter of admonition to the Annan court would be negligible at best and counter-productive at worst. Correspondence with the Annan court undoubtedly still passed through the hands of the Trinh lord, so whatever answer the Qing court receives will be subject to Trinh dissimulation. At the same time, an

official letter from the Qing would quickly become public knowledge throughout the Annan realm, and even if the letter caused the Trinh to back down from their schemes, it would spark off a flurry of calls for aid and intervention in the country in the name of destroying the traitorous Trinh. This could become a real mess—it could oblige the Qing to intervene and create public pressure for this action. Based on this analysis, the Qing court decided to wait for a memorial from the Annan court announcing and explaining this change of ruler before coming to conclusions on the matter.³⁵¹

While the court restrained from initiating non-routine communications and waited for the Annan court's next move, field officials in Guangxi turned their attention to the upcoming tribute mission from Annan scheduled for 1741. Maertai and Yang Xifu memorialized the court separately in the spring of 1741, reminding the court of the current unrest in Annan and the recent installation of a new king there. Tribute protocol required that the Annan tribute mission envoys make their journey sometime in the spring and summer, with advance notification from the Annan court specifying the exact dates. No advance notice had been made, but in light of the situation, both Maertai and Yang suggested that there was no need to send any prompts regarding the tardy mission. The Grand Council further recommended that the king of Annan be granted a reprieve from sending a tribute mission until the Annan court had cleared the envoy route and travel was feasible.³⁵² The tribute mission appears to have been delayed until 1743, when tribute envoys from Annan were reported passing through eastern Guangxi.³⁵³

Building up the border

³⁵¹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL5.10.dingwei.

³⁵² *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL6.2.yichou; *QSLGX excerpts*, QL6.3.29.

³⁵³ *QSLGX excerpts*, QSL QL8.3.29.

Having postponed the scheduled tribute mission, the Qing court turned its attention to its preparedness and defenses on their own side of the border. From the spring of 1741 to the beginning of 1742, the Qing court did not consider any new intelligence of the rebellions taking place in Annan or communication from the Annan court. During this year, field officials limited themselves to building up defense infrastructure and guarding the border passes. Later, however, new developments would spur the court to reexamine the situation and its approach. On the one hand, new intelligence reports signaled an end to the Vi Phuc Quan rebellion. On the other hand, it became obvious that Qing subjects were crossing into Annan and participating in the rebellions.

During 1741, Yang Xifu took several steps to develop Ningming department (*zhou*) as a strategic town in the border area. Ningming lay midway between the prefectural seat of Taiping, the prefecture in the southwest corner of the province nearest the border, and the Zhennan Gate, through which official court-to-court communication and envoys passed. It was also noteworthy as lying in the former Siming domain, the major *tusi* in the southwest of the province in Ming and early Qing times. Somewhat to the east of Ningming lay the former *tusi* headquarters of Mingjiang. After the removal of the office of the Siming hereditary prefect in the early 1730s, the Qing had established a new mainstream department at Ningming.

Earlier, in the autumn of 1739, Qing envoys returning from Annan made a recommendation to relocate the headquarters of Ningming department to the traditional power center of Mingjiang and to convert the current earthen wall there into a brick one. In addition, they recommended stationing additional soldiers along the road from the seat of Taiping prefecture to the Zhennan Gate.

Undoubtedly, the envoys based their recommendation on their observations and experience traveling along this section of the envoy route. From a wider point of view, however,

the Board of Works made a counter-argument for the strategic value of the current site of the Ningming department headquarters. Mingjiang, despite being the headquarters of the former *tu* prefect, lay in a remote location that was poor in riverine transport connections. Ningming was just the opposite: it lay at an important chokepoint for the entire prefecture of Taiping and held strategic control of the waterways. The Board advised building a brick wall at Ningming and increasing its complement of soldiers in order to protect the granary, treasury, and jail located there. This amounted to an additional one hundred soldiers at Ningming itself and smaller contingents at two outlying posts. At the same time, the Board advised, Mingjiang should not be neglected since it lay at the center of a cluster of fifty villages and advised repairing the existing earthen wall. Regarding the envoys' proposal to add more soldiers to guard the route between Taiping and the Zhennan Gate, the Board pointed out that eleven riverine military stations had already been added to the existing twenty-two land and riverine stations, and vetoed the envoys' suggestion.³⁵⁴

It took a while for this plan to upgrade the defensive infrastructure at Ningming to materialize. It was not until the summer of 1741 that Yang Xifu, reported the beginning of the project to rebuild Ningming's wall with brick, repair the earthen wall at Mingjiang, and repair the buildings of the *ying* military camp and postal and military stations along the roads (*tang xun*) in the area.³⁵⁵ Although issues of bureaucratic communication and funding problems could account for this delay, it is possible that the border alarms of 1740 gave a new urgency to implement the project. Moreover, Ningming was envisioned as more than a point of military defense; later in the summer, Yang Xifu requested the building of an Altar to the God of

³⁵⁴ QSLGX excerpts, QL4.8.25

³⁵⁵ QSLGX excerpts, QL6.5.28

Agriculture (*Xiannong tan*) at Ningming, indicating the town's growth as a residential and productive center.³⁵⁶

At the same time, all along the Guangxi border with Annan, the defense of the border passes was scrutinized and strengthened where needed. Zhang Chaoxuan, the military commander at Youjiang, reported that, on account of the proximity of Zhen'an *xie* to areas where Vi Phuc Quan and other Annan rebels were operating, he had created checkpoints (*ka*) and stationed soldiers along the border to protect the border passes. Zhen'an *xie* was a military camp subordinate to the Youjiang commander and lay close to the Annan settlements of Cao Bang, Muc Ma, and Bao Loc.³⁵⁷

Yang Xifu had been urging vigilance at the border passes further to the south and east along the Guangxi border with Annan. Moreover, despite the distance and the malarial infestation there, Yang deployed one hundred soldiers from the Zuojiang command at Nanning prefecture to be stationed at the border at Xiashixi *tu* department. This measure had been taken because the troops in the border area were largely occupied with city defense duties and few could be spared for the border passes. Yang requested extra compensation be given these Nanning troops on account of this tough assignment.³⁵⁸

The end of the Vi Phuc Quan rebellion

In the winter of 1741/42, the Qing court received news from Guangxi that the Vi Phuc Quan rebellion had been put down. The Annan commander retook Lang Son for the Annan court

³⁵⁶ QSLGX excerpts, QL6.11.17

³⁵⁷ QSLGX excerpts, QL6.5.30.

³⁵⁸ QSLGX excerpts, QL6.6.8.

and reopened the envoy route.³⁵⁹ Not long after, the Annan court was able to apprehend Vi. It had him executed but appointed one of his clan members to his former post in Lang Son.³⁶⁰

Cross-border traffic

Although the Vi Phuc Quan uprising had come to an end and some measure of peace had returned to Annan, the Qing court soon became aware of a new problem on the border: cross-border activity. In fact, the acting governor-general of Guangdong-Guangxi earlier in 1741 had made prescient observations about the possibility of subjects of both kingdoms crossing into the other. Wang Anguo had memorialized in the summer of 1741 that he had ordered additional soldiers to carefully guard the border in order to prevent, on the one hand, the rebels in Annan from entering Qing territory and, on the other hand, Qing subjects from going abroad illicitly. He predicted that as the civil wars in Annan reached a conclusion, the victorious parties would attempt to enlist Qing support for the coup de grace while the losers would seek asylum across the border.³⁶¹

Wang was proved right a few months later, in the autumn of 1741. Qing authorities had apprehended some fugitives from rebellions in the Miao frontier in the Guangxi-Hunan interprovincial area and had obtained confessions from them that the ringleaders of the uprising had fled to Annan.³⁶²

It was perhaps not surprising or a cause for alarm to the Qing court that fugitives from the Miao frontier would attempt to flee beyond Qing territory and into Annan. After all, they were

³⁵⁹ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL6.10.30.

³⁶⁰ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL6.12.29.

³⁶¹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL6.6.renshu.

³⁶² *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL6.9.xinmao.

leaders of an uprising against the state. Criminals already, it was not surprising that they would act contrary to Qing law and seek refuge wherever they could. For the Qing court, the response to these fugitives, assuming that they were still within Qing territory, was to apprehend them and bring them to justice.

The situation that arose in the summer of 1742 at the Guangxi border near Lang Son was a more complicated matter, however. Yang Xifu reported that Annamese residents of Lang Son displaced by the turmoil caused by the Vi Phuc Quan rebellion had sought refuge in various Qing border jurisdictions. He estimated that there were thirty to forty of these refugees at each jurisdiction. The immediate issue, of course, was what to do with them. For the Guangxi field officials, the obvious solution was to treat these refugees as such and provide humanitarian relief.³⁶³

Qingfu, now governor-general of Guangdong-Guangxi, observed that Lang Son and Annam more generally had been laid to waste by the recent fighting; these refugees were driven by hunger to beg for food in Qing territory. And, as Qingfu reported at the end of the summer, the second rice crop in Guangxi appeared to be a bumper crop.³⁶⁴ In fact, one of the Qing border jurisdictions that Annam refugees were fleeing to had received an excellent and timely combination of good rains and irrigation from a local spring that promised a good crop.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL7.5.29; 7.6.12; 7.8.30. Qing officials may have understood these refugees as belonging to the same category as castaways in the maritime context, a category of persons who were typically subject to verification of their identity by the Chinese authorities and, in the case of subjects of “submissive” vassal kingdoms, given succor and returned to their native countries. For castaways, see, for example, WATANABE Miki, “Shin ni taisuru Ryu-Nichi kankei no impei to hyochaku mondai,” *Shigaku zasshi* 114, no. 11 (2005): 1-35.

³⁶⁴ The text refers to the “late rice crop” (*wan he*), but it may in fact be a third crop.

³⁶⁵ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL7.8.30.

Yang and Qingfu dealt with these refugees by dividing them into two categories. Those who were able to travel were given rations and travel expenses and sent back to Annan for them to return to their native places. Those who were ‘old, weak, sick, and starved’ were given rations and allowed to stay in Qing territory until they were strong enough to travel and then sent back to Annan territory. Yang also sent word to the Annan authorities in Lang Son, requesting that they address the welfare of their subjects.³⁶⁶

At the same time, Yang and Qingfu were concerned to prevent these refugees from becoming the victims of human trafficking. They prohibited the sale of Annan subjects by Qing subjects.³⁶⁷ This was undoubtedly a well-founded concern. Human trafficking had been noted and condemned by Qing officials in the provinces of the southwest at least since the Kangxi reign.³⁶⁸ Like the rest of Southeast Asia, this part of China was a sparsely-populated frontier area where labor was a highly-prized commodity.³⁶⁹ The vulnerable situation of the Annan refugees made them likely candidates for human trafficking that could take them ever farther away from their homes in Annan.

More alarming than the refugees from Lang Son were reports that Qing subjects had played leading roles in the Vi Phuc Quan uprising. In the summer of 1742, Guangxi provincial commander Tan Xingyi reported apprehending two Qing subjects on their return from Annan. One was a dismissed student (*jia sheng*) from Chongshan, the metropolitan county of Taiping

³⁶⁶ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL7.5.29; 7.6.12; 7.8.30.

³⁶⁷ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL7.6.12; 7.8.30. Here, the potential subjects of human trafficking are referred to as *Annan zi nü*, which could mean children, children and women, or Annan subjects generally.

³⁶⁸ See, for example, John Herman, “Empire in the Southwest: Early Qing Reforms to the Native Chieftain System,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 1 (Feb., 1997): 47-74.

³⁶⁹ For a discussion of frontier and bonded labor in historical Southeast Asia, see Anthony Reid, ed., *Slavery, Bondage, and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (St. Lucia & New York: University of Queensland Press, 1983).

prefecture, named Ye Zhen and the other a man from Guangdong who was identified as “Old Six” Zhou. The former was accused of being an advisor to Vi and the latter of teaching weapons training and hand-to-hand combat.³⁷⁰

Although these two suspects were later found to have not played a significant role in the Vi uprising (but still guilty of illicit border-crossing), the specter of growing trans-border political adventuring and general trouble-making prompted the Qianlong emperor to comment on these cases. While commending the measures to provide for the Lang Son refugees, Qianlong pointed to the origin and solution of these border issues in the inspection and regulation of the border gates and passes. Without vigilant regulation, people were free to pass illicitly in either direction, causing trouble at the local level and potentially causing international incidents. Thus, in the summer of 1742, Qianlong ordered the senior field officials of Guangxi and Yunnan to confer and come up with proposals on how to ‘legislate and set in order’ (*li fa zheng chi*) for a better administration of the border, so that each gate and pass would be subject to careful inspection of its traffic and that the abuses revealed would be put to a stop. A solid and tight network of border gates and passes, in Qianlong’s estimation, was the key to bringing peace to the border area.³⁷¹

This new emphasis on a water-tight border was soon picked up by field officials in the provinces bordering Annam. In the winter of 1742/43, Guangxi governor Yang Xifu noted border threats in the neighboring provinces of Guangdong and Yunnan. These threats did not directly affect Guangxi’s section of the border, but Yang reported giving orders to his subordinates to

³⁷⁰ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL7.5.29; 7.8.30

³⁷¹ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL7.6.12.

earnestly carry out their duties of inspection and defense along the border, not allowing a single person to pass in or out of the border gates and passes.³⁷²

The problem of Qing subjects abroad

After the lull in 1741-42, unrest in the Annan borderlands again became a concern for the Qing court and its field officials. Lang Son and Dulong saw a renewal of uprisings, but it was the area around Bao Loc, between Lang Son and Dulong, that became the focus of a large-scale uprising. Two features of this uprising particularly alarmed the Qing court. First, this uprising eventually took on a hue of Mac restorationism. Secondly, this and the other uprisings during 1743-44 involved significant participation by Qing subjects. In addition to these two features, the Bao Loc area lay near the part of the Qing-Annan border where the Guangxi and Yunnan provincial jurisdictions intersected. On the Yunnan side, this area fell under the Guangnan prefecture, while on the Guangxi side lay Zhen'an prefecture.

Late in the spring of 1743, it was reported that rebels had taken the area around Bao Loc, in the hill-country of Cao Bang. The rebels' conquests included the town of Muc Ma, near two of the three Guangxi border gates, Ping'er and Shuikou. The governor-general Qingfu reported that—unlike the earlier case of Annanese refugees fleeing across the border from Lang Son—now large numbers of refugees claiming to be Qing subjects were seeking to flee the turmoil and return to China. In his memorial, Qingfu called for new regulations to be formulated to enable the field officials to identify and allow Qing refugees to return. In the meantime, Qingfu had ordered that the refugees be allowed re-entry by ascertaining the validity of their Qing subjecthood on the basis of three criteria: a) that they had property or livelihood in Qing territories; b) that they were good, law-abiding subjects; and c) that they could be vouched for by

³⁷² *QSLGX excerpts*, QL7.11.30.

kin. The specter of letting in non-Qing subjects under false pretenses was very much in Qingfu's mind.³⁷³

As the court was about to discover, the trouble ran both ways. Yang Xifu told the court that, in response to the current wave of unrest in Annan, some Qing subjects had gone to Jiaozhi opportunistically to participate in the uprisings. In fact, it was reported that two of the leaders of the uprisings, Mo Wukang and Li Sancong, were Qing subjects. The court responded to this news by issuing a dragnet in the governor-generalships of Liangjiang, Huguang, Fujian, and Guangdong-Guangxi to apprehend these opportunists before they made it to Annan.³⁷⁴ The court also wrote to the king of Annan, giving permission to the Annan court to apprehend these wayward Qing subjects.

Apparently, however, the Annan authorities were themselves part of the problem. Yang Xifu also reported that during their struggle to put down the Vi Phuc Quan uprising, the Annan commanders had enlisted the help of Qing subjects. After Vi's downfall, these Qing subjects lost the prospect of future spoils and turned to banditry instead. This was an embarrassing and alarming prospect for the Qing court. The court found it appalling that Annan officials were encouraging the participation of Qing subjects in their domestic battles. Again, the court wrote to notify the king of Annan of this situation and requested that any Qing subjects found causing trouble in Annan be apprehended and turned over to Qing authorities immediately.³⁷⁵

³⁷³ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.4.7.

³⁷⁴ I can only speculate why the dragnet covered so much territory. Guangdong-Guangxi is at the Annan border, Fujian might be included because of its maritime and trade connections with Annan, Huguang because of a perception that the Miao frontier and the Annan border were increasingly linked. Liangjiang is the most puzzling. I wonder if these areas might represent areas where disenfranchised *tusi* had been relocated, given the Jiangnan native places some of them claim.

³⁷⁵ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.4.21.

In the meantime, Qing subjects fleeing the turmoil in Annan continued to show up at the border, pleading to be let through. Yang Xifu reported to the court that those allowed across the border were sent to their places of registration and put under the supervision of their local *baojia* unit. He emphasized that no foreign subjects were allowed to pass.³⁷⁶

There was a growing awareness, however, that wayward Qing subjects and Annan bandits were equally the problem and equally to be kept from passing between the two countries. The new, acting governor-general of Guangdong-Guangxi, Tsereng 策楞, upon taking his post at the beginning of summer in 1743, ordered his subordinates to be on alert and diligently make inspection of the border passes.³⁷⁷ Neither Han troublemakers nor Annan bandits were to be tolerated crossing the border.³⁷⁸

Detecting these ‘Han troublemakers,’ that is wayward Qing subjects, required a bit of savvy. Earlier in the year, rebels in Annan had taken the walled town of Lang Son. Soon after their defeat in the late spring, however, Guangxi governor Yang Xifu received reports of large numbers of Qing subjects coming to the border gates and passes, seeking to return to China. On account of the timing of these returnees, Yang suspected that at least some of them had participated in the rebellion. Why did they seek refuge now rather than when the rebels had taken the walled town of Lang Son, earlier in the year? Yang vowed to carry out careful inspection of these returning Qing subjects before allowing them to return to their native places.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.4.30.

³⁷⁷ As romanized in Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (ECCP)*, 2 vols (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943-44). Otherwise, “Celeng” as a direct *pinyin* romanization of the Chinese characters.

³⁷⁸ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.i4.29.

³⁷⁹ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.i4.29.

Bao Loc, to the west of Lang Son, remained the major area of rebellion in the Annan borderlands. Qing field officials also were becoming aware of the complications the rebellion there was creating. Yang Xifu estimated that the majority of the rebels there were in fact Qing subjects.³⁸⁰ One of the main problems confronting field officials trying to oversee this section of the border was its remote location and the minimal Qing administration in the area. The Bao Loc area bordered Qing China at the point where the provincial jurisdictions of Guangxi and Yunnan met. The field officials in Guangxi in fact had a slight advantage over their colleagues in Yunnan. Zhen'an prefecture, which formed the Guangxi side of this border section, was a recently incorporated former *tusi* domain, but one that enjoyed a good working relationship with the provincial administration prior to incorporation and had been a center of attention after the incorporation in the 1730s. The Guangxi military and administrative structure was well-represented there, putting them in a good position to monitor the major border gates and passes, such as those at Ping'er and Shuikou. Guangnan prefecture, the jurisdiction on the Yunnan side, had long been a backwater for the provincial administration. This difference in provincial administrative presence was reflected in the response of the field officials of the two provinces to the border situation in Bao Loc.

By the middle of the summer of 1743, while the Guangxi governor had already reported apprehending Qing subjects accused of participating in the rebellion at Bao Loc, the Yunnan provincial administration was still scrambling to implement an effective border inspection and defense in Guangnan prefecture.³⁸¹ Qianlong complained that, compared to Guangxi's diligence in inspecting and processing border traffic, Yunnan's surveillance of the border at Guangnan was

³⁸⁰ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.5.29.

³⁸¹ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.5.29.

loose, allowing natives (*turen*) of the prefecture to cross over to Jiaozhi in droves. It appears that Yunnan governor-general, Zhang Yunsui, was either not in control of the situation there or not willing to say anything about it, as Qianlong also complained that Zhang had not made regular reports about the situation there.³⁸²

Nonetheless, the expansion of the Qing provincial administration in southern Yunnan and western Guangxi during the 1720s and 1730s had now made much more visible what were probably long-standing geographic connections in this border area lying between western Guangxi, southeastern Yunnan, and northwestern Annam. Towards the end of the summer of 1743, Yang Xifu reported that natives of the Xilin and Xilong jurisdictions in the far northwest of the province had participated in Mo Kangwu's rebellion in Annam. As a matter of fact, these natives of northwestern Guangxi, numbering over a hundred, had been apprehended in Yunnan as they attempted to re-enter China at the southeastern prefecture of Guangnan. In Yang's estimation, the route from Xilong to Annam necessarily passed via Guangnan.³⁸³ There is a certain truth to this observation, as Xilin and Xilong are not directly adjacent to the Annam border; the natives of these jurisdictions would have to go via Zhen'an in Guangxi or via Guangnan in Yunnan. Given the loose regulation at the Guangnan section of the border, it would make sense that these adventurers would choose that route over the more strictly supervised border section in Zhen'an.

Ultimately, these itineraries were more numerous and flexible than Yang's estimation. In the fall of the same year, Tan Xingyi, provincial commander of Guangxi, reported that a large group of "barbarian" (*yi*) men and women, under the guidance of a man from Guangnan, had

³⁸² QSLGX excerpts, QL8.6.25.

³⁸³ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.7.30.

entered China at the Guangxi border and made their way to Guangnan in Yunnan. It turned out, according to Tan's investigations, that in the spring of that year, the *tusi* of Guangnan had sent this man, a subordinate of his, to Jiaozhi via a border pass along the Guangxi section of the border.³⁸⁴ It appeared that natives from both sides of the Guangxi-Yunnan border followed routes to Jiaozhi that crossed not only imperial borders but also provincial ones.

Despite his initial disappointment in Yunnan's handling of the Guangnan section of the border, Qianlong was equally wary of the political capital his field officials in Guangxi might try to make of their unequal advantage over their colleagues. Qianlong interpreted Yang's report about the Guangxi natives attempting to cross the border into Jiaozhi as insinuating that the problem lay in Yunnan's regulation of the Guangnan border area. He commented, in reply to Yang, "He thinks he is being clever here, but this is such a stupid comment. If the natives hadn't found a way to leave Guangxi in the first place, there would be no opportunity to apprehend them in Yunnan."³⁸⁵ Similarly, when Qianlong compared Tan's report to reports from the Yunnan governor-general and the analysis of the Grand Council, he came to the conclusion that Tan had "embroidered" his account to deflect responsibility from himself to Yunnan. The emperor took the occasion to exhort his field officials not to slacken their efforts or try to blame other jurisdictions in matters of the border.³⁸⁶

In fact, the interprovincial border area comprising the frontier areas of Guangnan, Zhen'an, and Bao Loc was a messy, dimly-perceived area that the governors and governor-generals of Guangxi and Yunnan were struggling to make intelligible. And, contrary to

³⁸⁴ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.9.21.

³⁸⁵ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.7.30.

³⁸⁶ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.9.21.

Qianlong's criticism, the field officials of Yunnan and Guangxi did exhibit a certain measure of cooperation. It was based on a confidential memo from the Yunnan governor-general Zhang Yunsui that Guangxi governor-general Tsereng learned, in the fall of 1743, that the leader of the rebellion in Bao Loc,³⁸⁷ a man who went by the name of "Upright Leopard" Mo (Mo Zhengpao), was in fact a native of Sicheng prefecture in Guangxi. His followers, moreover, were for the most part from Guangxi.³⁸⁸ By following up Zhang's intelligence with investigations of his own, Tsereng discovered that, indeed, a clan by the name of Mo/Mac had been relocated (*an cha*) to Sicheng in the past, and their descendants currently lived in Lingyun, the metropolitan county of the prefecture. Connecting these pieces of information, Tsereng ordered his subordinates to investigate the Mo in Lingyun and make arrests.³⁸⁹

Surprisingly, neither Zhang nor Tsereng mentioned the historical background of the Mo in Sicheng in their reports. But the connection to the Mac, who had once contested for the throne of Annam in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, resurfaced soon. Later in the fall of 1743, Yang Xifu reported the arrest of "Pox-marked" Liang, a member of the Mo clan of Lingyun, as he returned to China from Jiaozhi. From this man, Yang was able to make a list of Mo clan members now operating in Jiaozhi. More damning still, Yang uncovered from Liang letters from a Mo clan member operating in Jiaozhi to his family in Sicheng. Yang also stated himself convinced that the Mo of Sicheng were the descendants of Mac Dang Dung.³⁹⁰ Yang had put his

³⁸⁷ Here, in addition to Bao Loc, the *QSL* entry also mentions An Bien, to the west of Bao Loc, which may be an area close to the Dulong mines.

³⁸⁸ This accords with or reflects Guangxi governor Yang Xifu's earlier claim that the majority of the rebels in Bao Loc were Qing subjects, see *QSLGX excerpts*, QL8.5.29.

³⁸⁹ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL8.8.29.

³⁹⁰ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL8.9.30.

finger on the legacy of the Mo in Annan, but it was a vague identification, probably based on a casual perusal of any of a number of late Ming authors. In particular, the late seventeenth-century persons and events that had brought the Mo to Sicheng were not mentioned.

But new evidence was coming to light that lent credence, at least, to the idea that the Sicheng Mo saw themselves in the light of the Mac heritage. Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general Tsereng reported finding in the clothing of Liang letters from the bandit leader Mo Zhengchen to his brothers, Mo Zao and Mo Kua. (The similarity of the circumstances of these reports suggests that this Mo Zhengchen was the same as the previously-mentioned Mo Nengren aka Mo Zhengpao, and Mo Bao.) The new twist that Tsereng had identified was that the letters made mention of a certain Cen Jikang, the brother-in-law of the rebel leader Mo Zhengchen. It appears that Cen was claiming to be a Mac/Mo and operating in Annan, with the intent of carving a minor kingdom for himself. It also seems that Cen was at odds with Mo Zhengchen. The letters to Zhengchen's brothers in Sicheng requested that they send, in return with Liang, the clan genealogy (*di an*³⁹¹) to resolve the matter. This genealogy (*an di tu ce*) was soon discovered and confiscated by the Qing commander at Sicheng. Perhaps with more acumen or transparency than Yang Xifu, Tsereng saw the case as posing a clear and serious threat, representing an instance of Qing subjects conspiring with foreign bandits and an attempt to resurrect a long-buried grievance.³⁹²

In fact, cases of Qing subjects engaging in adventuring in Annan caused the Qing court anxiety in part because it had not developed a clear understanding of how to prevent or respond to this kind of activity. Events transpiring on the border had the additional, tricky characteristics

³⁹¹ This may refer to a state-mandated genealogy, first instituted by the Ming.

³⁹² *QSLGX excerpts*, QL8.10.30.

of being fast-moving, threatening, and remote from the court, which strained the functionality of bureaucratic communication and decision-making. One such case plunged the emperor and Yang Xifu into misunderstanding and embarrassment. In the summer of 1743, Yang reported to the court his capture of two suspects, a certain Zhou Daonan and Huang Han, both Qing subjects, in connection with the uprising in Bao Loc in Annam. They had a reputation for being crafty, unpredictable, and cruel. Yang indicated that, while keeping these two under careful guard, he planned to try them along with other suspects he anticipated capturing soon. Qianlong replied to Yang, saying, “This type should be punished severely to make an example to others; do not give them any chance to escape their condemnation.”³⁹³

Several months later, at the beginning of autumn, Yang reported on the conclusion of the case of Zhou Daonan and Huang Han. Huang Han had been convicted of going to Annam and participating in rebellion there, while Zhou Daonan was convicted of recruiting men for the same purpose. Referring to Qianlong’s instructions to make an example of these suspects, Yang reported that he had ordered them publicly beat to death.

The emperor responded to this by trying to distance himself from Yang’s actions. He described Yang’s actions as “extremely foolhardy.” Qianlong explained that he had been concerned that Yang would allow the suspects to wriggle out of a conviction. He had therefore urged severity to encourage Yang to expedite the case. Yang, Qianlong explained, had misunderstood his instructions to mean have the suspects killed on the spot.³⁹⁴

Clearly, beating convicts to death in public before due process had been completed had crossed the line. But had this course of action been the foolish, overzealous mistake of a field

³⁹³ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.5.29.

³⁹⁴ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.8.29.

official or had it been in the emperor's mind and implied in his written instructions? A month later, Qianlong felt compelled to explain himself again before ordering Yang scrutinized by the Board of Personnel on account of his handling of this case. The emperor said,

Reading Yang's memorial, We were overcome with horror. The reason for the rescript We wrote was because it is common for convicted criminals, knowing they are doomed, to try to implicate many other people and make the case go on and on, in order to extend their lives for as long as possible. In Yang's memorial, he had written, "once other Han troublemakers are apprehended, I will propose sentences for them together." This suggested to Us that he was inclined to allow these suspects to get up to their tricks and drag out the case. So, We wrote in Our rescript that he should immediately deal with the case with severity in order to encourage him to quickly try the case, report it, make clear the appropriate statutes and punishments for the case, and thus magnify Our imperial code. It was Yang Xifu's misinterpretation of Our intentions that led to the abrupt death of Huang Han and the others by beating. Now, it is true that these suspects were due to face death, so Yang is not guilty of causing the mistaken death of innocent men, but it is nonetheless necessary to make clear Yang's fault in this. Imagine if he had been guilty of such a misunderstanding in the case of suspects who were not guilty—well, the dead cannot come back to life!

Qianlong could not help adding, in conclusion, "This business of Yang Xifu, really, it was extremely foolhardy!"³⁹⁵

Formulating a systematic border regulation

³⁹⁵ QSLGX excerpts, QL8.10.6.

Cases like this exemplified the problems in ad hoc responses to border issues and prompted Qing field officials to start formulating proposals to institute a more systematic regulation of the border. Some proposals were focused on the redistribution of administrative and military resources in the border area.

In the first half of 1744, Tsereng, the Guangxi-Guangdong governor-general, saw Nanning, the major city in the southeast of the province, as a strategic prefecture in what he called ‘the Miao frontier.’ He noted, however, that there were no military officers assigned exclusively to its city defense, i.e. it had no *cheng shou zhuan yuan*. In fact, Nanning was the headquarters of Zuojiang *zhen*, which commanded four brigades (*ying*). Tsereng proposed designating one of the four brigades for city defense duty.³⁹⁶

Soon after, Yang Xifu, the outgoing Guangxi governor, proposed switching the subordination of two prefectures from circuits in eastern and central Guangxi to circuits farther west in order to facilitate policing functions such as investigation and patrol. He proposed switching Sicheng, the former heart of *tusi* power and where the Mac had been relocated, from the Youjiang circuit in north-central Guangxi to Zuojiang circuit, overseeing the border area with Annan. Similarly, Yang requested to have Xunzhou prefecture transferred from “the core” (*fu di*) of eastern Guangxi to the Youjiang circuit.³⁹⁷ Overall, these changes represented a subtle extension of the province’s judicial system toward the west. In particular, the shift of Sicheng to the Zuojiang circuit undoubtedly reflects concerns with handling cases of illicit border-crossing connected with Mo/Mac of Sicheng. In addition, Yang also continued his interest in developing Ningming, the newly formed department near the border. As part of the ongoing process of

³⁹⁶ QSLGX excerpts, QL9.2.25.

³⁹⁷ QSLGX excerpts, QL9.3.15.

shifting the center of power in the former Siming *tusi* domains from the *tusi* headquarters at Mingjiang to Ningming, Yang requested to build a new granary at Ningming and transfer significant grain reserves from Mingjiang.

The centerpiece, however, of efforts to establish a successful border regulation in the mid-1740s was the creation of a passport system to regulate cross-border trade. Towards the end of 1744, Maertai, who had previously held the governor-generalship of Guangdong-Guangxi, was once again appointed to the post. His predecessor, Tsereng, and the Guangxi governor Tuoyong had already made some analysis and suggestions about the regulation of cross-border trade in 1743 and 1744.³⁹⁸ Following these earlier reports and analysis, Maertai submitted a report to the Qing court in the winter of 1744, detailing the status of the gates and passes on the border with Annan.³⁹⁹ Furthermore, focusing on the pass at Youcun and the gates at Ping'er and Shuikou, Maertai proposed new measures for regulating traffic at these important points.

In his report, Maertai grouped the passes and gates along the border into several clusters, corresponding to the jurisdictions responsible for them. These clusters included some that were completely under *tusi* supervision, some which were under the joint surveillance of imperial troops and *tusi*, and others which were completely under mainstream administration and imperial troops. Top on Maertai's list was the border area that formed part of the *tusi* domain of Sizhou. (This was what remained of the formerly larger and more influential Siming *tusi* domain.) There were more than fifty border passes in this area. Because of their strategic, logistic, and commercial importance, these passes were subject to joint patrol by imperial and *tusi* soldiers, according to Maertai. In addition, various passes had been sealed by heaps of stones or palisades.

³⁹⁸ For Tsereng's and Tuoyong's reports and recommendations, see discussion in Chapter Five.

³⁹⁹ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL9.10.3. The paragraphs following are based on Maertai's memorial as recorded in this *QSL* entry.

The second largest cluster of border passes, totaling more than thirty, formed part of the *tusi* domains of Qianlong, Siling and Xialei. Maertai reported that the *tusi* of this area had established captains and guards to patrol the passes and had filled in the appropriate places with stone and wood obstructions.

In another area of the border, which stretched between Sizhou *tusi* domain and the mainstream jurisdiction of Xiao Zhen'an in Zhen'an prefecture, there were six passes and a number of *ka* posts. Maertai claimed that this area was well-covered by the imperial troops.

However, Maertai was not satisfied with the situation of the border passes within the mainstream jurisdictions of Nanning, Taiping, and Zhen'an prefectures. He proposed to order the local officials of these jurisdictions to adjust or increase the number of guards for the border area as necessary and make inspection of the passes each winter, rebuilding the stone walls, repairing the palisades, and dredging silted-up moats as necessary. In particular, Maertai was concerned with the Zhen'an section of the border. On account of the ongoing rebellion in Bao Loc in Annan, Maertai proposed creating new *ka* posts at six locations. Soldiers from Zhen'an were to be transferred to these *ka* posts to serve as border patrols.

The pass at Youcun in the former Siming domain was the focus of Maertai's report. Maertai noted the problem that, while Ping'er and Shuikou had been designated the official portals for merchant traffic, Ky Lua in Lang Son, near Youcun pass, had emerged as the main emporium in the border area. But, in addition to also noting how the landless poor of Mingjiang depended on portage for their livelihood, Maertai pointed out that the Qing imperial presence was a significant factor in creating the trade in Mingjiang. He noted that merchants were attracted to this area because of the imperial brigade stationed at Mingjiang, presumably because it offered opportunities to provision the brigade.

Maertai's position was that Youcun needed to be opened to facilitate merchant traffic and the livelihood of the people of Mingjiang. The danger, though, was the usual one, that deviant Qing subjects and bandits would use the portal to escape the law. But Maertai formulated the issue further by saying that, once opened, "there must be numbers that can be checked" (*you shu ke ji*) for the traffic through Youcun pass. He also expressed the opinion that, whatever good intentions the officials might have in regard to the people of the borderlands, they could not be treated as if they were garden-variety commoners (*bianmin bu ru qimin*).

To counter these problems of the border, Maertai proposed to implement a system of inspection for merchants involved in cross-border trade. He noted that a merchants' guildhall (referred to as *huiguan* and *gongsuo* in *QSL* entry) already existed in Ningming. The leaders of the merchants were called 'masters of the sojourning merchants' (*kezhang*), and Maertai proposed that the Qing local officials at Ningming department should ensure that worthy candidates were selected for this position.⁴⁰⁰ These merchant leaders would then form the first link in a multi-step process of inspection and documentation.

When merchants prepared to travel to Annan to trade, the merchant masters would be required to record the name, place of registration (i.e. native place), export merchandise, and destination of the merchant. The merchant master was then to report it to Ningming department. Once this information was received and verified, the department would then issue a document called a *yinpao*. In addition, the merchant's information would be engraved and posted in public on a wooden placard. This was to deter the merchant masters from trying to take advantage of the merchants for whom they were reporting, Maertai explained. At the same time, the porters

⁴⁰⁰ It is not clear here whether the *kezhang* positions were created by Ningming department in the first place, or whether Maertai is suggesting that the department should intervene in the selection of a heretofore autonomous institution.

from the villages of Mingjiang whom the merchant had hired would also be required to have their name and address recorded. Moreover, the porters would be required to give a guarantee for themselves (*qu jie*) in return for a *yinpao* document. Once the merchant and porters arrived at the Youcun pass in Mingjiang, the assistant magistrate (*litu tongzhi*) of Mingjiang would be responsible for inspecting their *yinpao* documents. When these were found to be in order, the assistant magistrate was to issue a separate *yaopai* document and allow the party to exit the pass into Annan.

Maertai then described the return journey in his system of border regulation. The assistant magistrate at Mingjiang would be required to admit for reentry into China only those merchants and porters who had both *yinpao* and *yaopai* documents. As part of the procedure of reentry, the assistant magistrate would record the name of the merchant and where he had returned from in Annan. This information would be forwarded to Ningming and double-checked by the department officials. It appears that Maertai was operating on the assumption that export trade required only a relatively short period of time, because he made allowance for merchants who were importing goods from Annan to remain in the country for up to half a month. Once this limit of approximately fifteen days was exceeded, without the return of the merchant, the authorities at Ningming were to bring in the headmen and guarantors of the merchants and porters for interrogation.

With these measures in place, Maertai proposed that Youcun pass could be opened for lawful trade. In his plan for border trade, Maertai attempted to integrate the gates at Ping'er and Shuikou with the soon-to-be-opened pass at Youcun. The gates at Ping'er and Shuikou were located at a waterway. Maertai pointed out that this presented an easy opportunity for people to cross the border illicitly simply by paddling any small vessel across in the middle of night. To

prevent this, Maertai proposed installing iron chains drawn across the channel at Ping'er and Shuikou. These chains could then be lifted on the five-numeral and ten-numeral days of the month for trade, but otherwise obstruct illicit traffic. Furthermore, Maertai designated the three trade portals for different markets in Annan. Merchant traffic through Ping'er and Shuikou would be restricted to the destinations of Thai Nguyen and Muc Ma while merchants exiting from the Youcun pass would be allowed to trade at Ky Lua in Lang Son only. Annan officials, in Maertai's plan, were to obstruct, apprehend, and return to Qing authorities any Qing subjects who attempted to exceed these limits on their destinations in Annan.

Finally, Maertai addressed the complicated issue of Qing subjects who had taken wives in Annan. He proposed granting Qing merchants, or those who were otherwise Qing subjects, a half-year grace period in which to return to their native places in Qing China. In a sense, this was a grace period for Annan officials as well, since in Maertai's plan, they were to identify and return these Qing subjects to Qing authorities for relocation. Those Qing subjects who had no place of registration in China, or at least none that the Qing authorities could determine, would be relocated to prefectures in central and eastern Guangxi. Maertai did, however, recognize that there should be provision for those Qing subjects in Annan for whom it was difficult to return to Qing China or who simply did not want to return. These included Qing subjects who had married Annan women, who had children from these marriages, who had a domicile in Annan, and who owned and worked fields or other productive property. Of these Qing subjects who had established themselves in Annan, if any were willing to continue living abroad as such, they would be allowed to do so, but forbidden to ever return across the border to China. Although Maertai did not put it in the following terms, in effect, this would curtail their Qing subjecthood and make them at least potentially Annan subjects. Looking to future eventualities, Maertai also

proposed a complete ban on future marriages between Qing subjects and women in Annan. He expected Annan officials to cooperate in identifying such illicit marriages, separating the two parties, and returning the Qing subject to Qing authorities for repatriation to his native place and discipline by the local magistrate.⁴⁰¹

Events in the winter of 1744/45 and the spring of 1745 bore out the concerns Maertai had about cross-border trade, especially as it passed through the Youcun pass at Mingjiang. At the same time, the response of the field administration to these events reflected the congealing of approaches to Annan refugees, smuggling, and grain safety in the Qing borderlands. Following Maertai's brief return to Guangdong-Guangxi, a new governor-general, Nasutu, was appointed in the winter of 1744/45. Nasutu expressed concern at the beginning of his tenure that the threat of famine could drive people from Annan across the border to grain-rich Guangxi. Based on observations that the ongoing turmoil in Annan had kept peasants from their fields and merchants away from the borderlands, Nasutu speculated that grain prices were likely to be high across the border. He indicated, probably with reference to the uprising in Bao Loc, that he was prepared to apprehend any Qing troublemakers or Annan bandits who tried to cross the border to steal grain. He was also prepared for the eventuality of poor, starved Annanese coming to beg at the border. In contrast to the refugee situation faced by Qingfu and Yang Xifu in 1742, Nasutu did not entertain any thoughts of hosting refugee camps in the Qing border jurisdictions. His goal was to keep Annan refugees on the Annan side of the border and arrange for Annan authorities to resettle them in Annan. For Nasutu, a functioning border was at the heart of foreign relations. A functioning border needed to be able to distinguish between good, law-abiding commoners, in this case, the Annan refugees, and troublemakers, here including deviant Qing subjects and

⁴⁰¹ QSLGX excerpts, QL9.10.3.

Annan bandits. In this way, Nasutu said, “the way of ‘cherishing men from afar’ can be achieved through our border defense.”⁴⁰²

Again in the spring of 1745, Nasutu reported that grain prices were high in Annan. He feared that Qing merchants were engaged in illicit export of grain to Annan in return for salt. It was not only the flows of goods that concerned Nasutu; there was the added danger that this sort of illicit, unregulated border activity could nurture the seeds of border incidents. Nasutu’s response to this problem was typical in so far as he stepped up inspection and patrol of the border, but he also attempted to address the problem on the basis of an understanding of the local economy. He observed that Zhen’an, a recently incorporated prefecture at the far southeast of the province, had traditionally relied on Annan for its salt supply. To address this root issue, Nasutu proposed to make additional orders of state monopoly salt for Zhen’an and any other border jurisdictions that needed it, to divert this demand away from the supply across the border.⁴⁰³

More generally, Nasutu attempted to strengthen the surveillance and security of the border with existing resources and to identify the weak links. He acknowledged that, given the long and porous border with Annan and the current unrest there, the goal of sealing all possible routes to Annan was simply not feasible. Rather, he proposed a baseline for distributing the resources of surveillance and security. At all strategic points of the first order along the border, Nasutu proposed establishing two *ka* posts that would form a catchment area. With his remaining resources, he would establish single *ka* posts at points along the border of secondary strategic importance. These *ka* posts would be assigned imperial Green Standard soldiers or militiamen of the *tu* domains.

⁴⁰² *QSLGX excerpts*, QL9.11.30.

⁴⁰³ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL10.2.30.

To use a physiological metaphor, we might say that, if border infrastructure and deployed troops were the skin, senses, and orifices of the frontier body politic, then *baojia* were the organs and cells that regulated the body internally. *Baojia* organizations, at the most local level, were expected to nip deviant border-crossing behavior at the bud. But it was found, Nasutu reported, that not only were there villages in the border area that had not yet been organized into *baojia*, but some *baojia* heads were in fact running smuggling operations themselves. Instead of preventing unregulated traffic across the border, *baojia* had thus become organizations that facilitated the traffic.⁴⁰⁴

The end of the Mac transborder threat

In the spring of 1745, signs of trouble again appeared across the border. It was reported that bandits in Annan had taken Ky Lua, the main market in Lang Son. Nasutu feared that the unrest might spill over into the border area at Youcun pass. He made a request to the court to postpone the upcoming audience of one of the border commanders with the emperor at the capital. Nasutu wanted someone knowledgeable and experienced on the ground until the crisis passed.⁴⁰⁵

As a matter of fact, the appointment of border personnel was becoming a sensitive matter to the Qing court. Zuojiang *zhen*, headquartered at Nanning, was the military command nearest the Annan border, and its commander was thus responsible for the Qing court's first response in case of any military incident. The emperor had already found it necessary to correct a somewhat braggart and lax attitude on the part of its commander, Yang Gang, in the fall of 1744.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁴ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL10.3.30.

⁴⁰⁵ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL10.3.30.

⁴⁰⁶ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL9.8.30.

Qianlong still thought Yang Gang was lacking in his preparedness in the summer of 1745, despite Yang reporting that he had implemented a rigorous program of drills for soldiers to be deployed to the outlying checkpoints (*tang xun*). Yang stressed the centrality of training, but Qianlong rebutted him, saying that in the art of generalship, it was the commander's knowledge and experience that was of the highest importance.⁴⁰⁷ The last straw came when the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general recommended transferring Yang elsewhere and bringing in a commander with more experience and gravitas. Yang had been doing a thorough job overseeing the border, admitted the governor-general, but he was always thinking of engaging in military exploits across the border. The governor-general was concerned Yang might spark a border incident. Qianlong agreed with this assessment of Yang's reliability. The emperor noted that Yang was due for a capital audience with him soon. He would find another assignment for the trigger-happy commander.⁴⁰⁸

This was a prudent and timely move, for the Youjiang commander, who appears to have taken over some of the border duties pending a new Zuojiang commander's arrival, reported new movement by the Mac forces at the beginning of the winter of 1745/46. After retaking Bao Loc in the summer, the Mac rebels led by Mo Kangwu had been found gathering in areas a mere seven or eight days journey from the border. Bi Ying, the Youjiang commander, was primarily concerned for the military bases at Guishun and Xiao Zhen'an. He created some additional *ka* posts at select points of strategic value, increased the number of soldiers and the frequency of patrol. As he expressed to the emperor in his memorial, his aim was to prevent the bandits from crossing the border to steal grain. Qianlong approved of his measures, but emphasized that it was

⁴⁰⁷ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL10.7.28.

⁴⁰⁸ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL10.8.30.

enough to keep the bandits from harassing the border areas, i.e. to avoid border incidents or the need for interference across the border.⁴⁰⁹

Bi Ying was primarily concerned with Mac movements as they might impact the border; it remained unclear, however, how successful was the Mac uprising in Annan. Later in the winter, Tsereng, having returned to the post of governor-general of Guangdong-Guangxi, reported that the Mac rebels had expanded their sphere of control beyond Annan's border provinces to provinces further south and even in the Annan core. Tsereng forwarded a report he had received from his subordinates at the border, which spoke approvingly of both Mac actions and their chances of completing a reconquest of Annan. Mo Kangwu was said to now control the majority of Annan territory, including the provinces of Hai Duong (*chu dong*), Son Nam (*chu nan*), Tuyen Quang, Thanh Hoa, Yen Quang, and Thai Nguyen, while the Annan court held only the two provinces of Son Tay (*chu xi*) and Kinh Bac (*chu bei*). Even Mac actions in their areas of conquest suggested their anticipation of resuming legitimate rule. The report from the border said that the Mac did not engage in slaughter in the areas they took under their control, claiming that they were fighting only to avenge the descendants of Mac Dang Dung. They spared the Annan officials they captured and instructed them to return to their posts and encourage the populace to resume their livelihoods. While pursuing their enemies, the Mac forces respected the Qing border, not allowing anyone to cross the border. Moreover, the Mac leaders showed an understanding and respect of the Qing and its laws in the language they used and the regulations they issued.

This enthusiastic report from a subordinate in the border area resembled a typical Ming attitude, concerned with evaluating the possibilities of potential Annan rulers and their

⁴⁰⁹ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL10.10.29.

legitimacy in order to determine the mode of intervention. Tsereng, however, was firmly in line with the Qing/Qianlong policy of vigilant non-intervention. In his memorial, he showed no excitement at the Mac developments. Annan had been in turmoil for many years now; this is nothing new and does not merit a shift in approach, he seemed to say. His response to the news, which received the emperor's approval, was to tighten border defense and make a show of "steadfast calm" to Annan. The goal, Tsereng insisted, was to prevent any illicit border-crossing in either direction or smuggling of grain or prohibited goods.⁴¹⁰

And perhaps Tsereng was far-sighted in his restraint because in the summer of 1746 he reported a situation in stark contrast with the winter report on the Mac. Mo Kangwu had been defeated by the forces of the Annan court and had fled with several thousand men and women to That Nguyen chau at the border in Lang Son, conducting raids from there on a regular basis. Again, with the Qianlong's approval, Tsereng focused on maintaining a vigilant defense of the border and preventing the export of grain.⁴¹¹

Henceforth, the Mac-led or Mac-inspired rebellion in Annan appears to have fizzled out over the next few years. In 1749, the Youjiang zhen commander reported that Mo Kangwu was dead, while another Mac leader, Mo Bao, barely held on to Bao Loc as his supporters and grain supplies dwindled.⁴¹² A year later, a former supporter of the Mac had come out of hiding and was raiding an area in Lang Son along the envoy route, forcing Qing officials to escort returning Annan tribute envoys to a different point of the border to make the crossing.⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL10.12.dingmao.

⁴¹¹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL11.5.jiazi.

⁴¹² *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL13.11.gengchen.

⁴¹³ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL15.3.renshen.

Mac supporters or invokers undoubtedly continued to surface in the Annan borderlands, but they no longer figured as a major trans-border threat. With the reestablishment of the Annan court's authority in the borderlands, the Qing court shifted its attention to managing relations with it. In 1751, an Annan official requested the help of their Qing counterparts in investigating the continued existence of Mac in Sicheng. The Annanese had captured the leader of some remaining Mac partisans, who was himself surnamed Mac/Mo. This man Mo Chengchen/Mac Thanh Tran claimed that his father and grandfather were alive in Sicheng. In their response to this request, the senior field officials in Guangxi remained focused on rooting out the problem of trans-border political adventuring. Despite noting that Mac descendants had been relocated in 1741/1742 from Sicheng to Anhui province in eastern China on account of their political activism, the Guangxi field officials feared that there might be remnants of the clan in Sicheng and planned to investigate the matter.⁴¹⁴ Qianlong, as he explained to the Grand Council in response to the Annan request, was more concerned with the danger of creating precedent for Annan involvement in Qing subjects and territory. He asserted that, as the Mac resided in Sicheng, they were thus subjects of Qing China, not under the authority of Annan. To entertain these requests by Annan officials could create a precedent for future requests and, soon, the Qing border jurisdictions would be busy with police work on behalf of a vassal court. Not only was this an affront to the dignity of the Qing court, but it would also create the potential for a border dispute between the two courts. The emperor instructed the field officials to explain to their Annan colleagues that the relocation of the Mac to Anhui represented a special dispensation towards a small nation (*fuzi xiao bang ge wai endian*). Now that peace had returned to the borderlands, said Qianlong, Annan officials should mind their own business and stop repeatedly

⁴¹⁴ I have not been able to find a *QSL* entry dated to QL6 regarding this relocation of the Mo to Anhui.

requesting investigations into the possible existence of Mac in Qing territory if they did not want to find themselves abusing the favor they received.⁴¹⁵

Border incident as diplomatic row

In the years immediately following the defeat of Mo Kangwu's uprising, several incidents involving the representatives of the Qing and Annan courts at the border reveal how entangled intercourt diplomacy and the border had become. As the Annan court regained control of the border provinces of Lang Son and Cao Bang, their policing operations began brushing against the border defenses created by the Qing in the preceding decade. An incident involving the accidental deaths of some Qing border guards in 1747 demonstrated the Qing court's attempt to cultivate a cooperative relationship with Annan while asserting the inviolability of its borders and its prerogative as suzerain to decide matters of justice. Qianlong's characteristic obscurantism toward his field officials on these matters, while undoubtedly distressing to these men, reflected not so much arbitrariness or indecision but rather an attempt to assert and maintain hierarchical relations in a space that lent itself to laterality. The actual outcomes of the juridical process were less important than control of that process.

The incident itself was quite straightforward; few new details emerged during the several exchanges between the Qing court and its field officials over the course of a couple of years. One night in the late, winter months of 1747, an Annanese captain led several Annanese soldiers in pursuit of bandits—possibly former Mac supporters—who had plundered an Annan village. This was near the Qing border jurisdiction of Guishun department. The bandits fled up a slope where a Qing border post, Genghan *ka*, was located. Hearing a commotion outside the walls of the checkpoint, the Qing border guards rushed out to prevent anyone crossing the border. Just at the

⁴¹⁵ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL16.11.jiazi.

same time, the Annan captain and his soldiers arrived on the scene, and in the melee in the dark, the Annan party accidentally killed two Qing border guards and wounded and carried away two others.⁴¹⁶

Despite the simple nature of the incident, finding an appropriate response turned out to be an uncertain matter for Qing provincial officials dealing with the case. And it was not for lack of experience. The governor-general at the time of the incident was Tsereng, a senior member of the imperial administration with prior experience on the Northwestern frontier and an earlier term as Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general. Following the incident, Tsereng, along with the governor and provincial commander of Guangxi, wrote a memorial to the Qing court, describing the incident in detail and reporting that the two soldiers who had been carried away alive had already been returned to the Qing authorities by their Annan counterparts. Moreover, they had written to the king of Annan to have him determine who had dealt the killing blows to the other Qing border guards and to bring the culprits to the border to be executed there in front of representatives from both courts.

At the same time, Tsereng sent the emperor a secret memorial to notify him of his plans and to request his discretion. Tsereng admitted that he saw nothing sinister about the incident; it really did appear to be an honest accident, understandable as it had happened in the dark of night and in hot pursuit of bandits. “But,” Tsereng pointed out, “this has to do with a border pass and thus the body politic of the Celestial Court. It will not do to treat it simply as an accident, as it might lead to a slackening of the defense of our border.” For this reason, Tsereng explained, he had written jointly with the other provincial officials to order the king of Annan to investigate and deal with the matter. In the letter, he had lied and told the king that the incident had not been

⁴¹⁶ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL12.10.bingshu & 14.5.dingmao.

reported to the Qing court yet, in the hope that, with some room to maneuver, the king would be motivated to promptly make right the matter. In this light, Tsereng requested Qianlong's forbearance, to postpone issuing an edict on this matter until the king of Annan had made his reply and the provincial officials could report again on that development.⁴¹⁷

A few months later, in the spring of 1748, Tsereng reported that a subject of Annan had come to the border and had presented an accusation. It is not clear what this accusation consisted of, but Tsereng interpreted it as a frivolous attempt, possibly directed by the Annan court, to shift the blame for the incident to the Qing side. Tsereng turned away the Annan subject and urged the Annan court to comply with the earlier instructions in the letter to the king of Annan. Tsereng possibly thought he was taking a hardline position here, in not entertaining Annan machinations, but Qianlong was not satisfied. The emperor was indignant at this move imputed to the Annan court and described it as "exceedingly sly." Speaking to the Grand Council, he exclaimed, "These provincial officials should not turn a blind eye to this. They need to hold Annan responsible, regardless of the fact that it involves foreign territory." As usual, Qianlong was adept at hindsight. He chastised the Guangxi provincial officials for being too lenient. They should have held for questioning the Annan subject who had brought the accusation instead of returning him to his country and merely reminding the Annan court to act compliantly.⁴¹⁸

Having received the emperor's disapproval of their handling of the matter, Tsereng and the other provincial officials changed tack and sought to force Annan's hand. Tsereng reported that the provincial officials had issued a two-month deadline to the Annan court; if the culprits were not handed over, the provincial officials would give orders to mass the forces of the

⁴¹⁷ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL12.10.bingshu.

⁴¹⁸ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL13.2.shuyan.

regional command and demand the culprits' extradition. But there was no pleasing Qianlong. He complained that Tsereng had first erred on the side of leniency and now was being too harsh, blowing the matter out of proportion. In arguing against Tsereng's actions, the emperor invoked the usual tropes of Annan's long-standing compliant attitude, the location of the country beyond the pale, and the silliness of such a large empire brow-beating a small nation in the remote wilds. At the same time, he also presented a slippery-slope argument: if we take punitive military action over such a minor incident, then a rift will form between the two courts and any incident will become an issue of contention that will just grow and grow. In fact, Qianlong's argument to the Grand Council almost seems excessive in his attempt to rein in the provincial officials and keep to a non-interventionist position. The emperor said that, in the first place, the border guards' deaths were accidental, and moreover the king of Annan appeared submissive in his replies to the Qing court. No rash action should be taken, he instructed, but the provincial officials should be exhorted to handle this matter with great care. They must avoid staining the Qing's dignity while bringing order to the borderlands. Qianlong also seemed to begin to appreciate the problem his obscurantism had on the decision-making of his field officials, even if he did not express it in those terms. Thus, the emperor also instructed Tsereng not to overcorrect himself this time by appearing weak to the foreign court.⁴¹⁹

Half a year later, by the beginning of 1749, the governor of Guangxi could report to the Qing court that the king of Annan had agreed to turn over the culprits of the Genghan *ka* incident. The king had made multiple pleas for leniency for these men, and Shulu, the Qing governor, lent his support to these pleas. But Qianlong was intent on establishing, without doubt, the inviolability of the Qing border. "It is an unpardonable crime for foreign barbarians to slaughter

⁴¹⁹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL13.5.renzi.

Chinese border guards,” the emperor asserted. “It is the duty of senior provincial officials to uphold the law and pass sentence on such a case.” He allowed that there might be room for lightening the sentence on account of the king of Annan’s consistent submissiveness and in order to demonstrate Qing virtue in “cherishing men from afar” but any such gesture would be strictly a matter of the emperor’s discretion and grace.⁴²⁰ A couple of months later, Shulu reported that Annan had turned over the culprits at the border. He ordered his subordinates to interrogate the suspects and determined that it was true that the deaths were caused by accident on account of the dark night. Nonetheless, Shulu dismissed the possibility of sentencing the culprits according to Qing laws for commoners (*neidi pingren lii*). He recommended executing them at the boundary between the two countries.⁴²¹

Having demonstrated to his field officials and the Annan court the inviolability of the border and the judicial sway of Qing justice in border incidents, Qianlong was quite willing to show mercy to the culprits and give the king of Annan his due. In the summer of 1749, the Qing Board of Punishments gave its recommendations for the case. The Board noted that, as reported in a letter from the king of Annan, the Annan captain who had led the party in pursuit of the bandits had already been relieved of his post and punished by the king. In the same letter, the king again pleaded that the men responsible for killing the Qing border guards be tried according to law but with consideration of the accidental nature of the deaths. Nonetheless, the Board recommended convicting the two culprits of the crime of “soldiers acting unlawfully and causing disorder while on campaign” (*chuzheng bing wei fa luan ji zheng fa li*) and executing them immediately in the presence of Qing and Annan officials at the boundary of the two realms. In

⁴²⁰ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL13.11.dingchou.

⁴²¹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL14.1.dingchou.

addition, the Board recommended ordering the king of Annan to punish with severity the captain who had led the pursuit.

Despite the several exchanges with his provincial officials in the past months, the Qing emperor, in responding to the Board's recommendations, returned to the position that his field officials had been urging all along. Qianlong acknowledged that the Annan soldiers had no intention of harming the Qing border guards and that the matter had been an unfortunate but sincere mistake. Moreover, the king of Annan had responded to the communique from the Guangxi provincial officials and had not shielded the culprits. On this basis, the emperor spared the culprits from execution and ordered that they be turned over to the king of Annan to be disposed of as he saw fit.⁴²² While the whole affair may seem a tempest in a teapot, it served to establish for the Qing court a precedent for dealing with Annan over border incidents.

Conclusion

The 1740s crisis in Vietnam presented a challenge for Qing diplomacy and governance at the border. The Qing court aimed to preserve its diplomatic relationship with the Le court by fulfilling, at least in form, its obligations as suzerain while at the same time minimizing the possibilities of unrest spreading to Qing territory and avoiding a political or military intervention. This strategy engaged Qing provincial authorities in dealing with a number of problems typical of modern borders, including providing humanitarian relief, distinguishing between subjects of different states, gathering intelligence on the political situation in a neighboring state, and processing refugees. The containment strategy, however, rested implicitly on the assumption that the subjects of each court remained within the respective territories. Eventually, however, the Qing court came to realize that not only were some of its subjects living and working in Vietnam

⁴²² *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL14.5.dingmao.

but also that Qing subjects played significant roles in the political unrest in Vietnam at the time. The Qing court did not find it feasible or desirable to attempt to enforce an absolute prohibition of movement across the border. Rather, it chose to implement a passport system (discussed further in Chapter Five), along with border infrastructure and personnel, to regulate and monitor the movement of Qing subjects across the border into Vietnam. This system was recognized by the Le court as it recovered a stable rule of their kingdom and became a feature of Qing-Le diplomatic relations.

CHAPTER 5

CROSS-BORDER TRADE AND THE PASSPORT SYSTEM, 1744-EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

The most significant institutional change at the border in the period following the 1740s crisis was the creation of a passport system by the Qing authorities. The design and evolution of the system tells us not only about Qing attempts to regulate cross-border traffic but also reveals the contours of the circulation of persons and goods that it sought to control.

Trade and the border before 1744

In 1744, as recounted in Chapter Four, the Qing court established a border regulation that was designed to prevent Annan subjects from entering China and Chinese subjects from causing trouble in Annan. The system was not, however, designed as a ban on commercial intercourse. It allowed for a regulated system of passports for Chinese merchants to travel to Annan and trade, although no reciprocal system allowing Annan subjects to do likewise in China was ever envisioned.

Little is known about the land-based trade across the Guangxi and Annan border before 1744. What is clear is that there was a series of mountain passes (*ai* 隘) that served as points of entry between the territories of the two countries. These mountain passes were guarded, on the Chinese side, variously by imperial troops or the soldiers of the *tusi* domains and were sometimes fortified to allow for better defense and surveillance. It is not clear what arrangements Annan had in place for control of these corridors.

The phrase commonly used to describe the China-Annan border was “the three border crossings and hundred mountain passes” (*san guan bai ai* 三关百隘). This referred to the three border crossings (*guan* 关) of Ping'er 平而, Shuikou 水口, and Zhennan 镇南 and the more than

a hundred mountain passes along the border between China and Annam. This formula appears to have only applied to Annam's border with Guangxi but not that with Yunnan or Guangdong.

Sometime during the Yongzheng reign (r.1723-36), Jin Hong 金鉉, the governor of Guangxi, is said to have designated the two border crossings of Ping'er and Shuikou as the sole portals for commercial traffic with Annam, while leaving Zhennan for the exclusive use of envoy travel and other official business and keeping the remaining "hundred mountain passes" sealed against exchange or transit.⁴²³ Ping'er and Shuikou were near Longzhou and Jin Hong's system undoubtedly reflects Longzhou's longstanding importance as a hub of trade, if not a pre-existing system of regulation.

In addition to the border crossings and mountain passes of Guangxi, there were other border nodes along the Guangdong and Yunnan sections of the border. In Guangdong, there was only one small section of the border, at Dongxing. Yunnan shared a border of significant territorial extent with Annam, but the grasp of both states on this frontier was poorly defined, except at the important border crossing, Mabai, between Jianshui county, Lin'an prefecture on the Chinese side, and the Dulong mine, ruled by native officials who owed allegiance to the Le-Trinh court.

One minute detail that we have of the pre-1744 border trade is the apparent existence before this date of a Chinese merchant guildhall (*huiguan*) in Ningming, near the mountain pass of Youcun, which was to be opened to trade in the 1744 system.⁴²⁴

⁴²³ *Ming-Qing shiliao, geng bian* [*Ming-Qing historical materials, tenth collection*; hereafter *MQSLGB*] (Shanghai: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1960), 187a-191a.

⁴²⁴ *Qing shilu Guangxi ziliao jilu* [*Excerpts from the Qing Veritable Records concerning Guangxi*; hereafter *QSLGX excerpts*], v.1 (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1988), QL9.10.3.

More generally, some details from Qing memorials in the second half of the eighteenth century give a sense of the nature of the Guangxi-Vietnam trade. Little is known about the mode of this cross-border trade.⁴²⁵ The traders involved in the trade appeared to travel singly or in small groups and operated on small amounts of capital. Goods exported to Annan included: silk (*chouduan* 緞),⁴²⁶ cloth (textiles, cotton?; *bupi* 布疋), shoes (*xie* 鞋), socks (*wa* 襪), paper (*zhizhang* 纸张), pigment (*yanliao* 颜料), lamp oil (*dengyou* 灯油), loose-leaf tea (*chaye* 茶叶), white sugar (*baitang* 白糖), betel nut (*binlang* 檳榔), candies (candied fruit?; *tangguo* 糖果), tobacco (*yan* 烟), tobacco pipes (*yantong* 烟筒), crockery (*gangwan* 缸碗),⁴²⁷ and various kinds of common medicine (*xunchang yaocai* 寻常药材). Imports from Annan into China included:⁴²⁸ amomum villosum (*sharen* 砂仁), shouliang yam (dioscorea cirrhosa; *shulang* 薯蓣)⁴²⁹, white lead (*baiqian* 白铅), bamboo and other timber (*zhu mu* 竹木), star anise (*dahui* 大茴), and Annan silk (*Jiao juan* 交绢).⁴³⁰

⁴²⁵ Perhaps more can be garnered from a fictional source, the mid-17th century vernacular novel, Zhaoshibei: “Zou Annan yuma huan xingrong.” See Zhuoyuanting zhuren, *Zhaoshibei* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1956; 1985).

⁴²⁶ *MQSLGB*, v.3, 204a describes silk exports as *lingxing chouduan* 零星紬緞, suggesting that the trade in silk was small and perhaps only in small lots for household use by a small market of well-to-do families.

⁴²⁷ During my field trip to Lang Son in fall 2010, I noticed a banner at the Lang Son public library advertising an exhibit of Jingdezhen ware. Perhaps these were artifacts from Lang Son and suggests evidence for the eighteenth-century trade?

⁴²⁸ Curiously, this did not include metals. What happened to the metals, e.g. silver, mined in places like Songxing? Does it stay in Annan or come through to China apart from the official Guangxi borders? For example, does it get transported to Dulong/Mabai? Perhaps metals were transported to the coast and shipped to Chinese ports, e.g. Canton, by sea?

⁴²⁹ A medicinal plant. Li Tana discusses a wild yam, *cu nau*, produced in the six outer provinces and used to produce a brown dye; see her “Between Mountains and the Sea: Trades in Early Nineteenth-Century Northern Vietnam,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 74-75. Are these the same yams?

⁴³⁰ *MQSLGB*, 190b, and 204a. The trade goods listed in these two documents, memorials by Fukang’an and Guo Shixun respectively, differ slightly.

Qing precedents for passport control at other borders

Before and after implementing the 1744 passport system at the Guangxi-Annan border, the Qing had created similar systems at other borders of the empire. Two examples, for trade to Qing Central Asia and for trade to Mongolia, have been studied by other scholars. A passport system was created for Han Chinese merchants traveling to Khalkh (outer Mongolia) in 1720. Han Chinese merchants had to apply for a permit (*piao* 票) to travel and trade at the Lifanyuan in Beijing. These permits displayed the following information: the number of merchants and other personnel in the party, the goods they were allowed to carry, and their destination. The permits had to be obtained once a year, and stipulated a maximum number of porters and carts. On their way into Khalkh, the merchants had to submit their goods for inspection to Qing officials at designated towns (Kalgan, Khokh Khot, or Dolon-nuur). Merchants were required to complete their trade, return from Khalkh, and submit their permit to the Lifanyuan within the one-year period of validity of the permit. If they did so, they could reapply for a new one.⁴³¹

Following its conquest and creation of Xinjiang in 1757, the Qing court established a passport system for Chinese merchants from the Qing interior (*neidi* 内地) to travel and trade in Qing Central Asia. Merchants applied for the permits, called “road passes” (*lupiao* 路票), at places in the interior depending on which route they took: at Beijing, Zhangjiakou, or Guihua for the steppe route, and at Suzhou for the Gansu route. Identifying information was recorded on the permits issued, including the merchants’ names, number of persons in their party, native place (place of registration), age and physical appearance of the travelers, the goods carried, and their destination. In addition to these permits issued to merchants originating in the Qing interior,

⁴³¹ M. Sanjdorj, *Manchu Chinese Colonial Rule in Northern Mongolia*, trans. Urgunge Onon (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980), 33-34.

Qing authorities in Xinjiang also issued further permits for these merchants to travel beyond their original destination as well as permits for local East Turkestani merchants traveling within Xinjiang and foreign merchants entering Qing territory from Central Asia. Various Qing officials were required to inspect the travel permits at points along the routes to ensure that the merchants kept to their itinerary and did not exceed the goods they were allowed to trade in. These inspections and other evidence suggest that considerable information was circulated within the Qing bureaucracy about the movements of merchants and that the authorities were concerned to monitor and regulate the circulation of persons and goods with this permit system.⁴³²

Tsereng and Tuorong's analysis of trade and border-crossing problems, 1743-44

In the mid-1740s, Qing field officials began to see the problems in ad hoc responses to border issues and were prompted to start formulating proposals to institute a more systematic regulation of the border. In the winter of 1743, Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general Tsereng pointed to the persistent problem of deviant Qing subjects crossing the border at will despite repeated measures and legislation to detect and prohibit their movement. Instead of harping on this problem, Tsereng attempted an analysis of the sources of the problem. He adduced two primary reasons for the rampant border-crossing committed by Qing subjects. First, there were the economic and geographic realities of the livelihoods of merchants and laborers. Tsereng observed that the Qing border gates and passes formed a series of close and convenient portals for those seeking markets for goods and labor. Secondly, once active in Annan, these Qing subjects invariably found Annan wives and set up domiciles there for themselves. Their wives and homes in Annan brought the Qing men back to Annan again and again. And, in case anyone

⁴³² James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 120-21.

thought this was a harmless phenomenon, Tsereng argued that these men were tantamount to roving bandits. There were no means of keeping these men in check: it was difficult to investigate them when they were on the Qing side of the border, and once in Annan, the Qing authorities could not restrain them there. If and when they banded together, they posed a threat not only to Annan, but also to Qing control of the internal Miao frontier.⁴³³ Annan could not be expected to do anything about the problem. Given the suzerain-vassal relationship between the Qing and Annan, the latter was undoubtedly leery of giving any appearance of acting unilaterally in excess of its position by setting up border defenses and regulatory infrastructure of its own. And, to the extent that Annan had not received any edicts instructing them to drive out or repatriate these sojourning Qing subjects, Annan would undoubtedly not take any action.

Dealing with this problem required bilateral cooperation. Tsereng proposed to the Qing court that it write to the king of Annan and give orders to the senior Guangxi field officials for each to send representatives to the border to discuss appropriate protocols for regulating cross-border activity. Tsereng spelled out some of the concrete issues he wanted this meeting to address: a) how should people be inspected or checked when they pass through the border passes?; b) where should be designated the place of trade for Qing merchants in Annan?; c) in the case of those who leave China illicitly or those who stayed in Annan for no approved reason, how should they be apprehended and repatriated to China?; d) how long of a grace period should Qing subjects currently residing in Annan be given to make their return to China?; e) the illicit marrying of foreign wives by Qing subjects had to be banned in perpetuity.⁴³⁴

⁴³³ Tsereng here is alluding both to cases where it was claimed that fugitives from the Miao frontier had fled to Annan and to cases involving places such as Guangnan and Xilong and Xilin that connected or were considered part of the Miao frontier.

⁴³⁴ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL8.10.yimou.

A further analysis of the problem of the transborder activities of Qing subjects was presented by the governor of Guangxi, Tuoyong 托庸, in 1744. In the summer of that year, Tuoyong delivered a report to the Qing court on the management of “the three gates (*guan*) and hundred passes (*ai*)” of the Guangxi border with Annan. In this report, he summed up previous measures, gave his observations and analysis of border dynamics, and sorted through the proposals by intermediate field officials in Guangxi. His brief history of precedents included the policies of Jin Hong, the governor during the later Yongzheng reign, and Tsereng. Jin Hong had designated the gates at Ping'er and Shuikou for merchant traffic and left the Zhennan gate exclusively for official diplomatic business, including envoy missions. The remaining “hundred passes” were sealed. The problem, Tuoyong noted, was that between the passes lay many paths through remote, “miasmatic” places. These are difficult areas for patrol, but they posed no difficulty to the native Tu and Miao, habituated as they were to these mountainous places. Whenever the patrols became lax, troublemakers turned to these remote paths to cross the border. More recently, Tuoyong claimed, Tsereng had prohibited Qing merchants from going to Annan for trade and staying abroad and marrying local, Annan women.⁴³⁵

When he was appointed to the post of Guangxi governor, Tuoyong found that the field officials of Guangxi had taken several conflicting measures towards the border. In fact, as Tuoyong observed, there did not seem to be a consistent policy. Earlier, the field officials had attempted to seal all the passes by heaping them full of stones or building wooden palisades. Then, they had proposed to open the pass at Youcun, a village near Mingjiang, to trade. Finally, they admitted that the policy of sealing the passes with barriers was futile, as there were too many places in between that allowed people to pass over.

⁴³⁵ This is probably related to the *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL8.10.yimou entry cited above.

Against this background, Tuoyong then gave a few observations about the pass at Youcun and the surrounding local economy. The merchants of Ningming, Tuoyong explained, preferred the pass at Youcun to the official portals at Ping'er and Shuikou because the former lay only 110 *li* from Ningming and led directly to important marketing nodes in Annan, such as Luc Binh, Van Uyen, and Ky Lua. In contrast, to use the Ping'er and Shuikou gates, the same merchants had to make a detour of several hundred *li* and more than ten days travel. Tuoyong was quite clear what the outcome would be: "Despite barring traffic through Youcun pass, it will be impossible to completely prevent illicit crossing there."

Tuoyong further observed that the local economy of Mingjiang depended heavily on the use of the pass. The natives of Mingjiang, Tuoyong claimed, were an unruly lot who had caused the downfall of the former Siming tusi since he had not been able to keep them under control.⁴³⁶ They made a living working as porters and peddlers. Tuoyong predicted that, if Youcun pass were closed, it might prove counterproductive by causing unemployment and thus banditry and smuggling.

Another dimension of cross-border trade, Tuoyong pointed out, was the large profits to be made by importing salt from Annan. Unlike China, there was no monopoly on salt in Annan. Moreover, the scale of salt production on the Jiaozhi coast was massive. Distributors were only charged a minor tax of twenty copper cash and then were allowed to carry as much salt as they were able to handle. The large amounts of salt imported this way translated into huge profits when imported and sold in China. In particular, Tuoyong illustrated, Van Ninh on the Jiaozhi coast produced a great deal of salt and was separated from Guangxi only by a mountain ridge,

⁴³⁶ This is probably a reference to the Denghengzhai bandits. See Chapter 3 on *gaitu guiliu* in the 1720s and 1730s.

called the Hundred Thousand Hills (*Shiwanshan*). Qing subjects participated in this trade frequently and often banded together and resisted arrest.

Despite his detailed analysis, Tuoyong did not offer a comprehensive new system of regulation. But he did recommend implementing two concrete measures. On the one hand, he ordered the field officials to enforce the ban on illicit border-crossing at unauthorized points (presumably in response to the salt smuggling). On the other hand, he recommended making trade feasible and convenient by opening the Youcun pass for traffic.⁴³⁷

Maertai's 1744 system (1744-75)

In 1744, following the reports by Tsereng and Tuoyong, Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general Maertai proposed a system of passports to regulate cross-border trade. In the following description of the functioning of that system in the period between 1744 and 1775, the year that the border was closed to trade, I rely on the information about the system as proposed by Maertai and his colleagues to the Qing court in 1744 and descriptions in the proposals by Qing official Fukang'an and his colleagues for the reopening of trade in 1792, which presented their recommendations as renewals and improvements of the earlier system.⁴³⁸

Before 1744, trade across the land border between Guangxi and Annan was restricted to the Ping'er and Shuikou border crossings near Longzhou. In fact, the two border crossings were close to each other and were often spoken of together. Thus, in the period before the establishment of the 1744 system, merchants traveling through or from Guangxi traveled to Longzhou, in the western section of the Guangxi-Annan border, and then traveled by boat past the Ping'er or Shuikou border crossings into Annan territory. There, they could proceed to

⁴³⁷ *QSLSEA excerpts*, QL9.6.yihai.

⁴³⁸ *QSLGX excerpts*, QL9.10.3 (for Maertai's memorial); *MQSLGB*, 187a-191a (for Fukang'an's memorial) and 203b-204b (for Guo Shixun's memorial).

settlements in Cao Bang or Thai Nguyen 太原, such as Bao Loc 保乐 or Muc Ma 牧马, or go by river eastward to Lang Son town.

The major change in 1744 was the establishment of a new, authorized portal for private trade at the mountain pass of Youcun 由村. Youcun lay in the former *tusi* domain of the Siming 思明 Huangs, who had been reduced to a small domain, Sizhou, in 1732, the remaining part forming the new mainstream administrative territory of Ningming zhou 宁明州 (see chapter 3). The location of Youcun was significant for two reasons. In the first place, Youcun was near the Zhennan diplomatic portal and in effect formed its private, commercial counterpart in this part of the border. Secondly, Youcun lay directly between the former Siming domain and Lang Son town.

When Maertai and his colleagues proposed the opening of Youcun, the stated reason was to facilitate trade and support the local economy of Siming.⁴³⁹ Merchants at the new administrative headquarters of Ningming had represented to Ma'ertai that trade to Lang Son currently forced them to travel westward to Longzhou, then eastward again to Lang Son, when significant distances could be avoided by a direct land route south across the border. Ma'ertai also learned that an area of poor villages, collectively called “the fifty-three *zhai* 寨,” relied for their livelihood on offering their services as porters to merchants traveling across the border to Lang Son. The fifty-three *zhai* belonged to the new administrative territory of Mingjiang ting 明江厅, which had formerly been the headquarters of the Huang *tusi*. Ma'ertai was in part concerned with the possibility of unrest in the fifty-three *zhai*, as this area played a large role in the unrest that had led to the dismantling of the Siming domain.

⁴³⁹ QSLGX excerpts, QL9.10.3.

During the period of 1744-1775, therefore, Chinese merchants had the choice of two major routes through three authorized border crossings. The merchants that participated in this trade were from the nearby areas in Guangxi, from Guangdong, and from as far as Zhejiang, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Shanxi. Inferring from the arrangement of *huiguan* discussed below, merchants from Guangdong appear to have formed the largest group in this trade.⁴⁴⁰ Specifically, they hailed from Shaozhou, Huizhou, Jiayingzhou, and possibly Chaozhou prefectures in northern and eastern Guangdong.⁴⁴¹ Merchants from Guangxi may have come from all parts of the province, but the sources specifically identify three prefectures along the Annan border: Nanning, Taiping, and Zhen'an.⁴⁴²

It is likely that, regardless of their origin, merchants involved in the Guangxi-Annan trade would have begun their journey to the Annan markets from Nanning 南宁. Nanning was the major city in western Guangxi and during the eighteenth century grew to be a major hub for trade. Some merchants from provinces other than Guangxi based themselves at Nanning as sojourning merchants.⁴⁴³

From Nanning, merchants would travel southwestward upstream on the Lijiang River. Passing Taiping Prefecture, they had the choice of the western route toward Longzhou or the

⁴⁴⁰ At the designated markets in Annan, the Chinese traders were organized into two *hao* 號 (possibly official Annan brokers) based on their province of origin in the 1792 system of trade. Since one *hao* was designated for the Guangdong traders and the other designated for Guangxi and all other provinces, I infer that Guangdong formed the largest number of traders. However, this division may have been for other reasons, including a need to manage the merchants from Guangdong in a particular way or separately from other provinces.

⁴⁴¹ The text of the source is effaced at the place where “Chao” may be written.

⁴⁴² Imperial administrative documents were concerned directly with affairs in the mainstream administrative jurisdictions, so it is possible that the sources do not mention the existence of merchants from *tusi* domains. However, I would expect that they would be concerned with all traffic from Qing lands into Annan and would have mentioned such merchants if they existed.

⁴⁴³ *MQSLGB*, 189b-190a.

southern route toward Ningming. On the western route, the merchants had the choice of going due west along the Shuikou (Song Bang) River to the Shuikou border crossing, where they entered Annan and continued along the river to Cao Bang. The other border crossing on the western route was the Ping'er border crossing. To cross the border there, merchants traveled from Longzhou in a southwestward direction along the Ping'er (Ky Cung) River. Once past the border crossing, the river continued to That Tuyen chau. From there, merchants could proceed to Cao Bang or Thai Nguyen by land. Meanwhile, the Ky Cung River turned sharply eastward here, and if the merchants continued their travel by boat upstream they could reach Lang Son town.

Merchants who wanted to use the Youcun border crossing would take the southern route after leaving Nanning and passing Taipingzhou. They traveled upstream on the Mingjiang River, a tributary of the Lijiang, stopping first in Ningming, then again at Mingjiang, further upstream. At Mingjiang, the merchants switched to a land route, hiring porters at Mingjiang to carry their goods overland to Youcun border crossing and from there proceeding to Lang Son town.

The border crossings at Ping'er and Shuikou on the western route and at Youcun on the southern route were the designated, authorized channels of private Chinese trade to Annan. As such, they were subject to Qing regulation, with the cooperation of the authorities in Annan. The purpose for allowing private trade to Annan was to allow Annan to get the goods it needed from China and for Chinese merchants to seek a profit for their livelihood. The *raison d'être* of the border was to prevent Qing and Annan subjects from entering the territory of the neighboring state. Therefore, the regulation of the authorized trade at the three border crossings aimed, above all, at tracking Chinese entry into Annan, restricting it to non-residential, short-term trade in Annan, and ensuring the timely return of Chinese merchants to Chinese territory.

The center-piece of this system of regulation was a passport system. This system is clearly described for the operation of the trade at Youcun when that border crossing was established in 1744. Merchants taking the southern route to Youcun were required to register themselves and their merchandise with the merchant master (*kezhang* 客长) at the merchants' guildhall (*huiguan*) in Ningming.⁴⁴⁴ The merchant master would make a record of the merchant's name, native place, merchandise, and his destination in Annan, post a public notice of these details on wooden staves outside the guildhall while forwarding the recorded details to the Ningmingzhou magistrate. If these details did not raise any suspicions, the magistrate would issue a *yinpiao* 印票 document to the merchant, which the merchant would need for the next step in his journey.

The merchant then proceeded to Mingjiang, where he would engage a suitable number of porters among the fifty-three *zhai* for the overland journey from Mingjiang across the border into Annan. Here, the porters were also subject to a system of regulation. Like the merchants, local porters were required to register their names and addresses in Ningming and sign statements of guarantee (*que jie*) in exchange for *yinpiao* permits. After inspecting the *yinpiao* documents of both the merchant and the porters, the vice-prefect at Mingjiang would issue a *yaopai* 腰牌 passport for each *yinpiao*. The merchants and porters needed both of these documents to be allowed across the border crossing.

The merchant and his party were processed by the imperial military officer and soldiers stationed at the Youcun border crossing. The border crossing was open only on the fifth and tenth days of the Sinic ten-day week. After checking that the merchant and his porters had the

⁴⁴⁴ Maura Dykstra's dissertation discusses the roughly contemporaneous appearance of a *kezhang* system in Sichuan: "Complicated Matters: Commercial Dispute Resolution in Qing Chongqing from 1750 to 1911" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2014), 88ff.

necessary documents and that the persons and goods matched what was stated there, the soldiers would allow them to continue on into Annan, although the soldiers and their officer appear to have had some discretion for inspecting and weighing the merchandise.

Once in Annan, the merchants and their porters were expected to proceed to Lang Son directly and remain there during their time in Annan. They were allowed fifteen days to travel to Lang Son, complete their business, and return to the Youcun border crossing. To re-enter Chinese territory uneventfully, the merchants and porters needed to show their original *yinpiao* and *yaopai* documents. They were required to report their names and their itinerary in Annan, which was recorded and forwarded to Ningming and checked against the information filed when applying for the *yinpiao*.

Much the same procedure operated for regulating the border crossings of Ping'er and Shuikou on the western route through Longzhou. Sun Hongnian even suggests that the system established at the new border crossing of Youcun in 1744 was modeled on the existing system at Ping'er and Shuikou.⁴⁴⁵ But some differences existed between the Youcun and the western border crossings. One obvious difference was that Ping'er and Shuikou regulated traffic across river routes. To make regulation effective, the border crossings at Ping'er and Shuikou were normally sealed by running iron chains across the river and opening the border crossings during the day on the fifth and tenth days of the week. It seems that the chains were particularly designed to prevent boats slipping across the border in the dark of night.

Another difference was that it appeared that merchants were not required to apply for *yinpiao* as a prerequisite for applying for the *yaopai* visa. The sources only mention that

⁴⁴⁵ SUN Hongnian, *Qingdai Zhong Yue zongfan guanxi yanjiu* (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006), 167.

merchants were required to apply for a *yaopai* at Longzhou.⁴⁴⁶ Similarly absent was any attempt to regulate the boats and boatmen who provided transportation upstream into Annan. Finally, while merchants passing through Youcun were restricted to Lang Son, merchants who took the Ping'er and Shuikou border crossings were constrained to proceed to Muc Ma in the Annan province of Thai Nguyen (or Thai Nguyen provincial seat *and* Muc Ma?).⁴⁴⁷

Significantly, commercial or transit taxes were not collected at the Guangxi border crossings into Annan. This appears to contrast with the situation at Mabai 马白 between Jianshuizhou 建水州 in Lin'an 临安, Yunnan and Dulong 都龙 in Annan, which is specifically identified as a "taxed crossing" (*shuiguan* 税关). In the 1790-92 proposals for the reopening of Guangxi-Annan trade, Fukang'an and his colleagues argue for continuing the tax-free nature of the border-crossings in Guangxi. They reasoned that there was no need for taxation at the border since Chinese merchants would already have been taxed at the tax stations at Wuzhou, Xunzhou, and Nanning in eastern, central, and western Guangxi respectively prior to arriving at the border. This was premised on a particular understanding of the Chinese trade to the Annan borderlands of Lang Son and Cao Bang, made explicit in the proposals: There were only overland routes connecting Lang Son and Cao Bang with the Red River in the lowlands and these involved great distances of eight to nine hundred li. There was no evidence, the proposals stated, of goods brought to lowland Annan by maritime trade then being transported north to the Guangxi-Annan

⁴⁴⁶ *MQSLGB*, 187a-188a. It is not clear why the western route was spared the need to apply for *yinpiao*. Is it possible that merchants traveling either route had to first apply for a *yinpiao* at Ningming? Ningming is not far up the Mingjiang tributary and it is conceivable that merchants were required to detour to Ningming first then return and go upstream on the Lijiang to Longzhou.

⁴⁴⁷ I have not been able to ascertain what the toponym Muc Ma refers to.

border. The issue here seems to be the possibility of Chinese maritime exports to Annan finding their way to Lang Son and Cao Bang untaxed.

It is worth reflecting on why the Qing authorities chose not to increase their revenues by taking advantage of the border trade. This may reflect a general strategy of encouraging the welfare of the Annan borderlands through relatively affordable Chinese goods and thus promoting the stability of its population.

1792 reopening and after

The passport system described above was discontinued after 1775, a result of a sensitive diplomatic incident involving the border (see Chapter 8). Between 1775 and 1792, the border was officially closed to Chinese private trade and movement. Of course, unlawful movement across the border and smuggling undoubtedly took place during this period. Nonetheless, the Chinese and Vietnamese courts saw fit to reopen the border and reestablish a system of passports and trade following peace after the Tay Son defeat of the Qing expedition to Annan in 1789.

The 1792 reopening of private trade at the Guangxi-Annan border represented a resumption of the 1744-75 system with additional features designed to strengthen its regulatory capacity. Given Qianlong's perception of the earlier system as a failure when he curtailed the trade in 1775, it is surprising that the Qing court would decide to reinstate the system after a hiatus of a decade and a half. However, the earlier system was a reality that officials, merchants, soldiers, and porters and boatmen had become accustomed to and was still in their memory.

All features of the 1744-75 system were revived in 1792. The three border crossings of Ping'er and Shuikou on the western route and Youcun on the southern route were reopened. Merchant guildhalls (*huiguan*) and merchant masters (*kezhang*) were reinstated at Longzhou and Ningming to mediate between merchants and local officials. Merchants were required to

complete paperwork at these locations to obtain permission to cross the border. They were required to trade at Muc Ma if they used the Ping'er and Shuikou border crossings and Lang Son if they crossed at Youcun. The same goods that were allowed or prohibited under the 1744-75 were subject to the same restrictions after 1792. Again, no commercial or transit tax was collected by the Qing authorities at the three border crossings.

The main change to the system of border trade regulation was an elaboration of the passport system, which aimed at exercising greater bureaucratic oversight as well as greater accommodation to trade practices. As discussed above for the 1744-75 period, merchants were required to obtain a *yinpiao* at Ningming and then a *yaopai* passport at Mingjiang or Longzhou, depending on which border crossing was intended. In the 1792 system, an additional step was instituted, requiring merchants to obtain a *yinzhao* 印照 document at their native place (*jiguan*). The local magistrate at the merchant's native place recorded the merchant's name, age, a description of his appearance, his native place on the *yinzhao* document.⁴⁴⁸ The merchant also had to get statements from his neighborhood *baojia* unit guaranteeing his conduct (*ju baolin ganjie*) in order to get the *yinzhao* document. Merchants from Guangdong and Guangxi were required to complete this process in their native place in the two provinces, but merchants from other provinces were given the option of applying for the *yinzhao* document via the brokers for the Annan trade (discussed below) at Nanning. Merchants were required to obtain this document in order to apply for the *yinpiao* document at Ningming or the *yaopai* document at Longzhou.

As the *yinzhao* application process suggests, Qing authorities recognized the distant origins of some of the merchants and the central role Nanning played in regional trade. An innovation of the 1792 system was the establishment of ten brokers for the Annan trade, known

⁴⁴⁸ Perhaps as a measure to prevent and track troublemakers from Chaozhou and Shaoguan.

as the “Annan cross-border trade brokers” (*Annan tongshi yahang* 安南通市牙行). These brokers were chosen by and responsible to the Guangxi provincial authorities. In addition to processing applications for *yinzhao* by merchants not from Guangdong or Guangxi, the Nanning brokers were authorized to process changes to existing *yinzhao* documents in the event the merchant exchanged some of his goods for others at Nanning. *Yinzhao* documents were supposed to state the nature and quantities of the merchant’s goods destined for Annan. This service provided by the Nanning brokers allowed merchants additional flexibility to respond to their changing perceptions of trade opportunities in western Guangxi and Annan.

The role of the *yaopai* visa remained the same in the 1792 system, but merchants were now given significantly more time for transit and trade in Annan. Generally, the 1792 system was more elaborate and specific in the time allowed for different forms of travel. Merchants who applied for *yaopai* to cross the border at Ping’er and Shuikou could be granted between four months (the lower limit, *zhuoxian* 酌限) and half a year (the upper limit, *tongxian* 统限) for travel to Muc Ma, to trade, and to return to Qing territory via Ping’er and Shuikou. The land journey between Youcun border crossing and Ky Lua market in Lang Son town was significantly shorter than the journey to Muc Ma along the western route and the 1792 system allowed a correspondingly shorter time to merchants using Youcun. *Yaopai* issued at Mingjiang for Youcun granted between one and three months for merchants to complete their return journey. As discussed earlier, porters and boatmen who participated in the transportation of the trade were also required to apply for *yaopai* for themselves. Boatmen serving the Longzhou-Muc Ma route were given four months to reach their destination and return while porters on the Mingjiang-Lang Son route were allowed a limit of twenty days. It is unclear on what basis magistrates were supposed to decide how much time, within the upper and lower limits, to grant merchants for

their yaopai. Since the type and quantity of merchant's goods was recorded on the yaopai and other documents, I suspect the time expected for selling particular kinds and amounts of goods formed an important consideration. This may have been an area where the merchant masters (*kezhang*) in Longzhou and Ningming played a consultative role to the magistrate.

Another way that the 1792 system attempted to combine greater regulation of and flexibility for the cross-border trade was in how it dealt with contingencies on the Annan side of the border. In seeking to reopen the trade, the Tay Son leader Nguyen Hue had proposed several measures for regulating the trade on the Annan side. Echoing the restricted destinations of trade in the 1744-75 system, Nguyen Hue proposed to establish two authorized markets (*shi*) at Muc Ma in Cao Bang and Ky Lua, i.e. Lang Son town, in Lang Son. These markets would be served by two officials each, a market master (*shizhang* 市长) and a supervisor (*jiandang* 监当).⁴⁴⁹ Soon after the initial proposals were made, Nguyen Hue's government further proposed the creation of a third market at Hoa Son 花山 in Lang Son, a short overland journey from Ping'er and Shuikou, for the convenience of merchants coming from those two border crossings.

To manage the Chinese merchants during their trade and travel in Annan, Nguyen Hue proposed the creation of two organizations, Taihe 太和 and Fengsheng 丰盛, which were described as *hao* (号). The sources do not give much indication for what their purpose or functions were, but the two organizations were designed for the membership or management of two categories of merchants: Taihe would serve as the organization for merchants from Guangdong while Fengsheng organized merchants from Guangxi and the rest of China. Clearly, these were merchant organizations of some sort, a point which is further suggested by the *hao*

⁴⁴⁹ The *jiandang* title is the same used for the supervisors of the mines licensed by the Le-Trinh court, e.g. at Tong Tinh. See Chapter 8.

appellation, although it is not clear how much, if any, control the Chinese merchants had over these bodies. Taihe and Fengsheng are probably best thought of as counterparts to the *huiguan* associations in China, such as those found in Longzhou and Ningming, associations authorized and held responsible by the government for the regulation of merchants.

The Qing authorities approved and incorporated Nguyen Hue's proposals into their own, thus coordinating the infrastructure and arrangements on both sides of the border. This coordination, and the cooperation of local officials on both sides of the border, formed the basis for increased surveillance over and flexibility for the movement of Chinese merchants in Annan. The 1792 system relied on the Annan provincial authorities to participate in enforcing the *yaopai* passport time limits.⁴⁵⁰ When the Qing officials at Ningming, Mingjiang, or Longzhou discovered that a merchant remained at large after his *yaopai* passport had expired, they would notify the senior provincial official (*tran muc*) in Lang Son or Cao Bang and requested that the merchant be located and returned to the Qing authorities for questioning and punishment. The Qing architects of the 1792 system understood that illness or unexpected delays in selling or taking in goods could force merchants to overstay their *yaopai* passport. The new system thus provided that merchants could apply to the Annan *tran muc* for a new *yaopai* passport. To do this, the *tran mu* communicated the merchant's circumstances to the Qing officials at the border jurisdictions, who checked what was reported against the information recorded when the original *yaopai* was issued. When the merchant had recovered from his illness or completed his remaining business in Annan, the *tran muc* would then issue a new *yaopai* with the updated information. The merchant was required to show both the original and new *yaopai* when he

⁴⁵⁰ Perhaps in response to the problem, e.g. Songxing, caused when the Annan authorities were not called on to participate, in 1744-75, and allowed large numbers of Chinese miners in Annan territory. See Chapter 8.

passed through the border crossing on his return to China. In the event that a merchant died from his illness while in Annan, his companions, i.e. fellow merchants, were to report the matter to the *tran muc*, who would examine the dead man's *yaopai* passport and notify the Qing authorities. The *tran muc* was expected to send the *yaopai* document to the Qing officials to keep on file while issuing a *yinzhao* document authorizing the dead man's companions to transport the corpse and coffin back across the border.

Conclusion

During the 1744-75 period, and again from 1792 onwards, Qing authorities used an elaborate passport system to monitor and regulate the movement of Qing subjects outside Qing territory. The imposition and application of this system at the China-Vietnam border was not a unique innovation, but drew on previous and contemporaneous systems used by the Qing at other borders. It was an asymmetric system, in that it only recognized and authorized cross-border activity by Qing subjects, leaving Annan subjects barred from entering Qing territory. However, a central purpose of the system was to facilitate the cross-border flow of goods. One popular view of Qing foreign policy was a complete ban on the extraterritorial movement of its subjects. This view has increasingly been shown to be one of many varied and changing approaches taken by the Qing government. In the example of the passport system at the China-Vietnam border of the second half of the eighteenth century, the Qing attempted to regulate and monitor extraterritorial movement rather than prohibit it. The policy was motivated by two primary reasons: First, the Qing state understood that it was impossible to completely seal the border and stop all cross-border movement. Thus, regulation was seen as a feasible means of intervening in this aspect of society. Second, the Qing state recognized the vital role that cross-border trade played in supplying Vietnamese demand and in the livelihoods of merchants and porters in China.

As part of this understanding, the Qing state was also guided in its fine-tuning of the system by the realities of geography and business. The Qing state aimed, for the most part, in making the system conducive to merchant activities. On the whole, the Qing approach to cross-border trade and the movement of its subjects was to identify and neutralize politically destabilizing activities while facilitating peaceful trade. The passport system is also evidence that the Chinese and Vietnamese courts coordinated and negotiated about border regulation. Although there is no direct evidence of this collaboration in the 1744-75 period, the way that Nguyen Hue's arrangements on the Annam side of the border were incorporated into the post-1792 system suggests that the passport system was an institution that involved both states.

CHAPTER 6

LOCAL AND TRANSLOCAL SOCIETY AT THE BORDER TOWN OF LANG SON, 17TH-18TH CENTURY

Borders are not simply the product of the farthest extent of one or more states' reach. They are also social spaces in their own right, a center of their own world. Borderland societies nonetheless are shaped in particular ways by their position at the states' periphery, near the territorial division of states, and as connecting thoroughfares for the circulation of people and goods. In this chapter, I examine the local society of Lang Son 諒山, an Annan town near the China-Vietnam border, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Lang Son was a particular kind of borderland society. It has been mentioned in previous chapters of this dissertation as an important node along the envoy route between the Qing and Le-Trinh courts. In many cases, this was where Qing envoys had their first interviews with Annan officials and where Annan envoys waited for permission to cross the border into Qing territory. The border at Lang Son had thus been an example of a diplomatic border. Following the incorporation of Siming domain into the Qing mainstream administration in the 1730s and the expansion of Qing border infrastructure and regulation in the 1740s, the Lang Son border became more than a diplomatic border. With the growth of cross-border trade and the attempts of the two courts to maintain local order and control the flow of their subjects across the border, the Lang Son border increasingly took on a territorial and economic character.

In the following pages, I examine a series of temple inscriptions from the Lang Son area in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Depictions of local society in histories of premodern Vietnam have heretofore been restricted to the brief mentions of towns and villages in the court chronicles and other official histories, which project a view from the court or the regimes that

contested for power. Although there has been a tradition of studying epigraphic inscriptions from various locales in Vietnam, this has generally been narrowly philological or cultural in orientation. Recently, historians of premodern Vietnam have begun to use epigraphic inscriptions to supplement and challenge the narratives of the court chronicles.⁴⁵¹ Here I do likewise with several late seventeenth century inscriptions in Lang Son in order to provide a contemporary portrait of local and translocal society at the border. Lang Son is revealed as a place where the Le-Trinh court had a continuous but evolving presence, where the central state's rule was effected by partnerships with local clans. At the same time, Lang Son featured a thriving Chinese sojourner community, brought to Annam for the purposes of trade and facilitated by the passport system mentioned above. Through the temple inscriptions, we see that one way that social and political relationships were forged among these several communities was through religious, and specifically Buddhist, associations.

⁴⁵¹ Notable recent examples are Ueda Shin'ya's studies of Le-Trinh administrative structure and Philippe Papin's investigations of women, property and religious culture. See UEDA Shin'ya, "On the financial structure and personnel organization of the Trinh Lords in seventeenth to eighteenth-century North Vietnam," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 2 (June 2015): 246-73. Philippe Papin, "Saving for the Soul: Women, Pious Donation and Village Economy in Early Modern Vietnam," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, vol. 10, no.2 (Spring 2015): 82-102.



Figure 8. China-Vietnam border, 1967 CIA map. LOC.

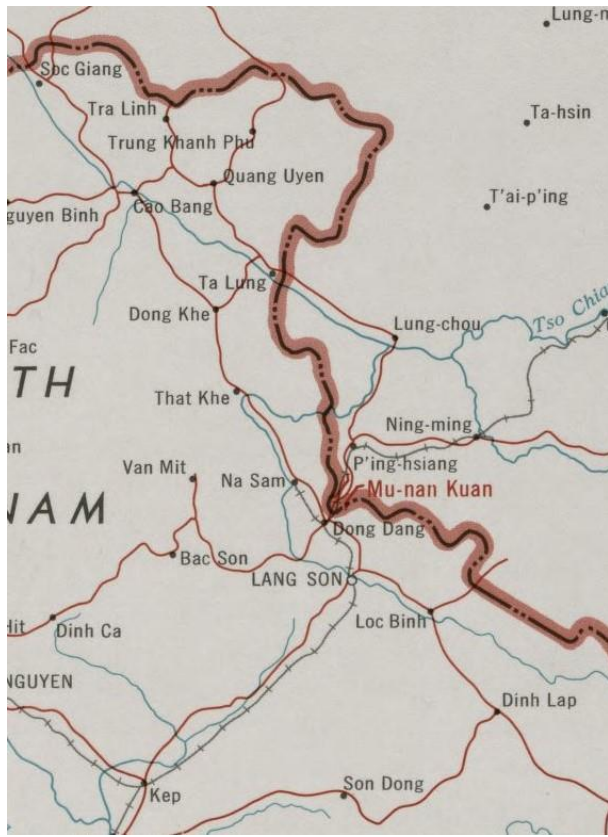


Figure 9. Inset, Lang Son & environs, China-Vietnam border, 1967 CIA map. LOC.

Lang Son society, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

The major political change in Lang Son in the sixteenth and seventeenth century was the transfer of control of the area from Mac to Le-Trinh. For the former, the battles for Lang Son represented the end game for an increasingly desperate regime, while, for the Le-Trinh, Lang Son was one of the final pieces of territory to cap their success at restoring Le dynastic rule. In 1560, the Le restorationist forces established temporary rule in Lang Son for the first time, having circumvented Mac control of the Red River delta by marching along the edge of the western highlands.⁴⁵² Later battles drove the Mac out of the capital and they in turn regained

⁴⁵² CHEN Chingho, ed., *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (hereafter *DVSKTT*) (Tōkyō : Tōkyō Daigaku Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, Fuzoku Tōyōgaku Bunken Sentā, 1984-86), gengshen3 (1560), entry#4, p.857.

parts of the north. By the early 1590s, Annam north of the Red River was in a state of chaos, with many small bands competing for the lowland territory and the Mac entrenched in enclaves near the border.⁴⁵³

While representatives of the Le court engaged in the negotiations and ceremonies of the Le-Ming détente at Lang Son town and Zhennan Gate in the 1590s (see chapter 1), the Le-Trinh court at the same time struggled to push the Mac out of the rest of Lang Son. In particular, the Mac continued to hold out against the Le-Trinh in An Bac chau 安博州, which allowed Mac communication with other Mac supporters in the eastern province of An Quang 安廣, and That Tuyen chau 七泉州, which was on the west side of Lang Son, astride the river route to Longzhou 龍州. Through a ruse by the native official of An Bac chau, Le forces were able to capture the Mac hiding in that locale in 1598, but That Tuyen chau remained off-and-on in Mac hands through the first half of the seventeenth century.⁴⁵⁴ Despite several successful raids against the Mac, the Le-Trinh court was frustrated in its attempts by the Mac option of retreating across the border to Longzhou, only to reassert control over That Tuyen chau and the neighboring Cao Bang 高平 province again later.

This situation was finally resolved in Le-Trinh favor by the time of the Zhou Can embassy in 1683 (see chapter 2) through a series of events in the 1660s and 70s. The Le-Trinh court had launched a major offensive against the Mac in 1662, driving them out of That Tuyen chau into Longzhou yet again.⁴⁵⁵ The Mac might have again recovered That Tuyen chau in the

⁴⁵³ K.W. Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 253-54.

⁴⁵⁴ *DVSKTT*, wuxu21 (1598), entry#12, p.913.

⁴⁵⁵ *DVSKTT*, renyin5 (1662), entry#3, p.986.

1670s but for their ultimately fatal choice to support Wu Sangui against the Qing, which lost for them Qing protection and forced them to accede to relocation to an area in Guangxi away from the border.

1670 inscription: local elites and Le-Trinh appointees

The first of the late seventeenth century inscriptions is one found in Dong Dang village, dated to 1670.⁴⁵⁶ (Dong Dang is a village in Lang Son, north of Lang Son town and adjacent to the border.) The specific nature of this inscription is somewhat unclear: it makes mention of a *dinh* 亭 or communal hall but also uses the term *thuy luc* 水陸, which may be a reference to a Buddhist water and earth mass.⁴⁵⁷ Regardless of the specific formal nature of the association this inscription commemorated, the content of the inscription suggests that the stele was erected to commemorate the political allegiance of a Lang Son clan with the Le-Trinh regime. In addition to the final list of names of donors, the inscription comprises a prologue narrating the occasion for the inscription and a verse section expressing the role of the clan in Lang Son and in relation to the Le-Trinh. The inscription is noteworthy for its emphasis on the clan's role in administering the border with China.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁶ Han Nom Institute inscription rubbing #44673-76, “(同登)水門亭體存碑記.”

⁴⁵⁷ Thuy luc, “water and earth mass,” was a common Buddhist ritual for universal salvation, but often particularly for one's close kin. See entry on “shuilu hui,” p. 813, Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 813. Unfortunately, there is not a good reference for the history of the *dinh* communal halls. However, see NGUYEN The Anh, “Village versus State: The Evolution of State-Local Relations in Vietnam until 1945,” *Southeast Asian Studies* 41, no. 1 (June 2003): 101-23. See also discussion of communal halls (*dinh*) in HUU Ngoc, *Wandering Through Vietnamese Culture* (Ha Noi: The Gioi Publishers, 2004): 173-77.

⁴⁵⁸ Although sources from this period rarely, if ever, speak of clans, or other forms of extended kinship, I argue that this can be inferred from the sources. In fact, I think it is hard to understand the social information in these inscriptions and other sources without recourse to a notion such as clan. Historical scholarship on premodern Vietnamese kinship has shied away from discussions of the existence of lineages. However, there is abundant evidence that elite families kept elaborate genealogies, with extant genealogies from the nineteenth century or earlier.

The central figure mentioned in the 1670 inscription is a man named Nguyen Dinh Luc 阮廷禄. He is described as the “master of the association” (*hoi chu* 会主) and is listed as the first name in the list of names at the end of the inscription. He is identified with a title comprising three elements. Firstly, he is identified as the Do Tong Binh Su 都总兵使 commander of Lang Son. Secondly, he is identified as the Right Do Doc 右都督 commander of the Do Doc office of the North 北军都督府. Thirdly, Nguyen Dinh Luc has a title, Thao quan cong 鞞郡公.

Immediately following Nguyen Dinh Luc’s name, the inscription lists the members of his family by name. These include four primary wives and three secondary wives, or concubines, five sons, and five daughters. Here, as in other instances in these Lang Son inscriptions, the women are identified by their surname as well as personal name. Some of Nguyen Dinh Luc’s children are married and their spouses are identified. Some of the sons and sons-in-law are further identified with offices or titles.

After the names of Nguyen Dinh Luc’s family members and at the end of the inscription, another man, Than Duc Tai 申德才, is mentioned, identified with several offices and titles preceding his name. The layout of the inscription encourages the reader to think of Nguyen Dinh Luc and Than Duc Tai as counterparts, as the lines recording the titles and names of these men are both raised one space above the other lines, “outdented” as it were. Than is identified as a eunuch in the Trinh lord’s administration on special assignment to border matters in the Kinh Bac 京北 circuit. He also has a title, Han quan cong 漢郡公. Furthermore, Than is identified with a native place, An Duong district, Nhu Thiet *xa* 安勇县如铁社.

On the second panel of the stele, there is a brief inscription dated about six months later in 1670 than the first panel. Here is listed seven additional names, complete with their office,

their title, their native place, and the amount of money each donated to the construction of shrine and the stele.

The names, and the associated offices, titles, family relations, and native places, in the 1670 inscription at first appear very fragmentary, but when read together with the later inscriptions from Lang Son, larger patterns emerge. Here, in the 1670 inscription, there are several important themes that emerge.

Firstly, there are two categories of officials or leaders in Lang Son: resident, local officials, e.g. Nguyen Dinh Luc, and non-resident appointees from the Le-Trinh court, e.g. Than Duc Tai. The inscription does not identify Nguyen Dinh Luc as a locally-based “native official” (e.g. *tusi/tho ty*) but it does speak of the hereditary nature of Nguyen Dinh Luc’s duties as keeper of the border. Other, circumstantial evidence supports this. Nguyen Dinh Luc is mentioned in Li Xian’gen’s 1669 embassy account as “the *yi* official of Van Uyen chau,” 文淵州夷官 a jurisdiction within Lang Son, in contrast with the other officials Li meets in Annan, whom he describes as “foreign (*fan* 番) officials.”⁴⁵⁹ Li understood Nguyen Dinh Luc as analogous to the *tusi* of Southwest China, who were sometimes described as *yi* but not as *fan*.

Secondly, the surnames and other naming practices seen in the 1670 inscription suggest the clans present in Lang Son. My hypothesis is that middle names in seventeenth and eighteenth century Annan, in Lang Son and elsewhere, functioned as one means to distinguish between patrilineal lines of the same surname.⁴⁶⁰ A well-known quality of surnames in Vietnam, in comparison with surnames in China, is the paucity of surnames. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century,

⁴⁵⁹ Li Xian’gen, *Annan shi shi jiyao*, in *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu*, shi bu, v.56 (Tainan: Zhuangyan wenhua, 1996), j1p2a, 83.

⁴⁶⁰ See Appendix II on naming practices.

too, sources such as the *DVSKTT* gives evidence of the prevalence of surnames such as Nguyen, Le, Trinh, Pham, Phan, etc. While this partly reflects the political dominance of a number of elite families and the relatively weak meritocratic effect of Vietnam's examination tradition, it was nonetheless the case that many people shared the same surname without being related. Given the rather heated political climate and the importance of family connections in seventeenth and eighteenth century Annam, it was important to be able to determine whether a given person was close kin of a political enemy or ally. Middle names thus functioned as a means to distinguish between unrelated families of the same surname and, in some cases perhaps, between different branches of a large patriline.

The names in the 1670 inscription give a sense of the various clans or surnames in Lang Son. There is, of course, the Nguyen Dinh clan, represented by Nguyen Dinh Luc and his sons. Interestingly, one of Nguyen Dinh Luc's daughters is married to a Nguyen Dinh. It is unclear whether this man, Nguyen Dinh Ke 阮廷继, was part of the same Nguyen Dinh clan (and thus practicing endogamy) or part of another, distinct Nguyen Dinh clan. Dinh is a common middle name, appearing in several other clans in Lang Son and among families from the Red River delta, and the high incidence of Nguyen Dinh individuals in Lang Son inscriptions incline me to assume that they represent more than one Nguyen Dinh clan.⁴⁶¹

The surnames of the seven wives of Nguyen Dinh Luc and the spouses of his sons and daughters include Ha 何, Chu 周, Be 閉, Nguyen 阮, Nong 農, Hoang 黃, and Vi 韋. Ha and Nguyen appear to be important marriage alliance partners with Nguyen Dinh Luc's family: Among his seven wives and his five sons- and daughters-in-law, four are Ha and three are

⁴⁶¹ This would appear to be counterevidence to my theory that middle names functioned to distinguish patrilines. However, it may be considered an exception to the rule, or possibly suggestive of the Tay origins of these clans.

Nguyen. The donors on the second panel of the inscription have the surnames of Ha, Hoang, Vi, and Dang 鄧. The man surnamed Dang, however, is identified as coming from a locale outside of Lang Son.

Combining information in the 1670 inscription on surname, middle name, and native place yields the following hypothetical clans or patriline: Nguyen Dinh (more than one clan), Hoang Duc (Vinh Dat xa, Van Uyen chau), Vi Dinh, Ha Cong (Chu Tuc xa, Van Lan chau), Ha Duc (Chu Tuc xa, Van Lan chau), Hoang Hung (Binh Gia xa, Van Lan noi chau), Vi Phu (? An chau), in addition to ones we only have surnames of: Chu and Be.

1677 inscription: translocal & transborder connections and Buddhism

The second of the Lang Son inscriptions comes from a cave or grotto in the immediate environs of Lang Son town and dates to 1677.⁴⁶² In contrast to the somewhat unclear or mixed purpose of the 1670 Dong Dang inscription, the 1677 inscription clearly places itself in the context of Pure Land Buddhism.⁴⁶³ The inscription identifies the grotto as an ancient temple called the Pure Meditation Cave (Thanh Thien Dong 清禪崗) and commemorates the meritorious efforts of donors in restoring the dilapidated temple. The inscription has a short prologue and some brief verses expressing conventional Pure Land beliefs and sentiments. The remaining two thirds of the inscription are a list of names of members of the association, presumably donors for the restoration of the temple, although the inscription does not list the donation amounts. Many of the individuals listed are women. In some cases their names are preceded by the names and

⁴⁶² Institute of Han Nom Studies inscription rubbing #44665, “脫朗州永寨社清禪崗.”

⁴⁶³ Pure Land Buddhism is a very diffuse phenomenon that was not exclusive to a particular school or set of scriptures. See the entry on “pure land,” p. 683, in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* for more discussion of this diffuse phenomenon.

titles of their husbands but in other cases they are listed without a husband but with the names of children.

The 1677 inscription resembles the 1670 inscription in that they identify two primary parties. While the 1670 inscription focuses on Nguyen Dinh Luc and the Le-Trinh representative Than Duc Tai, this inscription from 1677 identifies a “master of the association” (*hoi chu*) and a “vice master of the association” (*pho hoi chu*).

The master of the association in the 1677 inscription is a man named Vi Duc Thang 韋德勝, from Khuat Xa xa, Luc Binh chau in Lang Son. The office and title preceding his name is similar to those of Nguyen Dinh Luc. In fact, he is identified as holding the same local office, the Do Tong Binh Su commander, as Nguyen Dinh Luc. Vi Duc Thang is also identified as holding the Do Doc Thiem Su post in the Le-Trinh military organization, the North Army Do Doc Military Office (*Bac quan do doc phu*). Again, like Nguyen Dinh Luc, Vi Duc Thang holds a *quan cong* rank title: *Vu quan cong*. Following Vi Duc Thang’s name, the inscription goes on to list members of his family and then other persons from Lang Son and beyond.

Although Vi Duc Thang’s wife, Pan Yi 潘意, is listed following his name as part of his family, she appears again in the inscription later as the vice master of the association. She is identified as being from Longzhou Prefecture across the border in China (here expressed variously as “Ming dynasty” and “Celestial dynasty”). Following the vice master’s name is an extensive list of Pans, including Pan Yi’s brother, their father, grandfather, great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, their respective spouses, additional great-uncle Pans, as well as Pan Yi’s maternal grandfather and his wife.

The 1677 inscription and the Pure Land association it commemorated thus represented the linking of a family from the Chinese side of the border, the Pans, with a prominent Lang Son man, Vi Duc Thang.

In addition to the Longzhou Pans, the 1677 inscription also indicates Lang Son connections with other places. The donors or members of this Pure Land association further included men and women from various locales on the lowland plain in Annan, e.g. Dong Chieu 東潮, Tu Liem 慈廉, An Phong 安豐, An Viet 安越, An Duong 安勇, and Kim Hoa 金華 huynh, as well as a vaguely identified “official” from Guangxi and his Annamese wife.

Here, and in the other inscriptions from Lang Son, Buddhism of various kinds provided a medium of association for individuals of different communities who intersected in Lang Son: Lang Son local society, lowland Annan communities near Lang Son, representatives of the Le-Trinh court, communities on the Chinese side of the border and Chinese officials. Later inscriptions further feature Chinese and Annamese merchants and monks.

1683 inscription: Le-Trinh appointees, trade, and religious associations

The third Lang Son inscription from the late seventeenth century is a 1683 inscription commemorating the establishment of a shrine to a man named Than Duc Tai.⁴⁶⁴ This is the same Than Duc Tai in the 1670 inscription, a representative of the Le-Trinh court. One panel of the inscription has a prologue extolling Than Duc Tai’s virtuous administration and noting the date of his death. On another panel entitled “Sojourners of the two countries,” a number of donors are listed under separate categories, including “Merchant sojourners of the thirteen provinces of the Celestial dynasty” and “the seven wards (*phuong* 坊) of Annan.” A third panel lists donors under the category of “Personnel of Lang Son,” and includes names of local clan leaders. The

⁴⁶⁴ Han Nom Institute inscription rubbing #44649, “(Đền Tả Phủ) 宗師父碑.”

remaining, fourth panel of the inscription describes the purchase of agricultural fields for the upkeep of the shrine. Unfortunately, most of the lines listing the properties purchased and the designated purpose of the income have been effaced from the inscription, as has most of the names listed in the sojourners' panel.

Than Duc Tai evidently was well-loved by the Lang Son communities represented in the inscription. In addition to his personal virtues and service to the state, the inscription states that Than brought joy to the officials and subjects of Lang Son by removing "tiresome burdens" (務止烦苛), possibly a reference to reforms in taxation, law, or discipline. Than is also praised for his good treatment of merchants from every direction, who were thus encouraged to do business at the market and travel on the roads.

Shrines to virtuous officials were common in Annam as well as China, but they were usually not associated in any direct way with Buddhism.⁴⁶⁵ Neither is Than's, but there are a couple of obscure Buddhist references or influences here. At the bottom of the prologue panel, there is an image depicting what appears to be the main characters from the *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西游记) story: a horse led by a man with a trident or crescent moon-shaped weapon; a shorter figure with a long rod; a Buddhist monk; and a man carrying some items on the two ends of a carrying pole across his shoulders.⁴⁶⁶ The other Buddhist reference is more obscure. The inscription appears to refer to Than with the titles "lineage master" (*tong su phu* 宗师父) and

⁴⁶⁵ For more on 'living shrines' in Ming China, see Sarah Schneewind, "Beyond Flattery: Legitimizing Political Participation in a Ming Living Shrine," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.72, no.2 (May 2013): pp.345-66. Olga Dror also discusses the spirit worship in early modern Vietnam in her introduction to Adriano St. Thecla, *A Small Treatise on the Sects among the Chinese and Tonkinese* (Ithac, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2002).

⁴⁶⁶ Unfortunately, I was not allowed to photograph this image from the stele rubbing at the Han Nom Institute in Hanoi. Regarding the *Journey to the West* motif in vernacular Buddhism, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* does not have an entry on this, but there is an entry on "Da Tang Xiyu ji," p.224, i.e. the text about the monk Xuanzang's journey to India. See also entry on 'Hsi-yu-chi' in William H. Nienhauser, ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 2 vols (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986 & 1998).

“[master] of the Khi Bao lineage” (*Khi Bao tong* 启保宗).⁴⁶⁷ This is reminiscent of Meditation (Chan/Thien/Zen) school lineages

From the brief glimpses offered by the 1670, 1677, and 1683 inscriptions, we can see the outline of Lang Son society at the end of the seventeenth century. The landscape of Lang Son was dominated by locally-rooted clans such as the Nguyen Dinh. These clans were recognized by the Le-Trinh court, which periodically sent their appointees to oversee the province and renew the allegiance of these clans. But these clans, and the Lang Son society that they dominated, was not insular. In addition to marriage alliances with families across the border in China, they also had connections with areas in the lowland plain in Annam. The town of Lang Son and its neighboring village of Dong Dang were moreover commercial milieus where Chinese merchants sojourned and traded. In addition to the local Lang Son clans who may have bought and sold with the Chinese merchants, there is also the suggestion that lowland Annamese may have had a role in the trade at Lang Son, as seen in the mention of the “seven *phuong* of Annam” in the 1683 inscription. Finally, while there is no evidence that religious practice in the province was uniform or narrow, Buddhism of several varieties seems to have provided a medium for these various local and translocal groups to establish and maintain relationships between each other. Although there is some suggestion of the language and practices of the Meditation School, it is by no means the most important form of Buddhism to inform the local-sojourner-state associations of this period. Rather, a gamut of Buddhisms, from Pure Land to Meditation to the popular Buddhisms as seen in the *Journey to the West* and lineage motifs, play a role.

Le-Trinh policy toward the border and Lang Son, 1680s-1730s

⁴⁶⁷ It is possible that Khi Bao may be Than Duc Tai’s ordination name (*faming*).

Following Le military and diplomatic success over the Mac, crowned by the 1683 Qing embassy, the Le-Trinh court was occupied with consolidating their relations to the Qing *tusi* along the border. Immediately following the 1683 embassy, the *DVSKTT* reports that two Qing *tusi*, Guishun 归顺 and Sicheng 思诚, sent tribute to the Le-Trinh court.⁴⁶⁸ In 1689, Le-Trinh representatives negotiated with Qing provincial officials over the delimitation of the border at Luc Binh *chau* 禄平州 and Silingzhou 思陵州. More accurately, the Le-Trinh and Qing representatives attempted to work out a solution to divide a number of villages between Vi Duc Thang, the native official of Luc Binh *chau* who appears in two of the preceding Lang Son inscriptions, and the native official of Silingzhou on the Qing side. The *DVSKTT* notes that in the first instance, the negotiations went badly for Luc Binh *chau* and the Le-Trinh because of Vi Duc Thang's inopportune words. On the second meeting, the Le-Trinh representative had to keep Vi Duc Thang out of sight and finally was able to negotiate a favorable outcome: several villages were allocated to Silingzhou, but the most populous village, Na Oa/Nawo 那窩, was given to Luc Binh *chau*.⁴⁶⁹ At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Qing *tusi* of Xiao Zhen'an zhou 小鎮安州 and Silingzhou attacked areas along the Annan border, but Xiao Zhen'an then chose to repair its relations by sending tribute to the Le-Trinh court. Vi Phuc Vinh, a Lang Son native official responsible for the security of the border passes (*thu ai* 守隘), succeeded in repulsing the Silingzhou attack, but relations with Silingzhou would continue to be uneasy in later years.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ *DVSKTT*, *guihai*4 (1683), entry #16, p.1013.

⁴⁶⁹ *DVSKTT*, *jisi*10 (1689), entry#3, pp.1017-18. This territorial dispute flared again in 1725 and, in the ensuing negotiations between Qing and Le-Trinh, Na Oa/Nawo was ceded to Silingzhou.

⁴⁷⁰ *DVSKTT*, *jimao*20 (1699), entry#3, p.1027; *xinsi*22 (1701), entry#2, p.1029.

Following the pacification of the border area against the Mac and Qing *tusi*, Lang Son entered a period of peace in the early eighteenth century, a period which saw some changes in the way the Le-Trinh court administered this area. The *DVSKTT* does not report any rebellion, external attacks or other unrest in this period until Vi Phuc Quan's uprising in the early 1740s, which formed the beginning of a decade-long political crisis (see chapter 4).

One significant area of change in Le-Trinh administration of Lang Son was a clearer definition of the responsibilities of the native officials of Lang Son and a shift in the nature and responsibilities of appointees from the Le-Trinh court. *Phu dao* 辅导 was the most basic title or rank granted by the Le-Trinh court for local leaders in Lang Son; that these local leaders, "native officials," actually used the *phu dao* title can be seen in the 1683 stele. In 1708, the Le-Trinh court restricted travel by the *phu dao* of the peripheral provinces to the Le capital in reaction to trouble caused by these out-of-towners in the urban area around the court.⁴⁷¹ This also represented a shift from a tributary mode of relation between the native officials and the court to one where the *phu dao* were increasingly held responsible for the security and governance of the peripheral provinces such as Lang Son. Thus, in a reform of the courier system in 1721, *phu dao* in the peripheral provinces were made analogous to county magistrates (*huyen quan*) in the inner provinces and required to administer the courier posts in their area.⁴⁷²

The early eighteenth century saw a parallel transformation of the role of Le-Trinh appointee in Lang Son. In 1712 the Le-Trinh court required that the lowland Annamese officials it appointed to the senior provincial post (*tran quan* 镇官) of the peripheral provinces take up

⁴⁷¹ *DVSKTT*, wuzi4 (1708), entry#3, p.1036.

⁴⁷² *DVSKTT*, xinchou Bao Thai 2 (1721), entry#14, p.1050.

residence at their post.⁴⁷³ Hitherto, the appointees, men like Than Duc Tai in the 1670 and 1683 inscriptions, resided in the lowlands or even at Thang Long and made occasional visits to their posts to take care of specific administrative tasks.

More than a decade later, in 1721, the court made two additional changes to the role of the senior provincial post. On the one hand, in order to reduce the tax burden of the governed areas, the court eliminated all centrally-appointed posts from peripheral provinces like Lang Son except the senior post of *tran quan*, and concentrated administrative power in the latter.⁴⁷⁴ This was not to be a lasting change, as additional centrally-appointed posts would be created later in the eighteenth century, such as the *doc dong* 督同 mentioned in the 1758 preface to the *Lang Son Doan Thanh Do*, a gazetteer of Lang Son.⁴⁷⁵ On the other hand, 1721 marked the first time a civil, rather than military, official was appointed to the senior provincial post in Lang Son, a change that would endure for the rest of the eighteenth century.⁴⁷⁶

The effect of these administrative changes in the early eighteenth century was to make governance in Lang Son a matter of the cooperation of an involved and powerful civil administrator appointed from the Le-Trinh court and a group of local leaders with increasingly definite responsibilities. The increased involvement, power, and perhaps administrative ambition of the civil appointees from Thang Long may have caused friction with the “big men” of Lang Son, of the likes of Nguyen Dinh Luc and Vi Duc Thang, and may have been one factor in precipitating the uprising of Vi Phuc Quan in the 1740s. In 1739, the Le-Trinh court attempted to

⁴⁷³ *DVSKTT*, renchen8 (1712), entry#4, p.1039.

⁴⁷⁴ *DVSKTT*, xinchou Bao Thai 2 (1721), entry#19, p.1051.

⁴⁷⁵ Manuscript #A1220, Han Nom Institute.

⁴⁷⁶ *DVSKTT*, xinchou Bao Thai 2 (1721), entry#20, p.1051.

prohibit the *tran quan*, i.e. the senior Le-Trinh-appointed provincial official, from creating ad hoc minor police posts in their jurisdictions because they were often subverted by the holders of these posts to serve as excuses for robbing their neighbors.⁴⁷⁷

In 1739, the year before the outbreak of the Vi Phuc Quan uprising and the more widespread political crisis in Annam, the Le-Trinh court made additional changes to the administration of the peripheral provinces in the north, including Lang Son. In one policy discussion, members of the court made six proposals for administering the provinces of Thai Nguyen, Cao Bang, Tuyen Quang, Hung Hoa, and Lang Son. They recommended: a) The posts held by the native officials should henceforth be appointed at the discretion of the senior provincial official, the *tran quan*, instead of handed down along hereditary lines; b) surveillance of mines should revert to the previous arrangement where they were overseen by *phu dao*⁴⁷⁸; c) the Black-clothed Nung 儂 population should be kept separate from the local population; d) the system of purchasing upstream timber should be reformed; e) customs posts (*tuan* 巡) should be prohibited from establishing unauthorized branch posts and collecting excessive customs duties; and f) depopulated areas in Tuyen Quang 宣光 and Hung Hoa 兴化 should be repopulated. Although the first two recommendations, concerning the appointment of native officials and the governance of the mines, were not approved, the court adopted the remaining four concerning the Nung, timber, customs, and repopulation of Tuyen Quang and Hung Hoa.⁴⁷⁹

During the widespread unrest in Annam in the 1740s, the Le-Trinh court could only focus on the essential task of fighting rebels in its relations with the Lang Son area. In 1740, the court

⁴⁷⁷ *DVSKTT*, p.1091n29. These may be the irregular posts discussed by Ueda, pp.250-52.

⁴⁷⁸ In other words, not to let the immigrant groups (Chinese, Nung) run the mines without supervision.

⁴⁷⁹ *DVSKTT*, p.1089n7.

enacted a law to promote the production of necessary military supplies. While the court sought to increase the collection of grain from lowland areas around the delta, it ordered the native officials of the peripheral provinces to supply the court with lead, saltpeter, and sulfur for artillery purposes, in return for waiving the tax on mines and for office and rank based on how much the native officials submitted.⁴⁸⁰ Later in the year, the court was desperate for ready cash and again offered office and rank to the native officials of the peripheral provinces if they were able to supply the court with copper to mint coin.⁴⁸¹

Lang Son shifted back and forth between control by rebels, including the Vi Phuc Quan uprising, and officials loyal to the Le-Trinh court in the early 1740s. In 1740, the fort at Lang Son town was unguarded when a native official, probably Vi Phuc Quan, besieged and captured the fort, killing the court-appointed senior provincial official.⁴⁸² By 1742, the Le-Trinh court had captured and executed the Lang Son rebel leader and resumed governance of the area from the fort at Lang Son town, only to see the fort fall victim to another siege by Lang Son rebels in the following year.⁴⁸³ Although the siege was lifted and control returned to the Le-Trinh court when a loyal Lang Son native official defeated the rebels, it was not before the Le-Trinh officials in the fort had been killed by the rebels.⁴⁸⁴ The *DVSKTT* records one more instance of rebels capturing

⁴⁸⁰ *DVSKTT*, p.1095n8.

⁴⁸¹ *DVSKTT*, p.1099n51.

⁴⁸² *DVSKTT*, p.1096n15. Neither this nor other *DVSKTT* entries mention Vi Phuc Quan by name. Rather, here and elsewhere, the chronicle identifies the leader of the uprising as “marcher lord Toan Co” (藩臣纘基). Toan Co does not appear to be a personal name, and given the *DVSKTT*'s occasional use of abbreviated titles to refer to rebel leaders, I think it is possible that Toan Co was part of the leader's title, possible at the *hau* rank. I have simply assumed that Toan Co was the same person as the Vi Phuc Quan of the Qing Veritable Records, or someone associated with Vi Phuc Quan.

⁴⁸³ *DVSKTT*, p.1110n6.

⁴⁸⁴ *DVSKTT*, p.1113n5.

Lang Son town in 1745, but the Le-Trinh-appointed senior provincial official soon defeated the rebels and recovered the town.⁴⁸⁵ As in the rest of the country, at Lang Son the tide seems to have turned in favor of the Le-Trinh court after the middle of the 1740s.

Lang Son society in the 1744-75 passport era

A 1757 inscription from Lang Son provides a sketch of local and translocal Lang Son society during the era of the 1744 passport system (see chapter 5).⁴⁸⁶ This inscription comes from the four sides of a bell in the Huong Lam Buddhist temple 香林寺, located on the southern bank of the Ky Cung River in Lang Son town. The inscription indicates that the temple doubled as (or included) a “merchants’ guildhall of the Thirteen Provinces” (*shisansheng huiguan*), a collective reference to all the provinces in China and which could be translated as “the all-China merchant’s guildhall.” More specifically, the bell had hung in front of a hall dedicated to the deity Guandi (*Guan shengdijun dian*) within the compound.

In fact, the manufacture of the bell itself attests to the commercial, translocal nature of Lang Son society. The inscription attests that the bell had been produced at a forge in Foshan in the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong, a well-known center for iron manufacturing. Moreover, while the bell mentions that monks of the temple had worked to raise donations and arrange for the bell to be made, a brief commemorative text on one side of the bell is attributed to a monk identified as being from a monastery in Guangzhou in Guangdong province. This suggests that the Huong Lam temple may have been established by monks from Guangdong and affiliated with monasteries there. The bell’s origin in Foshan also provokes speculation about how the bell was transported to Lang Son.

⁴⁸⁵ *DVSKTT*, p.1122n6.

⁴⁸⁶ Han Nom Institute inscription rubbing #44635, “延慶寺.”

The Huong Lam temple and its bell recall the role of Buddhism as a medium of translocal association mentioned earlier in relation to the 1670 and 1683 Lang Son inscriptions. The four sides of the bell are each headed by a line of verse, forming two pairs of couplets. One couplet reads: “The sun of Buddha increases in brilliance/The wheel of dharma continuously turns” (佛日增辉/法轮常转). The text of the other couplet is partially effaced, but it can be rendered as “The Imperial design is reinforced/the Emperor...flourishes” (皇图巩固/帝...昌). This joining of affirmations of Buddhist faith and secular authority is perhaps deliberately ambiguous. The rulers of Qing and Annam both used the imperial titles of *huang/hoang* and *di/de*. The bell’s inscription is thus a nod to the authorities on both sides of the border through an expression of universal, transborder rule in the religious and secular realms.

This universal or bilateral orientation is modified by the use of a *tianyun* 天运 reign period in the inscription. The use of the *tianyun* reign period is most associated in scholarship on Chinese history with the activities of secret societies and anti-Qing revolutionaries towards the end of the dynasty.⁴⁸⁷ It was a way for these groups to subvert Qing authority by challenging its prerogative of conveying the will of Heaven through the producing of the calendar. *Tianyun* appears to have an earlier history as a way for Ming loyalists to keep a calendar not based on the Qing reign dates. I do not think that its appearance in the 1757 Lang Son inscription should be taken as a sign of anti-Qing sentiment or activity but rather as indicating the participation of Lang Son’s translocal society in broader networks of Chinese trade and Buddhism in Southeast Asia. Secondly, the *tianyun* reign name could have been a convenient way to avoid falling foul of the sensibilities of the Qing and Annam courts.

⁴⁸⁷ See Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), 519.

The 1757 inscription offers some information about the Chinese merchants that frequented Lang Son, presumably via the 1744 visa system. Besides a group of names of native officials of Lang Son, most of the space of the inscription is taken up with the names of over eighty individual Chinese merchants.⁴⁸⁸ This figure gives some sense of the scale of the transborder trade. Among these names, there are also six women listed as the wives of six of the men. In contrast to the use of full names in the 1670 and 1677 inscriptions, the women here are only listed by their maiden name. This appears to reflect a general difference between China and Annan in how women are identified in formal texts. Of the six women's maiden names, two are Nguyen/Ruan 阮, one Trinh/Zheng 郑, and the remaining are Hau/Hou 侯, Loi/Lei 雷, and Van/Wen 文. Given that a third of the maiden names are Nguyen/Ruan and that there are no merchants surnamed Nguyen/Ruan in the inscription, I think it is likely that these two women, and possibly the Trinh/Zheng woman, were Annanese. The remaining three maiden names are very rare in Annan but relatively common in China. Two of these three, Hau/Hou and Van/Wen, are also the surnames of some of the merchants in the inscription. In particular, the Hau/Hou woman and her husband are listed just after a man surnamed Hou, which may indicate a kin relationship between the two. The evidence of the maiden names of the women in the 1757 inscription suggests that some Chinese merchants married Annanese women, which accords with what Qing authorities complained about at times. It also suggests that merchants may have brought wives with them, or what is perhaps more likely, that they had female offspring in Annan who married other Chinese merchants.

⁴⁸⁸ On one side of the bell, these individuals are identified as “faithful merchants” (*xinshang* 信商). There is no direct proof that these individuals are Chinese, but I think it must be the case. The bell was manufactured in China and was erected outside a Guandi shrine in a Chinese guildhall. I do not think it is likely that these individuals are from Lang Son or elsewhere in Annan because neither the surnames nor the personal names resemble those of Lang Son or Annan more generally.

The Huong Lam temple bell inscription offers a glimpse into the translocal society at Lang Son during the passport era. As at contemporaneous Hoi An and Nagasaki, long-distance trade and Buddhism were closely allied. Of particular interest in this inscription is the reflection of Lang Son's border location and the merchant community's bilateral orientation in the language of Buddhist and secular authority. This may also be a reflection of the authorized character of the overland trade, in contrast to situations where border crossing was uniformly illicit and thus to be kept secret.

Conclusion

The long eighteenth century, delimited chronologically in various ways, has been characterized in various ways for East Asia. The time corresponding to the reigns of the three Manchu emperors, Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong, has been described in Chinese as well as English historiography as a period of flourishing growth and termed the 'High Qing' or *shengshi*. More specifically, historians have seen in this period political stability, imperial expansion, demographic doubling or tripling, economic revival and growth, and elaboration of social and intellectual forms. Frontiers in Southwest China saw a number of phenomena that were part of these trends: migration, demographic growth, the growth of mining and trade.

Historians such as Leonard Blussé have seen the eighteenth century in Southeast Asia as distinctive as well, terming the period "the Chinese century," when there was a flourishing of Chinese trade, mining, migration, and even state-building in the region.⁴⁸⁹ Chinese trade was essential to the flourishing of entrepôts like Hoi An, Batavia, and Nagasaki. In these places,

⁴⁸⁹ Leonard Blussé, "Chinese Century: The Eighteenth Century in the China Sea Region," *Archipel* 58 (1999): 107-29.

Chinese merchants and laborers, local elites, and state representatives related in a variety of ways, negotiating their relationships in part through social and cultural projects such as temple-building.

At the China-Vietnam border in northern Annan, these two worlds overlapped and came together. Lang Son was an important town in northern Annan, near the border between China and Vietnam, and shared in many characteristics with the Qing Southwestern frontier as well as the world of Southeast Asian entrepôts. The social landscape of the town featured local elites, Chinese sojourners, and representatives of the state. Trade and mining were important to the town and to those who passed through it. As in some of the Southeast Asia entrepôts, and to some extent as in merchant networks in China, Buddhist associations and practices became a medium of association for local elites, sojourners, and the state. As in Southwest China and Southeast Asia, the growing presence of large numbers of Chinese in the borderlands around Lang Son ultimately became an issue that called for state intervention (see chapter 8).

In some ways, however, Lang Son differed from other places and cases in eighteenth century Southwest China and Southeast Asia. Arguably, it was part of not a new frontier but a centuries-old borderland between China and Vietnam. Related to this is the fact that Lang Son was an important administrative center of Annan as well as part of the envoy route, or what I call the diplomatic border. Unlike the port cities Hoi An or Nagasaki or the Weiyuan and Pu'er in Yunnan that Giersch describes, Lang Son formed part of the official interface between the Qing and Le-Trinh courts.⁴⁹⁰ It was part of the diplomatic relationship of the two courts and clearly under the eyes of both states. Here there was a relative symmetry or co-presence of two states at a border, which distinguishes it even from situations like that at Batavia, where there was a close

⁴⁹⁰ For Weiyuan and Pu'er, see "Chapter Five: A Motley Throng" in C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006): 127-58.

state presence but only one state. Correspondingly, while Lang Son remained on the periphery for both the Le-Trinh and Qing states, it nonetheless featured active involvement from both governments, as seen in the Le-Trinh appointees and Qing border regulation.

Lang Son was a border town that was shaped by local, translocal, and transborder ties. As in many other contemporaneous entrepôts in East Asia, Buddhism provided a framework for transnational association in Lang Son.⁴⁹¹ At the same time, Lang Son featured in the Le-Trinh court's attempts to control its northern frontier. However, Le-Trinh representatives too had to negotiate their place in Lang Son society in order to achieve their goals. In chapter 8, we will see how Le-Trinh attempts to deal with a dynamic and turbulent mining frontier became the occasion for new forms of associations between the Lang Son translocal and local society and the lowland representatives of the court.

⁴⁹¹ Charles Wheeler, "Buddhism in the re-ordering of an early modern world: Chinese missions to Cochinchina in the seventeenth century," *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 3 (Nov., 2007): 303-24.

CHAPTER 7

TENSION WITHIN COLLABORATION: BORDER REGULATION AND DIPLOMATIC INCIDENTS, 1740S-1780S

In Chapter Four, I discussed Qing responses to the political crisis in Annan and its effects on the border. Through increased vigilance and securing of the sealed parts of the border and the implementation of a passport system for merchant travel, the Qing authorities hoped to enforce the separation of the territories and subjects of China and Annan and to regulate the limited forms of lawful private cross-border travel.

Although I have not found archival sources, Qing or Annan, specific to border regulation, the Qing court chronicle, the *Veritable Records (Shilu)* of Qianlong's reign record a number of incidents that centered on Qing or Annan subjects' border infractions. The common thread in all these transgressions was that they involved the subjects of one country unlawfully entering the territory of the other. More specifically, these incidents involved banditry practiced across the border, unauthorized travel for trade, unrest among miners unlawfully staying in the other country, fugitives or political refugees seeking asylum, and subjects and officials of one country facilitating cross-border crime or abuse of authority. While some of these incidents involved the 1744 passport system through the three authorized border crossings, the rest occurred in other parts of the Qing-Annan border, including sections of the border that were supposed to be sealed.

In the following, I review a number of these incidents to illustrate challenges to Qing border regulation, how the Qing court attempted to modify and reinforce the system to face these challenges, and more generally, how the Qing court understood the state's role in regulating the border. These incidents, when surveyed chronologically, may suggest a teleological movement from the establishment of border regulation to increasing stress on the system and finally to the

collapse of the system. These incidents could be read that way, but this interpretation relies on understanding the Tong Tinh mine incidents (see Chapter Eight) as a culmination of a process of increasing inability of the two courts to regulate their border. In my discussion of the Tong Tinh mines incidents in Chapter Eight, I suggest that the Qing court may have deliberately turned a blind eye to illicit labor migration of miners into northern Annam. Setting aside the teleological narrative described above, the following border incidents are better read as examples of how the Qing-Annam border regulation worked—and in some cases, as with all systems of state regulation, could fail to achieve its purpose or be subverted to other ends.

Suppressing, punishing, and extraditing bandits

The Liang Xingxiu 梁行修 case of 1753 illustrates the cooperation and reciprocation between the two courts. Several Chinese men from the Pearl River Delta, including a man named Liang Xingxiu, had gone to Annam and engaged in banditry there. In 1753, they were captured by an Annam official and turned over to the Qing authorities. Not only did the Qing court approve a reward for the official, it also decided to deviate from the standard judicial procedure of sending the culprit Liang back to Guangdong for trial and punishment. Instead, the court ordered Liang executed immediately at the border as a demonstration of Qing justice to the Annamese and to deter Qing subjects from crossing the border without authorization and causing mischief in Annam.⁴⁹²

In attempting to govern the border, the Qing court not only attempted to discipline its subjects but also came to see the borderlands as a sensitive space that needed to be protected from destabilizing elements. In 1758, a group of approximately thirty Qing men, led by two men

⁴⁹² Qing shilu Yuenan, Miandian, Taiguo, Laowo shiliao zhai chao [Excerpts from the Qing Veritable Records concerning Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos; hereafter QSLSEA excerpts], (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1985), v.1, 58-59 (QL18.3.yiyou/1753.4.3) & (QL18.8.renyin/1753.9.16).

named Zhang Funeng 张甫能 and Wang Budu 王布督, entered Annan territory and joined a group of bandits there. Once the bandits were apprehended, Annan officials turned over Zhang, Wang and their fellow Qing subjects to Qing officials to be tried and punished under Qing law. As in the Liang Xingxiu case of 1753, the Qing court had the ringleaders Zhang and Wang executed at the border. The crimes of the rest of the Qing bandits were deemed less serious and these men were sentenced to a life of exile in Balikun in Xinjiang. The Qing court saw banditry as a scourge of the border area and attempted to remove offenders from the area, understanding that the divided jurisdiction of the border encouraged and abetted banditry.⁴⁹³

A similar case in 1764 gave Qianlong occasion to spell out procedure for demonstrating Qing justice. Yang Yadao 杨亚道, a Qing subject from Guishunzhou 归顺州, had been caught and convicted of practicing banditry along the section of the border near Guishunzhou, resulting in the death of at least one victim. Approving the Qing provincial authorities' course of executing Yang at the border, Qianlong explained this form of justice to the Grand Council:

In a case like this, where Our subjects are causing trouble abroad, the country concerned, [i.e. Annan,] should be notified after the culprit is sentenced, so that the subjects of that country can be gathered together, and the law be carried out on the spot before them. That way, not only are our laws upheld but the foreigners will also feel gratified. Moreover, whenever the local jurisdictions are pursuing fugitives in cases like this, the country concerned will understand that China upholds the law justly and attends equally to mercy and punishment, so the concerned country will not dare to just look on and delay in aiding apprehension of the culprit.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ *QSLSEA excerpts*, v.1, 63 (QL23.7.gengxu/1758.8.29).

⁴⁹⁴ *QSLSEA excerpts*, v.1, 69 (QL29.7.bingyin/1764.8.13).

The Qing court's willingness to assert responsibility for the border area can be seen in its treatment of Annan pirates operating near the Guangdong coastal section of the border at Dongxing 东兴. In 1764, the Guangdong authorities reported that Qing fishermen had been attacked by Annan pirates. The Qing court learned that the attack had occurred while the Qing men had been fishing in Annan territory. More specifically, they had set up a temporary shelter on the coast in Annan territory as a base for fishing outings. This situation was similar to the 1753 Liang Xingxiu case and the 1758 Zhang Funeng and Wang Budu case in that it involved the activities of Qing subjects unlawfully present in Annan territory. The Qing court stated in its deliberations over the case that it was unlawful for Qing subjects to hunt, fish, or harvest beyond the border.⁴⁹⁵

What was different in the 1764 piracy case in comparison to the 1753 and 1758 cases was that Qing subjects had been the victims rather than perpetrators of crime while in Annan territory. The Qing court took the course of demanding that the Annan pirates be turned over to Qing authorities. The pirates were brought to the border at Dongxing and held there in Qing custody. This seems to have been a novel situation for the Qing court, as no immediate action was taken. After being held for three months in custody, the large number of Annan pirates were executed at the border, for fear that transporting the group for trial or continuing to leave them at Dongxing would pose a problem.⁴⁹⁶ The Qing court's position on banditry in the border area was expressed as taking full responsibility of the area: "The Qinzhou jurisdiction abuts Annan territory at many

⁴⁹⁵ *QSLSEA excerpts*, v.1, 68 (QL28.12.xinmao/1764.1.11).

⁴⁹⁶ *QLSSEA excerpts*, v.1, 68-69 (QL29.3.yihai/1764.4.24).

points. All foreign, [i.e. Annan,] bandits should be apprehended and held accountable as a warning to the others.”⁴⁹⁷

Several principles of Qing border regulation become apparent from the cases above. In general, the Qing court took responsibility for the activities of Qing subjects in Annan as well as the security of the space of the border area. Moreover, there was a practice of extraditing lawbreaking subjects to be tried and punished by the countries they belonged to. In doing so, the Qing also had a practice of executing lawbreaking Qing subjects at the border as a demonstration of Qing justice.

An unusual case of organized violence and pillaging at the border took place in 1766 when a transborder plot of Mac restoration was defeated by Annan and Qing forces. The case is hazily documented in the Qing sources and does not appear to show up in the Annan records. The Qing sources refer to it as the Huang Futuan 黄付團 case, although the man by this name does not appear to have been the sole or even the primary leader in the plot. The meager documentation on the case, a fragment of a memorial,⁴⁹⁸ suggests that the activity that the Qing authorities uncovered was a conspiracy of certain minor native leaders from both sides of the border to conquer the Annan outpost at Bao Loc 保樂 and establish a minor territory ruled in the name of a purported descendant of the Mac royal line. Huang Futuan, Nong Fufeng, and Nong Fuyao appear to have been local leaders in the border area around Xiao Zhen'an 小镇安 (on the Chinese side of the border) and Bao Loc. Their collaborators, Liu Dehui and You Wen'guang,

⁴⁹⁷ 钦州地方在在接壤安南所有行劫夷匪自应拿究以示惩戒, *QLSSEA excerpts*, v.1, 68 (QL28.12.xinmao/1764.1.11).

⁴⁹⁸ *Ming-Qing shiliao, geng bian* [*Ming-Qing historical materials, tenth collection*; hereafter *MQSLGB*] (Shanghai: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1960), 67a-68b. However, Zhang Yi, the poet and historian, was indirectly involved in this case and wrote about it. See Liang Yang and Huang Haiyun, *Gudao Zhuang feng: Zhao Yi Zhen'anfu shi wen kao lun* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005).

appear to have been Han adventurers, possibly unsuccessful examination-takers. While the sparse documentation does not explain how it came about, it appears that these conspirators enlisted the participation of a Mac royal descendant or pretender, Mo Ying 莫英 (Mac Anh), who claimed to be the son of Mo Bao 莫保 (Mac Bao), the Mac pretender during the Mac restorationist attempts of the 1740s (see Chapter Four). The Qing authorities were inclined to accept this fact since, in the course of the subsequent investigations, they compared the exact pattern of the calligraphic brushstrokes from the seals in the 1766 plot with the seal mark on letters between the conspirators in the 1740s.

In any event, the 1766 Mac restoration adventure went horribly wrong from the point of view of the conspirators. While Nong Fuyao, You Wenguang, and the Mac pretender, Mo Ying, waited on the Qing side of the border, Nong Fufeng and Huang Futuan led a band of followers from the Qing side of the border into Annan and joined up with their Annan collaborators. They first pillaged some villages along the way to Bao Loc. When they reached the town, they found that the Annan authorities had gotten wind of the plot and the Annan soldiers there were in a good defensive position, holding the river between the town and the route Huang Futuan's band had come by. Nong Fufeng and Huang Futuan took up positions on a hill on their side of the river, securing the defensive advantages of the caves at the bottom of the hill and the spring at the top of it. For about a week, the two forces faced off across the river, exchanging musket fire on two days. However, Annan reinforcements arrived during this time and at the end of the week, they attacked during the night, crossing the river with the support of cannon and muskets. Huang Futuan and Nong Fuyao's forces collapsed and the principle conspirators split up to hide. Eventually, they were all captured at different places along the Qing side of the border.

This incident is noteworthy as evidence of the persistence of Mac restorationism as a political project in the borderlands. It may be that, since local Qing and Annan officials were able to quickly uncover and suppress Huang Futuan's plot, they thought it prudent not to emphasize the Mac restorationist side of the incident. The Annan court chronicle does not even register the incident, while the Qing *Veritable Records* focuses rather on disciplinary procedures towards officials who were held responsible for allowing Huang Futuan's force to move around and across the border and for slip-ups in processing the conspirators once they had been apprehended.

However, the Huang Futuan case did give opportunity for Qing emperor Qianlong to state what he expected from local officials dealing with the border. It appears that at one point, the Annan authorities requested the Qing official at Xiao Zhen'an to prevent any of the bandits fleeing from their defeat at Bao Loc to escape into Qing territory. Qianlong criticized the Xiao Zhen'an official's reply, which was that he would order the border personnel to be cautious and not spark any border incident. Qianlong criticized this as being passive and warned that border incidents could be caused as much by not addressing immediate problems as by precipitous action. In his view, the Xiao Zhen'an official was being disingenuous. Qianlong then spelled out what he considered the routine responsibilities of Qing officials in monitoring border activity: preventing any Annan subjects or bandits from entering Qing territory; and apprehending those who do so and turning them over to the Annan authorities. If Annan officials and soldiers crossed the border in pursuit of bandits, Qing officials were not only to drive them back across the border, but report the incident and seek redress from Annan. Furthermore, Qing officials

were to demand and insist on Annan turning over any Chinese fugitives who had escaped into Annan.⁴⁹⁹

Border incidents involving legitimate political authorities

Despite the Qing border imperative of keeping Annan subjects out of Qing territory, there were occasional cases where the activities of legitimately-instituted Annan authorities exceeded the border into Qing territory. The Nguyen Ngoc Huan 阮玉勋 case of 1773 is an example of this kind of border incident, as is the case of Dinh Anh, discussed in conjunction with the Hoang Van Dong uprising in Chapter Eight. Nguyen Ngoc Huan, an Annan headman from near the border had a dispute with one of his subordinates, a man named Bac Tam 博三. The dispute provoked Bac Tam to attempt to flee with his family into Qing territory. They were discovered by Qing guards near the border. In response to this situation, the Qing provincial authorities returned Bac Tam and his family, as well as Nguyen Ngoc Huan, who appears to have pursued Bac Tam into Qing territory, to Annan and let the Annan authorities look into the dispute.⁵⁰⁰ Cases such as the Nguyen Ngoc Huan and Dinh Anh cases reflected the Qing policy of non-intervention in Annan politics. The Qing court considered these cases the proper sphere of the Annan king.

Diplomatic Disputes

Border incidents involving local chieftains such as Nguyen Ngoc Huan, in the example above, did not become cause for diplomatic disputes. Yet other incidents relating to the border

⁴⁹⁹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 69 & 70 (1766.5.24 & 1766.7.17). In criticizing the Xiao Zhen'an official and spelling out expected behavior from Qing officials at the border, Qianlong pointed to the negative example of Yunnan governor-general Wu Dashan in QL27-28 (1762-63), who initially hesitated to pursue fugitives across the border but ultimately sought a military solution. Wu Dashan was disciplined for this failure and Qianlong announced this discipline internationally (*xuanshi zhongwai*).

⁵⁰⁰ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 81 (QL38, 1773). The *QSL* entry mentions a precedent for this decision from 1751 (QL16) involving a certain Nguyen Ngoc Han 阮玉漢. It is not clear if there was any family relationship between Huan and Han.

did spark diplomatic rows. Of greatest diplomatic importance among these was the Hoang Cong Toan 黄公纘 case in 1769, involving a dispute between Qing and Annan over the extradition of a rebel leader from the western highlands in Annan. Hoang Cong Toan was the son of Hoang Cong Chat/Chi 黄公质 (also known as Hoang Cong Thu 公舒), a rebel leader in Annan's western highlands. Father and son had been headquartered at a fortified place called Manh Thien Trai 猛天寨.⁵⁰¹ The father, Chat/Chi, died in 1769. Toan was not able to retain his hold on Manh Thien Trai and fled to Yunnan in Qing China with his followers, seeking refuge and political asylum from the Qing. (More specifically, Toan sought to come under Qing rule, *neifu* 内附.) As part of his request, Toan claimed to be a descendant of the Mac. The Qing court was caught between two responses. On the one hand, since Toan was a subject (*gai guo ren* 该国人) of Annan, the Qing was obliged to ignore this plea and allow Annan to take care of the matter. On the other hand, though, Toan had come as a supplicant, and to deny him succor would be to contradict the Qing principle of acting benevolently towards all. The Qing court decided to accept Toan's offer of allegiance and gave him and his followers political asylum. Toan's group was settled in Pu'er Prefecture in Yunnan; later, in 1770, they were relocated to Urumqi in Xinjiang.⁵⁰²

The Qing court informed Annan of its decision soon after the decision was made.⁵⁰³ In response, Annan instructed the Annan officials at the border to petition the Yunnan authorities to return Toan for punishment in Annan. In 1770, the Annan court wrote to the Guangdong-

⁵⁰¹ SUN Hongnian, *Qingdai Zhong Yue zongfan guanxi yanjiu* (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006), 293. The following discussion of the Hoang Cong Toan affair is based on Sun's discussion, 293-94.

⁵⁰² Sun Hongnian, 293-94.

⁵⁰³ Sun Hongnian, 293.

Guangxi governor-general for the return of Toan, but the governor-general explained and reaffirmed the Qing court's decision and reassured Annan that Toan and his followers had been relocated to Xinjiang in the north, i.e. well away from the Annan border. In 1772, as part of a tribute mission to the Qing, Annan again sought the return of Toan. Qianlong refused to grant the request and rejected the tribute gifts from Annan.⁵⁰⁴

Toan died in 1777 in Xinjiang. Until then, his followers had been governed through Toan as the officially-recognized headman. Upon his death, Qianlong allowed his followers a choice of having Toan's son to assume the role of headman for another generation, or to be governed directly by the Xinjiang authorities as part of the population there.⁵⁰⁵

Following the unrest at the Tong Tinh mines in 1775 and the subsequent cessation of the Qing cross-border travel pass system (see Chapter Eight), the Qing court endeavored to win back Annan trust through increased diligence over border regulation. Although this often involved the Qing in deferring to Annan objectives in the borderlands, there remained some areas of tension and disagreement in the relationship between the two courts. The Zhou Gui case, involving the servants of an Annan envoy to Qing China, and the Six Meng territorial dispute illustrate that, beyond the relative stability of collaboration over border regulation, the two courts could nonetheless disagree on other issues.

At the beginning of the summer of 1778, Wan Tingxin, the magistrate of Xuanhua, the metropolitan county of Nanning prefecture in Guangxi, caught two Annanese men, Tran Dinh Huyen and Nguyen Van Phu, in Qing territory with shaved heads, i.e. in the Manchu queue style, and Qing garb. The interlopers claimed to be servants of the Le official Ho Si Dong, who was

⁵⁰⁴ Sun Hongnian, 294.

⁵⁰⁵ Sun Hongnian, 294.

one of the envoys on the Le tribute mission that year. Wan brought them to Ho, who affirmed that they were his servants. Tran and Nguyen were then sent to the provincial capital for further questioning by Guangxi governor Wu Hubing.

Wan may have thought this was a fairly straightforward case, but after reading Wan's report, Qianlong criticized his handling of the situation. Qianlong saw sinister possibilities in the case. He suggested that there might be more behind the subterfuge of the interlopers. He was also critical of Wan for taking them to Ho just because they claimed to be his servants. Qianlong asked, since Wan did not speak Annamese, how would he be able to interpret their conversation? Ho could have been covering up for them.

Qianlong raised the possibility that Tran and Nguyen could be spies. Qianlong ordered that if, after questioning the two men, it was true that all there was to the matter was that Tran and Nguyen were trying to pass as Qing subjects, then they should be held in Qing territory and punished for the crimes of changing one's hair and garb and of illicitly crossing the border. The king of Annam should further be notified of the incident.⁵⁰⁶

Later in the summer of 1778, two months after the initial report of the interlopers claiming to be the Annam envoy's servants, the Qing court considered the findings about the case in a memorial sent by Guangxi governor, Wu Hubing. In the course of the investigation, Wu had discovered that a Qing subject named Zhou Gui 周贵 had assisted the two Annamese men to enter Qing territory. Zhou, a man from the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong, had previously moved to Annam, set up residence, and ran a shop there. Zhou had been paid to act as Tran and Nguyen's guide and to change their hair and garb into the Qing style. While the two Annamese were caught in Nanning, Zhou evaded capture and fled.

⁵⁰⁶ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 100-101, QL43.5.xinyou, 1778.5.27.

In reviewing the governor's report, Qianlong thought that the proposed sentence for Tran and Nguyen was too harsh, as it seemed they had only been seeking to profit from trade. In a characteristic reversal of an earlier position, Qianlong now dismissed the idea that the two could be spies. Apparently, the Guangxi governor had followed Qianlong's earlier suspicion that Tran and Nguyen could be spies and had labelled them as such. Qianlong lamented that he had originally planned for the two to be simply sent back to Annan for the king of Annan to punish. Now that Wu had labeled them as spies, the king of Annan would be suspicious of Qing intentions and the whole thing would be more complicated.

In dismissing the idea that Annan would send spies into Qing territory, Qianlong reminded the Qing court that Annan had always been submissive. Furthermore, the Qing had not threatened it with military action so there was nothing for Annan to spy about. Commenting more broadly on how officials should handle relations with foreign states, Qianlong faulted Wu for trying to impress him with his thoroughness, when dealings with foreign states needed to be handled in a balanced manner.⁵⁰⁷

In the fall of 1778, Zhou Gui was taken into custody by the Guangxi governor, although it took Annan cooperation to do so. Zhou had fled to Khau/Khieu Le (Qiuli 丘黎) in Annan, with Qing bailiffs hot on his trail. The bailiffs notified the Annan chief in the area of their pursuit and received his acknowledgement and assistance, in the form of Annan guards to keep watch over the prisoner. Upon orders from the Annan king, the Annan chief escorted the prisoner and his captors across the border back into Qing territory.

⁵⁰⁷ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 101, QL43.i6.jiaxu, 1778.8.8. The identification of the native place of Zhou Gui as Sanshui in the Pearl River Delta is provided in *QSLSEA excerpts*, 102, QL43.i6.yihai, 1778.8.9.

Qianlong was pleased with the king of Annan's initiative and compliance and decided to hand over Tran and Nguyen to be dealt with by Annan. He instructed Guangxi governor Wu to have the two escorted by a senior official to the border, and then to have an edict proclaimed there in front of the Annan border officials.

In Qianlong's edict to Annan, he promised the king of Annan that he had a special gift for him, to be given to the Annan envoys when they reached the Qing capital.⁵⁰⁸ In the following spring, the king of Annan replied with a letter to thank Qianlong for turning over Tran and Nguyen. He promised to send a delegation to express his gratitude but Qianlong said it was not necessary.⁵⁰⁹

While the espionage scare of the Zhou Gui case in 1778 was quickly dismissed, the recurrence of a longstanding territorial dispute in 1782 was a more serious diplomatic impasse for Qing-Annan relations. The area in question was a group of six *muong* or upland Tai towns, called the "Six Meng" (*liu meng* 六猛) that lay in the ambiguous far reaches of the Qing and Annan states, to the south of Lin'an 臨安 in Yunnan and to the west of Tuyen Quang 宣光 in Annam. The Qing and Annan courts had already disputed the territory in the Kangxi and Yongzheng reigns.⁵¹⁰

In the winter of 1782, Fugang, the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou, memorialized to the Qing court that he had received a letter from the king of Annan, claiming that Qing subjects were trying to confuse the border territorial division and requested that Qing

⁵⁰⁸ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 102-03, QL43.8.xinsi, 1778.10.14.

⁵⁰⁹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 103, QL44.1.jiawu, 1779.2.24.

⁵¹⁰ Other authors have discussed these earlier disputes, see P.B. Lafont, ed., *Les Frontières du Vietnam: histoire des frontières de la péninsule indochinoise* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989); Sun Hongnian, 217-22.

officials clarify the boundary. In response, Fugang had instructed Qing officials at the border to investigate the matter.

There is no mention of this dispute during the late 1770s or 1780s in the *DVSKTT*. This may be due to the unstable political situation at the Le-Trinh court during these years. It may also suggest that initiation of the dispute came from Annan officials in the border area rather than from the Annan court. In any case, confusion over territorial boundaries would not have been surprising following the suppression of the Hoang Van Dong uprising (see Chapter Eight) just before the dispute.

In discussing Fugang's report with the Grand Council, Qianlong agreed with the governor-general's handling of the matter, on account of Annan's longstanding submissiveness. Nonetheless, he expressed his suspicions of the claims, saying that it was likely that native subjects (*tumin* 土民) of Annan were trying to evade their tax obligations and making up the claim that Qing subjects were claiming Annan territory.

Qianlong therefore instructed the Grand Council to revise Fugang's draft of his reply to the king of Annan and give Annan a stern rebuke. The revised letter began by restating the Annan claim: In the area in question, called the "Ten *Chau* of An Tay" (*Anxi shi zhou* 安西十州) by Annan, Annan claimed that Qing subjects had occupied Quang Lang (Guangling 廣陵) and Lai Chau (Laizhou 萊州), claiming that they were actually called Mengla (Manh Lat 猛辣) and Menglai (Manh Lai 猛賴). The letter responded to the king of Annan by denying that there had ever been any ambiguity about the boundary, that the Six Meng had been listed in the Qing tax registers for more than 110 years. Any ambiguity about the extent of Annan territory was due to Annan's native subjects trying to evade taxes and should not concern the Qing side of the border.

To emphasize the point, the letter further argued that China had many parts of its territory abutting other states. There had never been any case of other states requesting a redrawing of the boundary. The letter warned that Annan was acting out of line and disrespectfully in making this request. As proof that the boundary between Qing and Annan territory was clear, the letter included a list of the settlements in the Six Meng area.

To soften the rebuke and provide a line of action for the Annan court, the Qing letter restated the Qing view: the trouble was that native subjects of Annan had conspired with Qing subjects to confuse the matter of the territorial boundary for their own gain. The letter instructed Annan to capture and turn over these troublemakers to the Qing for trial. The letter also implicitly put part of the blame for the discord between the two courts on the Annan local officials in the border area. Finally, the letter urged Annan to renew its submissiveness and keep to its station. It exhorted the Annan king to remember that the Qing emperor treated Annan and its king as fairly and equally as he did “the interior,” i.e. China.⁵¹¹

The Hoang Cong Toan, Zhou Gui, and Six Meng cases were examples of real or potential disagreement between the two courts. Real antagonism surfaced at some point in virtually all these cases, but ultimately none of them led to a breakdown of Qing-Annan diplomatic relations. Qing anxiety over signs of abuse and failure of border regulation, 1770s

Although the Qing court insisted on the correctness of their position in the diplomatic disputes discussed above, other incidents, directly involving Qing border regulation, were understood as signs of the failure or even abuse of Qing border regulation. The Long Yun and Yao Guoqin cases took place in 1773 and both became embarrassments to the Qing as examples

⁵¹¹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 108-09, QL47.9.dingwei, 1782.10.19.

of how Qing border regulation could be ignored and how even official personnel could abuse their authority to carry on illicit activities.

In 1773, the Annan court informed the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general of Annan's capture of a Qing subject named Long Yun 龙云. The Qing man had been caught impersonating a minister of justice from Yunnan in pursuit of a Qing fugitive in Annan. On that pretense, Long Yun had been extorting money from people in Annan. The Annan court requested that the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general take Long Yun into custody and send him to Yunnan.⁵¹² The governor-general proposed to try Long Yun at Huaiyuan 怀远, where the governor-general was currently located, a request which Qianlong approved to save the labor of transport to Yunnan.⁵¹³

New details emerged that prompted the Guangdong-Guangxi authorities to turn the case over to Yunnan. A man named Cai Xinrui was now named as a culprit in the impersonation and extortion case, while the Qing jurisdiction implicated in the crimes was Jianshui 建水 county in Yunnan, at the border with Annan. Since the case hung on evidence of the forging and misuse of tokens of office from Jianshui county, the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general argued that he could not check the evidence to try the case. In the initial discussion of the case between the court and the provincial officials, there was some confusion over the identity of a certain Dao Ning 刀宁 of Menglai (Laizhou/Lai Chau), who appeared to have been the target of the extortion scam. Dao Ning was identified as a headman of Annan in one document but as a Qing subject in another. Furthermore, the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general wondered if there was any

⁵¹² *QSLSEA excerpts*, 81. The premise here seems to be that Qing officials could be authorized to investigate and pursue suspects in Annan territory.

⁵¹³ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 81-82.

connection between this Dao Ning and a certain Dao Weiping, a Dao-surnamed *tusi* of Yunnan who reportedly disappeared or fled south across the border into Annan.⁵¹⁴

In response to the new details, Qianlong concurred with the suggestion of looking into whether there were any possible connections between the Daos on either side of the border. Qianlong also queried whether the written order to apprehend Dao Ning was in fact issued by Jianshui county or whether it had been forged by the culprits, namely Cai Xinrui and his associates, and instructed the Yunnan governor-general to follow up on these questions when the case was turned over to him.⁵¹⁵ Further details emerged that the suspects, all Qing subjects, had bona fide minor posts in China. It was on this official standing that they abused their position to enter Annan and attempted extortion.⁵¹⁶

Eventually, the Yunnan governor-general reported two findings to the Qing court. First, it appeared that a Jianshui county runner Liu Shun, along with the Menglai headman Dao Zhengwen, had taken an Annan runner Xan Vu into custody and brought him back to Qing territory for questioning. In response to this, the Yunnan governor general reported that he had released Xan Vu to return to Annan and had punished Liu Shun. Secondly, the Yunnan governor-general found that it had been in response to Annan's capture of the Menglai master-of-*zhai* (*zhangzhai* 掌寨) Dao Ning that headman Dao Zhengwen petitioned Jianshui county to

⁵¹⁴ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 83. This sheds some interesting light on the disputes over the Six Meng area since here we see some confusion on the Qing side over whether a ruler of Menglai was subject to Qing or Annan.

⁵¹⁵ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 83-84.

⁵¹⁶ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 84.

demand the return of Dao Ning from the Annan local authorities, and that the Jianshui county magistrate had failed to report these goings on.⁵¹⁷

Qianlong found many problems with the investigation. He noted that there appeared to be some shielding of officials from their responsibility and blame. Bemused that there should be any difficulty in determining whether Dao Ning was a Qing subject or an Annan headman, Qianlong criticized the officials involved for not resolving the question. Qianlong further faulted the Jianshui county magistrate for not reporting the Dao Ning matter but rather attempting to investigate the matter independently by sending the runner Liu Shun, who caused trouble in Annan. Qianlong also found fault in the Jianshui magistrate for taking Dao Zhengwen's words at face value, not reporting the matter, and independently demanding the return of Dao Ning from Annan.⁵¹⁸ Qianlong ordered the Jianshui magistrate and the runner punished, and the matter investigated honestly by officials. He emphasized the need to investigate thoroughly in order to be impeccable in the eyes of Annan.⁵¹⁹

Further revelations about the case made Qing border regulation look even less respectable, although the mystery about the relations among the Dao was cleared up in the minds of the Qing court. It was reported that the suspects had not only been guilty in this recent extortion incident, but in fact had been engaged in illicit travels beyond the border to harass and extort for many years. However, the Yunnan governor-general determined that Dao Ning was from Menglai,

⁵¹⁷ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 84. This situation bears some resemblance to the event that precipitated the Hoang Van Dong uprising, when the local ruler of Dulong, Hoang Van Dong, was detained at Tuyen Quang by the Annan authorities on account of a dispute over taxes to be submitted to Annan. See Chapter Eight.

⁵¹⁸ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 84.

⁵¹⁹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 84. Qianlong also ordered that the response to the letter from Annan should point out the inappropriateness of the language or words used by Annan.

which was far from and did not communicate with Jiulongjiang in Pu'er. He concluded that the Daos of Menglai and those of Dao Weining in Pu'er were not related.⁵²⁰

A similarly embarrassing case came to light in 1774, when it was discovered that Qing subjects, including a certain Yao Guoqin 姚国钦, had made many illicit trips to Annan via Longzhou. In response, Qianlong blamed local Qing officials for habitual laxness in preventing and apprehending this kind of cross-border activity. He ordered all officials involved stripped of their office. Qianlong was concerned that this rampant laxness at the border made a laughing stock of the Qing in the eyes of Annan.⁵²¹

Summary

In this chapter and more generally in this dissertation, I have argued that Qing China and Le-Trinh Annan collaborated in regulating their common border, particularly regarding the movement of their subjects across the border, but also in regard to curtailing transborder political activism such as Mac restorationism. In this chapter on border regulation during the 1744-88 period, I have reviewed a number of cases of border incidents that made it into the Qing and Le-Trinh court chronicles. These should not be considered a complete inventory of proscribed transborder activity in this period. Undoubtedly, there was a great deal of activity that took place that was not reported to the two courts nor recorded in the chronicles. However, I am not inclined to adopt any simple assumption about whether these recorded incidents represent either

⁵²⁰ QSLSEA excerpts, 84-85.

⁵²¹ *QSLSEA excerpts*, 85. The Yao Guoqin case is evidence that there was a significant, if not large, flow of illicit migrants to Annan, perhaps the source of the Tong Tinh miners in Chapter Eight. A document in the *MQSLGB* collection, 83a, dated QL39.2.4 (1774), shows the Yao Guoqin case did have repercussions for officials identified as being responsible for the Longzhou border area. The document is a memorial from officials in Shuntian Prefecture relating that they had found out that an assistant prefect in the prefecture had been responsible for a 1769 (QL34) case of Huang Wenxiang et al illicitly crossing the Guangxi-Annan border; in obedience to Qianlong's orders following the Yao Guoqin case, the Shuntian officials took the assistant prefect into custody to answer charges in Guangxi.

isolated exceptions or the tip of the iceberg. Rather, I think these incidents are best approached as examples shedding light on the nature and functioning of the Qing-Annan relationship during this period.

During the 1744-88 period, the two courts responded to banditry along the border by apprehending the perpetrators and executing them. Mac restorationism was also treated as a form of banditry or rebellion along the border. In most cases, Qing subjects who committed banditry or seditious behavior in Annan were extradited back to the Qing and very often executed at the border as a demonstration to Annan of Qing justice and goodwill. The fate of Annan subjects committing crimes in the border area varied, reflecting Annan's subordinate status in relation to the Qing. Sometimes the Qing decided to carry out justice against Annan subjects, while at other times the Qing court acted reciprocally by extraditing Annan subjects back to Annan.

Separate from the criminal acts of banditry, some border incidents had a distinct political dimension. The Nguyen Ngoc Huan and Dinh Anh cases involved disputes between local leaders on the Annan side of the border that led to Annan subjects fleeing into Qing territory. In these cases, the Qing refrained from intervening in these matters and rather turned the persons involved over to the Le-Trinh court for it to decide the matter.

There were several border incidents that led to disputes between the two courts. Although they involved border regulation, I argue that, in each case, the heart of the conflict was something other than border regulation. These incidents should be understood not as failure of the collaborative border regulation of the two courts specifically but rather as stress points in the more general diplomatic relationship between the two courts. The Hoang Cong Toan case was the major diplomatic dispute of the 1744-88 period. However, what was in dispute was how to deal with a political refugee in Qing territory that threatened the legitimacy of the Le-Trinh court

by the claims he made. (This case also forms an interesting complement to the Mac restorationist attempt in the Huang Futuan case. The Qing treated political activism of this kind as violent rebellion against the legitimate order but retained a political principle of giving succor to political refugees who claimed descent from a former Qing vassal.) The Zhou Gui case involved illicit border crossing but the primary context was the tribute mission. Although spying was brought up as a possible purpose for the fraudulent entry of Qing territory by the Annan men, the immediate issue was the sanctity and trust of the tributary relationship. The Six Meng case did involve an issue about territory, but, quite apart from the lack of mention in the Le-Trinh court chronicle, a closer examination of the incident suggests that the contention was over the bureaucratic discipline of local officials rather than over contested territory. In none of these three cases did disagreement between the two courts on specific issues lead to any perceivable weakening of their diplomatic relationship or border regulation.

It was rather incidents that directly concerned border regulation that caused unease and alarm at the Qing court about the impact on its relationship with the Annan court. The Long Yun case in 1773 and the Yao Guoqin case in 1774 involved the abuse of border regulation for private gain in the one case and laxness in border regulation in the other. In both cases, the Qing court acted quickly and with alarm to these examples of malfeasance out of a concern for its own reputation and its relationship with Annan. These two incidents occurred just before the second Tong Tinh incident in 1775 (see Chapter Eight) that ultimately led to the curtailment of the passport system and can be understood as setting the stage for this development and as indicating the mood and concerns of the Qing court at the time.

CHAPTER 8

CLOSING OF THE BORDER: QING AND LE APPROACHES TO THE MINING FRONTIER AND THE END OF THE PASSPORT SYSTEM, 1760S-1780S

Border incidents were particularly sensitive points in Qing-Le diplomatic relations. As seen in Chapter Seven, the Qing court was careful to show that it was not shirking its responsibility for keeping the border in order. One particular borderland phenomenon in the eighteenth century was the growth of large mining operations run by Chinese entrepreneurs and worked by various people groups from both sides of the border. Qing and Le attitudes toward these operations were ambivalent, and this ambivalence was reflected in how the two courts dealt with this common issue and each other.

E-Tu Zen Sun distinguishes between two ways that the Qing state related to mining. One way, in small-scale, local mining operations, was to encourage its contribution to the local economy while attempting to curb possible disruptions to local order. The other way was to offer incentives to encourage large-scale production in response to monetary policy.⁵²² The Annan mines discussed in this chapter do not seem to fit neatly into this classification, in part because they were not in Qing territory. They may be best compared to overseas Chinese mining in places like Borneo during this period. However, it can be argued that the Qing relationship to the Annan mines resembled the first mode that Sun describes, where the state is concerned primarily with the effects on local livelihoods and order. Similarly, the Le-Trinh relationship to the mines appears to fit the second mode that Sun describes, where the state encouraged the mining production through licensing and relied on its output. Beyond the role of the state, the fragmentary sources on these mines on the Annan frontier point to the roles of capital, expertise,

⁵²² E-Tu Zen Sun, "Ch'ing Government and the Mineral Industries before 1800," *Journal of Asian Studies* 27, no. 4 (Aug., 1968), pp. 835-45.

and leadership from men of the Hakka areas of Guangdong and a labor force from the border region, often identified by the appellation Nung/Nong. The ethnohistory of the Nung before the nineteenth century has yet to be fully sketched, but they appear to be Tai-speaking migrants from western Guangxi and southeastern Yunnan.

In this chapter, I look at Qing and Le responses to unrest in mining country on the Annan side of the border. I argue that both courts took into account the actions of the other in dealing with this issue, reflecting a shared understanding of the border regime. I also argue that the two courts exhibited a range of strategies toward the mining frontier, including taxation, tolerance, containment, military action, and cultural integration.

The Trouble with Mines: the Tong Tinh mines incidents and the end of the passport system

The Tong Tinh mines (Songxing 送星廠) were mines in Thai Nguyen 太原 province in Annan, not directly at the border but in the general upland, border zone. The mines may have produced a variety of precious metals and other mineral products, but they appear in the *Complete Book of the History of the Great Viet (Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu 大越史記全書*, hereafter *DVKSTT*) primarily as sources of silver.⁵²³

In the discussion below, I describe two incidents at the Tong Tinh mines that prompted responses from the Le-Trinh and Qing courts. Ultimately, after the second incident in 1775, the Qing court responded by curtailing the passport system. The motivation of the Qing court in this

⁵²³ Zhang Yi 張翼 also speaks of the Tong Tinh mines as producing silver. See LIANG Yang and HUANG Haiyun, *Gudao Zhuang feng: Zhao Yi Zhen'anfu shi wen kao lun* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005), 470-71. This contradicts, for example, Anthony Reid's characterization of the mines as copper mines in his "Chinese on the mining frontier in Southeast Asia," in *Chinese circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia*, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 25. Reid appears to follow either Alexander Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model: A Comparative Study of Nguyen and Ch'ing Civil Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 259-60, or NGUYEN Thanh Nha, *Tableau économique du Viêt Nam aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Éditions Cujas, 1970), 86-90.

decision seems to reflect a concern with its reputation and trust with the Le-Trinh court. There is a sense on the part of the Qing court that the large numbers of Chinese returning from the mines reflected a laxity at the Qing court in enforcing border regulation. Given the relatively good intelligence the Qing had on conditions in Annan throughout the period covered in this dissertation, it seems unlikely to me that the Qing court and the Qing provincial administration were unaware that there were large mining operations not far across the border, involving large numbers of Chinese subjects. Definite proof of this intelligence can be seen in a memorial on investigations into Chinese miners' deaths in Annan surrounding the 1765 Tong Tinh mines incident discussed in this chapter.

Rather than seeing the Tong Tinh incidents as reflecting the ignorance and limitations of the Qing court, I am inclined to see the Qing authorities as deliberately turning a blind eye to the presence of large numbers of illegal Chinese migrants working at the mines in Annan.

The first Tong Tinh incident, 1765

Signs of stress and challenge to the border regime surfaced as early as the 1760s. One of these indications was a crisis at the Tong Tinh mines in Thai Nguyen on the Annan side of the border. In 1765, mounting tensions among various Chinese mining groups in Tong Tinh erupted into violent conflict, which prompted the Le-Trinh court to attempt, unsuccessfully, to crack down on the loosely-regulated mines. The Qing provincial officials also became involved in adjudicating murder charges associated with the Qing subjects involved in the violence.⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ CHEN Chingho, *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (hereafter *DVKSTT*) (Tōkyō : Tōkyō Daigaku Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, Fuzoku Tōyōgaku Bunken Sentā, 1984-86), 1163, entry 19 (1767). As is often the case, Annan and Qing sources do not match up closely and together only offer a fragmentary account of the Tong Tinh incident of 1765. The *DVKSTT* entry (p.1163#19) is found under the date of the sixth month of 1767 but the entry in fact begins the account in the undated past, and it is in fact the subsequent Le-Trinh expedition to the mines that is the entry's present moment. The Qing *Veritable Records* does not appear to record this incident, but there is a document in the *Ming-Qing shiliao, geng bian* [*Ming-Qing historical materials, tenth collection*; hereafter *MQSLGB*] (Shanghai: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1960), 78b-80a, that relates to the Tong Tinh incident. This document is dated to

The entry on the 1765 Tong Tinh incident in the *DVKSTT* outlines the backstory to the incident from the Le-Trinh point of view. Sometime in the unspecified past, the Le-Trinh court had given a license to the Nung 儂 to exploit the production from mines and the bark of cassia trees (*guipei* 桂皮).⁵²⁵ More recently, the licensed parties, identified as “supervisors” (*jiandangguan* 监当官) had recruited large numbers of foreign, i.e. Chinese, workers in order to expand the tax collected on the production.⁵²⁶ Alarming, the numbers of these foreign workers had swelled to over ten thousand miners in the case of some mines. Among these Chinese miners, miners from Chaozhou and Shaozhou had formed large, violent groups, with frequent armed conflict between these groups over the control of the mines. Prior to the 1765 Tong Tinh incident, the Le-Trinh court had not intervened, as long as tax payments on the exploitation of the mine continued regularly.

The *DVKSTT* entry does not in fact mention a particular incident in 1765 as prompting a response from the Le-Trinh court. Rather, the Le-Trinh court is portrayed as responding to an increasing trend of violence and, more importantly to the Le-Trinh court, threats to territorial security and tax revenues. In response to this trend, Ngo Thi Si 吴时仕, governor of Thai Nguyen, and others at court produced a policy analysis and recommendation. The policy statement identified three threats the unruly miners posed to the country. In the first instance, not

QL33 (1768), but within the document, dates are given for the incident (QL30; 1765) and the arrival of a letter from the Le-Trinh court to the Guangdong-Guangxi officials (QL31; 1766).

⁵²⁵ A curious phrase is used to identify the Nung who were licensed for this production: 本国化韦侬人, which could be parsed in a number of ways. One possibility: “Nung who have assimilated to the Vi surname of Annan.” The tricky part for translation is the word *hua/hoa* 化, which indicates some sort of transformation but probably should not be taken in the modern compound “-*huan/hoa* 化” such as *han hua* 汉化.

⁵²⁶ 监当官大集外国客人採之以廣歲課. This possibly suggests that the Le-Trinh court had increased tax demands and the expanded production was at least in part an attempt to fulfill these demands.

only was the Le-Trinh court failing to collect the full amount of tax from these mining groups, these foreigners were occupying strategic territory of Annam. Secondly, the widespread excavation of the earth in the area of the mines in Thai Nguyen threatened the geomantic integrity of the country. Thirdly, the miners retained their identification as Qing subjects in keeping their queue and Qing-style dress, and moreover took silver out of Annam into China.

Ngo Thi Si and his associates recommended that the Le-Trinh court appeal to the Qing court for a resolution to this problem. In particular, they suggested that the Le-Trinh court should write to the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general, emphasize Annam's record of acting submissively in relation to the Qing, give notice of the abuse Qing subjects were inflicting on Annam in this matter of the miners, and ask for a resolution to the problem. The recommendation continued by articulating a principle that the Le-Trinh court should use to support their request to the Qing governor-general. There was an existing precedent of Qing subjects coming to Annam to purchase the bark of the cassia tree. In this precedent, and by implication in the miners' case, there was a principle that merchants entering a foreign country should abide by the country's customs and not abuse its laws.⁵²⁷

According to the *DVKSTT* entry, the Le-Trinh court adopted this recommendation and sent word to the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general, but the Qing reply did not acknowledge the situation. Having failed to involve the Qing provincial authorities in resolving the issue, the Le-Trinh court resolved to address the issue itself and commissioned Ngo Thi Si and other officials to form an expedition to drive the Chinese miners back into China. The Le-Trinh court

⁵²⁷ The principle as stated in the *DVKSTT* entry: 入国便从其俗买卖要顺乎人不容挟官法陵[*sic*]下国者. This is suggestive of the link between Chinese merchants and Chinese miners. Here the Le-Trinh court makes an analogy between Qing merchants coming to buy cassia bark and the miners.

did, however, provide a means for these miners to remain in Annan and work the mines: they would be required to change their hairstyle and clothing and become Annan subjects.

In any event, the matter remained unresolved as Ngo Thi Si's expedition was forced to return to the capital soon after their arrival in the area of the mines, in response to the news that the Trinh lord had died. The expedition did, however, establish a new rate of taxation with the mining groups before they left, but the situation of vast groups of Chinese miners controlling the Tong Tinh mines and periodically erupting in internecine violence continued to simmer until the second Tong Tinh incident in 1775.

Although the Qing sources are more or less silent on the Qing court's direct knowledge or action in regard to the Tong Tinh mine incident in 1765, a Grand Council document has preserved the text of a memorial from the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general regarding judicial handling of murder charges against some of the Tong Tinh miners.⁵²⁸ This memorial does not change the outline of the incident as recounted in the *DVKSTT*, but it gives details about the violence and the Qing individuals involved as well as a different view of the correspondence from Annan on the case.

The memorial quotes or summarizes the contents of a letter received from the king of Annan in 1766 notifying the Qing authorities of murder charges made by Qing subjects against other Qing subjects. The letter explained that there were silver and tin mines in Annan territory, namely the Tong Tinh mines, whose exploitation had been initiated by native peoples (*turen*), who had been joined by sojourners from China. They had worked together in harmony until recently, when two leaders of these Chinese miners, Zhang Renfu and Zhang Nante had formed separate groups and were contesting for control of the mines. This competition had turned

⁵²⁸ *MQSLGB*, 78a-80b.

violent, leading to the violent deaths of nine persons, including certain men named Gu Laoer and Gu Zhiyu. The letter further identified the two leaders as natives of Shaozhou prefecture in Guangdong. The letter from Annan cited here thus seems different than the communication proposed by Ngo Thi Si and his associates, but in addition to the possibility that there was more than one letter, it may be that the Le-Trinh court decided to use this case involving Qing subjects as a pretext or opening for requesting Qing action against the Tong Tinh miners.

The Guangdong-Guangxi provincial authorities responded by investigating the native places of these men and requesting that Annan turn over them and any other Qing subjects involved in the case. The Guangdong-Guangxi authorities confirmed that Zhang Nante was registered in Wengyuan county in Shaozhou prefecture in Guangdong but it was not until they questioned some of the extradited Qing subjects that they learned that Zhang Renfu was from Changle county in Fuzhou prefecture in Fujian.

The story that emerged from the court proceedings conducted by the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general was indeed violent. Zhang Nante and Zhang Renfu had been working separate mines when, in the second month of 1765, Zhang Renfu noticed that Zhang Nante's mine was more productive than his and began excavating in Zhang Nante's mine. This provoked a conflict between the two men. Zhang Renfu then gathered a number of men, for the most part all surnamed Zhang, and miners numbering over 110 persons to attack Zhang Nante and his group with clubs and other weapons. During the melee, Zhang Renfu's men caused two men of Zhang Nante's group, the two aforementioned Gu, to die violent deaths. Zhang Nante and another leader in his group went to the Annan authorities in Thai Nguyen and Cao Bang to accuse Zhang Renfu and his group of murdering nine persons.

Although Zhang Renfu and some of his cohort succeeded in escaping to their native place in China, they were later apprehended on the basis of information from a Chinese merchant in Annan that had become caught up in the miners' murder case. Zhong Nanhua led a group of fifteen merchants on their way back to China after making a profit from trade in Annan. Some of Zhang Renfu's group, including some involved in the deaths of the victims, joined Zhong Nanhua's group to travel together towards the border. When Zhong's group reached Cau Phung (Jiufeng 九封市) market in That Tuyen *chau* near the Ping'er border crossing, Zhang Renfu's group members were recognized by some of Zhang Nante's men assisting the Cao Bang authorities in hunting down the culprits. Zhong and his group of merchants and his goods and money were taken into custody and turned over to the Qing authorities along with those accused of the Tong Tinh miners' murders.

As the case unfolded, more details emerged about the miners involved that shed some light on the activities of Chinese sojourners in Annan. For example, while men from Zhang Nante's group initially accused the men of Zhang Renfu's group of the murder of nine men, later evidence demonstrated that seven of the nine supposed victims had suffered fates quite apart from the Tong Tinh incident. Of these seven, one continued to work at the Tong Tinh mines, one died of illness in Annan, one fled but was later killed while attempting a theft, one was drowned while trying to cross the river at Longzhou, one died of illness at Longzhou, another had died even before the Tong Tinh incident had taken place when he was killed as he attempted a theft in Annan. (Only six mentioned, perhaps the seventh was dismissed because of no positive proof?) The case also gives an idea of the money involved in the cross-border trade since the merchant Zhong Nanhua, who was accidentally caught up in the arrests of the Tong Tinh suspects, was judged by the Qing authorities to have broken the law against engaging in trade across the border

without permission. The money he was bringing back to China was confiscated, a sum of 1491 taels and 7 qian.

Second Tong Tinh incident, 1774-75

The most significant and large-scale border disruption in the 1770s was the second Tong Tinh mines incident in 1774-1775. Surprisingly, there is only a brief mention of the incident in the *DVKSTT*, given the consequences it precipitated for Qing-Annan relations, as recorded in the Qing sources. However, the brief entry in the *DVKSTT* gives the information on the beginning of the story. The Tong Tinh mines in Thai Nguyen had been worked by Chinese mining groups, paying an annual tax to the Le-Trinh court on the silver they excavated. In 1774, two Chinese mining groups, led respectively by men surnamed Zhang and Gu, came to violent conflict over the mines, and the tax due the court went into abeyance. The Thai Nguyen governor was ordered to lead an armed force to confront the miners and bring them to order. The Thai Nguyen governor succeeded in quelling the violence, took the contending leaders to Thang Long, where the Le-Trinh court compelled them to agree to pay the mining tax regularly.⁵²⁹

Although this is the end of the story in the *DVKSTT*, evidently there continued to be unrest at the Tong Tinh mines. The Qing court became aware in 1775 of violence between Qing subjects Zhang Deyu and Li Qiaoguang over the Tong Tinh mines and the involvement of Annan troops in suppressing the unrest.⁵³⁰ This was a serious and embarrassing situation for the Qing, and prompted a rethinking of the policy of allowing cross-border trade by means of travel passes.

⁵²⁹ *DVKSTT*, 1181 entry 21 (jiawu 35th year, QL39, 1774-75, 11th month). The entry mentions that the annual tax yield from the mines was approximately 10,000 taels.

⁵³⁰ In a side-light on the wealth generated by mining, Qing officials later investigated Zhang and Li's origins and wealth. It was reported that Zhang Deyu had considerable wealth, more so than Li Qiaoguang and that both were from Jiayingzhou in Guangdong (suggesting that they may have been Hakka). The Qing court ordered Zhang Deyu and Li Qiaoguang's assets at home to be confiscated. See *Qing shilu Yuenan, Miandian, Taigu, Laowo shiliao zhai chao* [Excerpts from the Qing Veritable Records concerning Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos; hereafter *QSLSEA excerpts*] (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1985), 94, QL40.8.yisi (1775.9.6).

Qing emperor Qianlong suggested restricting trade to the border, in order to restrict Qing subjects' movements while maintaining trade flows to Annan and asked the Grand Council to provide further advice on such a possibility. The Grand Council supported this idea with a claim that most of the trade between Qing and Annan currently went by sea rather than overland. Predictably, the Grand Council also called for stricter punishments for officials who allowed illicit border crossings.⁵³¹

Neither the Qing nor the Annan sources give a clear idea of what happened at the Tong Tinh mines in early 1775, i.e. after the Le-Trinh intervention in the mines recorded in the *DVKSTT*, but it provoked a large-scale return of the Chinese miners across the border back into Qing territory. Possibly this represented the fallout from further conflict among the miners, with the losers leaving the mines and returning home. Or, the Le-Trinh court's intervention, either militarily or in the form of more demanding tax quotas, could have prompted the exodus.

Whatever the cause or motivations, over the year of 1775, the Qing officials in Guangxi, Guangdong, and Yunnan faced a growing problem of large groups of returned miners on the Qing side of the border. As a group, these miners represented illicit border crossing on a vast scale. The Qing court had to balance the need to deal with the miners sternly in light of their defiance of Qing law with the danger such a large group of condemned, volatile miners represented.

Towards the end of the summer of 1775, Guangxi governor Xiong Xuepeng reported the return of 320 miners via Donglong pass. The Qing court recognized the danger the miners could pose if they were settled in places in Guangxi and Guangdong, relatively near the border, and considered the possibility of relocating the miners to Xinjiang to keep them out of further

⁵³¹ *QSL SEA excerpts*, 87-88, QL40.6,jiachen (1775.7.25).

trouble.⁵³² A few weeks later, the numbers of returning miners rose to over 2,000, returning via Xiao Zhen'an, Baise, and Guishunzhou.⁵³³

The Qing court continued to fine-tune their plans to relocate the miners, while keeping these plans secret to avoid a revolt among the miners. Qianlong instructed the provincial officials to conceal the miners' destination of Xinjiang until they were well on their way.⁵³⁴ Soon after, Qianlong eased off a blanket punishment of exile to Xinjiang for the miners. He admitted that the large numbers of miners prohibited processing and transporting them *en masse*. Rather, he outlined a gradation of crimes and corresponding punishments and means of processing them. These included returning them to their places of registration or relocating them to nearby provinces (but not to 'Miao frontier,' *Miaojiang*, provinces, such as Yunnan or Guizhou).⁵³⁵

Ultimately, of a possible total of two to three thousand returning Chinese miners,⁵³⁶ 63 serious offenders were sent to Ili to be slaves of the troops stationed at the agricultural colonies, 903 lesser offenders were sent to Urumqi to farm and provide labor there, others were sent to Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang and Henan, and yet another group, men who had family and livelihoods at home, were sent back to their places of registration to be monitored by local officials.⁵³⁷

⁵³² *QSL SEA excerpts*, 88, QL40.7.jiayin (1775.8.4).

⁵³³ *QSL SEA excerpts*, 89-90, QL40.7.jiazi (1775.8.14) & QL40.8.guiwu (1775.9.2). There is also a later report that a certain Gu Hongwei, possibly related to the Gu-surnamed miner leader in the *DVKSTT* entry, and a group of about 18 people had reentered Qing territory via Guangnan in Yunnan, see *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.93, QL40.8.dinghai (1775.9.6). The geography of the routes taken to return to China, i.e. via Xiao Zhen'an, Baise, Guishunzhou, and Guangnan, suggest that the miners were Nung/Nong.

⁵³⁴ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p. 89, QL40.7.jiazi (1775.8.14).

⁵³⁵ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.91-92, QL40.8.guiwu (1775.9.2).

⁵³⁶ This figure is mentioned by Qianlong in *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.95, QL44.i10.jiyou (1775.11.27).

⁵³⁷ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.94-95 QL40.10.bingzi (1775.10.25).

At the same time as the Qing court was deliberating on how to deal with the returning Chinese miners, it was also attempting to develop an improved policy towards the regulation of the border in collaboration with Annan. At the first report of violence at the Tong Tinh mines between Zhang Deyu and Li Qiaoguang, Qianlong had raised the possibility of restricting the Chinese trade with Annan to the border, rather than issuing travel passes to Qing merchants.⁵³⁸ As Chinese miners began flowing back into Qing territory in significant numbers, the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general Li Shiyao closed the Youcun portal and suspended the issuing of cross-border travel passes.⁵³⁹ Later, as part of the Qing court's process of sorting out the returned Qing subjects according to their crimes and corresponding punishments, Qianlong ordered that, while returning Qing subjects who had not been involved in the mines should not be punished, these merchants should nonetheless not be allowed to return to Annan to trade.⁵⁴⁰

The response of the Annan court, as it is recorded in the Qing sources, ultimately dovetailed with the Qing court's inclination to prohibit the cross-border trade. The Annan court may have considered allowing Qing subjects to return to the mines at first. After large numbers of Chinese miners had returned to Qing territory in the late summer of 1775, the Annan court wrote to the Qing court to ask that mercy be shown the miners. In his reply, Qianlong acknowledged the benevolent intentions of the Annan court but insisted that the miners must be tried strictly under Qing law.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.87, QL40.6.jiachen (1775.7.25).

⁵³⁹ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.90, QL40.7.yihai (1775.8.25).

⁵⁴⁰ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.93, QL40.8.bingxu (1775.9.5). The suggestion here is that, while the merchants did not participate in the violence at Tong Tinh, they were perceived by the Qing court as involved in the Tong Tinh mines.

⁵⁴¹ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.91-92, QL40.8.guiwei (1775.9.2).

In any case, the Qing court realized that the scale of illicit border-crossing revealed by the aftermath of the Tong Tinh mines incident called for a reordering of border regulation. At the beginning of the fall of 1775, the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general Li Shiyao and the Guangxi governor Xiong Xuepeng began discussing new regulations for trade at the border between Qing and Annan.⁵⁴² However, when the Qing court solicited the Annan court's input on the proposed trade, the Annan king replied that there was no good place for holding trade on the Annan side of the border. This unenthusiastic reply appears to have been just to Qianlong's liking. He commented to the Qing court that he had been concerned about the effects of curtailing the border trade, but it appeared it was of no concern since even Annan itself thought the matter was not practicable.⁵⁴³ (The premise of Qianlong's view here is that trade between Qing and Annan was primarily of value to Annan rather than of value to each side. The view is consistent with other rhetoric of Qing, particularly of Qianlong, that China was self-sufficient and there was only need for trade to supply the wants of other nations, not to supply the wants of China.⁵⁴⁴) The Qing court therefore drafted a reply to the king of Annan, notifying him of how the miners were being dealt with; that, having received Annan's input on the issue of trade, the Qing emperor had decided to close the border to trade; and instructed Annan to send any illicit border crossers to the Qing provincial authorities to be tried and punished accordingly.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴² *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.94, QL40.8.yisi (1775.9.24).

⁵⁴³ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.96, QL40.11.yiwei (1776.1.12).

⁵⁴⁴ See, for example, James L. Hevia's discussion of the letter from Qianlong to George III in the context of the Macartney embassy of 1793 in *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 238ff. I am grateful to Richard von Glahn for pointing out that this is in fact a long-standing trope in Chinese statements about trade with foreign countries. For attitudes and policies toward foreign trade during the Han dynasty (3rd c. BCE-3rd c. CE), see, for example, Yingshi Yu, *Trade and Expansion in Han China; A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

⁵⁴⁵ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.97, QL40.11.yiwei (1776.1.12).

The Qing response to the unrest at Tong Tinh in 1775 was to curtail the passport system. Regardless of whether or not illicit travel and trade continued, officially Qing subjects were not allowed to travel into Annam from the Guangxi border. This situation lasted until the revival of the passport system in 1792 (see Chapter Five).

Le-Trinh approaches to the mining frontier, 1770s-80s

For the Le-Trinh court, however, the mines at Tong Tinh and elsewhere in the northern uplands were a problem in their own backyard. Another major mining concern within Annam's territory was the mines at Dulong, near the Mabai border crossing at the Yunnan border. Here, too, the Le-Trinh court faced a crisis that threatened its hold on this territory and the taxes it collected from the mines' production. In contrast to the lack of information from the Annam side for the Le-Trinh response to the 1775 Tong Tinh incident, the *DVKSTT* provides a tolerably complete account of the cause of the trouble at Dulong and the Le-Trinh court's response. In addition to providing information on a separate case of Le-Trinh handling of mines, the events of the Dulong case can stand as an example of how the Le-Trinh court might have responded to the 1775 Tong Tinh incident. A caveat to this suggestion, however, is that, while the Tong Tinh case seems to primarily have involved conflict between Chinese mining groups, the Dulong case featured outright resistance of the local lord against the Le-Trinh court, which can perhaps be compared to the Vi Phuc Quan uprising of the 1740s in Lang Son.

The events at Dulong in the 1770s and 1780s represent one type of response from the Le-Trinh court toward securing its rule in the mine-rich borderlands. Military intervention was only one type of response, however. The Le-Trinh court, through its appointees to the peripheral provinces like Tuyen Quang and Lang Song, was capable of pursuing a policy of cultural integration as well. During the late 1770s and early 1780s, the Le-Trinh court appointed Ngo Thi

Si as provincial governor at Lang Son. Lang Son was not immediately close to the Tong Tinh mines, but Lang Son was an important node in the cross-border circuit of trade and mining and probably the primary location where the Le-Trinh court and the Chinese trade and mining interests interfaced. Ngo Thi Si should also be remembered as the provincial governor of Thai Nguyen during the first Tong Tinh incident in 1765 and a coauthor of a policy recommendation to the Le-Trinh regarding the miners. During Ngo Thi Si's tenure at Lang Son, he became associated with renovation of local temples. By examining several inscriptions related to Ngo Thi Si during this time, I attempt to sketch a picture of Le-Trinh attempts to integrate the translocal, borderland society of Lang Son with the state and society of the Red River Delta.

More trouble with mines: the Dulong mines and the Hoang Van Dong uprising, 1770s-80s

Following the Tong Tinh mines debacle and the subsequent curtailing of the cross-border transit pass system at the Guangxi-Annan border, the Qing court remained sensitive to any possibilities of mismanagement of the border and hence embarrassment in front of Annan. An example of this was the border incidents that arose as a result of the Hoang Van Dong uprising at the Dulong mines near the Mabai border portal at the Annan-Yunnan border.

According to the *DVKSTT*, the trouble at Dulong began in 1777 when the local chief at Dulong, Hoang Van Dong 黄文桐 (aka Hoang Dinh Dong 黄廷桐), went to the Le-Trinh provincial headquarters of Tuyen Quang to submit the tax due on the copper produced at the mines. The Le-Trinh officials responsible for collecting the tax, Le Quy Don and Chu Xuan Han, detained him indefinitely, though the *DVSKTT* does not give the reason for this treatment. Hoang Van Dong eventually escaped, returned to Dulong and raised an armed force and besieged Tuyen Quang. The Le-Trinh court sent an armed force to Tuyen Quang that successfully relieved the siege, with Hoang Van Dong retreating to Dulong. The Le-Trinh commander in charge of the

relief force, Nguyen Le 阮儷⁵⁴⁶ persuaded Hoang Van Dong to surrender and resume his allegiance to the Le-Trinh court. When he did so, Hoang Van Dong accused Le Quy Don and Chu Xuan Han of attempting extortion while he was earlier detained at Tuyen Quang. The Le-Trinh court accepted this view and punished Le Quy Don and other officials involved in the alleged extortion.⁵⁴⁷

Hoang Van Dong's relationship with the Le-Trinh court continued to deteriorate, however. After his defeat in 1777 at Tuyen Quang, Hoang returned to Dulong and, relying on the defensive advantages of the area around Dulong, increasingly disregarded the wishes of the Le-Trinh court. This prompted the Le-Trinh court in 1779 to send another punitive expedition against Hoang at Dulong.⁵⁴⁸

In the spring of 1780, the Le-Trinh commander Nguyen Le reached Dulong and found that Hoang Van Dong had gathered the people at Dulong and organized them to hold the strategic defense points. In order to break Hoang's defenses, the Le-Trinh commander sent a force through Qing territory to attack Hoang's headquarters from behind. The attack was successful: the Le-Trinh forces took Dulong and leveled the defensive mounds, while Hoang fled. Once the Le-Trinh forces had reestablished their control over the area, Hoang returned and surrendered, and the Le-Trinh court pardoned him.⁵⁴⁹

During the time that Hoang Van Dong was actively resisting the Le-Trinh court in the years between 1777 and 1780, the Qing court paid special attention to how Qing provincial

⁵⁴⁶ Son of (春郡公) Nguyen Nghiem 阮儷

⁵⁴⁷ *DVKSTT* p.1189, dingyou year 38, QL42, spring/2nd month, 1777.

⁵⁴⁸ *DVKSTT* p.1191, jihai40, QL44, 7th month, 1779.

⁵⁴⁹ *DVKSTT* p.1191-92, gengzi41, QL45, spring/2nd month, 1780.

officials handled border incidents near the areas affected by Hoang Van Dong's uprising. In the summer of 1779, Qing subjects Tian Laodao and eighteen others were caught illicitly crossing the Qing-Annan border, attempting to reenter Qing territory from the Annan side. They were seized by the Qing authorities and sent to the provincial capital, Kunming, for investigation.⁵⁵⁰

Qianlong took the occasion to instruct the Grand Council that, on account of the ongoing Hoang Van Dong rebellion across the border, Annan subjects found in Yunnan should not be returned directly to Annan officials at the Yunnan border. This was because, speculated Qianlong, Hoang Van Dong might try to impersonate Annan officials in order to recover his men. Rather, Qianlong ordered that Annan subjects should be transferred from Yunnan to Guangxi to be handed over to Annan at the Guangxi section of the border, which Qianlong described as "the primary route across the Annan border" (*Annan jiaojie zheng lu*).⁵⁵¹

A couple weeks after the initial report on Tian Laodao from Yunnan, the acting governor-general of Guangdong-Guangxi, Li Zhiying, reported that the king of Annan had requested that the Qing apprehend and extradite Hoang Van Dong and his followers if they were found in China. Li said he would put the border on alert and if Hoang was apprehended, he would hold him for questioning, memorialize the Qing court, and act in response to the emperor's instructions. Qianlong expressed his disapproval of Li's handling of the matter: Annan had

⁵⁵⁰ *QSL SEA excerpts*, 103, QL44.7.dingyou, 1779.8.26. Tian Laodao is described here as a *yi* Qing subject (*neidi yimin* 内地夷民), which I take to mean a Qing subject of non-Han ethnicity, probably from one of the *tusi* jurisdictions of Guangxi or Yunnan. A later *QSL* entry describes him as "a Nong commoner" (*neidi nong min* 内地農民); see *QSL SEA excerpts*, 104, QL44.7.jiyou, 1779.9.7.

⁵⁵¹ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p. 103, QL44.7.dingyou, 1779.8.26. Qianlong returned to these themes a couple weeks later. In response to a memorial from the Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general, he questioned, if the Hoang Van Dong uprising was affecting both the Yunnan and Guangxi sections of the border, why had not the Guangxi officials picked up any Qing subjects crossing the border illicitly, as had the Yunnan officials? Qianlong complained that it was an embarrassment to have Qing subjects illicitly entering Annan and brought up the Tong Tinh miners' case again, rebuking the provincial officials for ignoring his concern with the surveillance of the border. See *QSL SEA excerpts*, p. 104-5, QL44.7.jiyou, 1779.9.7.

always been very compliant, thus Li should have immediately responded affirmatively to Annan and put the border on alert. There was no need to seek special instructions from the throne. The danger was rather that, in delaying in replying and acting, the Qing might lose Annan's trust. However, Qianlong warned against possible subterfuge by Hoang's allies in Vietnam, pretending to be Annan chiefs coming to the border to receive him as a prisoner.⁵⁵²

The Qing court's caution over the possible ambiguities of border incidents during this period of Hoang Van Dong's uprising can be seen in how it handled a group of Annan political refugees who had entered Qing territory via the Guangxi section of the border. A group of twelve people from Annan were apprehended at Tundengyandong within Zhen'an prefecture. They were led by a woman named Dinh Anh 丁安, who claimed to be the wife of Nong Hau Dong, the former chief of Bao Loc, on the Annan side of the border. Nong Hau Dong had lost control of the walled town of Bao Loc to his cousin, which had prompted the flight of Dinh An and her fellow refugees.

In a report to the Qing court, the Guangxi governor proposed to question the group and then send them back to Annan. Qianlong took the view that it would be too convenient for the usurper at Bao Loc if the Qing sent these political refugees into his hands. Rather, Qianlong ordered that the results of the questioning of Dinh Anh's group be relayed to the king of Annan, and to request that he send a party to receive the group at the border, where further questioning could be carried out.⁵⁵³ Although Hoang Van Dong was not directly involved in this case, Bao Loc was not far from the area affected by the uprising at the Dulong mines. The Qing court's caution over being deceived and used by rebels in Annan extended to the Dinh Anh case and

⁵⁵² *QSL SEA excerpts*, p. 104, QL44.7.jiyou, 1779.9.7.

⁵⁵³ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p. 105, QL44.8.yihai, 1779.10.3.

prompted it to deal directly with the Annan court instead of engaging with increasing ambiguity in the border area.

In the spring of 1780, as Le-Trinh forces were on the march toward Dulong to confront Hoang Van Dong, the king of Annan again requested Qing help to apprehend and extradite Hoang if he fled into Qing territory. The Guangdong-Guangxi governor-general assured the Qing court that he had put the Guangxi and Guangdong border sections on alert for Hoang and his followers.⁵⁵⁴

In the summer of 1780, the king of Annan informed the Yunnan-Guizhou governor-general that Hoang Van Dong appeared to have left the Dulong mine area following the heightened alert on the Qing border. As a mark of appreciation and respect, the king of Annan sent a gift of incense, wax, and silver to the governor-general as well as a large sum of silver as reward to the Qing soldiers responsible for the border. The king of Annan also urged, in his letter, the governor-general to keep up the search for Hoang. The governor-general reported to the Qing court that he had returned the gifts to the king of Annan, but again instructed the local officials near the border to be vigilant for Hoang's whereabouts.⁵⁵⁵

Le-Trinh cultural incorporation of Lang Son in 1770s and 1780s

In the summer of 1779, the Le-Trinh court appointee Ngo Thi Si visited the Temple of the Transcendent in Lang Son. The temple was a grotto inside a limestone hill on the south side of Lang Son town. From the entrance to the temple, Ngo Thi Si could take in all of the town and its environs. Ngo Thi Si commemorated the occasion by inscribing the eight sights of Lang Son: a) the official residence at the fort (*doan thanh*); b) the market at Ky Lua; c) the limestone hill

⁵⁵⁴ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.105, QL44.12.jimao, 1780.2.4.

⁵⁵⁵ *QSL SEA excerpts*, p.106, QL45.5.dingwei; 1780.7.1.

that formed part of the wall of the fort; d) the stone wharf and ferry crossing across Ky Cung River; e) the spring in the rock of the limestone hill known as Tam Thanh or Nhi Thanh; f) the grotto known as the hill of the transcendent or the temple of the transcendent; g) the dwellings around the Hoanh Pond (*hoanh duong*); and h) the guard tower (*tieu lau* 礁楼) on Duong Ridge (*Yang ling* 杨岭).⁵⁵⁶

As mentioned earlier, Ngo Thi Si, a Le-Trinh official, had been the provincial governor of Thai Nguyen in the 1760s when he helped reformulate the court's policy on mines following the first Tong Tinh mine incident in 1765. In the late 1770s, perhaps because of his experience in Thai Son, Ngo was given the governorship of Lang Son, which he held until his death there in the early 1780s.

Alexander Woodside, in an essay on political theory and economic growth in pre-colonial Vietnam, has expressed the view that the Le-Trinh court was not able or willing to incorporate its mining periphery, content to extract taxes without administratively or ideologically incorporating the peripheral provinces.⁵⁵⁷ There is some truth to this: Certainly, places like Songtinh and Dulong were not directly administered by Thang Long. However, as my discussion in Chapter Six on administrative changes in Lang Son shows, the Le-Trinh court did attempt to intervene in the peripheral provinces, at least at the level of the provincial capitals such as Tuyen Quang and Lang Son, by appointing residential appointees and giving them responsibility for supervising these areas.

⁵⁵⁶ Institute of Han Nom Studies, inscription rubbing collection, #44638. There is a question about the date of this inscription: The inscription is dated "Canh Hung 41 *jihai*," which were not the same year. *Jihai*, in the 60 year cycle was 1779 while Canh Hung 41 was 1780. Rather arbitrarily, I have opted for 1779.

⁵⁵⁷ Alexander Woodside, "Political theory and economic growth in Vietnam, 1750-1840," in Anthony Reid, ed., *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies* (Hampshire, UK: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp. 259-61. Incidentally, Woodside here identifies the Tong Tinh mines as copper mines. His reference is Phan Huy Chu's *Lich Trieu Hien Truong Loi Chi*.

In this section, I use Ngo Thi Si's involvement in a Three Religions temple in Lang Son and the inscriptions associated with it to show that the Le-Trinh court attempted to integrate the peripheral provinces at a cultural level as well.

During his time in Lang Son, Ngo Thi Si headed an initiative to create a Three Religions (Tam Giao; Sanjiao; 三教) temple in the environs of Lang Son town. This grotto temple and a nearby shrine to Ngo himself contain inscriptions from the late eighteenth century that suggest a cultural strategy on the part of the Le-Trinh court and its representatives to strengthen the ties of Lang Son's borderland society to the lowland state. The Three Religions movement was first seen in China in the sixteenth century, in part inspired by Wang Yangming's emphasis on the innate ability of humans to grasp the Way and the ecumenical and egalitarian implications of the doctrine. It is not clear what the history of the Three Religions movement in Annam was up to the late eighteenth century, but it is not improbable that knowledge and perhaps practice of it had existed there since Ming times.

In 1779, a pond was dredged at the Nhi Thanh Grotto and Ngo Thi Si determined to establish a Three Religions Temple at the grotto. In the center of the grotto, there was a steep cave wall where Ngo Thi Si situated the three representatives of the Three Religions: A sculpted figure of Confucius occupied the center of the wall, with an effigy of the Sakyamuni Buddha to the left of Confucius and one of the Daoist patriarch, Laozi, on the right. This triptych was repeated in the form of effigies of attendants of each of the three religions' patriarchs: Four attendants were placed in front of Confucius while attendants of the Buddha and Laozi were placed respectively at the left and right of the entrance to the grotto, with the protective figure of a guardian deity (*longtian hufa*) placed to left of the Buddha's attendants.

Within the temple, in addition to the figures of the three patriarchs, there was a hall or shrine to additional deities. These included figures of the Three World-Honored Ones, Maitreya Buddha, the Mansion of Heaven (*Thien phu*), the Mansion of Earth (*Dia phu*), the *tho dia* chthonic deity, and various worthies (*shengxian*). Furthermore, at the door to the grotto, Ngo Thi Si placed a sculpted figure of the mountain god riding a tiger.

These figures were sculpted and put in place and additional work was done on the temple until its completion in the fall of 1780, when the commemorative text was composed and inscribed. The cost of all the materials and labor was paid for by donations from a large number of individuals across the Lang Son elite. These included Ngo Thi Si's sons and daughters and their spouses, the vice governor of Lang Son, and an Annan envoy for the 1756 tribute mission.⁵⁵⁸ The majority of the donors, however, were from the local clans and held posts in the Lang Son military organization. Moreover, there were several donors from locales in the lowland plain, a collective donation from a number of Chinese merchants and masons from the *pho* 舖 market, donations from border guards (*ca dich* 卡役) and from a few local officials.⁵⁵⁹

A separate inscription at the Nhi Thanh grotto, also dated to the fall of 1780, offers an account of a different shrine. This inscription states in detail how the upkeep of the temple and its ritual expenditures were to be supported. While the Three Religions temple was focused on the three religions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, this temple was called the “deity grotto” (*truyen than dong* 傳神崗). The people of the local *xa* commune, Vinh Trai *xa*, proposed to venerate Ngo Thi Si in the deity grotto as a “deity of good fortune” (*phuc than* 福神) in

⁵⁵⁸ The individual is identified as an “envoy of the *bingzi* year,” i.e. 1756-57, but there is no record in the *DVSKTT* of this person's appointment to this role or indeed of any tribute mission that year.

⁵⁵⁹ Institute of Han Nom Studies, inscription rubbing collection, #44658.

recognition of his benevolent governance in Lang Son.⁵⁶⁰ For the upkeep of the temple, Ngo Thi Si donated his salary to purchase arable fields from the villagers of the *xa* and had a pond dredged in front of the grotto. Ngo Thi Si also established a pho market at the Nhi Thanh Grotto. The fields were to be divided in five to be farmed by the five clans of the *xa* and the pond used jointly by all in the *xa* for raising fish. The revenue of the fields, the fish, and the *pho* market would form the basis for paying the expenditures of maintaining the “deity grotto.”

This inscription also specifically connects Ngo Thi Si’s tenure at Lang Son with issues of the administration of mines.⁵⁶¹ In addition to the benefits the villagers would receive from the revenue of the temple property, the inscription specifically expresses gratitude for Ngo Thi Si’s actions in relation to the management of mines. The inscription says that “Nung miners wantonly entered mines and enlisted the support of officials and sojourning merchants, which resulted in increased taxes for the common people.”⁵⁶² After Ngo Thi Si arrived in Lang Son and observed the harm that came from the mines, the inscription continued, he waived the tax on the control of the mine, punished unruly miners and prohibited filing competing claims, threats, and hiding the truth about amounts to be collected. While these grievances and the measures Ngo Thi Si took are left somewhat vague in this account, it seems likely that the villagers of Vinh Trai *xa* were responsible for collecting a tax on nearby mines and that, through a variety of tactics, the Nung

⁵⁶⁰ For a contemporary European account of the Vietnamese system of *phuc than*, see St. Thecla, Adriano di. *Opusculum de Sectis apud Sinenses et Tunkinenses*, tran. Olga Dror. (Ithac, NY: SE Asia Program, Cornell University, 2002), 139-40.

⁵⁶¹ It is not clear which specific mines this refers to. It is possible that the reference is to the Tong Tinh mines, but it could also refer to mines closer to Lang Son town. In a 1999 gazetteer of Lang Son, the authors mention coal mining at Na Duong in present-day Lang Son, to the east of Lang Son town. See *Dia Chi Lang Son* (Ha Noi: Nxb Chinh tri quoc gia, 1999), 423.

⁵⁶² 久被稻[with stone radical]场依人妄进稻[stone radical]穴援引官客勘查抑捕税例小民不胜损扰

miners contrived to withhold taxes from the villagers, while the later continued to bear the tax burden.⁵⁶³

The inscriptions concerned with temple-building during Ngo Thi Si's tenure at Lang Son reflect a new approach by the Le-Trinh court toward dealing with the mining frontier. In contrast to earlier inscriptions in Lang Son (see Chapter Six), where various forms of Buddhism provided a medium of association, these inscriptions from the end of the eighteenth century articulate an official version of religious association that tied Lang Son to the lowland state. The Le-Trinh representative, Ngo Thi Si, and his entourage are prominent as patrons of temple-building and even as objects of devotion. Moreover, while Buddhism continues to occupy a place, the religious framework here is that of Three Religions, a form of officially-sanctioned syncretism familiar on both sides of the border. This Three Religions framework was capped by the officially-recognized traditions of teaching, i.e. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, and was a means for the lowland Le-Trinh state to assert hegemony over local religious expression. As it had done in the lowlands, the Le-Trinh state here recognized deities as representatives of local society, e.g. the mountain deity as well as Ngo Thi Si himself as *phuc than* deity, and linked them with the lowland Annan pantheon that was emerging in the eighteenth century.⁵⁶⁴ At the same time, while departing from the earlier Buddhist forms of association, the Three Religions temples provided a basis for Le-Trinh representatives to form associations not only with lowland society but also with the translocal society, of which Chinese merchants and skilled labor were

⁵⁶³ Institute of Han Nom Studies, inscription rubbing collection, #44654.

⁵⁶⁴ The religious history of eighteenth century Vietnam remains a vaguely defined field, but there is an admirable study of an important deity, Princess Lieu Hanh, in Olga Dror, *Cult, Culture, and Authority: Princess Lieu Hanh in Vietnamese History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007). For a study of the texts and traditions of the "Mother Goddess" (Dao Mau) pantheon and mediumistic practice, see NGO Duc Thinh, *Dao Mau Viet Nam*, 2 vols. (Ha Noi: Nxb Ton giao, 2009).

prominent parts. This was due to the commensurate nature of the Three Religions on both sides of the border.

Conclusion

Trade and mining were important to the Qing and Le-Trinh courts and the eighteenth century saw them collaborate diplomatically to regulate the border. Although the 1740s crisis was the occasion for establishing a passport system to monitor and regulate Chinese sojourning in Annam, it appears that trade and mining were taking place on both sides of the border before that, involving Chinese labor, expertise, and capital. Revenues from mining were an important source of income for the Le-Trinh court, while trade and mining may have been seen by the Qing court as valuable livelihoods to Qing subjects, at least implicitly.

My discussion of the 1744-75 passport system indirectly sketches the scope and scale of Chinese trade and sojourning in Annam in this period. More directly, the passport system was an important aspect of the collaborative border regulation of the Qing and Le-Trinh courts. As in all aspects of their diplomatic relationship, the border regulation at the China-Vietnam border was asymmetric, with the Qing providing the bulk of the regulatory apparatus as well as having a certain precedence over the Le-Trinh in determining border policy. Nonetheless, both courts played roles in this regulation, which required finesse to balance the goals of local order and economic production in the borderlands as well as the interests of the two courts.

Between 1765 and the early 1780s, the Qing and Le-Trinh courts demonstrated a range of approaches towards mining operations on the frontier. In the 1765 Tong Tinh incident, both courts showed tolerance toward the groups of miners. Although the Le-Trinh court attempted to intervene in response to unrest among the miners, ultimately it allowed the mining operations to continue, provided that they continued to provide a steady stream of revenue. The Qing court did

not respond to Le-Trinh calls for restraint and justice against miners' excesses, but neither did it act to crack down on the continued involvement of Chinese labor and capital at the Tong Tinh mines.

In contrast, after the 1775 Tong Tinh incident, Qing and Le-Trinh courts were alarmed enough about the threat miner unrest posed to diplomatic relations and order in the borderlands to attempt to suppress the mining operations and curtail the passport system that was seen as abetting the unlawful presence of the Chinese miners in Annam.

Thereafter, in the late 1770s and early 1780s, the Le-Trinh court continued to seek revenue from the frontier mining operations but also pursued strategies to suppress, contain, and assimilate the mining frontier. These included military action at Dulong and attempts by Le-Trinh representatives to culturally integrate the translocal society of places like Lang Son more fully into religious expressions from the lowland Annam core. Without being directly involved in these Le-Trinh policies, the Qing court nonetheless supported its neighbor where appropriate, such as in tolerating Le-Trinh military actions near the border and returning Annam fugitives and refugees to the Le-Trinh court.

All in all, throughout Qing and Le-Trinh approaches to managing the volatile issue of frontier mining operations, the two courts showed shared interests in balancing the gains of the mines with the need to maintain local order on the frontier. Thus, the Qing implicitly relied on Le-Trinh governance of the mining frontier while the Le-Trinh court alternatively expected the Qing court to turn a blind eye to illicit labor migration and to intervene to restrict transborder activity.

EPILOGUE

The mutual agreement between the Qing and the Le to curtail the cross-border passport system brought an era of state regulation of transborder movement to a close. For about a decade, until the late 1780s, there was no officially-sanctioned cross-border trade or movement of private persons.

An entirely novel force changed the Qing-Le relationship in the 1780s. A political movement, originating from the Tay Son mountains far to the south in the Nguyen kingdom, had swept aside the Nguyen dynasty and established themselves as a dynamic force on the coast. Despite initial Le success at taking advantage of the situation in the south, their gains were soon lost and Tay Son forces were moving north.⁵⁶⁵

By 1786, the Qing were aware of this new element on the international scene, an element that was threatening a tributary state and a partner in border regulation. The Qing court was cautious in its response, but was motivated to act on two counts: the threat to the sovereignty of a tributary state, and the potential loss of a cooperative partner in regulating the border.

In 1788, with the Le capital threatened by the Tay Son, the Qing launched a military expedition to recover the capital and restore the Le king to the throne. The expedition was largely successful in its march to Thang Long, and succeeded in investing the king. Embarrassingly, however, Tay Son forces under their leader Nguyen Hue ambushed the Qing forces at Thang Long and massacred a large number of Qing officers and soldiers. The remnant of the Qing force fled across the river and returned across the border.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ For the Tay Son movement, see George Dutton, *The Tay Son Uprising: Society and Rebellion in Eighteenth-Century Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006).

⁵⁶⁶ For the Qing intervention, see TRUONG Buu Lam, "Intervention versus tribute in Sino-Vietnamese Relations, 1788-90," in *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968): 165-79.

Nguyen Hue's success created a tricky problem for both the Tay Son and the Qing. Even during the Qing campaign to restore the Le king, the Le king and court's actions disappointed Qianlong, leading Qianlong to be pessimistic of the chance of Le survival.⁵⁶⁷ Once it was clear that the Qing army had suffered a decisive defeat, the Qing court cut its losses and decided to seek a relationship with the Tay Son. As for Nguyen Hue and the Tay Son, they were probably surprised at their victory over the Qing. They were suddenly put in the position of being victors over Qing China, and had to figure out a way to build a relationship with China in this awkward and unusual position.

As in the Mac and Le cases, the initial negotiations over the new relationship were conducted at the border.⁵⁶⁸ As both sides soon discovered, they each sought the same outcome: the cessation of hostilities, the recognition of the Tay Son as the new rulers of Vietnam, and the resumption of border regulation. During the negotiations, Nguyen Hue and the Qing representative developed an amicable relationship.⁵⁶⁹ This was fortuitous and foreshadowed the favors showered on Nguyen Hue by the Qing court.

Following the reestablishment of relations between Qing China and Tay Son Vietnam, Nguyen Hue was invited to attend Qianlong's eightieth birthday celebrations in Beijing. There is some controversy over the identity of the person who went to the birthday celebrations.⁵⁷⁰

Vietnamese sources and historiographical tradition claim that Nguyen Hue sent a double in his

⁵⁶⁷ See, for example, Qing shilu Yuenan, Miandian, Taiguo, Laowo shiliao zhai chao [Excerpts from the Qing Veritable Records concerning Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos; hereafter QSLSEA excerpts], (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1985), 122 (QL53.8.bingchen; 1788.9.26).

⁵⁶⁸ *QSL SEA excerpts*, 179 (QL54.4.gengzi; 1789.5.8); 182 (QL54.5.jiwei; 1789.5.27), etc.

⁵⁶⁹ See, for example, *QSL SEA excerpts*, 253 (QL56.8.dingsi; 1791.9.12).

⁵⁷⁰ See Dutton, 49 & 108, for discussion on this issue.

place, but Qing sources give no hint of suspicion of this ruse, if it was indeed what happened. The Qing sources instead paint a picture of Qianlong and the Qing court going to great lengths to entertain and honor the new Vietnamese king. In particular, the Qing representative and Qianlong himself cultivated personal friendships with Nguyen Hue during and after the king's visit.

On the basis of the reestablished tributary relationship and the personal friendship between the two monarchs, Qing-Tay Son relations were harmonious and productive during the lifetime of Nguyen Hue. Two particular issues were soon settled. First, the Qing identified and relocated the refugee Le royal family, including the last Le king, and officials. The king and his entourage were incorporated into the Manchu banner structure and settled in Beijing, while groups of Le officials and other Vietnamese refugees were settled in various cities in China.⁵⁷¹ This served the double purpose of fulfilling the Qing suzerain responsibility toward the Le house and reassuring Nguyen Hue by removing any semblance of a Qing intention to restore Le rule. In fact, this transition process became so peaceful and noncontroversial that Qing and Tay Son officials cooperated in locating and transporting Le royal family members and loyalists from their hideouts in Vietnam to Qing officials.

The second issue settled soon after the reestablishment of Qing-Tay Son relations was the management of cross-border trade. In the last years of the Le, the Vietnamese court had initiated the cessation of cross-border trade following unrest at the Songxing mines, and the Qing court had concurred. After the political transition, Nguyen Hue made a request to the Qing court to reopen the cross-border trade.⁵⁷² The result, in broad brushstrokes, was the resurrection of the

⁵⁷¹ *QSL SEA excerpts*, 200 (QL54.11.gengyin; 1789.12.24); 209 (QL55.1.gengyin; 1790.2.22), etc.

⁵⁷² *QSL SEA excerpts*, (QL54.12.yimao; 1790.1.18).

passport system. A number of modifications were added to the original system, some suggested by Nguyen Hue (see Chapter Five). This revived passport system appears to have continued well into the nineteenth century.

However, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the goodwill and trust between the Qing and the Tay Son disintegrated. The central point of contention was a border issue of sorts, this time of the maritime border rather than the land one: piracy. The Tay Son had been a complex political force made up of various social elements from the very beginning. One element that was an important military tool of the Tay Son were the pirate fleets of the South China Sea. These crews were international in composition and had bases on both the Vietnamese and Chinese coasts.⁵⁷³ While Nguyen Hue was alive, the personal friendship between him and Qianlong smoothed over the occasional incident involving Tay Son-allied pirates and the Qing authorities.⁵⁷⁴ While there was some suspicion that the pirates were connected to the Tay Son, this was never concrete and did not receive official Qing endorsement.

The death of Nguyen Hue and the succession by his son coincided with the increase in concern over piracy among the Qing court and officials on the South China coast. It became increasingly clear that there was a close, if complicated, relationship between the Vietnamese throne and the pirates raiding the Chinese coast. The Qing court responded by referring these incidents to the Vietnamese court and requesting that it cease giving shelter to the pirates and address this problem. The mood against the Tay Son turned increasingly grim following the death of Qianlong and the ascension of Jiaqing.

⁵⁷³ For the pirates, see Dian Murray, *Pirates of the South China Coast, 1790-1810* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987) as well as the discussion in Dutton.

⁵⁷⁴ For example, see *QSL SEA excerpts*, 239 (QL55.10.renxu; 1790.11.21).

When a scion of the former Nguyen ruling house of Cochinchina succeeded in reconquering its lost territory and pushed into the Red River Delta, the Qing court no longer had any desire to support the Tay Son regime. Unlike its response to the threat to the Le a decade and a half ago, the Qing decided against intervening in Tay Son favor. The new Nguyen ruler was quickly identified as a legitimate successor to a royal house of Vietnam and recognized as the new king of a kingdom that was now three times the size of the traditional Annam domain that the Chinese were used to dealing with.

Coming from the south and ruling from the central coast, the Nguyen dynasty faced an uphill battle in pacifying the north. However, they were relatively successful in the first half of the nineteenth century. Along with the coming of Nguyen rule, cross-border trade between China and northern Vietnam resumed along the lines recently established by the Tay Son. Li Tana argues that the northern border provinces, such as Lang Son and Cao Bang, traded in greater frequency and volume across the border with areas in Guangxi than with the lowland, Red River Delta provinces.⁵⁷⁵

By mid-nineteenth century, however, Qing and Nguyen state power both receded from the China-Vietnam border area. On the Chinese side, first the Taipings, then secret societies such as the *Tiandi hui* and *tang* and *gu* associations turned Guangxi into an area under minimal control from the Qing court. On the Nguyen side, in addition to the persisting northern distrust of the Hue court, the northern border provinces saw the rise of Le loyalists and the perennial problems of floating mining populations.

⁵⁷⁵ LI Tana, "Between Mountains and the Sea: Trades in Early Nineteenth-Century Northern Vietnam," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 7, no. 2 (Sum., 2012): 67-86.

It was in this context that transborder political entrepreneurship arose again in the area, echoing the activity of the Mac loyalists in the eighteenth century. The Black Flags formed from splinter groups from the Taipings and the secret societies. As an organized and armed group, they raided areas on the China-Vietnam border, eventually concentrated in the northern Vietnamese provinces, and finally created a virtual state in the northwestern highlands, at the town of Lao Cai.⁵⁷⁶

The rise of the Black Flags coincided with increasing attempts by French adventurers to provoke Nguyen rule in the north and involve the French state in a new colonization project. Finding themselves increasingly threatened by the French, and not finding a strong response from the court at Hue, Nguyen officials and local grandees in the north accepted an offer from the Black Flags to come into the Red River Delta to protect it from French forces.

The activities and provocation of the French adventurers were successful in getting the French government to intervene in northern Vietnam. At the same time, the newly confident Qing court, modernized according to the Self-Strengthening reformers, finally acted on the threat to its tributary state's sovereignty and made diplomatic attempts to get the French to withdraw. When that failed, the Qing court gave its recognition to the Black Flag resistance and also sent its forces against the French in northern Vietnam.

Although the Qing and the Black Flags performed admirably against the French forces, the Qing court opted, for diplomatic and political reasons, to concede to the French. The Qing

⁵⁷⁶ For the Black Flags, see Bradley Camp Davis, "States of Banditry: The Nguyen Government, Bandit Rule, and the Culture of Power in the post-Taiping China-Vietnam Borderlands" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 2008) and his *Imperial Bandits: Outlaws and Rebels in the China-Vietnam Borderlands* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

court renounced its right to intervene in Vietnamese affairs and recognized the French role in Vietnam.⁵⁷⁷

Following on the end of the Sino-French conflict, Qing and French representatives toured the northern border between China and Vietnam. They identified, agreed upon, demarcated, and mapped the border.⁵⁷⁸ This seems to have been the first time modern cartography was used to map the border and establish agreed boundaries. However, despite some minor disagreements in the process, the newly mapped boundary was for the most part the confirmation of the existing boundary and border infrastructure that had already existed or been created in the eighteenth century. Unlike many colonial borders, then, the modern China-Vietnam border was not a result of European colonial expansion, although how the border was depicted and seen now, in cartography, naturalistic sketches, and photographs was new.

Curiously, it appears that the French colonial government made relatively little effort to control or regulate the northern Vietnam border with Guangxi.⁵⁷⁹ Famously, Ho Chi Minh lived for some time in the border area in Cao Bang, before escaping to China to avoid the grasp of the colonial state.

Today, Lang Son is a sleepy provincial town near the China-Vietnam border. Cross-border trade has been an important part of both Guangxi and Vietnam's economy. When I visited Lang Son in the fall of 2010, a prominent tourist attraction was a night market, which boasted many stalls with Chinese-made products. Unlike Lang Son's past as a major trading hub, the

⁵⁷⁷ For the Sino-French conflict, see Lloyd E. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy during the Sino-French Controversy, 1880-1885* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967).

⁵⁷⁸ For the border demarcation, see the account of one of the French delegation: P. Neis, *The Sino-Vietnamese Border Demarcation, 1885-1887*, trans. Walter E.J. Tips (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998).

⁵⁷⁹ Diana Lary, "A Zone of Nebulous Menace: The Guangxi/Indochina Border in the Republican Period," in *The Chinese State at the Borders*, ed. Diana Lary (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007): 181-97.

bulk of cross-border trade goes by large trucks or freightliners across the border and down to the towns and cities of the Red River Delta. Similar to the Qing passport system of the eighteenth century, there are three official border crossings between China and Vietnam, at Youyi Pass near Lang Son, at Mong Cai, and at Lao Cai. In addition, local residents of the border areas hold special permits that allow them to cross the border regularly, for visiting friends and family, for buying supplies, local trade, and other quotidian errands.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have followed changes in the diplomatic relationship between the Le and Qing courts and how the two courts related to the China-Vietnam border. In Chapter One, I narrated the origins of the Le-Qing diplomatic relationship in the Le-Ming détente of the late sixteenth century and again in the Ming-Qing transition of the seventeenth century. By the late seventeenth century, the Ming dynasty no longer existed, but the Le and the Qing were bound in a diplomatic relationship that was structured by Ming precedents. As I argued in Chapter Two, although the Qing claimed the mantle of Ming suzerainty vis-à-vis the Le, the very touchstones of authority implicit in this relationship, e.g. classical texts, bureaucratic process, legal precedent, could be used to question and challenge Qing authority. A persistent or routine tension existed within Qing-Le relations, one that allowed for a measure of Le autonomy yet provided a basis for collaboration between the two courts on matters of shared interest.

In the first two chapters, I portrayed the Qing and Le courts as relating to the border primarily in the context of diplomacy, while local order and imperial defense in the borderlands were delegated to frontier magnates, the *tusi*. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, the Qing court was in direct control of the border. In Chapter Three, I reconsidered the process of centralization that replaced the indirect rule of the border through *tusi* with direct management of the border by the Qing court. Although events of the 1730s brought on the catalyst for this handover of local power, the causes of this change lay in the effects of fiscal and cultural policy in the *tusi* domains in the seventeenth century. This view of the internal, gradual process of centralization is echoed in the Le relationship to Lang Son, taken up in chapters 6 and 8.

Qing assumption of direct responsibility for the border coincided with a major political crisis in the Le realm in the 1740s. In Chapter Four, I showed how the Qing court's attempt to

balance its suzerain obligations toward the beleaguered Le dynasty and its caution in intervention created a need for border infrastructure and regulation as a means to protect its territory and limit its responsibilities. As described in Chapter Five, the centerpiece of Qing border regulation was a passport system that allowed Qing subjects to travel within Le territory to trade for short periods of time. The system was designed to balance the Qing court's need to monitor and prevent seditious transborder political activity, on the one hand, and the economic needs of both countries and the merchants and porters that made trade possible, on the other. Transborder and translocal connections were not new to the border at the time of the passport system. As shown in chapter 6, the border town of Lang Son had a history of transborder and translocal connections that found expression in religious associations. Transborder trade in the passport era represented a continuation with this pattern: Chinese merchants and other sojourners participated in transborder society through Chan/Thien Buddhist associations.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Qing and Le courts collaborated to maintain a regime of border regulation. As shown in Chapter Seven, the Qing court was intentional in maintaining a good working relationship with Le Vietnam in order to maintain local order and a functioning border regime. Abuses and failures of the Qing court to maintain the regulatory regime were the most sensitive and threatening issues in the Qing-Le diplomatic relationship.

In Chapter Eight, I looked at a particular border regulation issue, one that ultimately led to the curtailment of the passport system. Large-scale mining operations in the border area posed the greatest potential for disrupting border regulation and the diplomatic relationship. These mining operations represented a distinctly transborder challenge to the governance of the two courts. For the Le, they represented a governance issue on the northern frontier, in a peripheral

area in the realm. For the Qing, the mining operations represented a form of extraterritorial activity of their subjects. Both courts approached the issue with consideration for how their counterpart was approaching the issue. Ultimately, the two courts did not find a working solution to the issue and were forced to scale back their collaborative management of the border.

An early modern border in (South-) East Asia

By looking at the China-Vietnam border as it has changed over the seventeenth and eighteenth century, this study has revealed some of the particular characteristics of an early modern border in East Asia. The China-Vietnam border at the turn of the seventeenth century, at the time of the Le-Ming détente, had three elements: physical geography, a buffer represented by *tusi* domains, and a border of diplomacy and intercourt relations. The sense of a physically or geographically defined border can be seen in references to gates and passes, and to certain physical features, e.g. the Ten Thousand Hills Range. Nowhere have I seen any sources from this period that define this border visually as a boundary line on a map. However, there were recognized geographical features, natural or man-made, that marked the geographical limits of the two kingdoms. (It is beyond the scope of this study to identify the origins of these definitions but quite possibly they were set in the tenth and eleventh century, between the Song dynasty in China and the emerging Vietnamese state.)

The second definition of border in this period was the patchwork of *tusi* domains that acted as frontier as well as buffer between the two states. *Tusi* domains like Siming were part of the Ming and Qing empires through the hereditary rule of the *tusi* family as well as the supervisory and liaison functions of Ming officials and functionaries assigned to these places. In this arrangement, the Chinese court did not directly manage the China-Vietnam border (as defined physically/geographically above). Rather, each *tusi* was responsible for managing their

particular part of the border locally, in harmony with other *tusi* within Chinese territory as well as with their neighbors on the Vietnam side. The Chinese court only stepped in as arbitrator when local unrest threatened to spill out of particular *tusi* domains or when local disputes between Chinese *tusi* and Vietnam *tusi* became intractable.

The third sense of the China-Vietnam border in this period was the diplomatic border. This was the sense of the border most familiar to envoy representatives of the two courts. There was a well-defined, precedent-laden envoy route that connected the two courts and passing through the border gate of Zhennan Gate. At the Zhennan Gate, envoys from either court crossed a distinct threshold and entered the territory of the other court. As seen in chapter 1, the Zhennan Gate featured an elaborate infrastructure and could be the site of important diplomatic ceremony. On routine diplomatic missions, it was the place where envoys left behind the protection of their own court, were inspected for contraband, and were received by the representatives and military escort of the other court. In extraordinary diplomatic exchanges, the Zhennan Gate area could become a remote re-creation of the ceremonial space of the (Chinese) court, complete with the symbolic representation of the (Chinese) emperor's presence. The diplomatic border, seen at the Zhennan Gate, thus represents not so much a homogenizing, territorial border, but the threshold dividing two courts. As such, it may also be understood as the intercourt border, to distinguish it from notions of international borders. Although the clear demarcation of the intercourt border foreshadows the discrete nature of modern borders, where boundary lines clearly distinguish two territories, this diplomatic border only existed within the space of the envoy route, in part because it only envisioned the circulation of court representatives and not that of subjects of the two kingdoms.

Nonetheless, the three senses of border at the turn of the seventeenth century were linked. The physical geography, *tusi* domains, and the envoy route were all emplaced on a continuous landscape defined by precedent and traditional usage. Moreover, in addition to their duties to maintain local order and the local borders, *tusi* like Siming were charged with maintaining the envoy route and the Zhennan Gate, and to provide aid and manpower for diplomatic missions. Finally, envoys could act as observers and reporters to the court on the state of the border they passed through and often dealt with diplomatic disputes over the border in their missions.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Qing court had assumed direct management of the China-Vietnam border. Over the course of the next half century and onward into the present, border management became the central issue in China-Vietnam diplomatic relations. This transformation was conditioned by changes in three spheres: borderland politics, frontier expansion, and Chinese foreign policy. Although it was in the 1730s that the Qing assumed direct rule in borderland *tusi* domains, the internal dynamics of change that made this possible took place in the seventeenth century. In the case of Siming domain, an integrationist cultural policy dovetailed with fiscal arrangements and led to a greater integration of the domain into the Chinese empire, on the one hand, and an increased fiscal burden on a sector of the domainal population, on the other. By the eighteenth century, the ruling *tusi* family identified more with the imperial order than with the domain it ruled. At the same time, the population of the domain was increasingly dissatisfied with the tax burden and *tusi* rule. This conjunction led to unrest in Siming in the early eighteenth century, the resignation of the *tusi* family, and the Qing assuming direct administration of the area.

In addition to the internal changes in the borderland *tusi*, the seventeenth and eighteenth century China-Vietnam border was also touched by the general patterns of state expansion,

migration, and economic growth found on many Chinese frontiers. Although I have not focused on this aspect of the border, my study does suggest that these patterns were in play by the second half of the eighteenth century. Certainly, the border incidents and the mining frontier that the two courts had to deal with were indicative of increased commercial and other activity by Qing subjects. In addition to Qing state expansion mentioned above in the context of *tusi* domains, my research on Lang Son on the Annan side of the border suggests that the Le court also attempted to expand state presence on the frontier.

What distinguishes these patterns of frontier expansion in the China-Vietnam borderlands is the absence of large scale Han agrarian settlement. Although some Han Chinese Qing subjects undoubtedly migrated in pursuit of land, most entered Vietnam in search of opportunities for trade or mining entrepreneurship. The ethnic majority in the borderlands during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remained the Tai-speaking groups that had been in the area for centuries. But they were not immobile. While some remained in the villages and domains they had lived in for generations, many moved back and forth across the border in search of economic opportunities and better lives. Evidence of this can be seen in the vital role the inhabitants of the “Fifty-Three *Zhai*” of Siming played as porters in the overland trade to the Annan markets such as Lang Son. Other Tai-speaking inhabitants on the Chinese side of the border, sometimes labeled as Nung/Nong, provided a steady source of labor for the new and expanding mining operations on the northern Vietnamese frontier in the eighteenth century.

The third change that contributed to transform the nature of the China-Vietnam border was the shift in Qing diplomatic strategy. In fact, this shift involved considerations of local governance and grand strategy. Ming relations with Annan centered on a suzerain-vassal relationship that required and allowed Ming intervention in the tributary kingdom to preserve the

continued legitimate rule of the vassal dynasty. Many factors and considerations went into the early fifteenth century Ming intervention and colonization of Vietnam as well as the decision not to intervene in the sixteenth century. However, the deciding issue that legitimized the suzerain's action in the face of the sovereignty of the tributary kingdom was whether the ruling house had been threatened. It was the condition that authorized or obligated intervention. The Qing inherited the tributary portfolio of the Ming when it conquered China. In its early dealings with states like Vietnam, Korea, and Ryukyu, the Qing promised a continuation of the status quo. At the time of the Ming-Qing transition, this move was undoubtedly motivated by a need to pacify the Chinese kingdom and its neighbors.

In the 1740s, the Qing commitment to its diplomatic relationship with the Le-Trinh court was put the test when unrest in Vietnam spread and Le-Trinh rule seemed threatened with collapse. While mindful of conventional diplomatic strategy and tributary obligations, the Qing court was also concerned for the governance of the *tusi* domains it had recently been engaged in. At the same time, Qing grand strategy priorities were already engaged with the sprawling theaters of warfare and diplomacy that pit them against the Zunghars and Russians in the north and northwest, involved them with the spiritual and temporal leadership in Tibet, and entangled them in turbulent frontier expansion of the Upper and Middle Yangzi basin and the Yungui plateau. Qing priorities in Guangxi and the border with Vietnam were to prevent the contagion of unrest and rebellion from the Yangzi basin and the Yungui plateau to western Guangxi and to avoid the collapse of the Le-Trinh state and the certain embroilment of the border in the ensuing chaos.

To achieve these objectives, the Qing court embarked on a defensive strategy that sought to delimit and defend the territorial border while carrying out surveillance on the evolving

situation in Annan. This strategy had the additional benefit of allowing the Qing to appear to fulfill its suzerain obligations while gaining a stronger grip on its provincial and local officials, curbing the existing inclination among their ranks for intervention.

Lost border modernities

There is a persistent view that has associated the origins and existence of borders with modernity, the West, and specifically the “high colonialism” of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In reality, it is hard to identify any historical period or society in which bordering practices did not exist.⁵⁸⁰ Nonetheless, histories of borders, such as Adam McKeown’s *Melancholy Order* and Eric Tagliacozzo’s *Secret Trades, Porous Borders*, have identified borders as distinctly modern phenomena and located the genesis of borders in the global domination of Euro-American power in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

My study of the China-Vietnam border in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries overturns many of these prejudices. I have shown that ideas and practices of borders existed in early modern East Asia. These include: diplomatic or intercourt border; border as buffer; passport control; territorial demarcation; territorial sovereignty, etc. In fact, the China-Vietnam border was already an established reality at the beginning of the seventeenth century; my study, therefore, examines the nature and transformation of an “old border” rather than “border-genesis.”

In examining the transformation of this old border, I have identified a new type of border, the diplomatic or intercourt border. This border represented the space where the territory of two courts met, and served as a ceremonial space where representatives of the two courts met as if they were at the court of the suzerain power. A further dimension of the diplomatic border was

⁵⁸⁰ For territorial practices in pre-historic and ancient societies, see Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen, *Borders: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19-36 (“Chapter 2: Borders and territory in the ancient world”).

the crossing-over from one sovereign territory to another. While the first sense of the diplomatic border was asymmetric in favor of the suzerain power, China/Qing, the second was relatively symmetric, with representatives of both courts subject to the authority of their hosts while in the neighboring state.

Moreover, I have demonstrated that the China-Vietnam border in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was not a static reality. In three instances, I have shown how this border was transformed in ways that brought together long-term causes and immediate causes. In the case of Siming, a community on the Chinese side of the border, I showed how the Qing incorporation of the *tusi* domain was conditioned on political and cultural changes in the seventeenth century. Similarly, in the case of Lang Son on the Vietnam side, a long history of religiously-based translocal social organization provided the basis for the Le state's attempt in the late eighteenth century to bring the area into closer orbit with lowland Vietnamese state and society. In both these cases, central state initiative was only one factor among others in these transformations. The third instance of the conjunction of immediate and long-term causes of change was the expansion of border infrastructure and regulation, including a passport system, in the 1740s. The catalyst of political unrest in Vietnam brought together the recent Qing incorporation of borderland territories such as Siming with longstanding Chinese diplomatic approaches to Vietnam.

This last moment of change in the 1740s also provides a basis for challenging some of the accounts of modern borders offered by scholars such as McKeown and Tagliacozzo. In the most specific and rigorous versions of their arguments, McKeown and Tagliacozzo are offering accounts of the origin of specifically modern borders. The principle traits of modern borders in their accounts are the use of cartography, bureaucratic knowledge and control of individual

identities, and state ambition to regulate the movement of persons, goods, and ideas across space. A final implicit trait of modern borders in their accounts is the presence of a multi-lateral international order. The China-Vietnam border in my study exhibit some but not all of these traits. Cartographic projects are virtually absent from Qing and Le attempts to understand and regulate the border, despite the existence of cartographic traditions in both countries and Qing adaptation of new, European cartographic techniques for other borders. As for the second and third trait, the Qing state, in collaboration with the Le, sought to know and regulate the movement of the subjects of the two states, to prohibit the circulation of certain contraband items, to regulate the movement of merchants and thus trade, and in an indirect way, to limit the currency of subversive ideas such as those associated with Mac restorationism. This border regime was achieved in part by a system of bureaucratic knowledge of individual identities, seen in the passports or travel passes issued to Qing merchants, porters, and boatmen. The Qing state, with the partnership of the Le state, recorded identifying information of passport applicants and exercised surveillance and control over the activities of the passport-holders by checking against recorded information at checkpoints. Finally, while the international order Qing-Le relations existed in was not the Westphalian order, neither was it a universal empire or mandala order of hierarchical, concentric ruler-to-ruler relations. Rather, the Qing and the Le were sovereign, territorial states, which related to each other in a suzerain-vassal relationship of asymmetric power and status, and which negotiated with each other on the basis of Ming imperial legacy, the authority of a common classical canon, and diplomatic precedent.

Thus, while the China-Vietnam border of the seventeenth and eighteenth century may not fulfill all characteristics of modern borders as exemplified by those created by Euro-American high colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it resembles a modern border in many

aspects. In so far as cartography did not play a significant role at this border, it should be noted that gazetteers and other such forms of geographic and bureaucratic knowledge played a role in guiding decision-making and negotiation between the two courts over local disputes. Adam McKeown has argued that modern borders and passport control originate in white settler nations' attempts to control Asian migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and largely dismisses other sources for this aspect of international order. My study, in contrast, suggests the existence "lost modernities" in non-European, non-colonial borders and the need to further examine whether and how these border practices became incorporated into the international order of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁸¹ Alexander Woodside, *Lost Modernities: China, Vietnam, Korea, and the Hazards of World History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Appendix I:
Ruling dynasties, significant reign periods, and key dates in China and Vietnam
in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Ming (1368-1644) Emperors

Wanli, r. 1572-1620
Taichang, r. 1620
Tianqi, r. 1620-27
Chongzhen, r. 1627-44

Qing (1644-1911) Emperors

Shunzhi, r. 1643-61
Kangxi, r. 1661-1722
Yongzheng, r. 1723-36
Qianlong, r. 1736-96, -99

Restoration Le (1592-1788) kings

Le Duy Dam, r. 1573-99
Le Duy Tan, r. 1600-19
Le Duy Ky, r. 1619-43
Le Duy Huu, r. 1643-49
Le Duy Ky, r. 1649-62
Le Duy Vu, r. 1662-71
Le Duy Hoi, r. 1671-75
Le Duy Cap, r. 1675-1705
Le Duy Duong, r. 1705-29
Le Duy Phuong, r. 1729-32
Le Duy Tuong, r. 1732-35
Le Duy Thin, r. 1735-40
Le Duy Dieu, r. 1740-86
Le Duy Khiem, r. 1786-88

Trinh lords, years in office

Trinh Tung, 1570-1623
Trinh Trang, 1623-57
Trinh Tac, 1657-82
Trinh Can, 1682-1709
Trinh Cuong, 1709-1729
Trinh Giang, 1729-40
Trinh Doanh, 1740-67
Trinh Sam, 1767-82
Trinh Cau, 1782
Trinh Khai, 1782-86
Trinh Bong, 1787

Tay Son (1778-1802)

Nguyen Hue, r. 1788-92
Nguyen Quang Toan, r. 1792-1802

Key dates in this study

1592 Mac lose control of Thang Long to Le-Trinh
1595-97 Le-Ming détente
1604-05 Lu You rebellion in Siming
1644-83 Qing conquest and pacification of China
1683 Zhou Can embassy to Vietnam
1732 Qing assume direct control of Siming
1744 Creation of passport system at China-Vietnam border
1788 Tay Son conquest of Le kingdom
1788-89 Qing intervention in Vietnam
1792 Resumption of passport system

Appendix II: Naming practices

Vietnamese names in the seventeenth and eighteenth century were similar to those of modern Vietnamese and exhibit some of the same systematic similarities and differences that modern Vietnamese names show in relation to Chinese names. Formally, for the most part, Vietnamese in the seventeenth and eighteenth century had names composed of three words or Sinitic characters. The first word was the surname while the last word was the personal name. Thus, Nguyen Dinh Luc's surname was Nguyen and his personal name was Luc. This is not very different from Chinese names. However, the middle word in the name, or the middle name, as I will call it here, functioned quite differently in Vietnamese names than it did in most Chinese names.

In Chinese names, the middle and final word in a name often were used in combination, so that both together formed the personal name. For purposes of kinship reckoning, and especially in areas such as Guangdong where lineage organization was particularly developed, the middle word in Chinese names often denoted generation. Thus, siblings and cousins (and all descendants at the same generational remove from a common ancestor, depending on the scope of lineage) could be given the same middle character to form part of their personal name. At the same time, it was uncommon and even taboo for descendants of succeeding generations, such as fathers and sons, to share the same middle character in their names. This was especially important in cases of large, land-holding lineages that needed to be able to determine whether and how putative relatives actually related to the lineage.

The middle character in Vietnamese names of the seventeenth and eighteenth century functioned differently. It is common to find in the sources that a middle name is shared not only by brothers but by fathers and sons. And this appears to have been common in elite families from

the Red River delta as well as the elite families of Lang Son. Ngo Thi Si, a senior Le-Trinh official, whose native place was Thanh Oai in the Red River delta, gave his sons, e.g. Ngo Thi Nham, the same middle name as his own. In the 1670 inscription, Nguyen Dinh Luc and his five sons all share the same middle name of Dinh.

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