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Between Two Rivers:
The Li and Lao Chiefdoms
from the Han to the T’ang

Catherine Margaret Churchman

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of The Australian National University.

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Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to write a history of the non-Chinese peoples (known variously as Li and Lao) who lived in the country between the Red and Pearl River Deltas, over the period from the third to seventh centuries CE. More bronze drums dating from this era have been found in this region than anywhere else on earth, and yet, little research has been done into the history of the societies that produced them. That the drums were symbols of political authority and legitimacy among the Li and Lao is well-known from written records, but the flourishing of the drum casting tradition during this period, centuries after the Han conquest of the surrounding districts, points towards a growth in the wealth and prestige of their native rulers that is at odds with the oft-repeated linear narratives of ‘Sinification’ or ‘Sinicization’: the absorption of non-Chinese groups into the Chinese state through their acculturation to Chinese linguistic, cultural and political norms. The thesis discusses the various interactions of the Li and Lao chieftains with the Chinese empires of the time, through trade, administrative relationships and armed conflict, investigating what effect these had on Li and Lao societal structure and economic systems. It argues that at up until the seventh century, interactions with the Chinese states actually encouraged the growth of non-Chinese polities cementing local dynastic families in power over ever-larger areas and populations. The result of this growth was that by the seventh century even the large, powerful empires of the Sui and T’ang found it was necessary to install members of these families as provincial governors if they wished to have control over the area. The story of the Li and Lao not only offers a new perspective on the southern expansion of Chinese states and the nation-centred narrative of Chinese history, it is also a challenge to the nation-centred narratives of Vietnamese history from the same period. Living to the north-east of the Red River plain, the Li and Lao helped to isolate it from direct overland contact with the rest of the Chinese empires, and were, the thesis argues, an unrecognised contributing factor to the political autonomy of the area.
Note on Transcription System and Bibliographic Referencing

If this thesis has a slightly antiquated feel to it, it is because I have used the Wade-Giles system throughout to transcribe Chinese names. Originally I had intended that anyone unacquainted with the complexities of converting back and forth between different Chinese transcription systems could easily cross-reference names in earlier works such as Schäfer's *The Vermilion Bird* and Taylor's *The Birth of Vietnam*. In the end I diverged from Taylor's practice of using Vietnamese transcriptions, leaving them only for the few individuals who are better known in Vietnamese transcription than in Chinese, and then only in parentheses. There are two exceptions to the rule. The names of modern provinces are transcribed in the old Post-office spelling, as in Schäfer and Taylor (e.g. Kwangtung, Kwangsi, Fukien) as are the names of the two cities Canton and Peking. The use of Canton is through necessity, as the city was referred to by several different names in the Six Dynasties period, whereas the modern term for the city (Kuang-chou) referred to an entire province during the period under discussion. In the bibliography I have also used Peking, rather than Pei-ching, as it would appear in the proper Wade-Giles system. The name 'Yi' referring to a kind of 'barbarian' would be 'I' in proper Wade-Giles, but I have modified it so that it does not confuse the reader as the English word 'I'.

For Chinese primary sources in traditional pagination I have used the customary system in which the first number refers to the *chüan* or fascicle, the second to the page number and the final letter 'a' or 'b' to the side of the folded page on which the reference is to be found. Citations for modern editions of Chinese primary sources I have indicated in the following manner: 'ch.' chapter (which usually corresponds to the *chüan* of pre-modern editions), followed by the page number.
### Abbreviations used in Citations of Primary sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Chien an chi</td>
<td>建安紀</td>
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<td>Chin shu</td>
<td>景書</td>
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<td>Pei hu lu</td>
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<td>Sung shu</td>
<td>宋書</td>
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SuS  Sui shu
SWCT  Shuo wen chieh tzü
TCTC  Tzü chih t'ung-chien
TMITC  Ta Ming i t'ung chih
TPHYC  T'ai p'ing huan yü chi
TPKC  T'ai p'ing kung chi
TPYL  T'ai p'ing yü lan
TSFYCY  Tu shih fang yü chi yao
TT  T'ung tien
WLTLC  Wu lu ti li chih
WH  Wen hsüan
WS  Wei shu
YHCHTC  Yüan Ho chün hsien t' u chih
YTCS  Yü ti chi shêng
YTKC  Yü ti kuang chi
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Map One: The Two Rivers Region ca. 500 CE
Chapter One: Introduction

In the lands to the west of Canton and south of the Pearl River it is not unusual for farmers digging ditches or ploughing fields to come upon bronze drums. This happens almost once or twice a year, and has been a common occurrence for over a thousand years. The earliest record of a drum excavated is from the early 870s, during the repair of the city walls of the town of Kung-chou 龍州¹ ordered by Chang Fang-chih 張方直, the newly-arrived governor. At around the same time another drum was discovered in Kao-chou 高州² by a cowherd who had stumbled upon it through digging in a hole in the ground in pursuit of a croaking toad which was said to be the spirit of the drum itself.³ Writing in the 1170s the Sung authors Chou Ch’ü-fei and Fan Ch’eng-ta mentioned the drums, the former noting that drums were sometimes found in the ground during ploughing,⁴ and the latter that they had formerly been used by the ‘barbarians’ in the south and were frequently dug out of the ground.⁵ A more detailed description of the circumstances of the discovery of drums in Kwangsi comes from Hsieh Ch’i-kun’s *Kuang-hsi t‘ung-chih* (Provincial Gazetteer of Kwangsi) from 1800:

In the eighth year of the reign of the emperor Yung-chêng [1730], in Pei-liu County in Kwangsi, a peasant found a bronze drum in perfect condition without any corrosion, kingfisher green and cinnabar red, variegated in the old colours, it wasn’t something that ought to be anyone’s private treasure, and was respectfully presented to his majesty. In the autumn of the same year, on a sandbar in the river known as the ‘Bronze Drum Sandbar’ it had been observed that there was a hidden protuberance just below the surface of the water being lapped at by the waves, a fisherman assembled people to use the strength of a group to pull it up, and with a clang up came yet another bronze drum.⁶

¹ Present-day P’ing-nan 平南 in Kwangsi
² North-west of modern Mao-ming 茂名, Kwangtung
³ LPLI ch. 1 p. 4.
⁴ LWTT ch. 7 p. 254.
⁵ KHYHC p. 14.
⁶ KHTT 229: 1a.
Such discoveries are still being made, most recently at Yang-chiang, 7 ën-p'ing, 8 (Kwangtung) and Jung County (Kwangsi). 9

Bronze drums have been made and used by many different peoples and are found as far north and west as Yunnan and Kweichow and as far south as the eastern islands of Indonesia. The earliest bronze drum casting tradition was probably in the area known as Tien 滇 (now central Yunnan) close to the headwaters of both the Red and Pearl Rivers. There are several different types of drum, and many different typologies by which they are categorised. I have chosen to use Franz Heger's 1902 typology 10 since all contemporary classification schemes advanced by both Chinese and Vietnamese scholars ultimately have it as their underlying system. 11 I stick to Heger's typology for the most part to avoid the practice of Chinese and Vietnamese scholars who attach modern toponyms to the drums, in a sense claiming them as the heritage of their own country. Finds of Heger I drums are concentrated in Yunnan and the Red River Plain, and Heger II drums have been found in the hills to the west of the Red River Plain, as well as in southern China. Đồng Sơn is often used as a catch-all term for all types of bronze drum found in southern China and Southeast Asia, 12 but should

11 For a useful overview of the typologies adopted by Chinese and Vietnamese scholars and their relationships to one another, see Han Xiaorong, 'Who Invented the Bronze Drum? Nationalism, Politics, and a Sino-Vietnamese Archaeological Debate of the 1970s and 1980s'. Asian Perspectives 2004 vol. 43, no. 1 pp. 7-33.
12 Some authors refer to many different types of bronze drums indiscriminately as Đồng Sơn, even those not found at the Đồng Sơn site for instance, Calo, Ambria, The distribution of Bronze Drums in early Southeast Asia: Trade Routes and Cultural Spheres. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004; Nishimura Masamari 西村昌也, 'Hokubu vietnamamu dôko wo meiguru minzokushiteki shiten kara no rikai' 北部ヴィエトナム銅鼓をめぐる民族史的観点からの解読. Tônan aija kenkyû 東南アジア研究. 2008, vol. 46 no. 1, pp. 3-42.

properly refer only to the products of the culture centred on the Đông Sơn site. The Heger type I drums typical of the Tien and Đông Sơn archaeological cultures of Yunnan and the Red River Plain are the earlier and most famous type, intricately decorated with ringed scenes of warriors in feather headdresses and warships, centred on a radiating sun in the centre of the tympanum. The drums found to the west of Canton belong to Heger type II classification are decorated in a much humbler style consisting of geometric patterns, but they share with the Heger I drums the radiating sun motif on the tympanum which is often surrounded by attached relief models of frogs. What the Heger II drums lack in beauty of decoration they make up in physical size; type II drums measure sometimes as much as over 150 cm across the tympanum,\(^{13}\) making them over twice the size of the largest Heger I drums the very largest of which have radii of only 70-79 cm.\(^{14}\) Heger II drums are also impressive for sheer numbers of finds; more Heger II drums have been found concentrated in Kwangtung and Kwangsi than those of any other type in any other place on earth.\(^{15}\) Only 144 drums of any type were known in Vietnam by 1988, this was in comparison to the 164 examples of Pei-liu style\(^ {16}\) and 71 examples of Ling-shan style found in China.\(^ {17}\) Both of these styles are subsets of the Heger II style, making a total of 215 drums that were known in China by 1990.

Despite this the Heger II drums of south China have drawn relatively little attention from scholars, while the Heger I drums particularly those from the Đông Sơn archaeological culture of the Red River Plain are much better-known. There are several contributing factors to the neglect of Heger II drums in western-language works. Most materials on the Heger II drums are in Chinese and difficult to access, and they are not (unlike the Heger I drums in Vietnam) promoted as the national treasure and symbol of a modern nation-state.

The Heger II casting tradition west of Canton began in the second or perhaps the third century CE and lasted until around the end of the eighth century, its demise is

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\(^{13}\) The largest bronze drum ever unearthed is the ‘king of bronze drums’ (t'ung ku wang 銅鼓王) 1.65 m across the tympanum, unearthed in Pei-liu in 1955. See Yao Shun-an 姚舜安 Wan Fu-pin 萬富彬, and Chiang T'ing-yü 蔣廷瑜 eds. Pei liu hsing t'ung ku t'an mi 北漢型銅鼓探秘. Nanning: Kuang hui jen min chu pan she 1990, p. 4; p. 8.

\(^{14}\) The largest bronze drum of Heger type I unearthed is the Ngọc Lâu I drum unearthed in Ngu Trúc Lý Nhâm in Hà Narn Province, with a tympanum 79 cm in diameter (Pham, Đông Sơn Drums, pp. 4-5).

\(^{15}\) ibid. p. 170.

\(^{16}\) Yao Shun-an, Pei liu hsing t'ung ku t'an mi, pp. 8-23.

marked in the written record by a decrease in mentions of the active use of drums, and a corresponding increase in mentions of old drums dug out of the ground as curios or rarities. This period roughly corresponds to what western historians of China often refer to as the Early Mediaeval period, or what Chinese historians once called the Six Dynasties or Southern Dynasties (220-589), with a slight extension into the first two centuries of the T’ang Empire (618-907).

Rather than being a history of the drums themselves, this thesis is a history of the people who cast and used them during the period of production, of the changes in their political structures, in their economy and their military capabilities, and also in how they were viewed by those who wrote about them. Through this history I hope to illuminate the mechanisms and processes that gave rise to the drum culture, as well as what eventually caused its disappearance. Very little has been written on the economic and political conditions that created the environment for the growth of the bronze drum culture. Geoff Wade noted a need for the recognition and study of the major non-Chinese polities that existed in the Ling-nan region (the modern provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi and the northern half of Vietnam) prior to the T’ang. The lack of a detailed study should be reason enough in itself for a monograph on the subject, but the rise of the bronze drum culture has a wide-ranging significance beyond itself to the consideration of many important and well-discussed questions. Such as how the Chinese empires expanded into new territories, how non-Sinitic peoples in these newly-conquered territories were absorbed into the Chinese state through their acculturation to Sinitic linguistic, cultural and political norms (a process described variously as Sinification or Sinicization). In addition it also offers a new perspective on the nature of the relationships between the peoples of the Red River Plain, and the Chinese Empires in the first millennium CE, better known from previous studies framed

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18 Even though Chinese researchers have determined that the period of drum casting only began during the time of the Eastern Han Dynasty (23-220 CE). It is common for Chinese museums and media to attach the longest possible pedigree to the drums and uncritically report or display newly-found drums as relics from the Han Dynasty, ignoring the possibility that they could have been cast over five centuries later. For dating of the Heger II type drums, see Chiang T’ien-yü 蔣廷瑜, ‘Yiē shí hū t’ung ku tì ch’u pu yén ch’u’ 鼓式銅鼓的初步研究. In: Ku tai t’ung ku hsüeh shu t’ao lun hui lu wen chi 古代銅鼓學術討論會論文集 Peking: Wên wu ch’u pu shè, 1982 pp. 143-7.

19 The term ‘Northern and Southern Dynasties’ is now preferred in Chinese, however, since it recognises the legitimacy of the northern dynasties, which traditional Chinese histories did not.

in the context of the ‘Chinese colonisation of Vietnam’. It is hoped that this thesis will help to fill some of the gaps in those fields of knowledge.

Like many peoples known to posterity only from their mention in Chinese sources, it is not possible to know what the makers of the drums actually called themselves. Among the various names given to them by chroniclers writing in Chinese, those which were applied most specifically and consistently during this period were the three terms Li 俚, Lao 獭, and Wu-hu 鳥戳. Whether the people thus called actually used such names, or even perceived themselves as single or discrete groups of people remains a mystery. They have left no linguistic record of themselves save a few words and place names in the area where they lived all of which strongly suggest that they spoke languages belonging to the Kadai family, or more specifically the Tai branch of that family. However, there were also people referred to as Li and Lao in areas where there is no evidence for the historical use of Kadai languages, so it is unlikely that they are representative of linguistic groupings.

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21 Lao 獴 is often mistakenly transliterated as ‘Liao’, because it shares the same written form as another word meaning ‘to hunt at night with torches’ but these words were once distinct in both pronunciation and meaning. To add to the confusion, PRC publications often replace the character with the character 高 also pronounced liao.

22 Particularly common are place names beginning in na 那, which is the Tai for a paddy field. For discussion of this and additional evidence for the former use of Tai languages in this area in the toponyms of this region. For details see Hsu Sung-shih 徐松石, Yuèh chiāng liū yù jēn mín shīh 雅江流域人民史 Shanghai: Chung hua shu chū, 1939, pp. 192-209, and Li Chin-fang 李錦芳, T'ung t'ai yù yén yù wên hua 倭台語言與文化 Peking: Min t’u ch’u pan shè, 2002, pp. 288-301. Both of these works are to be used with caution when dealing with place names found in texts prior to the T’ang.
Map Two: The distribution of Heger II bronze drums in South China

(after Chiang, *Yüeh shi t'ung ku*, p. 142)
Chinese naming practices were inconsistent to the point that a whole chapter of this thesis is devoted to trying to untangle the mess. It is merely for convenience’s sake that I use the names Li and Lao or even Li-Lao as shorthand for the people who produced bronze drums in the Early Mediaeval period, with the occasional geographical qualification ‘between the Two Rivers’ or ‘between the Rivers’ as a reminder that other people who did not produce drums were referred to by the same names.

The title of this thesis ‘Between Two Rivers’ is a reference to the geographical location of the Li and Lao between the mouths of the Pearl and Red Rivers. The geographical centre of the Li and Lao drum culture was the Yun-k’ai and Yün-wu Mountain ranges. These lie along the watershed between rivers that drain northwards into the Yü River (Yü shui 鄱水) and enter the sea at Canton, and those that drain southwards into the Gulf of Tongking and the Red River. From the third to the late fifth centuries this watershed also represented a rough division between lands theoretically subject to the two southern provinces of Kuang-chou 廣州 and Chiao-chou 交州, controlled from cities near the mouths of the two great rivers. I have added ‘theoretically’ because it is highly unlikely that these were provinces that controlled areas of country within neatly delineated boundaries, a more realistic description would be ‘spheres of influence’, as commanderies and counties subordinate to Kuang-chou were clustered along the waterways that drain into the Pearl River Delta and the South Sea west of the Lei-chou Peninsula, whereas those subordinate to Chiao-chou were clustered in the Red River Plain and along the Rivers that drained into the Gulf of Tongking. The territories under Li and Lao control lay between these two spheres of influence, and beyond the control of both.

The term ‘people in between’ also carries a secondary, conceptual meaning, as the Li and Lao are squeezed between two better-studied fields of Chinese and

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23 This is only done when speaking about the Li and Lao in a general sense, when translating from a primary source I give the name exactly as it appears in the text.
24 River terminology is extremely confusing; as rivers not only change their names over time, but different stretches of the same river have different names. The modern term ‘Pearl River’ refers properly to the whole river system that enters Canton, and ‘West River’ (Hsi Chiang 西江) refers to the river only as far west as Wu-chou. The very handy Southern Dynasties term Yü River referred to the entire stretch of river from Canton to present-day Nanning. Since it has no equivalent in modern geography, I have revived its use in this thesis, retaining Pearl River only when referring to the entire river system that enters the sea in Kwangtung.
Vietnamese national history and are constantly left out of both. In the context of Chinese national history the Li and Lao are unimportant, eternally a peripheral minority people, whose bronze drums are a mere window dressing to the larger splendours of the Chinese national culture. In a Vietnamese context they are considered unimportant because despite their close proximity to the heartland of Vietnamese national history in the Red River Plain, their territory lay outside the boundaries of the modern Vietnamese state. As a result, they have been denied a voice in both mainstream narratives, and when they have been studied at all they have been relegated to the obscure field of minority history, denying them a voice of their own outside the retrospective narratives of the modern nation-state.\(^{25}\)

The Two Rivers Region in a wider Regional Context

O.W. Wolters noted that “Every center is a center in its own right as far as its inhabitants are concerned”\(^{26}\) and the first task in the discussion of the Li and Lao is to remove them from their former habitat lurking on the edges of Chinese or Vietnamese history, and place them firmly in the centre of the narrative. It is for this reason that I have named the region that surrounded the lands where Li and Lao drum makers dwelt the ‘Two Rivers’ region, partly to place the Li and Lao at the centre and remove them conceptually from their minor role in the story of the great southern expansion of China, \(^{27}\) and partly to accentuate the difference between the shared historical development of the two urban centres at the river mouths, and that of the Li and Lao who lived between them.

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\(^{25}\) When they are mentioned at all in national histories, the Tai groups, are cast in a supporting role as a sideline to the important events of the centres. In “nationality history” mun-tsü-shih they receive detailed treatment, but are depicted as eternal minorities, as ancestors to the Chinese Chuang or Vietnamese Tay-Nung and the other classifications invented in the 1950s for the Tai-speaking peoples in both countries.


\(^{27}\) There are already several names for this region, that have been used in other studies: the T'ang Dynasty circuit of Ling-nan 紓南 ‘The Land South of the Passes’ included the coast and river plains of the northern half of modern Vietnam, whereas the modern sense of the term in Chinese refers only to the region that is the territory of the Peoples’ Republic. Using Southern China encourages us to think of the area as having always been Chinese, and also excludes the Red River plain. Terms used during the Six Dynasties such as ‘Southern Yüeh’ (Nam Yüeh or Nam Việt 南越). Schafer’s use of Nam Việt fits the geographical area covered in this work, but names containing Việt/Yüeh suggest too strongly a continuity between the people called Yüeh in the past and those who refer to themselves as Yüeh or Việt today, i.e. the Vietnamese and Cantonese. In addition, Yüeh is often over-used in Chinese and English works to refer to the people of times and periods where it was rarely employed.
The idea that human activity in China south of the Yangtze originally had more in common with mainland Southeast Asia began to appear in the works of Chinese writers such as Hsü Sung-shih and Lo Hsiang-lin, and the Japanese writer Matsumoto Nobuhiro. From the 1970s onwards this was echoed in the works of archaeologists in the west such as Bayard, Meacham, and Solheim, who began to consider southern China in prehistoric and early historic times as a northward extension of Southeast Asia. Charles Higham devoted a whole chapter to the Two Rivers region as a region in itself within the larger context of the Southeast Asian Bronze Age. There is a definite trend in western archaeological scholarship of Southeast Asia that includes the Pearl River drainage area as the northern extremity of Southeast Asia in prehistoric and early historic times which is only just beginning to be carried over into the discipline of history.

Although historian Denys Lombard agreed with the archaeologists in proposing that South China and Southeast Asia could not be considered in isolation from each other, and Yoshikai Masato has argued for the recognition of the Two Rivers regions as a distinct historical region in its own right, the trend amongst post-war historians who have looked at the Two Rivers region has been overwhelmingly to view it from a Chinese viewpoint as the southernmost region of the Chinese empire. This is largely due to the influence of the only available textual sources which are all in Chinese. A

29 Don Bayard, ‘North China, South China, Southeast Asia, or Simply Far East?’ *Journal of the Hong Kong Archaeological Society*, 1975 no. 6, pp. 71-79.
33 This is not a universal trend, however, and it is not shared by the majority of Vietnamese and Chinese archaeologists, who have until recently tended to work within the boundaries of their respective nation-states.
35 This is on account of its recurring tendency towards political consolidation. He has, however declined to give the region a name and refers to it as ‘northern Vietnam and Southern China’. Yoshikai Masato 吉野将人, ‘Rekishi sekai to shite no ryōnan – hakubu betonamu; sono kanōsei to kada’ 歴史世界としての領南・北部ベトナム—その可能性と課題. *Tōnan ojia rekishi to bunka* 2002, no. 31 pp. 79-95.
few surveys of the region exist made from this Chinese perspective, but the most
famous study of the region in English is without a doubt Edward Hetzel Schafer's *The
Vermilion Bird*. No monograph since has discussed the region in such detail or
splendour as Schafer. Much of his scholarship on the flora and fauna of the region
remains unsurpassed, and since he utilises many sources dating from the Southern
Dynasties rather than the T'ang, I direct readers who are interested in the environmental
history of the Two Rivers region towards the two chapters on plants and animals in *The
Vermilion Bird*, rather than repeating his findings here.

Charles Holcombe wrote two articles on the region from the Han to the T'ang,
again from Chinese textual sources. His scholarship is particularly important as he was
the first to emphasise the similarities between the societies on Two River Plains,
especially when compared back to those of the country that lay between them. I argue
a similar point, that there was an important distinction to be made between the two river
plains and the uplands between them, but extend this distinction to show how it was a
reflection of the meeting of two larger cultural areas we would now distinguish as East
and Southeast Asian. The provincial capitals on densely populated urbanised plains, and
the smaller outposts along the rivers and the coast were the southernmost regions
permeated by Chinese administrative and military culture, and these areas of the Two
Rivers region can rightly be considered the southernmost extension of the East Asian or
Chinese cultural world. At the same time, however, the hill country away from the
riversides and plains was the subtropical homeland of peoples who spoke languages
belonging of the great mainland Southeast Asian language families (Austronesian and

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36 Two particularly good sources in English are de Crespigny's discussion of the region as a whole during
the later Han and the under the Three Kingdoms state of Wu, and Michael Loewe's overarching survey
from the Han to the Sui from the information contained in the standard histories, ostensibly for the
Kuang-chou region, but actually inclusive of the entire region: Rafe de Crespigny, *Generals of the South:
the foundation and early history of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu*. Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies
1990, pp. 29-43; Michael Loewe, 'Guangzhou: the Evidence of the Standard Histories from the Shi ji to
the Chen shu, a preliminary survey'. In: *Guangdong, Archaeology and Early Texts* edited by Shing Müller,
Shou-wei has written an excellent one-volume regional history of the region before the T'ang, covering
37 Edward Hetzel Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird: T'ang Images of the South*. Berkeley, University of
39 Charles Holcombe, 'Early imperial China's deep south: the Viet regions through T'ang times'. *T'ang
Studies*, 1999 nos.15-16 pp. 125-56; See also by the same author *The Genesis of East Asia: 221 B.C.-
Kadai) whose folkways were closer to those now associated with upland Southeast Asian material and political cultures such as betel-chewing, tattooing, dental modification by lacquering or filing, and living in stilt houses, in addition to the casting and use of bronze drums. It is for this reason that the upland areas of the Two Rivers region can be considered the northernmost extension of the Southeast Asian cultural world. This regionalist perspective is of course, a modern view. To an inhabitant of the region during the Early Mediaeval period, the upland-lowland distinction would have been more obvious than that between Kuang-chou and Chiao-chou.

Former Studies of the Li and Lao Peoples

Scholarship specifically related to the peoples named Li and Lao in Chinese texts has mainly been carried out in Chinese and it is therefore necessary to approach it cautiously armed with knowledge of the underlying assumptions and concerns of the writers. There are two particularly pervasive problems in Chinese language scholarship on the indigenous peoples of the Two Rivers region, one is the assumption that Chinese names for people equalled named realities, the other the denial of indigenous agency. These problems partly have their origins in politics, and partly in uncritical readings of the original texts.

As regards the meaning of names, both Chinese and foreign writers assume that the authors of ancient Chinese texts had sufficient knowledge about peoples other than themselves to distinguish between different ethnic groups, and that names of peoples in Chinese texts must have referred to concrete and definable realities. The results of this assumption at its most simplistic level is that the distribution of names in ancient texts is treated as proof of the geographical spread of ethnic groups, meaning that the

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40 Mēng Wên-t’ung is a notable exception in Chinese scholarship, noting that Yüeh was a general term for all non-Sinitic southerners during Han times, just as Hu ēr was applied indiscriminately to all northerners. Mēng Wên-t’ung 畲交通, Yüeh shì h’s t’ang k’ao 追史兼考 Peking: Jên mí h’u p’ên shè, 1983, p. 24.
appearance of an ethnym in a new location is taken as evidence of volkswanderung, and the appearance of new names and disappearance of older names in the same geographical area is an indication of a change in ethnic groupings, resulting in simplistic pedigrees such as the `Lao developed from the Luo Yüeh' and the `Li and Lao are descendants of the Hundred Yüeh' This is especially typical of Chinese scholarship that touches on the Li and Lao or bronze drums as part of larger comprehensive histories, such as the history of Kwangtung Province,\textsuperscript{41} or of recently created minority groups such as the Chuang.\textsuperscript{42} Writing the Li and Lao into the history of the Chuang, is a practice is known as `upstreaming', using modern ethnic classifications to interpret the texts of the past,\textsuperscript{43} and it is a depressing characteristic of the vast majority of Chinese scholarship on the history of non-Sinitic peoples. Fortunately a better class of Chinese scholarship can be found in the writings of those who have dealt with the Li and Lao specifically during the period of the Southern Dynasties. These writings contain more nuanced readings of the texts and admit some disparity between names and realities.

In the 1950s Ruey I Fu carried out some of the very best Chinese-language scholarship on the Li and Lao, notable in particular for its being the earliest collection of scattered original primary sources dealing on social customs and material culture.\textsuperscript{44} Ruey collected as many descriptions as possible from old Chinese texts of the Li and Lao and Wu-hu as a scientific survey, and argued that they were three distinct peoples based on their different customs and culture. Similarly to Ruey, Wolfram Eberhard believed that there were discrete and distinguishable cultures in the South of China which could be determined by records of their cultural characteristics over space and

\textsuperscript{41} Wang Wên-kuang 王文光 ed, \textit{Chung kuo nan fang min tsu shih} 中國南方民族史 Peking: Min tsu ch'\u pan shê, 1999, especially pp. 103-39; Wang Wên-kuang 王文光 and Li Hsiao-pin 李紹斌, \textit{Pai yüeh min tsu fa chan yen pien shih: ts'ung yüeh, lao tao chuang tuk yu tsu ko min tsu} 百越民族發展演變史:從越,獠到壯侗族各民族 Peking: Min tsu ch'\u pan shê, 1999; Fang Chih-ch'\u in 方志欽 Chiang Tsu-y\u an 蔣祖馨 eds, \textit{Kuang tuk t'ung shih (Ku tai shang ts\'i) 廣東通史 (古代上冊)} Kuang-chou: Kuang tung kuo t\u eng chiao y\u a ch'\u u pan shê, 1996, pp. 399-401.

\textsuperscript{42} See: Chang Shêng-chih 張聲瑋 ed, \textit{Chuang tsu t'ung shih 壮族通史} (3 vols.), Peking: Min tsu ch'\u pan shê 1997, v. 1 pp. 284-92p. 317-21. I refer to Chuang as `recently created' because no group corresponding to the Chuang of the present day existed in southern China before the 1950s.

\textsuperscript{43} I have borrowed this term from Richard White, \textit{The Middle Ground: Indians, Empire, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1630-1815}. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. xiv.

\textsuperscript{44} Ruey Yih-fu 蕭逸夫 `Lao jên k'ao' 壯人考, \textit{Kuo li chuang yang yen chiu y\u an, li shih y\u a yen yen chiu so ch\'i k\'um}, 1957, vol. 28 pp. 727-771.
time. He distinguished a definite Lao culture (he always transcribed the name as ‘Liao’). Inez de Beauclair also distinguished such a culture by this name, tracing very carefully those who bore the names Ko-loa and Lao from the past down to the present. All of these works were based on the belief that the name Lao always referred to the same group of people.

Schafer did not believe that the name Lao was fixed as the name of a discrete ethnic group, but noted that the name was ‘gradually extended to all southern savages as a term of contempt’, and that the identification of the name with certain cultural characteristics in the manner of Ruey was doubtful given the chronological range of the sources. On the other hand, he did not share similar reservations about the name Li, which he believed to be a more definite term indicating peoples related to the modern Li (Hoi) of Hainan. In the 1980s Hsü Hêng-pin collected similar materials as Ruey relating to the use of bronze drums, but took the more critical view that the Li were the ethnic group that created the bronze drums, a conclusion he based on comparing the distribution of the name with the distribution of drum finds. Lao, on the other hand, was nothing more than a general term for a ‘barbarian’ sometimes used in place of Li, which he considered the ‘correct’ term. Other Chinese scholarship concerned with identity problems (tsu shu wén t’i 族屬問題) has debated whether certain individuals were ‘really’ Li or Lao or were, or were actually ‘Han Chinese’.

Although some debate over the application of ethnonyms exists, it is mainly concerned with whether or not Chinese writers were using the terms correctly and it is rare to find scholarship that questions the essential significance of the names as markers of ethnic identity. Pulleyblank has made the most careful discussion of the etymology of Li and Lao to date, noting that the two

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47 Schatter, Vermilion Bird, p. 48.

48 Ibid, p. 276

49 Ibid, p. 53

50 Hsü Hêng-pin 徐恒彬, ‘Li jên chi ch’i t’ung ku k’ao’ 個人及其銅鼓考, In: Ku tai t’ung ku hsüeh shu t’ao lun hui lun wên ch’i 古代銅鼓學術討論會論文集 Peking: Wên wu ch’u pan shè, 1982, pp. 139-151.

names may in fact have derived from the same Tai root. But he is much more
conservative in his conclusions than other writers and makes no attempt to pin the terms
down as indicators of specific ethnic groups, he notes only that ‘in the Kwangtung
region the terms Li and Lao are linked to refer to the local non-Chinese inhabitants’ and
suspecting that ‘Lao was used in a broad sense to refer to the Tai-related populations of
South China and that there was some basis for this in native usage.\textsuperscript{52}

Trying to find out who was Li and who Lao is an impossible task, since it is by
necessity text-based, and in many cases the texts contradict one another. An easier
question to answer, which is also an explanation for the contradiction, is why such
names were given to people in the first place. I argue that application of the terms Li
and Lao was not based on linguistic categories or obvious similarities in material culture,
but was instead loosely based on a combination of factors including geographical
location, and observations of how people’s social structures and systems of government
differed from those of the people who wrote about them. When writers perceived no
difference between themselves and others they no longer felt the need to use the terms
Li and Lao and began to refer to them instead as the people or subjects of a certain
locality. Contemporary usage refers to these ‘nameless’ people as Chinese or Han, but
these terms were not used during the Early Mediaeval period to refer to groups of
people.\textsuperscript{53}

Historians of the present-day writing about European peoples are usually careful
to make distinctions between Romans and Italians, Gauls and French, Anglo-Saxons
and English people,\textsuperscript{54} but a lack of close knowledge of Asian history coupled with the
Asian nation-states’ promotion of their own long and glorious histories to their own
citizens has guaranteed that anachronistic use of the terms Chinese or Han is barely
noticed. China is a deceptive collective term for what has been a disparate collection of
empires, kingdoms and republics which have controlled territories of widely varying
size in the East Asian mainland, and whose rulers have maintained a tradition of turning


\textsuperscript{53} Admittedly ‘Han’ was used in Six Dynasties texts, but only in a historical sense to refer to people who had lived during the time of the Han Empire (206 BCE-220 CE). The term was employed in a perjorative sense by the Turkic rulers of the Northern Ch’i (550-577 CE), but does not appear to have been used in the south.

\textsuperscript{54} The term ‘German’ in English is admittedly problematic, but not so in German present-day usage where a distinction is now made between Germanen (ancient) and Deutsche (modern).
to the literature and philosophy of the society that flourished between the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers in the first millennium BCE for their models of political, linguistic and social behaviour. This tradition masks an infinite variety of people, languages, material and religious cultures that were constantly changing over time. Unfortunately since there are no better terms, I have retained the use of ‘Chinese’ in certain situations to avoid long and prolix explanations, limiting it to the description of administrative structures of the various dynasties and those who worked for them, in other cases I sometimes use ‘Sinitic’ to refer to the speakers of languages closely related to modern Chinese.

Agency and Sinification

The influence of the abundance of Chinese language sources on the Two Rivers region has meant that the history of the region has traditionally been approached from a Sinological perspective as a smaller corner of the larger Chinese world. In Chinese-language scholarship Chinese empires are depicted as either beneficent civilisers or developers (this is particularly prevalent in Chinese works), or as invaders and colonisers (more common in non-Chinese works). This resembles what Victor Liebermann recognised as the school of ‘externalist historiography’ in regard to historical studies of Southeast Asia, a part of the colonial project that entailed ascribing cultural innovations and advances in Southeast Asia to outsiders whilst denying southeast Asians any agency or creativity of their own. In the works of the externalist school, indigenous Southeast Asians were shown to as the passive recipients of the gifts greater civilisations, such as the Chinese, the Indian, the Islamic, and ultimately the European. This style of scholarship later gave way to an ‘autonomous’ approach, a study of Southeast Asian societies on their own terms, with emphasis on native Southeast Asians as active adopters and adaptors of the various cultural and political models with which they had become acquainted.55 Whereas Southeast Asian peoples (including those of the Red River Plain) have been rescued from the externalist approach, the study of their close relatives in the lands of the Two Rivers region that have ended up in China still languishes under the influence of a narrative that Nicholas

Tapp has described as ‘The long, slow march southwards of the dominant, conquering Chinese civilization…and its inexorable devouring of indigenous traditions.’ This was the basic theme of the works of Harold J. Wiens, and C.P. Fitzgerald which left little room for indigenous agency.

The history of non-Chinese peoples within the boundaries of modern China is still highly politicised and censored, and views of the southward expansion of China current in Chinese scholarship are still largely caught up in the argument of what Stevan Harrell has called the ‘civilising project’. Originally this was a continuation of pre-modern narratives of Chinese administrators bringing civilisation to benighted and backward savages, but was repainted in Marxist colours as a process whereby the Han Chinese were highest up the ladder of the stages of human development, and were merely pulling the minority peoples up from ‘barbarism’ or ‘slave society’ up to their own higher social and production level. Most Chinese language works from the PRC on the Li and Lao, portray them initially as economically and socially backward and emphasise the great improvements in their economic life and the advancement of their culture through feudalisation (fēng-ch'ien-hua) through contact with the Chinese empires, the ‘opening up’ or ‘development’ (k'ai-fa 開發) of their lands and their eventual mixture (jung-ho 融合) into the mainstream of Chinese society. These were the commonly-expressed views until the 1990s, and have remained so in historical works for popular consumption in which the Li and Lao are mentioned. In the past Chinese scholars also tended to de-emphasise the role of military force in dealings with the Li and Lao, emphasising instead a soft approach whereby local rulers were given imperial administrative titles and eventually peacefully mixed into Chinese society through exposure to Chinese culture. This has changed more recently in scholarship intended

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60 For a highly politicised account according to the narrative of ‘development and mixture’ see Chu Tawei 夔大衛, ‘Nan ch'iao shao shu min tsu k'ai lun chi oh yi han tsu ti jung ho' 南寮少數民族概況及其與漢族的融合. *Chung kuo shih wen chu* 中國史研究 1980, vol. 1, pp. 57-76.
61 Chang Shêng-chên, *Chuang tsu t'ung shih*, pp. 303-306; Feng Chih-ch'ien and Chiang Tsu-yüan, *Kuang tung t'ung shih*, pp. 370-3. Another scholar, Huang Hsing-chiu, notes that his explanation of warfare as the primary reason for the movement of Tai peoples out of the south 'would not be accepted by some
for academic audiences, in which there has been a shift towards admitting that violence, warfare and economic exploitation were involved in the incorporation of the Li and Lao into the Chinese state. An early example is Wu Yung-chang's study of Southern Dynasties policy towards the Li and Lao, which noted that the Li and Lao grew politically and militarily stronger during the Southern Dynasties period, but also that they came under increasing attack and exploitation by the Southern Dynasties. P'êng Feng-wen's studies of the Southern Dynasties policy towards the Li and Lao went so far as to criticise earlier scholarship for its downplaying of the military aspect of the conquest of the Ling-nan region. Despite this shift, certain problems remain and the Li and Lao are still treated as economically backward, passive recipients of Chinese policy, they are constantly referred to with the anachronistic term 'minority' (shao shu min tsu 少數民族), they are still the objects of attack, exploitation, and (finally) the beneficiaries of civilisation and Sinification. No attempts are made to describe the active response of the Li and Lao to contact with the Chinese empires. Chinese descriptions of Li and Lao history are still essentially 'externalist' in nature.

Where politics and actions of the Li and Lao are described in detail, it is usually in terms of their loyalty to the Chinese state or otherwise, ignoring the possibility that they might have had other more localised concerns for their political allegiances, or that their loyalties might have been more advantageous to themselves than to the empires they supposedly served. The Lady Hsien (Hsien fu jen 洗夫人), whose family is discussed in more detail in chapter seven, is the most well-known of the native Li leaders to be portrayed in this manner. She was married to Feng Pao 凌寶 the governor of Kao-liang on the southern coast of Kwangtung during the Ch'ên dynasty (557-586), supposedly as part of a strategic alliance aimed at gaining the co-operation of the Li people with the local Ch'ên administration. Because of her loyalty to the Ch'ên, Liang

scholars' suggests that there is still some censorship on these matters (Huang Hsüng-ch'iu 黃興球, Huang P'ai ts'ai hsüan hsien chieh ch'ien k'ao 壯泰族分化時間考. Peking: Min shu ch'u pan she, 2008, p. 252). The records of the brutalities of warfare are plentiful in the original sources, and non-Chinese scholars have not needed to be so guarded in their use. See, for example, Schafer, Vermilion Bird, pp. 61-9.


and Sui empires after her husband’s death, the use of her influence over the other Li leaders to keep the peace for these empires, and her introduction of Chinese laws and regulations to the people she ruled, she has been frequently lionized in Chinese scholarship for her role in ‘safeguarding the country’s unity’. The possibility that she engaged in a strategic alliance with her powerful neighbours with a view to increasing the influence of her own clan over other chieftains and the conquest of new territories is left out of the picture, and yet the result of the Lady Hsien’s successive alliances with the three empires brought her clan a huge increase in territory and gave her descendents such a strong grip on power in the lands to the south west of Canton that it took the T’ang over a century to wrest administrative power from the family’s grip. As for the question of Lady Hsien encouraging the spread of Chinese civilisation among her own people, it is true that her grandson Feng Ang was considered Chinese (or a ‘person’) to the extent that he was at one point a trusted official at the Sui court, but in his home environment between the Two Rivers his primary role seems to be that of feared warlord, and his relative Feng Tzu-yan 馮子猷 was still living as a drum-owning chieftain, despite his Chinese ancestry on his grandfather’s side.

Two significant exceptions to the narrative of the one way street to Sinification are Eberhard, who aimed to show how many non-Chinese cultural traditions had become embedded in the Chinese mainstream; and Liao Yu-hua, who looked into the acculturation of clans from outside to the norms of the Li and Lao, describing them as ‘southern-barbarised Han’ man hua han jen 單化漢人. Unfortunately, neither of these works escaped from the idea that were are concrete and definable ethnic groups such as ‘Han’ to begin with.

The eventual acculturation of the Li and Lao to Chinese norms of behaviour and the end of their bronze drum culture between the rivers as long-term historical processes lend support to the larger conclusions of modern PRC nationalist discourse. As such it should not be surprising that the disappearance of the Li and Lao and their assimilation into greater China has received more scholarly attention in Chinese academic circles than their appearance and rise. The birth of the bronze drum culture and the growth of strong non-Chinese political structures between the Two Rivers several centuries after

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64 For a detailed discussion of the Lady Hsien’s story in English see Geoff Wade, The Lady Simn.
65 Liao Yu-hua, Li shih ti li hsieh, pp. 247-78
the conquest of the surrounding river plains and coast calls into question the assumption
that close contact with one’s Chinese neighbours inevitably led to the abandonment of
one’s own customs and political structures. In the shorter term, from the third to the
sixth centuries, I argue that trade and contact between the Li and Lao between the rivers
and the people of the Chinese-controlled river plains and coast did the opposite of what
occurred in the long term, triggering a process of territorial expansion within native Li-
Lao political structures and ensuring their independence from direct Chinese rule.

Southeast Asian and other Approaches
Previously I noted that archaeologists have long considered the Two Rivers Region as a
northern extension of Southeast Asia, but that historians who made use of written
sources in Chinese have usually treated it as the southernmost frontier country of the
Chinese empires. I argue that a Southeast Asian approach — a view from the south — is
actually more helpful in understanding the growth of the Li-Lao bronze drum culture
than the traditional Chinese view from the north. Not only are the Li and Lao between
the Rivers the linguistic ancestors of the Tai-speaking peoples of Southeast Asia, but
looking through the Chinese records of the Li and Lao it is also easy to find many
similarities in material culture, economic systems, and political structures with those
recorded later in the lands further to their south. The Li and Lao between the Two
Rivers chewed betel, lived in stilt houses, and made bark-cloth, practices that were
familiar to people in mainland and island Southeast Asia over a thousand years later.66
The significance of the drums as ritual objects and symbols of political power is also
well-known among the peoples of upland Southeast Asia, and Li-Lao trade with people
in the river plains followed a similar pattern to the well-known hill-to-coast upriver-
downriver trade in luxury items in exchange for iron and salt in Southeast Asia.67 In
their everyday life, the Li and Lao had much more in common with the highland
peoples of mainland Southeast Asia than they did with the people of the capital of the
Southern Dynasties at Chien-k’ang.

66 For an overview of pre-modern Southeast Asian material culture as observed by Europeans from the
fifteenth century onwards, the best source in English is Reid, Anthony 1988 Southeast Asia in the Age of
Commerce 1450-1680: Volume One — The Lands below the Winds New Haven, CT: Yale University Press
see pp. 64-115.
67 Kenneth R. Hall, ‘Economic history of Early Times’. In: Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Volume
The historian of the Li and Lao faces a similar dilemma to those who study upland Southeast Asian peoples of more recent times; whereas the urban centres of pre-modern China are well-documented, the historian of the Two Rivers region prior to the T’ang must rely on a very limited range of written sources, and all of these are written by people who were foreign to the cultures they described. It is only for later periods that historians have access to texts written by non-Sinitic peoples and can find out how people viewed themselves, but such texts are of limited use for consideration of the very distant past.68 Whereas historians who deal with the Chinese mainstream can rely on a vast wealth of written materials for their periods, the paucity of ancient textual sources for the study of pre-modern Southeast Asia (particularly the history of the upland peoples) has encouraged historians to augment their philological and textual research with findings from other disciplines such as archaeology, linguistics, and anthropology. Since written records of the Li and Lao exist only in fragmentary form, the disciplinary and theoretical approaches of Southeast Asianists offer many new and useful insights for its reconstruction, but despite the many similarities between the Li and Lao and the upland people to their south, very little attempt has as yet been made to view the Li and Lao in this manner.

Although the majority peoples of the nation-states of Southeast Asia have been rescued from the colonial tradition of externalist scholarship, the people in their highland territories are still frequently subject to the same prejudicial treatment, named and classified by outsiders, they are considered backward and isolated in need of a good dose of civilisation (now referred to as development) from the economically and culturally advanced peoples of the lowlands that form the centre of Southeast Asian nation states. The rescue of upland peoples from the externalist tradition is an ongoing enterprise, carried out by either anthropologists or by historians with a strong anthropological bent. Many of their observations of upland Southeast Asian societies in recent times correspond very closely with what can be gleaned from Chinese textual

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68 Two examples are, John E. Herman, *Amid the Clouds and Mist: China’s Colonization of Guizhou 1200-1700* (Harvard East Asian Monographs 293), Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2008, and David Holm, 2003 *Killing a Buffalo for the Ancestors: a Zhuang Cosmological Text from Southwest China*. DeKalb: Southeast Asia Publications, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University. Both analyse texts written in the vernacular languages of the people studied. The only extant texts (discussed in chapter seven of this work) made by those referred to as Li or Lao that date from the time period covered in this work are two stelae from Ch’in-chou detailing the ancestry of the Ning clan that ruled over what are now the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands on the Gulf of Tongking.
sources about the Li and Lao, and their conclusions concerning ethnic classifications, highlander-lowlander relations and the formation of highland political structures, are extremely useful concepts for discussion of the history of Li and Lao society.

Edmund Leach’s, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* was a detailed study of the constantly shifting linguistic and social complexities of the upland people known as Kachins and Shans. Leach’s work showed how the commonly-accepted ethnic categorisations applied by outsiders were not congruent with the constantly shifting situations experienced by the highlanders themselves. Members of the societies studied by Leach lived within a constantly shifting pattern of social structures, were usually multilingual, and could shift from ‘Kachin’ to ‘Shan’ within a single generation. In fact, to become Shan one needed only to live within a Shan state, be a follower of Theravada Buddhism, and have knowledge of a Tai language; there was no impermeable border between the Tai and non-Tai. The complexity of this lived reality on the ground is something to always be kept in mind when dealing with ethnonyms that seem to suggest fixed and bounded realities.

An especially influential concept in the reconsideration of Southeast Asian peoples who lived outside the reaches of the lowland river plain-based states has been James Scott’s history of upland Southeast Asia, *The Art of not being Governed* based on Willem van Schendel’s original conception of the Southeast Asian massif as a single region named Zomia. Van Schendel argued that there were more commonalities in human activity within the region than between it and the lowland states to which it is now politically subject. Scott elaborated on the concept by arguing that Zomia was a refuge for those who wished to escape from state-building projects in the lowlands.

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69 Edmund Leach, *Political systems of highland Burma: a study of Kachin social structure* London: Athlone Press, 1970. Leach also observed that the societies of those known as Kachin oscillated between anarchistic and egalitarian gunlao system and the gamsa system which was closer to the hierarchical and autocratic society typical of the Shans, the (mainly) Tai-speaking peoples of the valleys who cultivated wet rice. Because of lack of records, it is difficult to know whether anything resembling a gunlao system, devoid of autocratic chiefs or hierarchy and living off swidden agriculture was widely practised among the Li and Lao between the Two Rivers during the period under discussion in this work.


These people would make themselves difficult to govern through living in areas difficult of access, in dispersed societies that were politically decentralised and easily moved from one area to the other. Although Scott’s argument focuses on much higher ground than the heartland of the Li-Lao bronze drum culture between the Two Rivers, he also analyses a ‘mini Zomia’ in the Pegu-Yoma range in central Burma which is geographically very similar to the centre of the bronze drum culture in the Yun-k’ai and Yün-wu Mountain ranges. Both are surrounded by plains and both were forested and difficult of access by lowland armies. Nevertheless, however tempting it might be to class the Li and Lao as the Zomians of the extreme north-east on account of their long-term retention of political independence against an encroaching Chinese state, the resemblance between the anarchic Zomian societies described by Scott and the Li and Lao between the rivers is only obvious in the very earliest Chinese records from the middle of the fourth century.

The earliest descriptions of Li-Lao societies describes them as small, scattered societies without paramount leaders ‘living in separate villages with each its own chief, without lords or sovereigns’. This seems much closer to the highland societies Scott describes, but by the sixth century they had become something quite different. By this time the people referred to as Li and Lao lived in more complex societies known to the Chinese as tung 詆 ruled by a class of hereditary clan rulers, known by names such as ‘Li commander’ (Li shuài 俚帥) or chieftain (ch’iu chang 會長) who sometimes no longer ruled over single tung, but over large confederations of smaller tung. These societies were involved in slave-trading and wet rice cultivation in valleys, both of which Scott associates not with highland societies but with the state-building projects on the plain. By the seventh century, the Li leaders of the Ning, Fèng, Ch’én clans ruled over alliances of smaller chiefs and were interested in acquisition of territory and slaves. In this regard tung could conceivably correspond to small versions of Condaminas’ description of the typical Tai political unit, the mủông. The aristocratic rulers of mủông performed the roles of chiefs of war and organisers of food production, in return for

73 Scott, Art of not being Governed, pp. 167-72.
74 From the third century Nan chou lü wu chih (NCIWC) quoted in the tenth-century encyclopaedia TPYL 785: 8a. The earliest record of Lao social structure (WS 101: 30b.) describes the Lao as selecting a leader as king (wàng 王). The same passage in the ninth century encyclopaedia T’ung Tien (ch. 187 p.999) records the word as lord (chú 臣), but both of these descriptions of Lao refers to people who lived in modern Yunnan and Szechwan, not those of the region between the Two Rivers.
which they owned rice fields, corvee labour with which to cultivate them, and taxes in kind from the harvest of fruit and hunting. Most importantly the aristocratic leaders of mường (known as taaw) held a commercial monopoly over the export of rare commodities which in turn gave them control over prestige goods made by craftsmen or by industry. Just how closely this description fits with descriptions of the leaders of the Li and Lao will become clearer as the thesis progresses.

I argue that it was the differences in governmental and societal structures that were the most important factors influencing writers in their application of the names Li and Lao in Chinese texts, and since neither Chinese nor Li-Lao societal structures and governmental systems were static, the significance of the names not only differed from writer to writer, but also altered over time. In considering how names were applied it is important to remember that the models of Chinese behaviour which the writers of Chinese texts considered the norm were never themselves static. The method of choosing local administrators under the Southern Dynasties differed significantly from the practices of the Han Empire. The Southern Dynasties’ tendency towards fragmentation of provinces into ever smaller units and their tolerance of localised gubernatorial dynasties ran parallel to a tendency towards local dynasties of Li-Lao chieftains controlling ever larger territories. The result of this convergence was that the seventh century it had become difficult for chroniclers to decide what terms to use for individual local rulers. Just who held the politically legitimate position of provincial governor, and who the illegitimate position of Li commander was difficult to decide, and many individuals ended up referred to by three different terms (chief, Li commander and provincial governor) in a single work.

The most fitting explanation for the growth of the Li-Lao polities and the concentration of political power in the hands of the Li commanders rather than village chieftains can be found in Oscar Salemink’s work on Highlander-Lowlander relations in Vietnam, in which he proposed that local leadership in the highlands was actually the product of economic, political and ritual exchanges with the lowlands. The Li and Lao

between the rivers occupied territories beyond the control of the Southern Dynasties that contained many products sought after by the people in the Chinese-controlled provinces that surrounded them. There are written records of economic exchanges with the lowlands describing trade in gold, silver, and luxury items in exchange for salt, iron and copper, but aside from these material benefits, an additional political advantage in the form of Chinese administrative titles was bestowed on the chieftains who provided such trade items. A side-effect of the trade exchanges through which titles were obtained actually encouraged the growth of localised chiefdoms through competition between small chiefdoms for territory and manpower. The greater the territory and manpower under one's command the easier it would have been to organise the collection of precious metals and luxury items for the trade with the river plains. The adoption of Chinese titles by the Li and Lao chieftains did not of itself lead to wholesale replacement of native leadership traditions with those derived from Chinese models of government, as bronze drums remained a symbol of prestige for local Li and Lao leaders who had Chinese surnames and were even ostensibly of Chinese ancestry well into the seventh century.

Although unrelated to Southeast Asia, another very useful concept for analysis of the situation between the Two Rivers is Richard White's Middle Ground, his term for the geographical space in the pays d'en haut the lands around the rivers that flow into the North American Great Lakes from the mid-seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries. When looking at Native American cultural change in the area White tries to get beyond black-and-white concepts of assimilation to European norms or cultural persistence through resistance, instead emphasising the compromise and creativity through which new and different political and cultural structures appeared. Most importantly, what gave birth to the Middle Ground was the inability of Indians and Europeans to use force to achieve their own ends, whether territorial conquest or control of the fur trade, and ceased to exist after the balance of power shifted in favour of the Europeans.

Although there is much less in the way of primary materials to illustrate a similar point for the Li and Lao, I argue that the bronze drum culture between the Two Rivers grew under similar conditions. For centuries the Li and Lao chieftains were not subject to military conquest, but this was not because of the munificence of the Empires

and their aversion to taking military action. It was because the Southern Dynasties simply were not militarily capable of taking all that they wanted in one go. The Han Empire knew of the riches of the far south and was able to conquer the Red River Plain and territories as far south as modern central Vietnam, and the successor empires to the Han were able to keep a tenuous hold on most of the region, but they became aware of the riches of the lands between the Two Rivers only when they were too weak to carry out new large-scale military conquests. Although they ate slowly away at the edges of the Li-Lao country, encroaching upon it with counties and commanderies, and sending small-scale military expeditions, the military power of the Southern Dynasties was concentrated along their northern borders against the greater threat of the powerful empires to their north and they were incapable of conducting an outright military conquest of the whole area.

The Li and Lao chieftains on the other hand were militarily powerful and economically self-sufficient to the extent that the Southern Dynasties had to negotiate with them to acquire the desired trade items, this only further encouraged the growth and strengthening of Li-Lao political structures and the enrichment of their own leaders so that eventually it was difficult even for the stronger empires of the Sui and T’ang to knock them out by military means. Once the T’ang Empire had consolidated its military and political strength, the large size of the Li-Lao chieftdoms became an advantage for the T’ang, as it became necessary to gain the co-operation of only a few powerful and influential leaders in order to exercise indirect control over large areas of the country.

Việt, Yüeh and Vietnamese National Histories
One corner of the two Rivers region that has been given exceptional treatment throughout the first millennium CE is the Red River plain. ‘Exceptional’ here has a double meaning referring to both the amount of academic scrutiny it has received compared to other parts of the region, as well as the tendency of this research to treat the area in isolation from its surrounding areas, particularly those to the north and east. As it later became a centre in itself and the cultural and historical heartland of states now associated with the name Vietnam, most of the academic attention was carried out within a context of Vietnamese national history, and its academic treatment can be said to have followed the trend of Southeast Asian historiography along the path from
'externalism' to 'autonomy' described by Liebermann. The Red River Plain was studied in detail from Chinese records by a generation of French scholars in the colonial period, followed by a generation of Vietnamese scholars who witnessed the independence of Vietnam from French rule, and then a later generation of Japanese and western scholars who were influenced by native Vietnamese post-colonial scholarship.

French scholarship on the Han-T'ang period in the Red River Plain began in the late nineteenth century, and was a quintessentially 'externalist' tradition heavily influenced by Sinology, that promoted the view that Vietnam had developed little of its own and had been content to borrow its entire culture from China. Such a view fed into justifications for European rule of Vietnam, as the Europeans saw themselves as simply following the historical trend of bringing civilisation and development to a stagnant and backward area.\textsuperscript{77} One French scholar, Leonard Aurousseau, considered Vietnam’s debt to China to have even deeper roots than simply political and cultural borrowings, and suggested that the population of the Red River Delta was a result of migration from the old Kingdom of Yûêch on the eastern coast of China.\textsuperscript{78} These ideas influenced a later generation of scholars outside Vietnam. Joseph Buttinger, the author of the first scholarly one-volume history of Vietnam in English was very much reliant on French scholarship of this kind, and he also believed that the Vietnamese were forced to adopt Chinese social and cultural inventions in order to successfully fight them off.\textsuperscript{79}

By Buttinger’s time, a new school of postcolonial Vietnamese historiography on the Chinese rule of Vietnam had already emerged in North Vietnam based within a grand story of heroic resistance to foreign invaders and strongly connected to the war against contemporary invading powers such as the Americans and the French.\textsuperscript{80} The French historian Phillipe Papin summed this up as ‘A militant, nationalistic, and very contemporary vision through which emerged a hypothetical substratum of an original Vietnam that was miraculously preserved throughout a millennium of the Chinese

\textsuperscript{77} For a deeper discussion of this trend of scholarship and its political implications, see Nola Cooke, 1991 Colonial Political Myth and the Problem of the Other: French and Vietnamese in the Protectorate of Annam, Ph.D Thesis Australian National University.


\textsuperscript{79} Joseph Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon: a Political History of Vietnam, New York, Praeger, 1958, p. 11: 'In order to fight off the Chinese successfully, Vietnam had to adopt many of the Chinese social and technical inventions'.

presence'. In this narrative, the Chinese empires became merely the first of the outside colonising forces to be eventually driven out of their land, and the 'Chinese' are depicted as corrupt invading colonisers, interested only in the profits they could cream off from their conquered territory. One should not judge the national school of Vietnamese history writing as entirely the product of present-day nationalism and anti-colonialism. For several centuries the literati of Đại Việt had asserted the historical continuity and cosmic legitimacy of a Southern empire (Đại Việt) as an equal of the Northern Empire (the various incarnations of 'China'), recording how the Northern Empire had ignored this repeatedly only to suffer defeat. The experience of the last two centuries with powers other than the traditional enemy merely caused a re-writing of the historical tradition in a new mould. Since very few Vietnamese scholars study the Han-T’ang period at present, the most detailed scholarship in Vietnamese on the subject dates from before the 1980s, and the conclusions and interpretations of this period have become the national orthodoxy, and for new interpretations of the period one must look to the work of overseas scholars.

In the 1970s Japanese scholars began to follow the trend of Vietnamese postcolonial scholarship, notably Gotō Kimpei and Katakura Minoru. Gotō’s Betonamu kyūgoku kōsōshi, although it deals entirely with the Han-T’ang period, makes the connection with the contemporary resistance to foreign occupiers is made obvious through the photographic illustrations of protestors and peasants calmly bending over their ricefields while their rifles are stacked close at hand. Katakura Minoru’s two-part study Chūgoku shihai ka no betonamu was a much less politicised study of Chinese

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82 For examples of this type of scholarship, see Dao Duy Anh. Lịch Sử Việt Nam từ Nguyên Gốc đến Thập Kỷ XIX. Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Văn Hoá Thông Thạo, 2006 (originally published in 1957), and Trần Quốc Vượng and Hà Văn Tấn eds, Lịch Sử Chế Độ Phong Kiến Việt-Nam Tạp I Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản giáo dục, 1960.
84 For the national orthodoxy no clearer text exists than the treatment of the Han-T’ang period in the sixth-grade national school textbook published by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education. Bộ Giáo Dục and Đạo Tạo, Lịch Sử 6 Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Giáo Dục, 2006 pp. 35-76
administration and tax-collecting practices in the Red River Plain throughout the Han-
T'ang period, but still emphasised the unique intractability of the people there.\footnote{Katakum Minoru, ‘Chūgoku shihuika no betonamu – Chūgoku shoōchō no shūdatsu ni kansuru shironeteki kōsatsu’ 中国支配下のベトナム—中国諸王朝の収容に関する試論的考察. \textit{Rokishigaku kenkyū} 歴史学研究 1972, vol. 380 pp. 17-26; vol. 381 pp. 28-35.}

Scholarship of this kind had a strong influence on Keith Taylor’s \textit{The Birth of Vietnam} published in 1983. This book covered the period from the late prehistoric period until the end of Chinese rule in the tenth century, and has become the standard English reference work on the subject. In this book he followed the line of Vietnamese nationalist scholarship and asserted the strong continuity between the pre-Chinese semi-legendary kingdoms of the Red River Plain and the formation of Đại Việt as a restoration of sovereignty one thousand years later. At this time, Taylor believed that Vietnam’s independence resulted from a thousand-year struggle to throw off Chinese rule, by a group of people who had always considered themselves as different from the Chinese, who held a conviction ‘that they were not and did not want to become Chinese’.\footnote{Keith W. Taylor, \textit{The Birth of Vietnam}. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983 p. xviii. Taylor later retreated from the nationalist position. Keith W. Taylor, ‘The Early Kingdoms’. In: \textit{Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: Volume One, Part One}. ed. Nicholas Tarling. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008 p. 137. The introductory paragraph to this article reflects his later view ‘by the end of the third century CE the efforts of Chinese frontier administrators and leading local clans had produced a relatively stable provincial polity, sensitive to Chinese imperial interests while at the same time representing a local system of power capable of taking initiative on behalf of its own interests when Chinese dynastic power was weak or intransient’.}

Jennifer Holmgren’s work \textit{Chinese Colonisation of Northern Vietnam} published at the same time as Taylor’s is unfortunately less well-known.\footnote{Jennifer Holmgren, \textit{Chinese Colonisation of Northern Vietnam: administrative geography and political development in the Tongking Delta, first to sixth centuries A.D.} Canberra: ANU Press, 1980.} Despite the suggestion of the title, Holmgren made a close scrutiny of the Chinese texts without interpreting the events in terms of the millennial Vietnamese struggle for independence, and unlike Taylor, she did not use different transcription systems for the Chinese characters in the original texts to make distinctions between which individuals were on the Vietnamese side, and which were Chinese.\footnote{For the implications of such spelling choices, see, Michael Churchman, 2010 ‘Before Chinese and Vietnamese in the Red River Plain: The Han–T’ang Period’. \textit{Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies} vol. 4 pp. 25-37, viewed 1 January 2010, http://csds.anu.edu.au/volume_4_2010/04-2_Chamchurchman_2010.pdf pp. 25-6.} She did, however, refer to Vietnamese and Chinese as if these terms made sense to the people of the time, and used the terms ‘Sinicization’
and ‘Vietnamisation’ when referring to political or cultural change in one direction or another.

All of the works quoted above take the existence of some kind of Vietnamese group consciousness as given, painting the events of the distant past retrospectively according to a Chinese-Vietnamese binary, but the existence in later ages of a group consciousness as Vietnamese is not evidence for its existence during the Han-T’ang period. The very terms by which the Chinese-Vietnamese binary have been expressed in modern scholarship are fundamentally misleading for the period in question, and they have no equivalents in the contemporary texts. The word Việt/Yüeh, frequently encountered in historical writing (especially that of Vietnamese writers themselves) is often carelessly used as if it referred to an ethnic group, when in fact the term had had many and varied referents and nuances of use in the Han-T’ang period, very few of which had any relation to the people of the Red River Plain.90 No one term can be pinned down that definitely refers to a cohesive group of people over time in the Two Rivers region. The texts make distinctions based on geography, membership of political structures, and behaviour towards the empire, dividing people into ever-shifting categories of ‘people’ and ‘barbarians’.91

Aside from the basic anachronisms inherent in the writing of national history, a major problem of the works in the Vietnamese national tradition is that their field of vision was limited only to the areas that now lie within the modern Vietnamese national boundaries.92 Treatment of the plain in isolation from its surroundings has led to conclusions about the exceptional nature of the people there. It is true that, compared to the political situation around the lower Yü River, imperial control was less than stable, and localised uprisings, the development of localised dynasties of governors, and the tendency for these to take control of local affairs when presented with the opportunity are easily interpreted retrospectively as signs of resistance or a wish for the restoration of long-lost national independence.

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90 Việt and Yüeh are merely two different transcriptions of the same Chinese character 域. For an examination of the various uses of the term and their relation to peoples of the Two Rivers region, see Michael Churchman, Before Chinese and Vietnamese, pp. 27-31.
91 Naming practices were actually far more complex than this simple binary, and in the third chapter I attempt to tease out some of the distinctions between the various ‘barbarian’ names applied to those between the Two Rivers.
92 Even areas such as the northern coast of the Gulf of Tongking are not usually included, even though they were ruled directly from the Red River Plain as part of the province of Chiao-chou for more than two centuries.
Because they dwelt outside the boundaries of modern Vietnam, the Li and Lao drum-makers seldom receive much more than a mention in Vietnam-centred works about the Han-T’ang period, and where they do appear they are usually mentioned as inconsequential ‘tribesmen’ of the hills. The Li and Lao are crucially important for an understanding of history of the Red River Plain during the Period of Chinese rule from the first to the tenth centuries, both as comparative examples with which to reconsider assertions of Vietnamese uniqueness, and as a contributing factor to the tendency towards the eventual political independence of pre-Vietnamese polities in the Red River Plain.

The Li and Lao and the Red River Plain

Through examination of the Li and Lao, comparing their political situation from the first to seventh centuries CE to that of the Red River Plain, and then making comparisons back to those in the Lower Yû River area, the similarities between the two river plains become very clear. In the light of such comparison even the leaders of the Red River Plain, celebrated in Vietnamese national history as promoters of independence, resemble the officers of the Son of Heaven at Canton much more closely than they do the drum-owning chieftains of the hill country.

Historical comparison with neighbouring areas is not the only challenge to the Vietnamese national story. I have argued in detail elsewhere that the growth of Li and Lao power was partly responsible for the tendency towards de facto political independence in the Red River Plain, as they helped to isolate the area from direct overland connections with the rest of the Chinese empire, discouraging new migrations of people from the north and allowing long-term resident families to establish power bases with little competition from outsiders. These then became localised dynasties which became desirous of preserving privileged positions within the imperial bureaucracy for their own members. The influence of external factors on the political life of the Red River Plain in the Han-T’ang period is still greatly understudied.

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93 Taylor, Birth, p. 67, calls them ‘tribal peoples’; Holcombe Genesis, p.154 refers to them as ‘tribesmen’ and the districts they inhabited he calls ‘tribal enclaves’ (Early Imperial China’s Deep South, pp. 140-4
The comparisons between the Red River Plain and the Li and Lao bring into question many of the claims of Vietnamese particularism, which I have grouped roughly under the three categories of context, cultural continuity, and resistance.

Context refers to the consideration of Vietnamese history in the background of larger regional histories, in the Vietnamese case usually as part of Southeast Asia or as part of an East-Asian grouping based on the areas that adopted Chinese character writing, and systems of philosophy and government. The postcolonial Vietnamese historical tradition has downplayed the commonalities with China and emphasised Vietnam’s historical commonalities with the Southeast Asian world. Taylor referred to this question of belonging to one area or the other as ‘probably one of the least enlightening in Vietnamese studies’ and yet he was drawn to express his own judgment of Vietnam as a unique blend of East Asia and Southeast Asia, with its roots firmly in Southeast Asia, but forced into East Asian cultural norms by Chinese rule.95 Trần Quốc Vượng believed that a study of Vietnamese history and culture should begin in the context of Southeast Asia,96 and Phạm Đức Dương went further and described the whole of Vietnam as a ‘Southeast Asia in miniature’ since it contained representatives of all the major Southeast Asian language families.97 However, when the rest of the two Rivers region is included as the northernmost extension of Southeast Asia as discussed above, comparison back to the Li and Lao country makes the Red River Plain appear all the more Chinese, Vietnamese historians often argue that the people of the Red River Plain retained a Vietnamese ‘cultural core’ throughout one thousand years of Chinese rule which made them different from other groups in Southern China who eventually lost their separate identities and were turned into Chinese.98 Trần Quốc Vượng called this cultural core a ‘Việt constant’ manifest, as he said ‘in the substratum of water-rice

97 Phạm Đức Dương, *Văn hóa Việt Nam trong Bội Cạnh Đông Nam Á*: Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Học Xã Hội, 2000 pp. 124-46. This is also true of the modern provinces of Kwangsi, Kwangtung and Hainan, where there are populations of Austroasiatic (Ustai) and Austroasiatic (Vietnamese and Lai) speakers, in addition to the many groups speaking Kadai and Miao-Yao languages.
98 Fitzgerald, *Southern Expansion*, p.1, notes that in contrast to the Việt of Vietnam, ‘The more northerly Việt were annexed to the Han Empire and lost their separate national identity’. on p.22 he refers to the Cantonese as the ‘more assimilated cousins’ of the Vietnamese.
culture in villages and hamlets, with a substratum of Viêt culture and ancient Viêt myths and legends. Although the term Viêt is an anachronism when referring to the Han-T'ang period, people who dwelt in the Red River Plain did retain features throughout the long period of Chinese imperial control that marked them as different from the people of other provinces, such as their spoken languages and mythological systems. None of this, however, was specifically limited to the people of the Red River Plain. Although it is true that over the very long-term, the Li and Lao eventually disappeared from the lands between the Two Rivers, this was a slow process that was perhaps not complete until the seventeenth century. Although their religious beliefs and languages are unfortunately largely lost to us in the present day, the Li and Lao and their descendents long outlived the destruction of their ruling class and the division of their lands into provinces and counties in the eighth century. In the tenth century there were still people living between the Two Rivers who were still considered sufficiently different from the imperial subjects of other Chinese provinces by those who described them to warrant the use of terms indicating a ‘barbarous’ status.

Language is also often held up as another reason for the continuity of a Vietnamese consciousness as distinct from Chinese. The whole idea of linguistic continuity in the Red River Plain has been brought into question by the research of John Phan who argued from the structure of the modern Vietnamese language that it developed from a creolised language resulting from a language shift from Middle Chinese to proto-Vietnamese after the Han-T'ang period, thus indicating that a large population had been speaking some form of Sinitic language prior to this time. As for the Li and Lao, there is written evidence that these people were speaking different languages between the Two Rivers as late as the eleventh century.

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100 Taylor, Birth, p. 300: ‘The survival of the Vietnamese language was very significant, for it means that whatever the Chinese did in Vietnam was conditioned by a cultural remnant that remained distinct and separate from the Chinese sphere of thought’.


102 The linguistic situation between the Two Rivers at this time is hinted at by descriptions of customs collected by Lê Shih 樂史 in his T'ai p'ing huan yā chi of the late tenth century. In this work it is reported that the Li people of Ch'in-chou ‘cannot understand how to speak’ (TPHYC 157: 13b.), that the people of Jung-chou 資州 (present day Jung county in Kwangsí) spoke three mutually unintelligible kinds
The linguistic and cultural changes that led to the situation of the present day, where those who live between the Two Rivers consider themselves Chinese and those in the Red River plain as Vietnamese, were not a product of the thousand years of Chinese rule, but rather of the millennium that followed. During the millennium of supposed Vietnamese cultural resilience to Sinification it was actually the Li and Lao who remained distant from Chinese norms of material and social culture. The people of the Red River Plain on the other hand were, by comparison, much more receptive to these norms.

According to Vietnamese national history, the people of the Red River Plain were especially intractable and rebellious compared to other peoples who came into contact with the expansion of the Chinese empires. Nguyen Khac Vien has described the period of Chinese rule in the Red River Plain as marked by a ‘steadfast popular resistance marked by armed insurrections against foreign domination’.¹⁰³ I argue that the situation during the Han-T’ang period, and particularly during the Southern Dynasties was in fact a reversal of what one would expect to find in the light of later events, and quite different from what is asserted in Vietnamese nationalist historiography. The various rebellions and uprisings carried out by the inhabitants of the Red River Plain are much less convincing evidence for the inextinguishable flame of the Vietnamese nation when juxtaposed with the activities of their Li and Lao neighbours to the north; these force a reconsideration of the received notion of the Red River Plain as a hotbed of revolt against the Chinese empires.

Unlike the Red River Plain, which had been under direct control by imperially-appointed (or at the very least, imperially-sanctioned) administrators throughout most of the period from Ma Yilan’s defeat of the Chêng (Trung) Sisters in 43 CE, there was a core of Li and Lao territory between the Rivers that had never been subject to direct control by any Chinese empire until the T’ang finally defeated the local chieftains in the seventh century. The Red River Plain was the administrative centre of the most populous commandery of the Han Empire in the Two Rivers region, containing twelve closely clustered subordinate counties whereas in all the land between the Yü River and

language (ibid. 167: 4b), and that the T'î-i (提系) Lao of Yung-chou 廣州 (districts surrounding present-day Nanning) had four discrete kinds of language which had to be translated if communication was to be possible (ibid. 166: 5a).

the Sea could only boast only four, and only one within the triangle with its points at modern Wu-chou, Ho-p’u and Yang-chiang. This area, the centre of the bronze drum culture, lay for hundreds of years at the remote edges of the three commanderies of Ts’ang-wu, Ho-p’u and Yü-lin. Its population remained untaxed and unregistered.

As far as rebellion is concerned, there was a long period for the two centuries following Ma Yüan’s defeat of the Trung Sisters in which there were no rebellions against imperial rule that originated in the Red River Plain, although five occurred in neighbouring commanderies. The only one to spread into the plain was started in 178 by the Wu-hu of Chiao-chih and Ho-p’u – the people between the Two Rivers. Ch’ao Au’s (Triệu Âu) rebellion of 248 spread to the Red River Plain, but began in the mountains of Chiu-chên. Although they eventually came to resemble each other, the nature of leadership in the Red River Plain after Ma Yüan’s defeat of the Trung Sisters was also significantly different from that of the Li and Lao between the Rivers. During the politically weak Southern Dynasties local rulers in the Red River Plain held imperial titles or demanded recognition of their de facto political rule from the Southern dynasties by such titles, going into open rebellion only when their efforts were frustrated or when the dynasties attempted to impinge on their local rights by appointing outsiders. Even those who declared themselves kings or emperors were not necessarily doing so because of a resurgent national feeling; it was a common occurrence for disgruntled officials to try their chances for the throne, and they often adopted names of local historical importance as the name of their prospective empires. Within the Two Rivers region as a whole the title king or emperor of Yüeh was a perennial favourite.

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104 See Holmgren, *Chinese Colonisation*, pp. 66-71, for details. Ascribing uprisings that originated in the southern commanderies of Chiu-chên and Jhi-nan to a Vietnamese consciousness ascribes a unity to these people for which there is no evidence other than the fact that the areas where they dwelt are now Vietnamese territory. It also begs the question of why the Wu-hu rebellion of 178, originating in an area that was much closer to the Red River Plain than Jhi-nan and Chiu-chên is never described as an act of Vietnamese resistance.

105 HHIS 8: 10b; 13:a.

106 TPYL 371: 3b.

I argue that during the Southern Dynasties the people of the Red River Plain were more likely to accept Chinese political structures and modes of behaviour than the Li and Lao. This is why the Li and Lao usually ended up being described as 'barbarians' and their leaders as 'chieftains', whereas the people of the Red River Plain were referred to as 'people' or 'subjects' ruled by 'governors' very similar to the people who lived around modern Canton. It was not until the end of the sixth century that a local leader (in this case Li Fo-tzū) was referred to as a Li person. The method with which the Southern Dynasties tried to deal with the local rulers of the Red River Plain was similar to the way they dealt with other rebellious officials and localised dynasties in their southern provinces, and the trend towards self-government in the Red River Plain was more to do with the weakness and ineffectiveness of Southern Dynasties' rule and the constant threats to them from the Northern Dynasties which kept military attention concentrated elsewhere.

The Li and Lao were in a different situation altogether from the people of the Red River Plain. Never having been subjected to the full-scale military conquest by the Han, they remained in control of their own resources and territories throughout the Southern Dynasties, during which time their rulers consolidated such strong power bases that it was not a simple task even for the stronger successor empires of the Sui and T'ang to march into their territory. The difference is most easily observed at the time the Empires of the Sui and T'ang came to conquer the Two Rivers region. The way they gained control of the Red River Plain was significantly different from the methods they applied to gain control of the Li and Lao. The Sui general Liu Fang 劉方 had been able to capture the local rebel Li Fo-tzū 李佛子 and the Sui sent Ch'iu Ho 丘和 to rule as inspector. The T'ang Empire gained control of the Red River Plain when Chiu Ho finally recognised it as the new authority, and thereafter the T'ang court was able to appoint governors and inspectors of its own choice and rule the plain directly without relying on the agreement of powerful local families. Between the Two Rivers the Sui and T'ang were unable to appoint officials from the centre, and were instead obliged to seek the co-operation and agreement of the local Li families for control of the area, often appointing them as local officials, although some members of these families had

108 For the Li Fo-tzū period in the Red River Plain, Taylor, Birth, pp. 158-62 gives an excellent, well-translated summary, as he does for the transitional period from Sui to T'ang period on pp. 166-9.
attended the Sui and T'ang courts, they were still frequently referred to as barbarians in Sui and T'ang texts. It took a further fifty years to wrest control of the lands between the Rivers from the hands of these families and begin to appoint officials of their own.

One final aspect of Li and Lao culture that is particularly relevant to the discussion of the Red River Plain is the bronze drum tradition. Vietnamese national history holds up the Đông Sơn bronze culture as an example of the authentic national culture before the Chinese conquest. The Đông Sơn drums have been used by the Vietnamese state as a symbol of the pre-Chinese indigenous traditions, a quintessentially Vietnamese symbol that predates the forced foreign accretions of colonialism typical of later Vietnamese culture and links the Vietnamese people back to their Southeast Asian roots when they had an influential and important civilisation of their very own.\(^{109}\) The drums are displayed as the national treasures in the national museum in Hanoi, carved miniature copies can be found in souvenir shops all over the city, and the tympanum of the Ngọc Lũ drum can be found on t-shirts and postcards, and as a large transfer stuck on the windows of Vietnamese restaurants the world over.

The end of the Đông Sơn bronze drum culture of the Red River Plain was an indication of the end of native traditions of leadership in the Red River Plain, and the beginning of a period in which Chinese-style titles (and presumably regalia) became the symbols of governmental authority. As the drum-casting tradition was being lost in the Red River Plain, a new and vigorous tradition began to blossom between the Two Rivers that would last for five centuries.

**Bronze Drums and the Li and Lao**

Bronze drums are a recurring theme in this thesis, and as the most important artifact that the Li and Lao left behind, they tell the story of the Li and Lao in a way merely hinted at in the Chinese textual records.\(^{110}\) The modern geopolitical situation in the Two Rivers region has ensured that the Heger II drums have remained understudied. They still languish in obscurity while the famous Đông Sơn culture associated with Vietnam gets

\(^{109}\) See for example, the explanation of the significance of the drums in Pham, *Đông Sơn Drums in Vietnam*, pp. 262-67

\(^{110}\) Unfortunately, aside from the bronze drums, very little attention has been paid to other aspects of Li-Lao archaeology. An exception is Feng Meng-ch'in 馮孟欽, Kuang tung li jên i ts'un ti k'ao ku hsüeh kuan ch'ü 廣東個體遺存的考古學觀察, In: *Pai yueh yen chiu* 百鍾研究 vol. 1. Name: Kuang hsi k'o hsüeh chi shu ch'u pan shê, 2007, pp. 216-30, which discusses finds of tiles, burial urns and pottery.
all the attention, as well as the naming rights. It is not surprising that this has occurred; at the level of Chinese national history the Heger II drums occupy a minor position, not as a symbol of a lost national culture, but rather as features of the ‘nationality cultures’\textsuperscript{111}—subsets of the greater whole that is China, and therefore hidden behind a whole raft of accomplishments of past dynasties that have been adopted as symbols of the Chinese national culture. Although they are considered important historical artefacts in Kwangtung and Kwangsi, in the larger discussion of PRC national culture the drums are peripheral, a small contribution to the greater national culture, as a symbol of local diversity.\textsuperscript{112}

To its great detriment, the study of bronze drums has been divided along national lines. Both Chinese and Vietnamese scholars were eager to claim credit for the invention of the bronze drum for their own nation-states, this was a protracted academic battle, in which Chinese scholars claimed that the type II drum was the original style of drum, the use of which pre-dated the type I drums of the Red River Plain and Yunnan by centuries.\textsuperscript{113} Even if the debate on the ultimate origins of drums is left out of the discussion, the national boundary influences scholarship on the distribution and transmission of drum cultures.\textsuperscript{114} Chinese scholars usually view the production of Heger II drums as a direct descendent of the type I drums found in Yunnan, and western

\textsuperscript{111}In recent years it has become popular to translate min-tsu into English as ‘ethnic group’ or ‘ethnicity’, but this is a distortion of the Chinese sense of the term and disguises its ideological origin. Although it is ostensibly still used in its Sinistrian definition in the PRC referring to a recognisably group with a common territory, common language, common economic life and common psychological make-up, Jacques Lemoine has argued that the term min-tsu is actually an untranslatable term unique to PRC political discourse; Jacques Lemoine, ‘What is the actual number of the (H)mong in the world?’ Hmong Studies Journal, 2005 vol. 6: pp. 1-8, viewed 10 August 2011, http://hmongstudies.org/LemoineHSJ6.pdf. The use and connotations of the cognate term dân tộc in Vietnamese are almost identical to those in Chinese, however, I myself prefer to use the translation ‘nationality’ as it preserves the archaic flavour of the term in English.

\textsuperscript{112}It is only in the Kwangsi Chuang Autonomous Region that the drums are in evidence, in the Regional museum in Nanning, and the recently built National Museum of Nationalities is built in the shape of an enormous bronze drum. The manhole covers in the central city are all decorated to make them look like the tympana of bronze drums.

\textsuperscript{113}Han Xiaorong, \textit{Who Invented the Bronze Drum} goes into detail about this debate and its origins.

\textsuperscript{114}Some of this may be due to the fact that Vietnamese and Chinese archaeologists seldom study each others' language, and are ignorant of each others' findings and opinions. This has created a division between two schools of drum scholarship that are confined by national or regional boundaries. This division is also evident in the works of outsiders. Bernet Kemperdevotes only a single page to the Heger II drums of southern China Bernet Kemper, \textit{The kettledrums of Southeast Asia: a Bronze Age World and its Aftermath.} Rotterdam: A.A. Balkema, 1988 p. 32. Nishimura Masanari’s recent study is similarly gives scant attention to any drums but those found in the territories that now lie within the Vietnamese border (Nishimura Masanari 西村昌也, ‘Hokuhu vietonam dôko wo meguru minzokushi teki shiten kara norika’北部ヴィエトナム銅鐘をめぐる民族史的視点からの理解, \textit{Tōnan ajia kenkyū 東南アジア研究}, 2008 vol. 46 no. 1, pp. 3-42.).
Kwangsi, ignoring the possibility that the drum-casting tradition may have passed through an area that is not present-day Chinese territory.\textsuperscript{115} The Japanese scholar Yoshikai Masato has provided a convincing argument for the transmission of drums and drum-casting techniques from the lower Red River north-westwards, rather than direct transmission from Tien.\textsuperscript{116} Several other pieces of evidence add weight to Yoshikai’s argument: The cliff paintings at Huashan along the banks of the Left-Hand River (\textit{Tso Chiang 左江}) in Kwangsi in which over two hundred and fifty bronze drums are depicted\textsuperscript{117} lie along a convenient route from the Red River Plain to the Pearl River drainage area. Heger I drums have been found in Kwangsi but mainly in the far north-west close to Yunnan which suggests a stronger connection with the Tien culture.\textsuperscript{118} Finally, the high lead content of the type II bronze drums found between the Two Rivers is similar to the lead content of Đông Sơn bronze but very different from that of the Heger I drums of northern Kwangsi\textsuperscript{119} and this seems to add weight to Yoshikai’s argument for a north-east flow of drum-casting and the fashion of drum ownership into the Li-Lao country from the Red River area.

\textsuperscript{115} Yao, Wan, and Chiang, \textit{Pei liu hsing t'ung ku} p. 2A-7.
\textsuperscript{116} Yoshikai Masato 吉野将人, ‘Dōko saiten no jidai – isennenki no betonamu, minamichōgoku’ 鍬鼓“ 再現”的時代 – 一千年後のバトン・南中国, \textit{Tōyō Bunka 東洋文化}, 1998 v. 78 pp. 199-218. He bases this claim on the appearance of the innovation of incorporating decoration into the drum moulds before casting rather than the old practice of incising decorations on to finished drums. One group of Chinese scholars has begun to investigate the possibility that the Heger I drums of the Đông son had an influence on later types of drum. Wan Fu-pin 王輔彬, Fung Ming-hui 房明惠, and Wei Tung-p'ing 魏東平, ‘Yüeh nan t'ung ku ts'ai jen shih yü t'ung ku fën lei hsin shou’ 越南東南同興再認識與鉛鼓分類新說, \textit{Kuang hsi min tsu hsieh yüan hsieh pao (chê hsieh shê hui k'o hsieh pan) 喬氏民族學院學報 (哲學社會科學版)} 2003, vol. 25, no. 6 pp. 77-83, but they still treat the Heger II drums of Kwangsi as direct descendants of Heger I drums from the Tien culture.
\textsuperscript{117} Wang K'o-jung 王克隆, Ch’iu Chung-lun 丘鍾倫, and Ch’ên Yuan-chang 陳遠璋, \textit{Kuang hsi tso chiang yen hua} 廣西左江紋畫 Wén wu ch’u pan shê, 1988 p.193. On p. 204 the authors suggest that these are depictions of Heger I drums.
\textsuperscript{118} However only two Heger I drums have been found in the vicinity of the Li-Lao country, in the Po-lo-wan tomb dating from the time of the Nan Yüeh kingdom close to modern Kueil County to the East of Nanning. See Li Lung-chang 李龍章, \textit{Líng nan ti ch’u ch’i t’u ch’ing t’ung ch’i yén chîn} 理南地區出土青銅器研究. Peking: Wén wu ch’u pan shê, 2006 pp.119, for analysis of these. For the geographical distribution of different drum types, see Yoshikai, \textit{Dōko saiten no jidai}, Figures VIII and IX.
\textsuperscript{119} Đào, \textit{Lịch Sử Cổ Đại Việt Nam}, p. 284, states that the high lead content of Đông Sơn bronze (around sixteen percent) is what makes it distinct from Chinese bronzes. The high lead content is also typical of the Heger type II drums of the central Li-Lao country which usually have around fifteen percent lead content, but is not typical of the Heger I drums found in northern Kwangsi or Yunnan. For content metals of the various types of drum in Kwangsi, see Huang Tsêng-ch’ing 黃增琦, ‘Chuang tsê ku lu tai t’ung ku ti chu tsao kung‘1’ 壯族古代鍬鼓的鑄造工藝, \textit{Kuang hsi min tsu hsieh yüan hsieh pao}, 1984 vol. 1, pp.41-7. For the type I drums of the Tien culture of Yunnan see Chang Tsêng-ch’i 張增琪 \textit{Tien kuo yü tien wen hua 滇國與滇文化}. Kunming: Yün nan mei shu ch’u pan shê, 1997 p. 90.
Regarding the time period of transmission, events of the Later Han in particular lend support to the argument for transmission of drums from the Red River Plain at that time. During the first and second centuries CE there was some political connection between the native rulers in the Red River Plain and those to the north-east, in particular the rebellion of the Chêng (Trưng) Sisters in 40 CE. This began in the Red River Plain, but soon involved the ‘barbarian’ peoples of Chi-chênh and Jih-nan, and most importantly those of Ho-p’u. The uprising of 178 mentioned above spread in the opposite direction from the Wu-hu of Ho-p’u and Chiao-chih southwards even down to modern central Vietnam. These events occurred in roughly the same period in which drum production is supposed to have begun in between the Two Rivers. It was probably the gravitational pull of strong leadership in the Red River Plain which made the drums a status symbol in the eyes of surrounding peoples and gave the impetus to the local leaders of the Left-hand River to begin producing their own drums as symbols of their own chiefly authority, and probably a similar process again that brought them to the lands between the rivers where economic circumstances and an abundant supply of copper allowed production to flourish again.

A further connection between the drum tradition of the Red River Plain and the Li-Lao drum culture is apparent from the etymology of the word used for ‘drum’ in modern Vietnamese and the Kadai languages. The modern Vietnamese word for a drum is trống but the oldest record of the pronunciation of the word in as trổ in de Rhodes’ Vietnamese-Portuguese dictionary of 1651.\(^\text{120}\) A clue to how the word was pronounced even earlier is provided by the earliest written record of the word in Chữ Nôm, the old Chinese-based Vietnamese demotic script. Nguyễn Trãi’s Quốc Âm Thi Tập 國音詩集 which dates from the first half of the fifteenth century writes the word as 蘭,\(^\text{121}\) made up of two elements pronounced cố 古 and lồng 龍 in Sino-Vietnamese, and combined in a single character to convey the sound of the entire syllable klong; a common practice in the earliest Nôm writings.\(^\text{122}\) The form of the character suggests very strongly that the

\(^{120}\) Alexandre de Rhodes, *Dictionarium Amissiticum Lusitanum*, et Latinum ope Sacrae Congregationis de propaganda fide, 1651 p. 813.


word was originally pronounced with an initial [k-] rather than a [t-] in de Rhodes.\textsuperscript{123} The identical Nôm character was used in the Nôm script of the Tây people to represent the word tông meaning ‘drum’.\textsuperscript{124} The word for drum is found as kồng, kong, and tsong throughout the Tai languages of South China and Southeast Asia and the ancestral proto-Tai form for these words has been reconstructed as [∗klɔŋ].\textsuperscript{125} Judging by the correspondence of the initial consonant cluster with other more distantly related Kadai languages, the direction of borrowing seems to have been from proto-Tai into proto-Vietic, rather than the other way around.\textsuperscript{126} Vietnamese scholars have noted a strong proto-Tai influence on the language ancestral to modern Vietnamese. The borrowing of the word for ‘drum’ from proto-Tai into Austroasiatic would seem at first to contradict the direction of the transmission of drum culture proposed by Yoshikai, if it were not for the fact that there is evidence also of a strong proto-Tai influence on the vocabulary of proto-Vietnamese,\textsuperscript{127} and shared vocabulary relating to the production of rice.\textsuperscript{128} No matter what the direction of these borrowings may have been, they indicate at least that speakers of proto-Tai and proto-Vietic lived in close proximity to each other and that there was a long-standing tradition of mixture and borrowing amongst these language families in the two rivers region.

The foregoing should be reason enough to raise suspicion whenever bronze drums are claimed as the distinctive cultural property of any modern nation-state, linguistic or ethnic group. They are a common feature of material cultures of many different peoples in far-flung areas throughout mainland and island Southeast Asia and have a similar cultural significance throughout the region to widely different peoples as symbols of authority, wealth, and power. Salemink has noted that wealth in upland

\textsuperscript{123} This initial is still pronounced kl- in some Vietnamese and Muông dialects such as in the Thạch Bì Muông klong (Lê ibid., p.109).


\textsuperscript{125} Proto-Tai reconstructions are based on Li Fang-kuei, A Handbook of Comparative Tai. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1977. p 221-6 for the initial cluster *kl-.


\textsuperscript{128} Pham, Văn hóa Việt Nam, pp. 183-228.
Southeast Asia was connected to the possession of certain ritual objects, which could only be acquired through long-distance trade, and the bronze drums, although of local manufacture, seem to fulfill a similar function.129 The many Chou-style ting tripods of local manufacture found in graves pre-dating the Han in the Pearl River drainage area show that the display of one’s status through ownership of such objects was a cultural trait that long pre-dated the drum culture in the Two Rivers Region.130 The popularity of bronze drums for the Li and Lao who were lucky enough to live in areas rich in copper resources, was most likely a continuation of the same fashion, only the objects of desire was no longer modelled on ritual objects from the distant north, but those in possession of the neighbouring (and possibly related) ruling classes of the Red River Plain. Đồng Sơn drum production survived Ma Yuan’s large-scale destruction of the indigenous ruling class. A bronze drum and earthenware casting mould have been found in the remains of Luy Lâu 庫樓 citadel near Lũng Khê in Bắc Ninh Province, a site dating from the second to sixth centuries.131 But by the end of the third century CE, a new ruling class had developed in the Red River Plain which was content with the legitimacy conferred by imperial recognition of their position as administrators, and judging by the lack of later drum finds and written records of drum use central Red River Plain, they had probably begun to see bronze drum ownership as the barbaric custom of hill dwellers.132 Among the Li and Lao, the drum culture went on to flourish as an independent tradition of its own.

The geographical spread and number of drum finds between the Rivers sheds light on many aspects of Li and Lao society, their distribution, their complexity, and their relationship with the people of the Southern Dynasties. The extent of lands under control of the Li and Lao chieftains can be ascertained from combining the areas where there were no Chinese counties or commanderies with those areas where large numbers

129 Salemink, Lowlander-Highlander relations.
132 It is interesting to note that the social significance of the drums for the people of the Red River Delta was not discovered by the Vietnamese until the twentieth century. The oldest Đại Việt texts such as the Lăng nan chì kua li erh chuan (Vietnamese Lĩnh Nam Chích Quốc liệt truyện 嶺南諸國列傳) and Yích shih lièh (Vietnamese Việt Sĩ Liệu) do not even mention them, let alone associate them with the legendary past of the pre-Han period.
of bronze drums have been found. The number of drums found there suggests there was a high level of wealth and complex social organisation. Nguyen Duy Hinh estimated that depending on the quality of copper ore, the amount required to make a single 72 kilogram drum was could range from 1000-7000 kg. However, one person was probably only capable of extracting 10-20 kilograms of ore in a single day. The Heger type II drums are often twice the size of their Heger I counterparts, and the casting of a single Heger II drum would therefore require double the labour. The social organization of the Li and Lao chieftains must have been sufficiently complex to support such a labour force as well, not to mention the artisans who created the drums. The growth and popularity of the culture during the Six Dynasties in an area that had been surrounded for centuries by commanderies and counties show that the drum-making tradition was not adversely affected by contact with the Chinese Empires. The social prestige given by drum ownership pulled in the opposite direction from the world of bureaucratic administration and book-learning associated with the Sinitic empires. Appealing to local sensibilities and local tastes, drums offered alternative symbols of authority to the administrative titles bestowed by the Chinese Empires. By their popularity from the Han to the Sui in both the copper-producing heartland as well as in the east closer to Canton where copper was more difficult to obtain, I argue that the non-Sinitic people on the periphery of the Li-Lao country were not looking towards cities like Canton or populations of Sinitic speakers for their models of social organisation, but gravitating instead to the drum-owning chiefs of the Li-Lao heartland.

Methodology and Sources
Since the Li and Lao have left no written records of their own, to make some sense of their history one must rely primarily on fragmentary descriptions recorded in old Chinese texts. These descriptions are problematic as the most detailed are still little more than outside observations of peoples peripheral and remote to the tradition that produced the written word. The writers of Chinese texts showed little interest in the internal political machinations of barbarians and as far as is known, did not attempt to

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investigate the history of the Li and Lao people, and recorded only events of contemporary significance. Although there are sufficient records in Chinese to arrange into a chronology for an article or chapter on the Li and Lao drum makers, studies limited to texts cannot help but be one-dimensional. To gain a fuller and more nuanced picture of the Li and Lao it is important to compare and analyse these Chinese texts with materials from outside the Chinese literary tradition. These include the results of research from different disciplines, such as archaeology, historical linguistics, and historical anthropology.

Hsü Sung-shih was the first Chinese writer to apply this combined approach to the study of the Two Rivers region by using textual criticism based on historical linguistics and archaeology. The lack of textual materials relating to the Red River Plain and the abundance of archaeological finds have meant that Vietnamese historians have long been aware of the value of these other disciplines, with the addition of collected folklore, to provide historical answers or as Trần Quốc Vương put it, to put ‘flesh’ on the mute archaeological ‘bones’. Such an approach resulted in the highly detailed (and highly imaginative) collection Hùng Vương Đặng Nước (The Foundation of the Country by the Hung Kings), and has also become a popular approach in the study of ‘Chuang’ history. The only problem is that those who have used such approaches have the unfortunate tendency towards anachronism, not only in their use of names, but also in the use of texts that were written centuries (sometimes millennia) after the period in question, quoting their contents as if they were primary sources. Historical works from Đại Việt and Ming times are particularly suspect when they deal with earlier periods because their writers were on the lookout for evidence in the distant past to explain their contemporary political situations.

136 It forms the basis, for instance, of Chêng and T’ân’s Chuang tsu li shih wen hua and much of the first volume of Chang Shêng-chên’s Chuang tsu t’ung shih.
137 Researching origin myths of medieval Europe Susan Reynolds has argued that this was not so much a deliberately deceptive process for the justification of the political ideology of the present, but more the result of a scientific search for explanation about how the present came to pass, based on the writers’ assumption that it was natural that a political or linguistic unit would have a single ancestor. See Susan Reynolds, ‘Medieval Origins Genlium and the Community of the Realm’. History, 1983 vol. 68 no.224, pp. 375-90.
In my use of primary sources I try as much as possible to follow the practice of Schafer who used contemporary sources exclusively 'in order to avoid the anachronisms which could make the characterisation of a particular era ridiculous'. Aside from the standard dynastic histories, the written sources I have used for this thesis are the 'lost books', the contents of which survive only in fragmentary form (sometimes only as a single line) in the encyclopaedias compiled during the T’ang and Sung dynasties. The only exceptions I have made to this rule are for materials that deal with distributions or descriptions of natural resources or wildlife, or linguistic material that has been transmitted unconsciously, since it was unlikely that any of these were employed for political purposes.

General Argument and Overview of Remaining Chapters
Drums were the symbols of local chiefly authority between the Two Rivers, and the number of those cast during the four centuries leading up to the foundation of the T’ang Empire in the seventh century is material evidence for the power of local leaders and the lack of effective control the Southern Dynasties had over the countryside away from the coast and the main river systems. The timing of the drum-casting tradition is particularly significant: it did not begin until at least two centuries after the supposed conquest of the entire region of southern China by the Han Empire in 111 BCE. The heartland of drum production lay directly between the two largest Chinese cities in the region, and appears to have grown and flourished even when surrounded on all sides by smaller commandery centres such as Yü-lin, Ho-p’u, Ts’ang-wu, and Kao-liang. From written records it is possible to see that during this period Li and Lao political culture underwent a significant change from societies ruled by chiefs based on small communities known as tung to the large and powerful political configurations (namely the Ning, Fêng, and Ch’ên clans) that ruled over many tung and dominated the political life of the lands between the Two Rivers from the early sixth century until the middle of the seventh century. The process that led to this situation was a combination of trade relationships advantageous to the Li and Lao, coupled with Chinese administrative practices and the military weakness of the Southern Dynasties. The Li and Lao occupied

118 Schafer, *Vermilion Bird* p.2.
lands rich in natural resources and close to Chinese cities, but were a military match for the Southern Dynasties, who were not capable of taking these lands by force or collecting the resources through taxation. The Chinese were forced to constantly negotiate with the Li and Lao chieftains for what they desired, and this served only to make the Li and Lao chieftains even more powerful.

The story of the growth of the Li-Lao chiefdoms shows that geographical proximity to Chinese centres, years of Chinese military campaigns, and the longstanding Chinese practice of bestowing titles on local rulers did not lead the Li and Lao automatically to be absorbed into the imperial administrative system or to fully adopt Chinese social and political customs. On the contrary, for most of the four centuries leading up to the T'ang, Li and Lao contact with the Chinese empires actively encouraged the growth of their own political structures and their control over their own people. The final result was that even the powerful Empire of the T'ang was unable to rule the Li and Lao directly and was forced for the first few decades to appoint clan rulers as administrators before consolidating sufficient power in the region to replace these with appointees from the court.

The second chapter sets the scene for the rest of the thesis with a description of the larger geographical context of the Li and Lao societies. The first part is a survey of the two urban centres that lay to their east and west near the mouths of the Two Rivers, their hinterlands, the communication routes between them and other urban centres of the Southern Dynasties, and what textual and archaeological sources can tell us about post-Han changes in demography, economy and political structures. The second part is devoted to the lands between the Two Rivers and how these evaded direct Chinese rule even though it was firmly imposed on the people of many of the districts that surrounded them.

The third chapter is a reminder about difficulties involved in accepting Chinese names for others at face value. Here I address the varied and changing meanings of the various names used for the people who lived between the Two Rivers in Chinese texts, especially the region-specific terms Li, Lao and Wu-hu. I argue that the ultimate etymology of these names, although probably derived from native terms, has very little to do with the way such names were later applied by Chinese writers. I also argue that rather than being the result of careful classification based on linguistic affiliation or
cultural traits it is far more likely that the use of names was based on the geographical habitat, economic activities, and mode of government of the people they referred to, as well as older Chinese literary traditions of how to refer to those who were considered barbaric. It is for this reason that it is improbable that Li and Lao actually corresponded to any coherent groupings of people as has been often supposed. Once the underlying reasons for the use of names in Chinese texts are better understood, it becomes easier to understand why there are so many discrepancies in their use.

The fourth chapter concentrates on trends of political and social change in the Li and Lao governmental systems, beginning with the political structures of the Li and Lao, moving on to how they altered through prolonged contact with the administrative systems of the various Chinese empires from the Han onwards and finally to how they came to resemble those of the Chinese until they were almost indistinguishable from one another. Change amongst the Li and Lao was only part of the story, however. At the same time that Li and Lao chieftains were taking on some of the characteristics of Chinese-style governors, Chinese modes of government were changing, relying increasingly on hereditary rule over smaller areas of the countryside, with the result that it eventually became difficult to distinguish hereditary governors from hereditary chieftains. This was partly a result of the growth of territory under the control of individual Li-Lao chieftains, and partly a result of the tendency among the Chinese towards smaller administrative units controlled by hereditary dynasties of localised families.

The fifth chapter details the attempts of the Southern Dynasties to make inroads into the lands between the rivers by force, and the changes in Li and Lao military technology that made this more difficult as the Southern Dynasties grew ever weaker and the Li and Lao became capable of causing problems for the outposts of the Chinese state.

The sixth chapter discusses the Li and Lao trade with the Chinese empires and its effects on the growth of Li-Lao political structures. I pay particular attention to the advantageous position of the Li and Lao through their control of territories where mineral resources (gold and silver) and luxury items sought-after by the Chinese (such as ivory and kingfisher feathers) were abundant, and propose that the reason for growth of large and influential Li-Lao polities was due to competition for the monopoly of
trade in such resources. I also argue that through this trade, the Chinese acquired knowledge of the uses of certain plants and animals between the Two Rivers, and I give a few examples of cultural borrowings that moved in a south-to-north direction.

The seventh and final chapter discusses the larger Li-Lao-based political structures that had developed between the Two Rivers by the late sixth and early seventh centuries. I have singled out three of the most well-known ruling families between the Two Rivers as examples of a type who had an ambiguous status in Chinese texts, constantly shifting between ‘barbarian’ and ‘human’, chieftain and governor. This final chapter in the story of the Li and Lao ends with the destruction of their leaders’ monopoly on power between the Two Rivers and the final disappearance of the Li-Lao chieftains.
Chapter Two: The Two Rivers and the Lands Between

Near the entrance of the two great rivers to the sea lay two great metropolitan centres, known by various names that correspond to modern Canton and Hanoi. The Sui shu compiled in the 630s described them in the following manner:

In the twenty or more commanderries south of the passes the ground is mostly damp, there are many miasmas and people die at a very young age. Nan-hai and Chiao-chih are the two great cities and they are both situated close to the sea. There is an abundance of rhinoceros, elephants, tortoiseshell, pearls, and strange and precious things. That is why so many merchants go there to become wealthy.¹

From the description of Nan-hai (Canton) and Chiao-chih (Hanoi area) as ‘great cities’ it appears that that the author still considered both to be of considerable commercial importance. Nevertheless, by the seventh century Chiao-chih was no longer the important centre it had been under earlier empires. At the time this text was written it had only recently been re-conquered after a century of independent rule, and under the T'ang it was soon given the special status of protectorate of the Pacified South (An nam tu hu fu 安南督護府) under a protector general (tu hu 督護) ‘a military duty assignment to preside over submitted alien peoples’.² This was the first time that a special administrative status had been given specifically to the area that would eventually become Vietnam. Looking back to Han times the Chiao-chih on the Red River Plain was actually the centre of Han rule in the Two Rivers region. After the conquest of the kingdom of Nan Yüeh by the Han Empire in 111 BCE, the entire Two Rivers region was ruled under a single large unit that also went by the name of Chiao-chih (and later Chiao-chou). For a short period of five years after the foundation of this province (111-106 BCE) it was ruled from the citadel of Ly Lâu 廩樓 in the Red River Plain to the

¹ SuS 31: 14b.
north-east of modern Hanoi. This was presumably to keep it distant from the remnants of loyalists to the Nan Yüeh kingdom in its old capital of P’an-yü 番禺 (Canton), but it also indicates that there was little risk of local resistance to Han rule in the Red River Plain at this time. The administrative centre of this Chiao-chou was then moved to Kuang-hsin 廣信 in 106 BCE, this was conveniently located near the connection provided to the Han capital at Lo-yang through the Ling-ch’ü 靈渠 or ‘Magic Trench’ canal dug on the orders of the First Emperor of the Ch’in in 214 BCE to provide a route for food supplies for his armies for the conquest of the lands to the south. Kuang-hsin was also well connected to P’an-yü downriver and the overland route to Chiao-chih. In 226 CE the large province named Chiao-chou was divided into two smaller provinces named Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou, these based around modern Hanoi and Canton respectively. The division was reinstated in 264 based on two distinct spheres of influence. The smaller province of Chiao-chou was administered from Lung-pien 龍編 near to modern Hanoi which lay at the heart of a network of subordinate centres of population concentrated around the mouths of minor river systems on the coast stretching between modern central Vietnam northwards along the coast to the east of the Lei-chou 雷州 Peninsula. The province of Kuang-chou controlled population centres along the tributaries of the Pearl River system and the smaller rivers east of the Lei-chou Peninsula that drained into the South Sea. The spheres of influence of these two provinces were not significantly altered until the foundation of Yüeh-chhou in 474 which removed the Ho-p’u area from the jurisdiction of Chiao-chou.

By the seventh century the status of Chiao-chih as a provincial centre of the Chinese empires had markedly diminished. Under the Han it had been the main administrative centre of the whole Two Rivers region, but by T’ang times it was little more than a frontier region with a protector-general appointed to ensure its security. The Kuang-chou area on the other hand, once the centre of an independent Nan Yüeh kingdom, had become a well-integrated part of the Sui and T’ang Empires. Many of the

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3 The early history is confusing. At some time between 226 and 264 the division between Kuang-chou and Chiao-chou had been abandoned. For details, see Loewe ‘Guangzhou: Evidence of the Standard Histories’, p. 60.
4 The main administrative centres (Chiu-chên and Chiu-tê) lay on the Lei River and the Chiu-tê chiu (The upper reaches of most of the rivers that flow into the Chiao-chih Sea lay beyond imperial administration.
5 Since this work deals with the period after the foundation of Kuang-chou, from here onward the term Chiao-chou (unless stated otherwise) will be used only in reference to the smaller, post-264 province, and Chiao-chih only to the commandery in the Red River Plain.
changes that led to this occurred during the two hundred years over which these two urban centres controlled the two provinces of Chiao and Kuang. The following section compares the two provinces from their foundation to the end of the fifth century when Yüeh-chou was founded.

Chiao-chou

The Chiao-chih area centred on Lung-pien remained the administrative centre of the Red River Plain until the beginning of the Ta-yeh period of the Sui (605-617).\(^5\) It is highly probable that sea connections between this centre and its hinterland were more important than land connections. The communications between the centre and its hinterlands was probably by sea rather than by land. T’ao Huang 隋煬, regional inspector of Chiao-chou appointed in 269, who ruled in the last decades of the third century, noted that the southern commanderies of Chiao were ‘Over a thousand \(li\) (approximately three hundred kilometres) distant by sea’.\(^7\) Counties of the subordinate commanderies of Chiu-tê, Chiu-chên, and Ho-p’u were clustered around commandery centres a short distance from the sea along river courses. The calculations of distances from the provincial centre at Chiao-chih in the Sung shu were also by water rather than land.\(^8\)

During Han and Wu times, trade was still carried out by ships that stayed close to the coast. Those that came from the south would pass from the centres of Jih-nan and Chiu-chên commanderies, and then to Chiao-chih or to Ho-p’u. So says the entry in the geographical treatise in the Chiu T’ang shu: ‘All of the countries in the sea to its south, mostly to the south and south-east of Chiao-chou have sent tribute from the time of Emperor Wu of the Han, and have had to go by way of Chiao-Chih’.\(^9\) The southern commanderies of Chiao-chou were originally the first part of the Han and Wu Empires to receive the maritime trade from the lands to the south and west, as ships would hug the coast of the mainland northward on their way to the Red River Plain and Ho-p’u.

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\(^5\) SuS 31: 12b.
\(^7\) CS 57: 5b.
\(^8\) SS 37: 39a-43b.
\(^9\) CTS 41: 43a. The name Chiao-chih changed meaning several times before becoming restricted to the commandery on the Red River Plain. In texts from the Han Chiao-chih can mean either the Commandery of Chiao-chih or the larger area including later Kuang-chou and Chiao-chou. Chiao-chou can mean the same. After the foundation of Kuang-chou this is no longer a problem.
Ships that continued on to P’an-yü probably used the sea route through the Ch’iüng-chou strait between Hainan Island and Hsü-wén on the southern tip of the Léi-chou Peninsula, but this was a dangerous route to navigate and the direction of wind and currents varied depending on the time of the year.\textsuperscript{10} By the end of the third century this shipping route had changed; improvements in ship-building technology had made it possible to build larger craft that were capable of sailing over the open sea directly from Kuang-chou to lands far to the south of Chiao-chih. No longer dependent on staying close to the coast, they began to bypass the Gulf of Tongking altogether.\textsuperscript{11} This had several effects on Chiao-chou. It was no longer of great strategic importance as the gateway for commerce if it could be bypassed from the south. The sea ports at Hsü-wén and Ho-p’u lost their economic importance as fewer ships passed through them on their way to Kuang-chou. Chiao-chou slowly ceased to be the gateway to the north for the trade from Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{12} It did however retain an economic significance of its own as a producer of luxury goods, and was still considered to be on a par with Nan-hai in this regard, as can be seen from the description in the Sui shu. The status of Chiao-chou as a trade centre was further eroded by the expansion of Lin-i in the south, which occupied the southernmost commandery of Jih-nan from 340 onwards as well as parts of Chiu-chên. Wang Gungwu also notes warfare with Lin-i in the mid-fourth century as a reason for decline of Chiao-chou as a centre of trade.\textsuperscript{13} An additional reason for loss of trade revenue in the province of Chiao-chou was that its subordinate commandery Jih-nan had been first port of call for traders of luxury goods who came from places as far afield as Ta-ch’in (The Eastern Roman Empire), and the administrators of the province of Chiao-chou and Jih-nan Commandery had reportedly been able to force twenty to thirty percent of the value of the goods traded there into their own pockets.\textsuperscript{14} Once the Jih-nan area was lost to Lin-i, it no longer provided any trade revenue for


\textsuperscript{12} Nišimura Masanari, ‘Settlement Patterns on the Red River Plain from the Late Prehistoric Period to the Tenth Century AD’. Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association Bulletin 25 (Taipei Papers Volume Three). 2007, p. 106.


\textsuperscript{14} CS 97: 9b.
Chiao-chou. It is interesting that in line with this shift in trade patterns, around this time the stories of corrupt officials also begin a north-eastward migration towards the Canton area.

*Chiao-chou’s Overland Connections with the North*

The Red River connected Chiao-chou with the province of Ning-chou (capital at modern Kunming) in the north-west. Ma Yuan was supposed to have travelled up the river from Mi-ling to Hsing-ku Commandery passing through a kingdom called Chin-sang, 進桑 later known as Chin-ch‘êng County. This county had a customs gate (*kuan 關*) on the river, which also suggests it was an important trade route and that Chin-sang lay somewhere near to modern Lào Cai. A modern source states that junks could navigate the Red River only up to around the modern Sino-Vietnamese border, and the customs gate was probably situated at the point where junks would have to offload their goods for land transport. This was the route by which the first prefect to Chiao-chou appointed by the Chin, Yang Chi 楊稷, arrived with his army from Shu 蜀 (modern Szechwan) around 266-268. Other records from the pre-T’ang period also indicate its continued use as a communication route.

Other than the sea there was no great water highway connecting Chiao-chou with other parts of the Empire, and overland traffic had to pass over the watershed between rivers that flowed north and west into the Yü River, and those that flowed south into the Red River or the Gulf of Tongking. This watershed was not only an important geographical division; it also corresponded more or less to the boundary of the administrative division between Kuang-chou and Chiao-chou during the three

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15 SCC ch.37 p. 1154
16 Defined by Loewe, ‘Guangzhou, Evidence of the Standard Histories’, pp. 66-7, as ‘a point of control where incoming and outgoing travellers and goods could be checked’.
17 For the location of Chin-sang, see Fang Kuo-yü 方國瑜, *Chung kuo hsi nan li shih ti li kao shih* 中國西南歷史地理考釋. Taipei: T’ai wan shuang wu yin shu kuan, 1987, pp.79-80
18 An early twentieth century geography of China describes it thus: ‘Throughout nearly the whole of Yunnan it is but a torrent, running in deep gorges and intersected with L. Richards, *Comprehensive Geography of the Chinese Empire and Dependencies*, translated into English, revised, and enlarged by M. Kenmelly. 1908, Shanghai: T’usewei Press, p. 179
19 CS 57: 4b.
20 In particular the attention paid to the description of its tributaries in SCC ch. 37 pp.1152-1159. T’ ao Huang noted that land and water routes from Hsing-ku in Ning-chou were both passable from Chiao-chou at a distance of 1600 li (CS 57: 6a). TCTC ch. 81 p. 2575 has a similar text with the additional detail ‘barbarians occupy the upper river’.
centuries from the creation of Kuang-chou in the third century to the foundation of the province of Yüeh-chou in the fifth.

Two routes of overland communication between the Red River Plain and the lands to its north-east are detailed in the *Chu p’u*, a manual of bamboo species written by a certain Tai K’ai-chih 戴凱之 supposedly a Chin (265-420) author.²¹ He himself claimed to have travelled to Chiao-chou and noted that there were two passes at Ning-p’u 寧浦 and Lin-chang 臨漳 commanderies to the south-west of Kuang-chou that gave access to Chiao-chou.²² The *Hou Han shu* does not record Ma Yüan’s expedition of 40 CE to subdue the Chêng (Trung) 從 Sisters as having passed over land, his biography merely stating that his army arrived at Ho-p’u and cut a road overland along the coast from there.²³ The clues to his use of the overland route are found elsewhere. There are references to him fixing the roads and bridges and opening blocked valleys and leading soldiers from Ch’ang-sha, Kui-yang, Ling-ling and Ts’ang-wu.²⁴ From this last area in particular an overland expedition to Ho-p’u would be more likely than doubling back to make a naval transport from Nan-hai. Tai K’ai-chih notes that some attribute the construction of these passes to Chiao T’o the king of Nan Yüeh and others to Ma Yüan.

The most celebrated land route to Chiao-chou was that through the ‘Ghost Gate Pass’ (*Kui mên kuan* 鬼門關) this is almost certainly the Lin-chang pass referred to by Tai K’ai-chih. This route followed the tributary of the Yü River now known as the Pei-liu 北流 to its source south-westwards from Ts’ang-wu, and then from the source of what is now called the Nan-liu 南流 (the name Lien River *Lien chiang* 廉江 was also used) down to Lin-chang commandery and then finally to Ho-p’u. This was noted as the main route to the Red River Plain in Chin times in a tenth-century geography²⁵ and remained an important local trade route even into modern times.²⁶ The tradition of Ma Yüan using this route to get to the Red River Plain is not made explicit in any work.

²¹ There is a problem with the dating of this work as it mentions Lin-chang Commandery, not founded until Yüeh-chou in 471. The names of administrative units seem to suggest a date in the late fifth century.
²² CP 2a-b.
²³ HHS 24: 12a.
²⁴ HHS 86: 10a.
²⁵ TPHYC 167: 3b. ‘All traffic going to Chiao-chih in the time of the Chin would pass through this gate’
²⁶ ‘Another but less important tributary, the Yung Kiang [Peilu River] which joins the Si Kiang above Wu-chou Fu, establishes easy connection with Pakhui. Goods coming by the Lien Kiang, as far as Fomien Foh-wei-k’u 福偉墟 to the S.W. of Yuhlin Chow are transported thence upon the backs of carriers to the Yung Kiang, which is navigable from Peilu Hsien and beyond’ Richards, *Comprehensive Geography*, p. 198.
prior to the Chiu T’ang shu, but from this record at least it appears that the road was already known to be an ancient route by T’ang times.²⁷ The road was said to be ‘first opened’ by the surrender of the Ning family who lived to the west of Ho-p’u in 622 to the T’ang general Li Ching 李靖 which suggests that it had been inaccessible for many years.²⁸ However, it is unclear whether travellers departed from Ho-p’u to Chiao-chou by sea or followed a route along the coast instead.²⁹ The very least that can be inferred from the frequent mentions of Ho-p’u on the route to Chiao-chih is that the most important and most frequently-travelled land route was the Ghost Gate Pass route.

Tai K’ai-chih’s Ning-p’u Pass probably followed the Ch’in River 欽江 down to the Gulf of Tongking. The headwaters of this river are accessible across fairly open country from the south bank of the Yü River near modern Hêng county 橫縣. The Ch’in River flows south and enters the sea at Ch’in-chou. Juan Fang 阮放 was appointed as inspector of Chiao-chou in the sixth month of 323 and ambushed and killed the general Kao Pao 高寶 at Ning-p’u on his way to take up office.³⁰ The fact that there was no recorded administrative outpost at the mouth of the Ch’in river until the foundation of Sung-shou 宋壽 Commandery in the late fifth century, suggest that this route to Chiao-chih was not as important as the Ghost Gate Pass Route which connected the larger and long-settled commandery centres at of Ho-p’u and Kuang-hsin.³¹

The route overland further west from Ning-p’u along the Left-Hand River (Ts’o Chiang), but known at that time as the Chin-nan 斤南 or Chin River (Chin chiang 斤江) through the present-day district of Lang Son seems to have been little used as a transport route during the Six Dynasties. Noting the Han outposts along the Left-hand River, Bielenstein argued that Han settlement of the Red River Plain went along this route during the Han.³² These two outposts were at locations called Lin-ch’ên 露廉 and

²⁷ CTS 41: 40a notes that all the traffic to Chiao-chih in ancient times passed through this Ghost Gate Pass route.
²⁸ TCTC ch. 190 p. 5949.
²⁹ For instance, in 410 the Chin Dynasty rebel Lu Hsün 露續 came from Ho-p’u to attack Chiao-chou, (CS 92: 5a) but how he reached there was unrecorded.
³⁰ CS 49; 5b.; TCTC ch. 92 p. 2912 provides the date.
³¹ NGS 14: 25b notes that Sung-shou was founded by being detached from Yüeh-chou in 480. This was already the second year of the Southern Chi’ dynasty, but it is extremely unlikely that the Chi’i would found a commandery with a name meaning ‘longevity of Sung’ and the commandery was probably founded in the last years of the Liu-Sung (420-479).
Yung-chi, the second was close to the modern Sino-Vietnamese border where there was a customs gate (kuan), indicating that the river was used as a trade route. The first was abandoned in 76 CE; the fate of the second is unclear. The Sui General Liu Fang 劉方 was credited with opening up the Left-hand River route to Chiao-chih over five centuries later. In 637 the local leader Ning Shih-ching 南師京 followed Liu Fang's road all the way to Chiao-chih whilst ‘opening up’ (k'ai-t'o 開拓) the lands of the Yi and Lao to found the new province of Jang-chou 濮州.\(^{33}\) Although Li Tao-yüan noted that the source of the river was in Lung-pien County in Chiao-chih\(^{34}\) the lack of other records about it and the absence of administrative units along it suggests that this route, while still known, was of minor importance. No new administrative unit was established along the river until T'ang times.\(^{35}\)

Overall, the routes from the Red River Plain to the north-east were few in number and it was easy to block them off if one wished to cut the Red River Plain off from the rest of the empire. This happened in 380 when Li Hsün, 李遜 governor of Chiu-chên instructed his two sons to ‘cut off and block the fords and narrow passes on the water and land routes’ to prevent the arrival of a new governor.\(^{36}\)

### Change in Population Registration and Migration

The Red River Plain and the two commanderies further south comprised particularly good agricultural land and all of them supported large populations. In the Han census of 2 CE, Chiao-chih commandery boasted a higher population than all other commanderies in the Chiao-chih circuit combined.\(^{37}\)

Migration from the north during Han times is also attested by the number of Han-style brick tombs (over 120) found in the Red River Plain and the low hill country.

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34 SCC ch. 40 p. 1269.
35 T'ao-yüan, A Chinese historical atlas (T'an Ch'i-hsiang 譚其驊 ed. Chung kuo li shih ti t' u chi 中國歷史地理集. 8 vols. Peking: Chung kuo ti t' u ch'u pan shè. 1982-87, vol. 4 plate 31) notes a county with the name of Chiu-chên 甕城 to the south-west of modern Nanning in a map of the Two rivers region under the Southern Ch'i (479-501). The name suggests that it was founded some time during the Chin but was mentioned in the geographies of the Ch'i and the Sung, but it had disappeared by the Sui. I have been unable to find any record of it in this location.
36 SS 92: 4a.
37 HS 28a: 10a-11b. The numbers are 746,237 individuals for Chiao-chih Commandery compared to a total of 626,053 in the six other commanderies in the circuit.
to its south-west which were either built by migrants or by locals influenced by the material culture of the migrant population, either way confirming the influence of migrant material culture on the people of the area. It is also significant that no bronze drums have been found in any of these tombs, which, if they are the tombs of locals, indicates a switch from the old cultural practices in a relatively short period of time. In this period even the areas remote from the main administrative centre at Chiao-chih such as Chiu-chên and Jih-nan commanderies were home to communities of migrants from the north, and at this time many must have come in search of trade opportunities. A sojourner down the coast in the later half of the fourth century Yü I-ch’i 俞益期 sent a letter to his friend Han K’ang-po 韓康伯 giving an account of people whom he called Ma-liu 马流, a group of about two hundred households who lived to the north of Lin-i and all had the surname Ma 马 which they shared with the general Ma Yüan. They were said to have been the descendents of ten families of soldiers who had come with Ma Yüan three hundred years previously and their language and eating habits were said to be the same as other ‘Hua’ people. Yü I-ch’i’s record does contain some less credible elements but recent excavations at Trà Kiệu near Hội An in central Vietnam, show clearly that there were people who made Han-style roof tiles and pottery, and owned seals written in Chinese characters living far down the coast of what is now Vietnam. So even though the origins of the Ma-liu may have been exaggerated, it is clear that there were settled communities of northerners living very far to the south of the Red River Plain who had been there for centuries. During the rule of Shih Hsieh 士燮 in the last two decades of the second century Chiao-chih was a popular place of refuge; it was reported that ‘scholars fled there in their hundreds’.

39 SCC ch. 36 p. 1146, this is the one occurrence in a an early mediaeval text I have found of a term that is anywhere close to the modern term ‘Chinese’.
40 For instance he states that the bronze pillars planted by Ma Yüan were once beside the settlement of the Ma-liu but that they had since sunk beneath the sea, and that there were originally only ten families of soldiers but they had married only amongst themselves to increase their number to two hundred families.
42 SKC 49: 96.
The census contained in the *Chin shu* has been identified as an inventory of taxable households made around 280.\(^{43}\) The next population census to have been preserved dates to in the mid-fifth century, at the height of power of the Liu-Sung Empire, probably in 464.\(^{44}\) Bielenstein’s opinion upon researching the contents of the Chin census was that its results reflected the fact that ‘the district officials had control only over the areas in the immediate vicinity of their residential towns, or that they did not care to carry out a correct census’.\(^{45}\) It has also been suggested that the low figures for the Chin and Sung censuses in the Red River area may have had something to do with the local administrators retaining for themselves the tax revenue they were employed to collect for themselves, this would have encouraged them to underestimate the population in the areas under their control.\(^{46}\) At the time of the Chin census, Chiao-chou still counted more taxable households than any other commandery in Kuang or Chiao.\(^{47}\) This altered sharply in the almost two centuries between the Chin census and the Liu-Sung census of 464.\(^{48}\) The figures for Chiao-chih commandery fell by over half, and the commanderies upriver (Hsin-chang and Wu-p’ing) had only a fifth of their Chin total.\(^{49}\) The decline in registered population between the Chin and Sung censuses goes hand-in-hand with a downturn in migration from the north into Chiao-chou. In the archaeological record there is a sharp decline in the number of Chinese-style brick tombs after the end of the Han, and the distribution of such tombs becomes restricted to the area around modern Hanoi and Bae Ninh.\(^{50}\) In Ho-p’u there is a similar decline in the construction of brick tombs and in both areas this seems to indicate a decline in

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\(^{44}\) SS 35: 2b.

\(^{45}\) Bielenstein, ‘Census’, p. 145.

\(^{46}\) Katakura, ‘ Chungoku shihaika no betonamu ’, p.33; Lü Shih-p’eng 呂士朋, *Pei shu shih tai ti yieh nan* 北魏時代的越南, Hong Kong: New Asia Research Institute, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1964, p. 97.

\(^{47}\) Hans Bielenstein, (‘Census’, pp 125-30) describes the Chin census as a ‘list of taxable households’ made in the T’ai-k’ang period (280-290) as an inventory of the newly re-unified empire. This was also due to the fact that Shih-hsing was detached from Nan-hai Commandery by this time the combined household count for these two commanderies that made up the territory of the old Nan-hai Commandery was 14,500, but for the old territory of Chiao-chih including the then detached Wu-p’ing and Hsin-ch’ang Commanderies the combined household count was still 20,000.

\(^{48}\) The date is given in SS 35: 2b.

\(^{49}\) The commandery of Hsin-chang was actually absent from the Sung census.

\(^{50}\) Nishimura, ‘Settlement Patterns’, p. 106, notes a decline in numbers of Chinese-style brick tombs blaming it on a shift in trade patterns and cultural change among the Chiao elite which led them to abandon the practice.
settlement from the north, as the construction of brick tombs in the Pearl River drainage area continued well into the Southern Dynasties.51

The Po wu chih, written in the late third century records that ‘There are constantly people who take their families and cross over (the sea) to Chiao-chih’.52 but records of large-scale flight to Chiao-chih after this time are less frequent. The area remained a popular place for migrating northerners after this time because it was a relatively peaceful refuge from the chaos in the north caused by the disintegration of empires, warfare between rival empires, or invasions by nomadic peoples from the north and west. A record from 306 noted a different reason: famine and pestilence had killed tens of thousands of people in Ning-chou and the Wu-ts‘ên barbarians (wu-ts‘ên yi 五苓夷) had become so strong they had defeated the imperial troops on several occasions, resulting in a flight of crowds of officials and commoners from Ning-chou into Chiao.53 During the first few decades of the fifth century Tu Hui-tu 杜慧度 began his career as both assistant magistrate (chu-po 主簿) and protector general of refugees (liu-min tu-hu 流民督護) of Chiao-chou.54 This title occurs only twice in the standard histories, and was borne only by Hui-tu and his son Hung-wên 弘文 to whom he passed the title. Although the origins of the refugees are unknown, there must have been a significant number of them at the time if a special administrative post was required for their supervision. It is likely that these were migrants from the southern commanderies escaping from areas which had suffered raids or been occupied by the armies of Lin-i.55 Upon the death of the inspector of Chiao-chou Liu Mu 劉牧 in the third month of 468, a local named Li Ch‘ang-jên 李長仁 was said to have rebelled and subsequently killed

51 Annette Kieser, ‘Nur Guangdong ist ruhig und friedlich’; Grabkult und Migration während der Sechs Dynastien im heutigen Guangdong. In: Guangdong Archaeology and Early Texts (Zhou-Tang), eds. Shing Müller, Thomas O. Hfllmann, and Puteo Gui. 2004, pp.101-24. Kieser (p.105) also mentioned the possibility that in the area that is now Vietnam a lack of finds may be indicative of the reluctance of Vietnamese archaeologists to pay attention to the archaeology of the period. For an idea of the extreme lack of Vietnamese scholarship on the period, one need only compare the amount of space given to it in the collections of archaeological reports in the annual volumes produced by the Vietnamese Institute of Archaeology (Việt khoa cõ hồ, Nhung Phaii Dien Môi i Khão Có Hồc. Hanoi: Nhà Xuất Bản Khoa Hoc Xã Hoi, 1972-2009). These volumes run to 800 pages or more for each issue, but until recently the millennium between the end of the Đông Sơn culture and the foundation of Đại Việt was passed over in silence.
52 PWC ch.1 p. 11.
53 TCTC ch.86 pp. 2718-9.
54 SS 92; 4b. 6a.
55 Liao Yu-hua, Li shih ti li hsieh, p. 63-4
either a group of refugees from the north or troops who had been under the command of inspector Liu Mu. This also shows that even at this late period, whether there for military purposes or as refugees, there was still a population of new migrants into Chiao from the north.

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15 NCS 58: 15b. refers to those who were punished as ‘troops’ (pu-ch’ü 諸曲). SS 94: 15a. records the same event but refers to them as ‘refugees’ liù-yü 流寓. TCTC ch. 132 p. 4144 provides the date and follows the NCS, naming them ‘troops’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commandery</th>
<th>Number of Households (Chin)280</th>
<th>Number of Households Sung - 464 AD</th>
<th>Percentage of Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nan-hai 南海</td>
<td>9500</td>
<td>Nan-hai 南海 8574</td>
<td>+73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hsin-hui 新會 1739</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tung-kuan 東官 1332</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I-an 義安 1119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T’o-chien 妥建 3764</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(total 16528)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin-ho 臨賀</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>(to Hsiang-chou - renamed Lin-ch’ing 臨慶) 3715</td>
<td>+48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shih-an 始安( Shih-chien 始建)</td>
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<td>(to Hsiang-chou) 3830</td>
<td>-36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shih-hsing 始興( Kuang-hsing 廣興)</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>(to Hsiang-chou) 11756</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Hsin-ning 新寧 2653</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Chin-k’ang 華康 4547</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yung-p’ing 永平 1609</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Ts’ang-wu 蒼梧 6593</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Hai-ch’ang 海昌 1724</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sung-k’ang 宋康 1513</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Sung-hsi 宋熙 2814</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(total 21453)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu-lin 鬱林</td>
<td>6000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuei-lin 桂林</td>
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<td>558</td>
<td>-72.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1429</td>
<td>- 55.3% (inc. Kao-hsing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kao-hsing 高興</td>
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<td>Ho-p'u 合浦</td>
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<td>- 70.7% (inc. Kao-hsing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4233</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Hsin-ch'ang 新昌</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>To Wu-p'ing</td>
<td>- 81.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu-p'ing 武平</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>1490</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiu-chên 九真</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>2328</td>
<td>- 22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiu-tê 九德</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>809</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jih-nan 日南</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>- 33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Changes in Local Leadership*

After Ma Yuan's defeat of the Chêng (Trưng) Sisters, no more large-scale rebellions originated in the Red River Plain, and the area became a fairly well-integrated part of the Han Empire and later the Wu and the Chin. Holmgren argues that the defeat of the Chêng (Trưng) Sisters was the end of an era, which began the "slow but inevitable formation of a new type of Vietnamese elite educated by and working within, the social codes and structures of Chinese society" who aspired to "positions of wealth and influence within the established system." This is certainly how the writers of the Chinese standard histories perceived these people. When they rebelled they were referred to in the terms applied to disobedient officials; even those who initially had no official titles usurped political power by declaring themselves governors, Even those celebrated in later Vietnamese histories as leaders of the Vietnamese such Li Ch'ang-jên and Li Shu-hsien who declared themselves kings and Li Pi who declared himself emperor were following a fairly common practice among disgruntled officials in other parts of the empire.

The emergence of families who held hereditary administrative posts in a single locality for generations was not a peculiarity of the Red River plain; it was common

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throughout the Six Dynasties Period even in areas close to the capital at Chien-k’ang. Where the Red River Plain differs from other areas is that localised families continued to hold power over Chiao-chou during and after the Liu-Sung, when administrators in other areas were usually members of the royal household appointed to the area. The ruling families in the Red River Plain were powerful in their own locality because they were physically isolated from the danger of competing with other factions and families. In other parts of the empire families who supported regional upstarts risked attack and punishment by those acting in the name of loyalty to the emperor. The Red River Plain was fairly rich, self-sufficient in agriculture, and isolated from strong rivals to leadership positions. The end of the Six Dynasties period just before the rise of the Sui was characterised by chaos and disunity throughout the empire, it was a time in which the courts had trouble controlling even areas close to the capital at Chien-k’ang and ruled by members of the royal family. The de facto independence of the Red River Plain in the first half of the sixth century needs to be seen in the light of the general weakness of the Southern Dynasties and the geographical isolation of the region from other parts of the Chinese empires. The causes of this isolation were not merely a result of physical distance; they were also attributable to the activities of the people who lived between Chiao-chih and the neighbouring province of Kuang-chou, but before moving on to the people in between, let us compare Chiao-chou with the province of Kuang-chou.

Kuang-chou

Although the province of Kuang-chou was named after its early administrative centre at Kuang-hsin, its administrative centre was in P’an-yü (modern Canton) at the mouth of the Pearl River. P’an-yü was also the seat of Nan-hai Commandery and the two names Nan-hai and P’an-yü are often used interchangeably, with Nan-hai tending to replace P’an-yü in post-Han usage. The city of P’an-yü was previously the capital of the Nan-Yüeh kingdom, and although there is no known name for the city that pre-dates the Ch’in conquest, from the scale of the constructions related to the Nan Yüeh Kingdom, the palace, shipyards, and sluice gates it is unlikely that the centre of the kingdom was founded on empty ground. From the time of the foundation of the province until the foundation of Kuei-chou 桂州 in 507 Kuang-chou controlled the lands along all the
western tributaries of the Pearl River system, Chinese settlement and administrative expansion in the province moved north east and west along these rivers. The main administrative centres dependent to Kuang were those at the confluences of the major tributaries of the Yü River, the most important of these being the former capital of the Han Province of Chiao-chou at Kuang-hsin at the confluence of the Li and Yü Rivers.\textsuperscript{58} There were also a few larger settlements subordinate to Kuang-chou such as Kao-liang on a stretch of the coast to the south-west as far as the Lei-chou peninsula.

\textit{Comerce}

The change in shipping technology mentioned previously allowed traders from the south to bypass the gulf of Tongking allowed them to sail directly to P’an-yü over the open sea from the south. Six Dynasties records of Nan-hai show it to have been frequented by foreign traders and trading ships. Officials appointed to Kuang often took advantage of this trade for their own personal benefit, and many of the negative judgements about them contained in the official histories are directly related to this. In the early fifth century it was said that was that a single box of the treasures from Kuang-chou could support a family for several generations.\textsuperscript{59} In Ch’i times (497-502) it was recorded that the administrators of Kuang always became very rich and that one could receive thirty millions (in what?) simply by passing through the city gate of Nan-hai as the inspector of Kuang-chou.\textsuperscript{60} The \textit{Liang shu} described the situation as follows:

In Nan-hai there are slaves from Kao-liang and ships arrive there several times a year and foreign merchants come to trade and exchange. In former times the provincial and commandery leaders would go to purchase goods for half price and then sell them again for several times the profit, this was always considered normal.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{58} Others were Yü-lin at the confluence of the Tsang-k’o and T’an Rivers, Chin-hsing at the confluence of the Left- and Right-hand Rivers) and Szü-Hui so named because it lay on the confluence of four rivers.

\textsuperscript{59} This is from a description of Kuang-chou from around the beginning of the fifth century ‘Kuang-chou embraces the mountains and the seas, and rare and unusual things are produced there, one box of them can support several generations, but there are many miasmas and pestilences, and people’s natures are fearful because of these’ from CS 90: 9b.

\textsuperscript{60} NCS 32: 2a.

\textsuperscript{61} LS 33: 2b-3a.
This sort of corruption was so common that governors who did not try to monopolise the trade and its benefits for themselves were considered exceptionally virtuous. It is worth noting here that records of greedy officials growing rich on the trade of luxury goods was as much a feature of Kuang-chou in this period as it had been of the Red River Plain in the earlier period, and that the migration of tales of rampant corruption to the north-west also reflects the change in trade patterns in a similar direction.

*Links with the Capitals of the Southern Dynasties*

The seat of Kuang-chou in Nan-hai Commandery was well connected by land to the capital and other parts of the empire. Tai K'ai-chih noted that the land routes to Kuang-chou were through the commanderies of Nan-k'ang 南康, Shih-an 始安, and Lin-ho 臨賀.62 The importance of these routes is also attested by the inclusion of the last two commanderies in 424 into the province of Hsiang-chou 湘州.63 The capital of Hsiang-chou was at modern Ch'ang-sha on a tributary of the Yangtze even though they were situated on the northern tributaries of the Pearl River system, and the incorporation of these commanderies into Hsiang-chou suggests easy access to them from the provincial capital. The Shih-an pass was the site of the Magic Trench canal. After the shift of the imperial capital from the north at Luo-yang to the north-east at Chien-k'ang, the Shih-an and Lin-ho routes diminished in importance, giving way to the Nan-k'ang route, which was the most direct overland route to the capital. The Nan-k'ang route went from the commandery of Shih-hsing (near to modern Shao-kuan) on a tributary of the Pearl River, through the Ta-yü 大庾 Pass to Nan-k'ang (modern Kan-chou on the Kan River).

Aside from those of T'ai K'ai-chih there are other records of this pass that indicate its regular use as the main route connecting Kuang-chou with the capital. The infamous ‘Spring of Greed’ (t' an ch'üan 貪泉) was said to be located close to this pass. Legend had it that newly-appointed administrators who drank from this spring on their way to take up office in Kuang would forget their morals and become greedy for the riches that

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62 CP 2a-b.
63 SS 37: 21a-23b.
they could gain at their new post. In 410, the rebel Lu Hsün 黨循 organised the transportation of timber across the pass from Nan-k'ang to Shih-hsing to sell there as a ruse to secretly collect materials to build his own fleet of warships, and judging from the description of his journey, Hsiao Mai 蕭勉 almost certainly used this route to return to Chien-k'ang when summoned back from his post as inspector of Kuang-chou during the 530s.

The eastern sea route to the capital from Kuang-chou seems also to have been commonly used. Under the Han the tribute from Chiao-chou had passed along this route to Hou-kuan (Fu-chou) but that so many ships had been lost on this route in storms and rough seas that the roads were fixed and the tribute went overland instead. The importance of the eastern sea route for the Southern Dynasties can be seen from the increase in new administrative units along the coast to the east of the mouth of the Pearl River (Hai-feng, Hai-ning, and Ch'ao-yang) all subordinate to I-an 義安 Commandery founded in 413. Before this under the Western Chin there was no administrative unit on the coast from the mouth of the Pearl River all the way to T'ung-an (modern Ch'ian-chou 泉州 in the south of Fukien). A story about the Lu 陸 family of Ku-su 姑蘇 (present-day Su-chou) shows that even small boats went by sea from Yu-lin Commandery (present-day Kuei-p'ing County) this family had a huge stone by their front gate, said to have been brought back from Yu-lin by their ancestor Lu Chi 陸績 who had been governor of Yu-lin under the Wu, because he had not brought anything back with him the ship was too light and was rocked about by the waves so he had taken this large stone from the riverbank to use as ballast.

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64 CS 90: 9b.
65 TCTC ch. 115 p. 3628 says that wood for a fleet of ships was collected in the mountains of Nan-k'ang and shipped four hundred li across to Shih-hsing.
66 His name sometimes appears as Hsiao Li 黃勳.
67 NS 51: 3b-4a. It is recorded that he was crowded by boats on his departure from Kuang-chou and that he eventually passed through the county of Hsin-chin 新淦 where a local woman presented him with fish and local boys swam out to his boat to welcome him.
68 HHS 33: 20b-21a. Since this record dates from the Han, Chiao-chou probably refers to the larger province that encompassed later Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou.
69 SS 38: 34b.
70 HTS 196: 11b.
Changes in Migration

Like the Red River plain, the Nan-hai and Ts’ang-wu area was also a safe haven for refugees from the north during Han times, as well as a desirable place to live because of its trade economy. Since the term ‘Chiao-chih’ in Han times referred to the entire southern province later split into the two provinces of Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou, it is difficult to tell whether the records of migration to Chiao-chih from the Han period refer to the Red River Plain or to the Pearl River drainage area that later became the territory of Kuang-chou. As in the Red River Plain, large numbers of Han-style brick tombs have been found in the Pearl River drainage area, and they are concentrated along the major waterways that connected Kuang-chou to the north, along the main inland river courses that meet at Canton, and significantly, in the modern city of Canton itself, where over 800 tombs had been excavated by the mid 1990s.\(^{71}\) Despite this large number of Han tombs compared those found in Vietnam, the registered populations of the Pearl River drainage area under the Han were only a fifth of those in the Red River plain. In the Chin census of 280 the number of registered households of the two commanderies of Nan-hai and Ts’ang-wu still did not significantly outweigh that of Chiao-chih Commandery. The events of the fourth century altered this markedly. The most important change came with the last major southward shift of northern populations into the Kuang-chou area. The period of most intense migration from the north shifts was in the fourth century from the Yung-chia 永嘉 period (307-313) onwards. Shortly after this the Chin Empire lost the lands north of the Yangtze. From this time until the foundation of the Empire of the Wei in 386, northern refugees streamed into what was left of the Chin Empire to escape the warfare and chaos that had engulfed their homelands.\(^{72}\)


that was made into a county (I County) in 405.\textsuperscript{73} It also records another encampment in the far south-west nearer to Ho-p’u. Chiao-i 招義 County was founded from it in 405 but subsequently abandoned.\textsuperscript{74} The origin of these refugees is unfortunately unclear, but the word ‘camp’ suggests that these were especially organised by the imperial administration as settlements, and their subsequent raising to county status suggests that these were organized projects of colonisation. A record from the early decades of the fifth century shows that there was a community of refugees or sojourners in Kuang-chou, noting that a certain Hsü Tao-ch’i 徐道期 of Tung-hai 東海 (the political heartland of the Eastern Chin Empire) took refuge in Kuang-chou but was ridiculed for his ungentlemanly conduct by those who had sojourned there for a long time.\textsuperscript{75}

Migration was not completely a north-to-south process, a significant number of people from Chiao-chou also sought refuge close to Canton. A special commandery was founded for them with four counties in 441. This was Sung-hsi 宋熙 Commandery, renamed Sung-lung 宋隆 nine years later. In the Sung census of 464 this commandery boasted 6450 households and seven counties.\textsuperscript{76} The foundation of this commandery for refugees from Chiao-chou corresponds with the records of regular attacks by Lin-i on the southern commanderies of Chiao-chou in the 430s and early 440s.\textsuperscript{77} It is not known by which route these refugees arrived in Kuang-chou, but the location of the county close to the coast at Nan-hai suggests that it was by sea.

The results of the Chin and Sung censuses taken before and after this population shift had occurred show that the registered populations in the two rivers region grew most in areas closest to the Pearl River Delta and the confluences of the tributaries of the Yü River close to Ts’ang-wu. The number of administrative units in this area also increased substantially. The most significant changes occurred around Nan-hai and Ts’ang-wu. Nan-hai commandery was split into five new commanderies and its number of registered households rose by seventy-three percent. Ts’ang-wu was split into seven new commanderies and its registered population almost tripled. Household numbers in Lin-ho increased by almost half again from the Chin total, and those of Shih-hsing more

\textsuperscript{73} NYC quoted in TPHYC 158: 3b-4a.
\textsuperscript{74} NYC quoted in TPHYC 167: 9b.
\textsuperscript{75} SS 50: 5a, this is mentioned in conjunction with events that occurred in 419.
\textsuperscript{76} SS 38: 33a.
than doubled. These four commanderies were all in the east of the Two Rivers region and easily connected by river traffic to the Canton area and the major inland transportation routes from the north and the Sung capital of Chien-k’ang. Neither the Chin nor the Sung Empire could claim half as many registered households for the area around Nan-hai and Ts’ang-wu as had been counted by the Eastern Han. This was true even for the areas that had received in the most migration from north of the passes.

The archaeological record also shows that the construction of brick tombs continued in Kuang throughout the Chin and Southern Dynasties. The tombs from these periods are concentrated mainly in areas close to the main waterways and their confluences, especially on the river routes from the north. Tombs dating from the post-Chin period are found further away from the main waterways, and this corresponds to the administrative expansion of the eastern Chin and Sung into previously unoccupied areas of the Two Rivers region.\(^78\)

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**Change in Local Leadership**

The regional inspectors of Kuang-chou were originally appointees from outside the region, often natives of the area around the imperial heartland of Chien-k’ang. In a similar manner to families in the Red River plain, some began to put down roots in Kuang-chou and the imperial authorities began to employ members of the same family as governors and inspectors rather than employing outsiders. This began under the Chin Empire when governorships and inspectorates of the area were held by various members of the Wang, Hsiu, and T’eng families,\(^79\) and the practice continued with the Chang and Liu families during the Liu-Sung.\(^80\) In the latter half of Liu-Sung rule from the mid-fifth century onward, imperial policy changed and the court began to appoint members of the imperial household as officials to the Kuang-chou area. The Ch’i and Liang Empires followed suit. The Liang was especially fond of this tactic, appointing four of Emperor Wu’s cousins or nephews at different times to the inspectorate of Kuang-chou; Hsiao

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\(^78\) See Kieser, ‘Nur Guangdong ist ruhig’ p.121-2 for an overview and map of the graves within the boundaries of modern Kwangtung Province.

\(^79\) Hu Shou-wei, *Lung nam ku shih* pp. 130-49 lists a Hsiu family, a Wang family, and two Liu families, the members of which inherited positions in the Pearl River drainage area.

\(^80\) Ibid. pp. 131-2; 139-42
Mai 薛勳 mentioned previously, was one of these.\(^8\) The appointment of officials from the imperial household rather than reliance on local families is an indicator of the increased importance the Liu-Sung, Ch’i, and Liang Empires attached to control of the area. The Southern Dynasties were unable to carry out a similar policy in the Red River plain, where instead they were increasingly reliant on the compliance of local families. The one attempt the Liang made to appoint a nephew of Emperor Wu as inspector of Chiao-chou had dire consequences for Liang rule in the Red River Plain which are discussed in Chapter Four.

\textit{Chiao-chou and the Lands Between}

To sum up, from the beginning of the fourth century onwards the lower Pearl River drainage area saw an increase in migration from the north resulting in the growth of registered population and the number of administrative units, and although there was a trend towards localised gubernatorial dynasties, from the mid-fifth century the imperial households had an increased say over who held the most important administrative positions. In contrast, during the same period the Red River Plain lost its appeal as a destination for migrants, registered populations fell sharply, few new administrative units were founded, and local families became the \textit{de facto} holders of political power.

If analysed in the context of the politics of the present day, it is tempting to use these comparisons for evidence of the Vietnamese millennial struggle against the Chinese occupiers in Chiao-chou and the trend towards integration into the Chinese state in Kuang-chou. This is easier if one chooses to ignore what was going on in the lands that lay between the mouths of the Two Rivers. Contrasting Kuang-chou with Chiao-chou during the Six Dynasties it is easy to find evidence for localised peculiarities in the latter that lend weight towards interpretation of events as part of a national independence struggle. On the other hand, a comparison of Chiao-chou with the lands between the Two Rivers to its north-east makes Chiao-chou look instead like a well-integrated part of the imperial administrative system. In addition to this, an examination of the situation in the lands between Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou goes

\(^{8}\) The others were Hsiao Yiân-chien 蕭元顯 who served in 514 (LS 23: 7b), Hsiao Ang 蕭昂, who served in the late 510s (LS 9: 4a), and Hsiao Yü 蕭燮 (ChS 17: 5b). For discussion of these people see Hu, \textit{Ling nan ku shih} pp. 176-191.
some way to explaining why the changes in migration, administrative structure and local leadership that occurred in Kuang-chou during the southern dynasties did not occur in Chiao-chou. The trends in Chiao-chou towards local rule in this period were not merely a result of internal resistance to outside forces, they were also due in a large part to the isolation of the Red River Plain from the rest of the Southern Dynasties.

Descriptions of Chiao-chou in the Nan Ch'i shu emphasise its isolation, referring to the area in one case as an ‘island’: ‘Chiao-chou is a completely isolated island which controls the outer lands and as a consequence of this it frequently relies on its strategic position to not submit to authority’.82 ‘Chiao-chou is a far distant borderland. In fact it ought to be classed as the wild circuit, and it relies on this distance to be the last to submit to authority; indeed, this a constant occurrence...’83 ‘Chiao-chou is controlled from Chiao-chih, it lies among the islands of the Boiling Sea...it borders on the southern barbarians, and produces many precious goods. For rare treasures of the mountains and seas it is incomparable. Relying on their strategic position and distance the citizens are fond of rebellion’.84 The use of ‘island’ is especially significant as it indicates that coastal traffic was still a significant mode of transport to Chiao, and that the land route was somehow cut off or difficult.

What made the area so isolated was the large expanse of hilly country to its north-east that cut it off from the commanderies belonging to Kuang-chou. This country and the people who dwelt there were quite unlike those of the two administrative centres described above. Even though later geographical works insisted that the area had been part of imperial administrative units since the Han, in the fourth century large areas of it still lay outside the effective reach of imperial administrations. Sinic settlement of the Two Rivers region up until the latter half of the fifth century was a slow administrative encroachment confined to areas along the major waterways or the sea coast, and this area lay far from both. If the limited nature of the Chinese presence there is not immediately obvious from a glance at a Chinese historical atlas,85 it is because

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82 NCS 58: 15a-b.
83 NCS 40: 6b.
84 NCS 14: 24b. The ellipsis replaces a short quote from a geographical work by the Han author Yang Hsiang 楊雄 (53 BCE-26 CE) called ‘Probing into the Twelve Chou’ (Shih erh chou chien 十二州賦) as these are not relevant to a fifth century description.
85 See, for instance, T' an Chi-hsiang 譚其麟 ed., Chung kuo li shih ti t'u chi 中國歷史地圖集. Peking: Chung kuo ti t'u ch' u pan shè, 1982-87 vol. 3 pp. 57-8; vol. 4, pp. 31-3. Here the concentrations of names written in black are more accurate indicators of the Chinese presence than the neatly-bounded blocks of
compilers of Chinese geographies usually had the habit of including administrative units retrospectively into older administrative units, thus giving the impression that administrative units in previously unoccupied areas represent new divisions of existing structures rather than an expansion into new territory. The compilers of the Historical Atlas of China made their maps according to a similar principle and chose to depict administrative units in large blocks of colour within tidy boundaries. Map Three shows the location of commandery centres according to the geography contained in the Ch'in shu. There was an obvious absence of imperial control south of the Yü River, west of modern Nanning, west of Ho-p'u to the modern Sino-Vietnamese border, east of Ho-p'u to Kao- hsing (near modern Yang-chiang), and north of Hanoi. These represent areas that were bypassed by the Han and subsequent empires on their way south to the Red River Plain.

One reason for the isolation of Chiao-chou was that the physical environment was a danger for outside visitors to the lands between the Two Rivers. ‘The ground has miasmic vapours that can kill people’, says the Nan Ch'i shu in its description of Yüeh-chou, going on to note that ‘in Han times the inspector of Chiao-chou would always go somewhere high to avoid it in the summer months. Now the ground in Chiao is in harmony, only the miasmas of Yüeh are still formidable’. This ‘miasmic gas’ probably referred to the visible steamy haze from moist jungle in the summer months, but what actually killed people is more likely to have been malaria, endemic throughout the Two Rivers region, and especially dangerous in the foothills further south than 26° latitude (roughly a line from Kunming to Fu-chou). The most dangerous time for malarial diseases was during the late summer months, and this corresponds to Chinese records of

colour that represent provincial territories.

66 For example, a thirteenth century geographical work (YTCS 117: 1a) records that the Kao-chou area (close to the modern city of Kao-chou) was a part of Nan-hai commandery under the Ch'in and Kao-liang commandery under the Han, but not a single county was founded in the area for six centuries until the foundation of Hai-ch'ang 海昌 Commandery in 439 under the Liu Sung. Similarly Sung-shou commandery was recorded as having been split off from Yüeh-chou in one source (NCS 14: 25b, See footnote 31) whereas another source says it formerly belonged to the jurisdiction of Chiao-chou (SS 38:44b). Since there was not even a county founded in the area prior to 480, it was probably split from neither and represents an expansion of the administration into a previously ungoverned area.


68 NCS 14:26a. The first ‘Chiao’ here refers to the Han province that encompassed the entire Two Rivers region, and the second only to the Tonkin area, as this was the extent of Chiao-chou at the time the book was written.
the danger from miasmas. The lands between Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou and especially the lands south of the Ghost Gate Pass were notorious for miasmas; Ma Yuan was said to have seen the miasma from a river kill a bird in mid-flight, and the miasmas were held responsible for the deaths of four or five out of every ten soldiers who attempted to pass through the area with Ma Yuan. There was even a ‘Miasma River’ (Chang chiang 長江) which was a tributary of the Nan-Liu River, and a Lin-chang 蘭陽 Commandery, the name of which meant ‘approaching the miasma’ founded near to it by the Liu-Sung. Spring miasmas were said to have killed six or seven out of every ten soldiers who were on the way to Ho-p’u to fight Li Pi in the mid-sixth century. The Chinese chroniclers noted that locals had strategies for dealing with this, either living in stilt houses to avoid miasma and pestilences, or making an annual migration on rafts to a safe area during the hottest season from the sixth to the tenth month in a manner similar to that of the Han inspector described above.

In addition to the physical difficulties of passing through the lands between, there was the difficulty of dealing with the people who lived there, for although this area was empty from the point of view of the imperial administration, it was not an uninhabited wilderness. On the contrary, they were populated by groups of people who were hostile both to their neighbours and to passers-by, and all of the land routes to Chiao-chou from Kuang-chou passed through their territory. Chinese written records of this area suggest that travellers considered this country and its inhabitants as wild and dangerous, and indicate that first-hand knowledge of them was difficult to come by. What did make it to the ears of writers were exaggerations and travellers’ tales which had already passed through several mouths. Some of the more frightening descriptions spoke of people called Wu-hu who were said to eat their first child at birth, and to consider human palms and feet as a delicacy. If they were to bury a dead relative the Li people had to fend off huge swarms of carnivorous beetles which ate human

90 TPHYC 167:3a associates the story with Jung-chou 容州, on the northern side of the Ghost Gate Pass. The original story is from HHS 24:13a-b.
91 HHS 24: 14a.
92 TPHYC 169: 2b.
93 ChS 8: 1b.
94 TPHYC 169: 6a; TPHYC 161: 2a.
95 WLTLC quoted in TPYL 771: 2a. The safe area was at Kao-yao 高要 (present-day Chao-ch’ing).
96 NCIWC quoted in HHS 86: 7b.
corpses,\textsuperscript{97} and they would shoot outsiders with poisoned arrows which would make the flesh rot off their bones.\textsuperscript{98} There were also reports of giant serpents, and centipedes so large that their skins could be used to cover drums.\textsuperscript{99} The manner in which this region had been bypassed by the administrative and military machines of the Chinese empires is made clear in the following two descriptions by officials who had both served long terms in the Red River plain. Over fifty years after the Wu-hu rebellion, Hsiieh-tsung's memorial to the throne in 231 described the situation in Chiao-chou as follows:

Now although it is said that Chiao-chou is more or less settled, there are still the incorrigible bandits of the area around the boundaries of Nan-hai, Ts'ang-wu, Yu-lin and Chu-kuan [Ho-p'u] commanderies who are still not under control. They rely on banditry and stealing and have become a lair of refuge for rebels and escapees.\textsuperscript{100}

The area he describes was one of the biggest empty areas in terms of Chinese administrative units, and the Ghost Gate Pass route – the main thoroughfare to Chiao-chou – cut right through the middle of it. Several decades later, a letter from T'ao Huang 陶璜, the regional inspector of Chiao-chou, to the Chin Emperor Wu 武 (reigned 265-290) is quite specific about the location and population of peoples beyond effective control of the Chin Empire.

On the South Bank of Kuang-chou following around an area of six thousand li there are more than fifty-thousand households who will not submit to authority, as well as about ten thousand households in Kui-lin who are of an uncontrollable type, as for those who follow the official orders there are just about over five thousand families. The two provinces [Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou] are connected as lips and teeth, and can only be held by military force.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{97} PWC ch. 2: p. 25
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} CCC quoted in TPYL 946: 7b.
\textsuperscript{100} SKC 53: 10b. Taylor's version of this letter (\textit{Birth}, pp.75-6) is garbled and misses this important passage.
\textsuperscript{101} CS 57: 6a.
The 'south bank' of Kuang-chou referred to the lands south and west of the Yü River, through which all the overland traffic to Chiao-chou was obliged to pass. T'ao Huang would have known these areas well, since they lay between the province under his control and the rest of the Chin Empire. The value of his description is its estimate of the population that lived outside the Chin administration. The taxable household numbers in the Chin census for the entire Two Rivers region was only 66,720 and yet on the south bank and in Kui-lin Commandery alone T'ao Huang estimates almost double that number of households outside the administration. Another description of the people of the area is from around two centuries later, but it shows that little has changed.

Kuang-chou is controlled from Nan-hai, control of the coasts and corners of the sea is given to Chiao [-chou], although there are a few families of citizens (min 民) there are numerous Li and Lao scattered about. They all live in towers in mountainous and inaccessible places and are unwilling to submit to authority. The sources of the two rivers to the south and west are remote and distant. A protectorate was established especially for the purposes of attacking them.\(^{102}\)

The protectorate mentioned here was the protectorate of the West River, the foundation of which was an important step in the process of the military subjugation of the Li and Lao and will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

The records above show the Li and Lao with all the attributes of those who would not accept the authority of the civilised world, stubborn, not submitting, not under control, not to mention the terms Li and Lao, which are value judgments on the barbarity of people in themselves. As well as these general complaints about the Li and Lao, there is also a concrete record of how they affected the travel plans of an individual sent to Chiao-chou who passed through this country in the mid-fifth century:

Emperor Hsiao-wu (reigned 454-465) of the Sung had wished to build a Pagoda, and because Chang Jung 張融 had donated only a hundred cash, the Emperor said “Since Jung is especially poor we should organise a good job for him”. So he was sent off to be the magistrate of Feng-hsi 封溪 [in the Red River plain]. On his way

\(^{102}\) NCS 14: 20a-b.
to take up office, he had to pass through the hilly and inaccessible terrain between Kuang-chou and Yüeh-chou where he was caught by the Lao bandits who were going to kill and eat him, but Jung’s spirit and countenance remained firm, and he then sang them a luo shêng chant. The bandits marvelled at this and did not harm him. He then sailed over the sea to Chiao-chou, composing the ‘Sea Rhapsody’ on the way.  

This text is specific about where Chang Jung was caught; the mountainous boundary between Kuang-chou and Yüeh-chou which cut straight through the Li-Lao country. This text shows that there were very real dangers posed by the people of the Li-Lao country to those who dared pass through their territory.

The records above indicate a fairly stable situation in the lands between the Two Rivers from the third to the fifth centuries in which large Li and Lao societies lived on the edge of imperial knowledge and the beyond the reach of imperial control. Although there was an increase in administrative units in the lands between the Two Rivers in this period, the census results for the lands between Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou show the sharpest falls in imperial taxation and control of any area in the Two Rivers region. An analysis of the Chin and Sung census by individual commandery results for the Two Rivers shows that the decline in registered population was not confined merely to the area that now constitutes part of modern Vietnam. The highest falls in registered household numbers were actually in the large commanderies of Yü-lin and Wu-p’ing which both fell by over eighty percent. Kui-lin and Chiao-chih commanderies showed drops of seventy-two and sixty-four percent respectively, followed by the Ho-p’u area, which lost either seventy percent or fifty-three percent of registered population. These

103 NCS 41: 1a-b.
104 Keith Taylor, Birth, p.120 provides this only for the commanderies that are now part of Vietnamese territory leading him to the conclusion that the decline of Imperial influence in the Vietnam area as if it were a peculiarity of that area alone. On p.121 he draws the conclusion “The fifth century was a time of phenomenal growth and in population and administration; yet this growth was confined to Kuang and the new province of Yüeh”. On p. 122 he states “In 471 Yüeh province was organised from portions of Kuang and Chiao. The immediate reason for this was to recognise those portions of Chiao that were still under imperial authority... Yüeh province, in effect became the new frontier of the Empire”. If all the population statistics for the Two Rivers region are calculated commandery by commandery, the picture is rather different.
105 The percentage of decline for Wu-p’ing is calculated from the Chin statistics for both Wu-p’ing and Hsin-ch’üan, since the latter was close to Wu-p’ing but was not recorded in the Sung census.
106 The number depends on whether or not the household count of the area of the former Kao-hsing commandery of the Chin census was included. Similarly, depending on whether Kao-hsing was included,
statistics indicate that the revenue gathering and organising abilities of the Southern Dynasties in the area were minimal. The area where imperial revenue collecting ability had become weakest was actually in the lands between the Red River Plain and Ts'ang-wu.

The Effects of the Li and Lao on the Red River Plain

Comparing Chiao with the lands that lay between them in the early fifth century, it is clear that much of the rebellious nature of the people of Chiao-chou was attributed to their isolation rather than their status as barbarian people. This also explains why rebellions and uprisings in the post-Han period remained localised in the Red River Plain and no longer spread over the wide area in the manner of the Chêng (Trưng) Sisters’ uprising. The class of people who had become the leaders in the Red River Plain resembled the semi-aristocratic families in Kuang-chou and had little in common with the Li and Lao chieftains, or for that matter, the people in the hill country that surrounded the plain. The Li and Lao people who lived between Chiao-chou and the rest of the empire were different; their rulers were not seen as rebellious officials, but rather as ungovernable barbarian chieftains. The existence of these societies around all the major routes to Chiao-chou from the north-west created an added complication for those fleeing from the far north who sought refuge in the south. Those who had reached Nanhai or Ts’ang-wu and had no access to a ship would have to pass through the lands of the Li and Lao if they wished to go further to Chiao-chou, and by the fourth century these areas had become dangerous for travellers. Li and Lao societies acted as a filter through which only officials, or those who were armed or could afford an armed guard, could easily pass, and the result of this was that the lands beyond the Li-Lao country received little outside migration from the north after the mid-fourth century.

With no large influx of new migrants from the north to alter the linguistic and political make-up of the Red River Plain, the end result was that the Chiao-chou area became like a pressure cooker for localised loyalties in which a small number of localised families could consolidate de facto independent rule there in relative isolation from the jurisdiction of the Southern Dynasties. This trend was later interpreted as

the registered population of Kao-liang commandery fell by either fifty-five or twenty-nine percent.
Vietnamese resistance to Chinese rule, but at the time, the deeds of officials in the Red River Plain look fairly tame in comparison with the activities of the people who cushioned them from direct contact with the rest of the Southern Dynasties.

The Li and Lao were surely not the only reason that migration to Chiao dried up. It was more likely that they were part of a combination of factors including tropical disease, economic downturn, and the danger from Lin-i that encouraged migrants to the south to end their journey in the relative safety of Nan-hai, Ts’ang-wu, and Shih-hsing. Localised families were also able to control these areas for a few generations, but not to the same extent as those in the lands beyond the Li and Lao. Nevertheless, the story of the Li and Lao is significant for putting the Red River Plain into perspective, as it contains much that has been claimed as quintessentially Vietnamese or Southeast Asian
Chapter Three: People and their Names

From the second century onwards records of the land between the Two Rivers mention people who go by the names Li, Lao, and Wu-hu, as well as innumerable examples of Yi and Man. These last two terms were very widely used. They were half of a set of four traditional terms for ‘barbarian’ based on the four cardinal points of the compass: the Jung (戎) of the west, Ti (狄) of the north, Yi (夷) of the east and Man (蠻) of the south. By the first century CE the old distinction between Yi and Man had become somewhat blurred. Man still referred to ‘barbarians of the south’, but the meaning of Yi had become so diluted that it could refer to the barbarian peoples of any point of the compass from the north-east (modern Korea and Japan) to the south-west (modern Yunnan and the Two Rivers region). Although it is widely recognised that the terms Man and Yi were general terms that did not refer to specific groups of people. However, for names such as Li, Lao, and Wu-hu, there is a still a widely-held belief that they must have been based on concrete realities.

The disparity between historical ethnonyms and the realities on the ground has long been recognised in other fields of history, particularly Southeast Asian studies. Ethnonyms applied by outsiders often have very little relationship to how the referents consider themselves. Names that were eventually defined as those of ethnic groups in relatively recent times were based on little more than people’s geographical location,1 their administrative status in the eyes of the state,2 or the pejorative terms applied by their neighbours.3 In the Two Rivers region of the present day there are groups of people whose language usage and self-identity does not fit to the nationality (min-tsu 民族) to which they have been officially assigned by the Chinese state. These include speakers of Tai-Kadai and Austroasiatic languages who have ended up classified

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1 For instance, Keith W. Taylor, ‘On being Muonged’, Asian Ethnicity, 2001 vol. 2 no.1, pp 25-34
2 David Faure argued that ‘Yao’ in was originally an administrative category rather than an ethnic group and that the division between Yao and ordinary subjects arose from a distinction in Ming local administration – the Yao lived on land that was registered under native officials, in contrast to those who lived on land registered under transferable officials appointed through the imperial administrative system. David Faure, ‘The Yao Wars in the mid-Ming and their impact on Yao ethnicity’, in Pamela Kyle Crossley et al. eds. Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity and Frontier in Early Modern China, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, pp. 187-89.
3 See the case of the Katsu in Salmink, Lowlander-Highlander relations, which was a word meaning ‘savage’ used for people living further up in the mountains than those who referred to them.
officially into the unrelated groups of Han or Miao respectively, and people who are officially designated Chuang even though they actually refer to themselves by various names such Yay, Nung, T'u, and Sha, and are unable to understand the radio broadcasts made in the official version of their designated mother tongue. It is highly unlikely that the writers of ancient Chinese texts were armed with superior ethnographic knowledge than those in modern times and it is highly unlikely that ancient Chinese names reflect ancient ‘barbarian’ realities. Any ethnonym recorded in a pre-modern Chinese text needs to be regarded with suspicion.

Since the people designated Li and Lao in ancient Chinese texts have left no records of their own aside from a few stelae dating from the seventh century CE, how they actually referred to themselves in earlier periods is a question which cannot be answered with any certainty. That they probably did not use the terms Li and Lao is suggested by the nature of the many references to the Li and Lao, used over many centuries, often inconsistently, for widely scattered and disparate groups of people. These groups almost certainly spoke unrelated languages, did not share any uniform material culture, and were not politically unified. The texts that mention that “it is their custom to enjoy attacking each other” indicate that they probably didn’t consider themselves to be a single group.

Although is highly doubtful that they had any meaning for those to whom they were applied, the names Li and Lao did have meanings and significance for those who used them. Rather than answering the question ‘who were the Li and Lao?’, it is better to ask, in imitation of F.K Lehman’s question concerning the Kachin of Burma, ‘why

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5 This is mainly from my own observations travelling around Kwangsi. A map of what the people known as Chuang actually call themselves can be found in Chang Chun-ju 張均如 et al, Chuang yü feng yen yen chiu 亙話方言研究. Chengtu: Szü ch’üan min tsu ch’ü pan shê, 1999 p. 318.
6 It is highly unlikely that any single language or even language family was spread over the wide areas where Li and Lao people were recorded. Jerry Norman and Tsu-lin Mei, ‘The Austroasiatics in Ancient South China, some Lexical Evidence’. Monuments Sinica, 1976 vol, 32 pp. 274-301, once suggested a very wide spread of Austroasiatic (the family to which Vietnamese belongs) as far north as the Yangtze, but this theory has been refuted by Laurent Sagart ‘The Expansion of Setaria Farmers in East Asia – a Linguistic and archaeological model’. In: Past Human Migrations in East Asia. Matching Archaeology, Linguistics and Genetics (Routledge studies in the early history of Asia Volume 5). ed. Alicia Sanchez-Mazas, London, New York: Routledge, 2008 pp. 133-81.
7 ChS 23: 3b; TPYL 785: 8b; Sus 80: 4b.
were the Li and Lao? The most important criterion for the application of these names to groups of people was that those who wrote about them considered them to be uncivilised, but it is also possible to determine distinct patterns of usage of the three names, particularly in the context of the Two Rivers Region, which can answer the question of why they were used for some people and not for others.

In his study of Chinese interactions with peoples to the north and west, Di Cosmo noted that in Han times there was a shift in the Chinese naming of peoples in those areas from names based on the points of the compass to a name based on an ‘anthropological type’ (Hu 胡), but that this name still did not imply that its referents were ethnically or linguistically similar. The terms Man and Yi were not fixed geographically other than vaguely fixed on peoples to the west and south, and they continued to be used as general terms for peoples in the Two Rivers region. The three new terms Li, Lao, and Wu-hu came into use around the same time as the term Hu. Aside from Wu-hu, which had a more localised and specific meaning, Li and Lao have widely divergent meanings over time and space that are difficult to pin down to specific cultural characteristics other than differences in political and social organisations from those who described them.

Unlike Man and Yi, which referred to people ever more distant from the Chinese centre, Li, Lao, and Wu-hu were used for peoples within specific geographical contexts. Of the three terms, Wu-hu was the most geographically and temporally specific, Lao the least so and used over the widest area, whereas Li had a fairly localised use, but was most inconsistent in its meaning over time.

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9 A universal characteristic of the three names is that they carry negative connotations. Li is written with a character that originally stood for word meaning ‘bumpkin’ or ‘rustic’ and Lao is written with the ‘dog’ radical. The Chinese meaning of the characters used to write Wu-hu have no particular meaning in themselves (their literal meaning is ‘black sloping river bank’) and probably represent a transliteration of a name in an unidentified language, perhaps in the language of the referents or in the language of their neighbours, and as such it probably had a foreign and barbaric ring to it.

10 See Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its enemies: the rise of nomadic power in East Asian history*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 p. 102, for the use of Jung and Ti, and p. 129 for Hu, which Di Cosmo explains as a ‘blanket term that included mounted bowmen who practised pastoral nomadism as their main economic activity’.

11 Ruey, *Lao jen k’ao*, proposed cultural characteristics such as bronze drums and stilts houses, but none of these were spread throughout the same geographical regions as those in which the names Li and Lao were recorded.
Distribution of Wu-hu

The term Wu-hu was in common use only during the Han Dynasty. The earliest work to mention it is the Wu official Wan Chèn’s 南州異物志 Nan chou i wu chih a work written during the time of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu (222-278). Wan Chèn noted that Wu-hu was originally a toponym referring to the area ‘South of Kuang-chou and North of Chiao-chou’ and that the people of that area were known as Wu-hu. In subsequent records they are seldom found outside of this area. The other major pre-T’ang text to mention them is the Hou Han shu they are also mentioned as living in or to the ‘west of Chiao-chih’, and are described as cannibals who eat their first-born son. The same chapter later refers to them in Yü-lin Commandery and in Ho-p’u and Chiao-chih. Yü-lin was a large commandery under the Han which contained twelve counties, and controlled the territories along the Yü, T’an, and Tsang-k’o west of Yü-lin, the Wu-hu recorded in the Hou Han Shu were probably the inhabitants of the areas adjacent to the T’an and Yü Rivers where they joined at the seat of Yü-lin Commandery. Chiao-chih and Ho-p’u had the Wu-hu who were responsible for setting off the great 178 uprising, and P’ei Yüan’s 裴渊 Kuang Chou Chi 廣州記 of the Eastern Chin which records them in Chin-hsing (near to modern Nanning). There is outlier record in a fifth century work which records Wu-hu living in Wu-yang 興陽 County, an area remote from any administrative posts in the mountains north-west of Shih-hsing (present-day Kui-lin). Without the outlier record, the limited geographical distribution of the name suggests that it might actually have corresponded to a specific group of people. The term soon passed out of usage, however, and T’ang and post T’ang texts mention them either only in historical context when quoting older books, preferring the terms Li and Lao instead.

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12 TPYL 786: 3b.
13 This could mean west of Chiao-chih Commandery (meaning west of the Red River Delta) or west of the later Han capital of Chiao-chih Circuit at Canton.
14 I base this assumption on the locations of new counties founded between the Han and the Chin. HHS 86: 14a refers to the foundation of seven new counties on the territory of over 100,000 surrendered Wu-hu. A Ch’ing commentator (TSFYCY Ch.108 p.4438) says this was later Yü-p’ing County (modern Kuei County).
15 HHS 86: 14a.
16 TPHYC 122: 12a. This is a work called 荊州記 by Shêng Hung-chih 盛宏之.
The Derivation and Distribution of the Lao

The term Lao first appears paired with Yi in a passage in the Hou Han shu. Prior to this the character represents a different word meaning ‘to hunt at night with torches’. It has been suggested that the name Lao was probably a shortening of Ko-Lao or Kiao as it is common for the first consonant in initial consonant clusters to be dropped when vocabulary is borrowed into Sinitic. The earliest records of this name are in the Hua yang kuo chih written in the mid-fourth century recorded in the form 暗獠 to refer to people in the commanderies of Hsing-ku and Yung-Ch‘ang, both of which lay in the mountains upriver from Chiao-chou. The next mentions were from works that recorded events of the fifth and sixth centuries: The Sang shu recorded that the people of the Nan-Hsü-chou 南徐州 (on the south bank of the Yangtze just east of Chien-k‘ang) had heard old tales of the cannibal Hu-lao 孤獠 people, and were thus terrified by the strange appearance of a few hundred soldiers from Shu (Szechwan) who wore rhinoceros-skin armour. The Liang shu and Ch‘énn Shu both recorded Ch‘ü-lao 屈獠 in a valley in Chiao-chih near the confluence of the Black Water River and the Red River. These were the people who heheaded the Yüeh Emperor Li Pi (Ly Bön) when he tried to take refuge amongst them after his defeat in 546. These names would have been pronounced something like *kʰ-lawʔ and *kʰ-ut-lawʔ in Early Middle Chinese.

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17 Pulleyblank, ‘The Chinese and their Neighbours’, has already given a detailed linguistic analysis of the terms Lao and Li. He also notes the way in which this character has been erroneously transcribed as 'Liao' rather than 'Lao', and is sometimes also written as 哉 or 羅. The two words have probably become confused because PRC texts have replaced the 'dog radical' of the character with the 'man radical', making it identical with the written form of the common word 'liao' meaning 'colleague' or 'companion' i.e. 哉. These correspond to the Sino-Vietnamese 'Lieżu' and 'Lào'.


19 Compare the Chinese word for betel leaf, Piper betle originally recorded as fu-liu-t‘éng in early mediaeval texts, the first syllable was eventually dropped and the word became lou 烏 or lao 孤 in modern varieties of Chinese. See Li Hui-lin, Nan-fang ts‘ao-mu chiang – a fourth century flora of Southeast Asia. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press 1979 pp. 112-3.

20 HYKC ch. 4 p. 57.

21 SS 84: 43a. dealing with a period in the second half of the Fifth Century. This may have been an error for the graphically similar Kuo-lao 孤獠 see also footnote 33 below.

22 LS 3: 33b.; ChS 1: 3b-4a. In the same chapter the Liang shu (LS 3: 29a) refers to them as simply 'Lao'

23 This was the location arrived at by Đào Duy Anh Đại Nội Việt Nam Qua Các Đời. Huế: Thuận Hóa, 1994 p. 68.

24 Taylor, Birth, p. 143, calls this the ‘Khưát Liệu Valley’, the first part of the name being the Sino-Vietnamese transcription of Ch‘u-lao, This should in fact be Sino-Vietnamese ‘Khưát Lào’.

25 These reconstructions are from Pulleyblank, Chinese and their Neighbours
Subsequent records of names similar to these do not occur until T'ang times. Unusually, the earliest references to ‘ko-lao’ people actually occur in later works than the first records of ‘Lao’, and the stability of the second graph indicates perhaps that this term was the older borrowing and that those who wrote of the ‘Ko-lao’ were in fact already conscious of the name ‘Lao’ when they wrote it. The graphical variations in the first syllable of the name (there are at least six of these) suggest that in each case it was an attempt to transcribe a name heard in a spoken language rather than a name picked up from reading a text. Perhaps the authors assumed that the first syllable was actually a description for a subset of Lao. As for the origin of the word itself, it is most probable that it was a word *klao meaning ‘person’ widespread in languages of the Kra branch of the Kadai phylum. If it was in fact picked up from speech, it suggests that people speaking these languages were once widespread throughout the mountains where the Two Rivers have their source.

The term Lao had a much wider distribution and was used over a long period of time. The first records occur in Chi'en Shou's San Kuo chih and Chang Hua's Po wu chih both written in the last decades of the third century. The former refers to Yi and Lao people in Yung-ch'ang 永昌 Commandery (in what is now Western Yunnan along the upper reaches of the Mekong) ‘The Yi and Lao hold the strategic spots, constantly commit banditry, and will not submit’ The Po wu chih records them as Lao-tzu 獛子 distributed ‘from the far south-western boundary of south of Ching-chou to Shu’, an area which encompassed all the country from modern Kwangtung to Szechwan. The Hou Han shu contains a reference to the Lao in a passage concerning a former ruler called the ‘Bamboo King’ (chu wang 竹王) who was said to have been born from inside

26 Other records of similar forms of the name occur in later works in reference to people in the area that is now Kweichow. HTS 222c:19a, and TPHYC 120:12b both refer to ko-lao 勒羅, ko-lao; TPHYC 108 6a uses an alternative spelling 藩羅. The Buddhist patriarch Hui-ming of Hsin-chou was also said to be of ‘Ko-Lao’ origin, in this case written 獴羅. LITCCC ch.1 p.4.

27 See Ostapirat, Weena 2000 Proto Kra Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area, vol. 23 no. 1 pp. 13-8 The words for ‘head’ and ‘house’ show a similar sound change across Tai-Kadai languages.

28 HHS 86: 19b may contain an earlier record, but the HHS was not composed until the early Fifth Century, it contains a reference to the Lao in a passage concerning the ‘Bamboo King’ of the Yi and Lao of the Tsung-k'ao and Yeh-lang area.

29 SKC 41: 1b. The name of the Ai-lao 契牢 people, recorded in this area from the late second century BCE to the late first century CE may have had an influence on the use of the term Lao for the people there at this time. The relationship between the two Lao is unclear, however. The characters were tonally distinct 獴 being a shang tone and 竹 a p'ing tone, and the prefix ai- (if it is indeed a prefix) is not recorded anywhere outside the confines of what is now Yunnan.

30 PWC ch. 2 p. 24
a section of bamboo the Yi and Lao of the Tsang-k’o and Yeh-lang area\textsuperscript{31} was not composed until the early fifth century, the \textit{Shui ching chu} associates this story with the T’sang-k’o River (\textit{T’un shui} 藤水) a northern tributary of the Yü River.\textsuperscript{32} The earliest record of Lao people in the vicinity of the Red River Plain dates from the late third century. The \textit{Chin shu} records that in the surrounding hill country where the land was steep and inaccessible the Yi and Lao were strong and fierce, and that they had not submitted to imperial authority for generations.\textsuperscript{33}

The \textit{Kuang chou chi}, composed during the Eastern Chin (317-420) has a record of Li and Lao in reference to their bronze drums, which limits the referents to people who lived in the area west of Canton and south of the Yü River.\textsuperscript{34} There were also numerous kinds of Li and Lao in ‘The Mountains of Kuang-chou’\textsuperscript{35}, a record of Li and Lao at a place called Shih-ch’i 石BigInt somewhere between Ho-p’u and Chiao-chou.\textsuperscript{36} and the Man and Lao in the south in general.\textsuperscript{37} The majority of the records of Lao are from I-chou 益州 (modern Szechwan), and Ning-chou 寧州 (Yunnan).\textsuperscript{38} But there were also Li and Lao in Yüeh-chou and Kuang-chou.\textsuperscript{39} In Chiao-chih there were Yi and Lao who would ‘join forces to carry out banditry’,\textsuperscript{40} and Yi and Lao in Hsiang-chou 湘州, Hêng-chou 衡州, Kui-chou 桂州, and Wu-chou 武州 (present-day Hunan and northern Kwangtung and Kwangsi) who were attacked by the Prince of Shih-hsing (second son of the first Emperor of the Ch’ên).\textsuperscript{41} In the \textit{Sui shu} Lao are mentioned mostly in connection with areas to the north of the Two Rivers region, but occasionally further south. Li and Lao were said to have rebelled against a greedy and cruel regional governor in Fan-chou 鑫州\textsuperscript{42} north of Canton before they were placated by the Lady

\textsuperscript{31} HHS 86: 19b-20a.
\textsuperscript{32} SCC ch. 36 pp. 1128-9.
\textsuperscript{33} CS 56: 5b.
\textsuperscript{34} TPYL 785: 8b. I infer this from the concentration of bronze drums in this area, and their absence in other parts of the Two Rivers Area.
\textsuperscript{35} SS 97: 4a.
\textsuperscript{36} SS 92: 4b-5a.
\textsuperscript{37} SS 61 14a-b. This is from a letter, and probably refers to Ning-chou and Chiao-chou.
\textsuperscript{38} NCS 15: 29a-b. records five Lao Commanderies (\textit{lao chun} 窮郡) in I-chou; LS 17:7b-8a.; CS 9: 1b. LS 53: 10a-b.
\textsuperscript{39} NCS 14: 26a; 41. 1b. has ‘Lao bandits’ (\textit{lao tsei} 黃蠻).
\textsuperscript{40} ChS 34: 24a.
\textsuperscript{41} ChS 36: 2a.
\textsuperscript{42} Later renamed Shao-chou 蕭州, modern Shao-kuan.
Hsien and together with Yi as partners in banditry in P’an-yü (Canton). So the geographical spread of the term Lao in pre-T‘ang texts is from Canton in the far east to Chiao-chih in the south and west, but the earliest and most widespread use of the term was far to the north west of the Two Rivers region, in the area where the water drains into the Yangtze.

**Distribution of the Li and the Derivation of the Name**

Records of people named Li were confined to a smaller area than Lao, and only within the boundaries of the Two Rivers region. Like Lao, the character for Li had an alternate meaning of ‘vulgar’ or ‘bumpkin’ in pre-Han texts before it was applied to people in the Two Rivers region. The ultimate derivation of the name is uncertain, but it may also have derived from a native term. It is usually suggested in Chinese scholarship that the earliest record of this name was from the Later Han Dynasty and referred to people in the hills of what is now central Vietnam but this is uncertain. Because the terms are often put together as a compound ‘Li and Lao’ many of the locations noted above for the Lao also applied to the Li. The earliest definitive record of Li people using the graphic form 亙 is Wan Chên’s Nan chou i wu chih in which he refers to them as the ‘Li bandits of Kuang-chou’ but without further detail as to the specific districts they inhabited. More specific records of the geographical distribution of Li people date from the Liu-Sung (420-479) and can be found in the Sung Shu and in Shên Huai-yüan’s Nan Yueh chih. In this period records of Li are mainly concentrated in areas that later became Chinese territory. There were Man and Li recorded in Shih-hsing

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43 SuS 80: 7a.
44 SuS 65: 12b.
45 Pai Yao-T‘ien 白耀天, ‘Li lun 俚論’. Kuang hsi min tzu yen chiu, 1990: 4 pp. 28-38; Li lun (hsü) 俚論 (謾). Kuang hsi min tzu yen chiu 1990: 5 pp. 52-64, has made a long but unconvinving argument for the derivation of the term Li from the Tai endonym Yao common in northern Kwangsi and southern Kwantchow.
46 HHS 86: 9b. records: ‘In the nineteenth year of Chien-wu, Chang Yu of the Man Li (里) outside the boundaries of the administration led his people to admire civilisation and become dependent [to the Han]. He was enfeoffed as the Li (里) who returned to the Han’. To this the comment ‘Li (里) is another name for Man, nowadays these are called Li (俚) people’ was added, either by the Liang commentator Li Hsien 李賢 or the T‘ang commentator Liu Chao 劉昭. I suspect that the original text was actually referring to villages rather than to people. The edition I used of the T‘ai p‘ing hsuán yü chih sometimes uses 里 whereas other texts use 俚.
47 TPYI, 785: 8a-b.
Commandery to the north of Canton at the beginning of the Yüan chia period (424-54). Li in one of the commandery’s counties called Chung-su 中宿, Li who were attacked by the governor of Chin-k’ang 晋康 commandery and presumably lived close by. Some Li also lived closer to Chiao-chou. The Nan Yüeh chih mentions Li living at Tuan-hsi, and Fu-yüan, both in Chin-k’ang commandery, in Kao-chou as well as further to the north-west in Kuei-chou 桂州, and far to the south in Sung-ch’ang in Chiu-tê (central Vietnam). The Nan Ch’i shu records that a Li fisherman of the Kao-liang area on the coast south-west of Canton had fished up an odd-looking bronze sculpture of an animal in his net. The Liang shu has several records of Li but only mentions their specific locations twice, on the borders of Shih-hsing, where they were especially fond of banditry so that before the 470s, administrators of the area were obliged to carry swords for protection. Li were also involved in piracy along the coast of Kuang-chou. There were many records of armed attacks against the Li in the sixth century, mostly concentrated south of the Yü River to the south-west of Canton. It is only in T’ang texts that the term was applied to people living east of Canton. By the late seventh century the term seems to have picked up an administrative sense; there were households classified as ‘Li households’ (li hu 倌戶) who only paid half the taxes of ordinary citizens. By the tenth century, records of Li people are confined to the Pearl River drainage area west of Canton.

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48 SS 92:7b-8a.
49 SS 92: 8a.
50 SS 54: 10a.
51 SS 92: 5a.
52 CHC 8: 40a.
53 TPY 785: 8a. According to this text, these Li had the alternative name of Ch’ieh 楚 an obscure word that appears in no other text. Perhaps it was taken from their spoken language.
54 TPHYC 161: 8a-b.
56 TPY 347: 8a.
57 NCS 18: 20a.
58 LS 13: 7b.
59 NS 51:4a.
60 This was in the districts of Ch’iao-chou 潮州 and Hsün-chou 汕州 where Li commander Yang Shih-lüeh 楊世略 surrendered the two provinces to the T’ang in 622 (TCTC 190: p. 5943).
61 TCTC ch. 204 p. 6445
62 The one exception to this is where they appear in a list of ‘barbarian peoples’ under the control of Ch’ien-chou 漢州 (now P’eng-shui 彭水 in northern Kweichow) TPHYC 120: 12a-b. The list also contains other unusual names such as Kuei-chou 桂州 and K’un-ming 昆明 both of which were a considerable distance from Ch’ien-chou.
What Li and Lao actually meant

The distribution of the use of the terms Lao and Li in pre-T’ang texts can be summarised as follows: Lao was used for people throughout the Two Rivers area, mainly in the hill country or areas more distant from the Chinese administrative centres. It was also used further afield to refer to people of the mountainous country of modern Yunnan, Kweichow, and Szechwan far to the north and north-west of the Two Rivers region. Li was used mainly to the west of Canton, but also in the Red River in hill and plain country and was usually applied to people who lived closer to large Chinese administrative centres. Inconsistencies in use abound, however. In some cases the same events are recounted in different works, or even a single work, but different names are used for the same group of ‘barbarians’. In one case in two early texts Wu-hu and Li are interchanged. On another occasion the names Li and Lao are confused: in the Ch’ên Shu a military expedition which leads to the capture of a certain Ch’ên Wên-ch’ê 陳文徹 (about whom more later) is recorded as ‘against the Yi and Lao’, but the reference to the same expedition in the Liang shu, refers to Ch’ên Wên-ch’ê personally as a ‘Li leader’, and the Nan shih identifies him as a ‘Li leader from west of the river’. Aside from these example, the common habit of compounding terms such as ‘Yi and Lao’ and ‘Man and Lao’ also suggests that some writers were more interested in defining ‘barbarians’ with whatever literary terms they had at their disposal than they were in distinguishing discrete groups among them.

Scholars writing in languages other than Chinese have put forward different theories as to the nature of the people known as Li and Lao. As previously mentioned, Pulleyblank speculated that they have had a connection with the Kadai language phylum. While this was probably true of the first recorded Ko-lao, from whose speech the name Lao was initially borrowed, later more widespread use of the term in the south-west probably had very little to do with Chinese identification of linguistic groups and was based on other factors. The etymology of the name does not necessarily equal

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63 NFTWC quoted in IWL C 82: 11a says that the Li collect a certain type of ivy, but CMYS 10:36a-b quotes the same text saying that it is the Wu-hu that do so. TPHYC 16a: 10b notes that Wu-hu are a kind of Li.
64 ChS. 9: 6b
65 LS 32: 11b.
its later usage. Taylor proposes that the distinction between Lao and Li was related to their habitat, and that Lao referred to mountain-dwellers in contrast to Li, which referred to ‘non-Chinese peoples living a settled existence in the lowlands’. This is a reasonable observation made from the respective geographical distributions of the two names, but I argue that the distinction between Li and Lao went beyond differences in geographical location. In sixth- and seventh-century texts, the distinction was loosely based on their political organisation and relationships with the Chinese state. The geography of the areas inhabited by Li or Lao, merely encouraged different patterns of settlement and social organisation on which the distinction was based.

Li was increasingly applied to people who lived close to imperially-controlled urban centres and were culturally close to what the writers of Chinese texts considered the norms of civilized behaviour. Lao, on the other hand, lived in mountainous areas remote from Chinese centres, suggesting that the term referred to people geographically distant and culturally divergent from the norms of those who described them.

The main reason for this argument is the ambiguous status of the Li in Chinese texts, particularly those of the period from the sixth to the eighth centuries. The most common inconsistency in the usage of names in texts of this period is in the application of the term Li. From the sixth century onwards the term Li is commonly interchanged with ‘person’. For example, Wang Chung-hsüan 王仲宣, who lived in the Canton area in the 590s is referred to in four different ways in the same book, as an Yi of P’an-yü, as a Ling-nan chief (Ling-nan ch’iu chang 嶺南酋長), as a Li commander (li shuai 俚帥) and as a man of P’an-yü (P’an-yü-jên 番禺人). Similarly Li Fo-tzü 李佛子 of Chiao-chou who was influential in the politics of Chiao-chou in the second half of the sixth century led a rebellion in the fourth year of 602 is a ‘man of Chiao-chou’ (Chiao-chou jên 交州人) in one chapter, a ‘Li man of Chiao-chou’ (Chiao-chou li jên 交州俚人) in another, and a ‘great leader of Chiao-chou’ (Chiao-chou chü shuai 交州渠帥) in yet another.

The cases of Wang Chung-hsüan and Li Fo-tzü are early examples of Li being considered ordinary ‘people’. This became increasingly common in the seventh century

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66 Taylor, Birth p. 149.
67 SuS 47: 4a, 65: 10b; 67: 9a-b; 80: 6a, respectively
68 SuS 2: 16b-17a; 53: 9a; 56: 5a. respectively. See Taylor, Birth, pp. 152-155; 158-162) for an account of his political career.
in references to members of the great ruling clans between the Two Rivers such as the Ning, Féng and Chén. In Chinese texts, those who were considered ‘people’ (jên 人) were usually inhabitants of urbanised areas close to the sea or to large rivers who paid taxes and carried out corvée labour, or the holders of imperial titles who administered them. People referred to as Li often resembled these people so closely in their administrative and social habits that they lost their ‘barbaric’ status altogether in the eyes of some Chinese writers and entered the realm of jên as ordinary citizens and administrators.

The case of the taxation of Li households in the T’ang is additional evidence for the cultural and political proximity of the Li to Chinese administrative and cultural norms. When the protector-general of Annam Liu Yen-yu 劉延祐 decided in 687 to levy full tax on them, a member of their faction named Li Szai-shên 李思慎 joined with others to attack and sack the seat of the protectorate to try to kill him.⁶⁹ In this case Li refers to people who were involved with the imperial administrative system, and is obviously approaching the meaning of an administrative category. In the context of the Two Rivers region, there are very few equivalent examples of confusion between the use of the terms ‘Lao’ and ‘people’; the Lao are usually referred to as an unnamed collective where the Li are usually recorded individuals bearing Chinese-style names. In the few cases where a certain individual is referred to as ‘Lao’ and as a ‘person’, the individual will almost certainly be referred to as a ‘Li’ in some other text. Lao was also frequently compounded with the classic ‘barbarian’ terms Yi or Man suggesting that the term was more deeply pejorative than Li, which was never compounded in this manner.

The contexts in which the two terms were used suggests that the general distinction between Li and Lao was not based on linguistic categories or locality, but was more similar to the later categorisation of peoples into savage and resisting ‘raw’ barbarians (shêng fan 生蕃) and tamer, submissive ‘cooked’ barbarians (shu fan 熟蕃).⁷⁰ This then became common in later texts. These terms referred to two grades of

⁶⁹ TCTC ch. 204 p. 6445; CTS 190a: 8b.
⁷⁰ Dikötter noted that this concept related back to whether they consumed their food cooked or raw. Frank Dikötter, The Discourse of Race in Modern China. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992 pp. 9-10. Magnus Fiskesjö make the interesting argument that the concept of ‘raw’ barbarian (he says less about the ‘cooked’ variety) was rooted more in classical conceptions of Chinese sovereignty and the benevolence of civilisation than about the nature of the barbarians themselves, they were merely the permanent exceptions to civilised behaviour – the peripheral people that had to exist in order for the civilisation of
The barbarian: the 'raw' type lived under their own autonomous (and often intractable) rulers, and had customs that deviated widely from those of the people who wrote about them; the 'cooked' type were still recognisable as different, but had adopted Chinese customs and were submissive and tame. Their leaders were incorporated into the imperial system and were usually obedient to imperial authority. The usage of the terms Li and Lao in the Two Rivers region, particularly from the sixth century onwards, corresponds better to the later concepts of 'raw' and 'cooked' barbarity than to any possible differences in language or group identity.

What is even more interesting about the case of Li Fo-tzâ's status as a Li, is that he was said to be a kinsman of Li Pi (Lý Bôn), who was never described as a 'barbarian' of any kind. So it was obviously possible for both families and for individuals to slip back and forth between the categories of 'barbarian' and 'person' depending on their political behaviour and where they lived. From the Sui onwards there are several examples of purportedly 'Chinese' lineages that had a long association with the lands between the Two Rivers (such as the Ning and Feng clans discussed in Chapter Seven) which had picked up 'barbarian' status in the eyes of T'ang writers. In one case the entire Red River Plain picked up a barbarian status when it was included in the section on barbarians in the last chapters of the Nan ch'i shu. The Nan ch'i shu was compiled some time in the first decades of the sixth century, leading up to and during these decades the great local families in Chiao-chou began asserting their autonomy from imperial rule. It is likely that the treatment of Chiao-chou in the Nan ch'i shu is closely connected to this trend.

When Chinese descriptions of people cease to use barbarian terminology, it probably indicates that the referents had become outwardly close enough in their day-to-day habits and political structures to the people of other parts of the empire to be considered nothing more than regional variations on a larger theme. When people and their leaders began to deviate from what was considered the norm, through political

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the centre to make sense. Unfortunately his discussion of the terms is limited to the post-T'ang period. Magnus Fiskesja, 'On the "Raw" and the "Cooked" barbarians of Imperial China', *Inner Asia* 1999 no. 1 pp. 139-6.

71 These two terms appear only twice before the seventh century. The term 'raw' Lao first occurs in the Wei shu (WS 101:32.1) 'raw' Man was first used in the Sung shu (SS:24b).

72 'Cooked' Lao did exist, but not within the two rivers region. SuoS 46:11a records them in what is now Yunnan, there are no records of 'raw' Li.

73 NCS 58:15a-16b.

activity or through social or material culture, it was easy for them to slip back into 'barbarian' categories. However, the shift from 'barbarian' to 'people' (and back) was not merely a result of the 'barbarians' becoming more (or less) like the 'people'. The norms of Chinese behaviour were also constantly shifting, and certain types of political structure considered 'barbaric' in one period were quite normal in another. It is too simplistic to suggest that the Li and Lao between the Two Rivers were absorbed by the southern dynasties and the Sui. It was more a case of merging that absorption. That the descendents of chieftains eventually came to look like localised great families in other parts of the empire was just as much a result of change in Chinese administrative practices as it was of acculturation to Chinese political norms. It is to these administrative practices that we now turn.
Chapter Four: Administrative and Social Change

A significant feature of leadership in the Li-Lao country during this period is the way in which the leadership structures of the Li and Lao and the imperial administrative machine begin to merge. In the fourth century it is easy to distinguish between the ‘native’ leadership of bronze drum-owning chieftains and the ‘foreign’ leadership of imperially-appointed Mandarins, but by the sixth century these began to resemble each other very closely. In the very earliest records of Li and Lao from the third and fourth centuries, the Li, Lao, and Wu-hu political structures appear alien to the Chinese chroniclers and their customs are presented as impenetrable and barbaric.

By the time of Lady Hsien in the late sixth century, however, this had changed and the Li-Lao political structures between the Two Rivers closely resembled models of local government in other parts of the Southern Dynasties empires. This was the main reason why it became difficult to distinguish Li-Lao chieftains from imperially appointed governors. On the one hand there were chiefs who were given appointments as local governors and had Chinese names. On the other hand, there were families who had lived in Li-Lao inhabited areas for long periods of time and were considered as barbarian chiefs by Chinese from other regions. Change in imperial power structures was also significant. The system of appointing local governors that began as a meritocracy during the Han had developed into a system in which official positions were inherited within great local families and these became a privileged ruling class in their own areas.

The growing resemblance of the Li-Lao chiefs to the heads of Chinese great families was not a linear process of Sinification, the resemblance was also due to internal change in Chinese political structures and the influence of Li and Lao political structures on Chinese families who migrated to the area and ended up being transformed into local elites. Political change in the Red River Plain was different again from what happened in the lower Pearl River area or the Li-Lao heartland, and therefore requires separate treatment and explanation.
Native political structures Tung and Tu-Lao

As noted in the second chapter, throughout the third and fourth centuries, tens of thousands of people were recorded as being beyond imperial control in the lands between Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou. Unfortunately, in contrast to their detailed descriptions of imperial political structures, the Chinese texts offer only the merest tantalising glimpses of the political structure of Li-Lao societies and there is a need to glean evidence from beyond the written sources.

There was no large, centralised Li-Lao polity before the fifth and sixth centuries. Although the written record of the time provides names of individual leaders, it never mentions by name any large political structure such as a kingdom. The most common way of referring to Li-Lao political structures was by the term tung, which probably began as a Tai word for a mountain valley or level ground between cliffs, beside a stream. The floors of such valleys could sustain agriculture, while the forested, uncultivated upland areas between them would have made natural divisions between one group of people and another, so it was only natural that the local name for such valleys as a geographical feature eventually acquired the extended meaning of a political unit or chieftain. This was the sense which was borrowed into Chinese.

The territorial reach of the various Li and Lao tung between the Two Rivers is difficult to plot, but can be ascertained more or less from a combination of evidence from different sources. The third century Nan chou i wu chih describes the geographical location and political organisation of the Li people as follows:

South of Kuang-chou there are bandits known as Li, they live in the five commanderies south of Kuang-chou: Ts’ang-wu, Yü-lin, Ho-p’u, Ning-p’u and Kao-liang, the centre of their territory stretches for several thousand li. They

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1 Pulleyblank, *Chinese and their Neighbours* p.430. It is written with the same character as a word for ‘cave’ and Schafer therefore translates it as ‘grotto’ Vietnamese has the words dòng for a dry field, and Nguyễn Ngọc San (Tiếng Việt Lịch Sử, p.140) says this term derives from Tai lòng. Li’s reconstruction (Comparative Tai p. 105) would give a proto-Tai *dog* with the meaning ‘plain, open field’. Li (Tung t’ai ya yen p. 290) discusses the terms ‘lung’, ‘lung’ and their relationship to one another. David Holm’s *Recalling Lost Souls – The Baev Rado Scriptures: Tai Cosmogonic Texts from Guangxi in Southern China*. Bangkok: White Lotus, 2004 p. 6, compares the archaic forms of the term ‘lung’ and ‘chung’, and suggests that the origin of the term ‘chung’ also referred back to a term for a flat fertile river valley. 2 There is evidence that the meaning of the word in the geographical sense was also known to Chinese authors. A tenth-century description of the customs in the district around modern En-p’ing and Yang-chiang records that ‘agriculture is mainly carried out in the tung’ (TPhyc 158: 6a) suggesting a geographical feature rather than a political unit.
usually live in separate villages and have no commanders or lords, they take refuge in the mountains and narrow passes and do not build city walls.\(^3\) 

The area described in this quote lay at the far edges of these commanderies, and no commandery centres, provinces, or counties were founded there until the last decades of the fifth century. The area also corresponds more or less to the locations where the majority of finds of Heger II bronze drums are concentrated. It also contains many physical examples of tung in the geographical sense; the peaks of the various mountain ranges rise to heights of over a thousand metres, and from their slopes flow many small rivers and streams, creating isolated valleys perfect for the maintenance of independent Li and Lao chiefdoms. The highest concentration of finds of Heger II drums happens to be in this country in particular, where the many physical examples of tung, confirm that it was the site of many tung chiefdoms in the past. The extent and location of some individual tung is hinted at in a few instances. There was an undated military campaign against a Ku-tang tung 古黨洞 a few miles northwest of modern Yü-lin,\(^4\) in 622 Nan-fu-chou 南扶州 was founded on the territory of the Luo-Tou Tung 畿賛洞 which is around modern Hsin-i 信宜;\(^5\) and the foundation of Shuang-chou 雙州 煙州 (South of modern Luo-ting 煙定) on the territory of the interestingly-named ‘Twin-head Tung’ (Shuang t'ou tung 雙頭洞) during the Ta-t'ung 太同 period (535-546).\(^6\) A Ta-lien tung 大廉洞 was in the vicinity of Ho-p'u.\(^7\) These ended up as the administrative districts of Tang-chou, Tou-chou, and Shuang-chou and Lien-chou under the T'ang, and all of these took their names from those of the pre-existing tung.

The earliest description of Li political organisation in Wan Chên’s Nan chou i wu chih is of a politically decentralised society of small independent villages. ‘They all live in separate villages and each has its own chief. They have no lords or sovereigns,'

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\(^3\) TPYL 785: 8a.  
\(^4\) TPYL 172: 8a; TPHYC 165: 4b. The TPYL records this as coming from the Nan Yüeh chih but since Tang-chou was not founded until the T'ang it is more likely that this was actually a quotation from another work, perhaps that named Hsü nan yüeh chih 續南越志 of the late T'ang which is also quoted in the TPYL and TPHYC.  
\(^5\) TPYL 172: 5a, records that the province was later re-named Tou-chou (叡州) in 634 after the name of the tung.  
\(^6\) TPHYC 164: 4b; 5a; TPYL 172: 4a-b. The second source quotes the Nan Yüeh chih again. Both sources mention these two versions of the name, both characters are and were historically homophones. The province of Shuang-chou covered the districts around present-day Luo-ting.  
\(^7\) HTS 43a: 9a.
relying on places difficult of access in the mountains they have no use for kings’. Over a century later P’ei Yüan’s early fifth century work *Kuang Chou Chi* 廣州記 offers clues as to the nature of the leadership of a tung in a description of a Li-Lao ceremony to celebrate the casting of a new bronze drum:

The Li and Lao value bronze drums highly, and consider only those which are more than a chang (about 2.5 metres) across as especially unusual. When first completed they are hung up in the courtyards and on an appointed morning they set out wines and invite those of the same tribe. The guests crowd the gates, and the sons and daughters of the rich and prestigious people among the guests take gold and silver made into large forks and after beating on the drums with it they then leave it for the owner of the drum. These they call the “bronze drum forks”. It is their custom to be fond of battle and they often make deadly enemies. When they wish to go to war against one another, they beat these drums to assemble their forces, who arrive like the gathering of clouds. Those in possession of these drums are extremely powerful.9

The tradition of casting bronze drums did not spread to the mountains to the north of the Yü River until at least two or three hundred years after this text was written,10 so the description almost certainly points to the lands between the Two Rivers. An almost identical text describing the Li and Lao bronze drums is included in the geographical treatise contained in the Sui Shu, but ends with the addition of the following:

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8 NCTWC quoted in TPYL 785: 8a.
9 KCC quoted in TPYL 785: 8b.
10 Yoshikai, *Dōko sainen no jidai*, pp. 211-3, dates the move north of the river to the ninth or tenth century.
Those in possession of the drums have the title of *tu-lao* and are selected by popular sentiment. Investigating the origin of this Commissioner T’o [i.e. Chao T’o] called himself “great and venerable chief of the Man and Yi” when speaking to the Han, that is why the Li people still call those they respect *tao-lao* because this has become corrupted in speech they also say *tu-lao*.

It is more than likely that the *Shu shu* is actually quoting Pei Yüan for this passage and has merely retained more of the original text than the later quotations in Sung encyclopaedias. The term *tu-lao* has been interpreted as a transliteration of a Tai term meaning ‘great man’, but it is much more likely to be a translation of ‘great noble’ which would have sounded something like *taaw-laau*, which corresponds more closely to the form *tao-lao* that the text considers to be the uncorrupted form. This *taaw* is still commonly used to refer to members of the nobility in many Tai languages.

This record paints a pretty vignette of what must have been a common occurrence in the Li-Lao country throughout the Chin and Six Dynasties periods, and shows that the owners of drums had control over the assembly of war parties, held large banquets as a show of status, and received offerings of tribute in gold and silver from the children of other powerful members of the community. How the *tu-lao* received their positions is unclear, however, it seems unlikely that the position was open to everyone. The selection by popular sentiment probably referred to the selection from a pool of smaller chieftains who inherited their positions within smaller communities, it is hard to believe that just anyone would have been permitted to contend for the position. This was no centralised system of government, but rather one in which the

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11 *Ssu 31: 15a.
12 Wade, *Lady Sinn*, p. 133 and Li, *Tung t’ai yü yen* p. 159, both offer explanations for the *tue* (now a classifier for animals and people only in a pejorative sense but once applied to gods) the modern distribution of *tai* meaning ‘great’ or ‘big’ is now restricted to north-western varieties of tai spoken in Yunnan and north-west Kwangsi, whereas those in other regions use *tang* or *hong* (Chang Chün-ju 賣均如 ed., *Chuang yü fang yen yen chiau* 壯語方言研究 Chengtu: Szü ch’üan min tsu ch’u pan sè, 1999, p. 756). But its continued use in Kam and other related Kadai languages (see: Wang Chün 王均 ed. 1984 *Chuang tung yü tsu yü chien chia* 壯語族語言簡志. Peking: Mín tsu ch’ü pan sè pp. 858-9) shows that the term was once widely used in the Li-Lao country, and that this interpretation of the name is more likely.
13 Condamin, *From Laos to Mon*, p. 113, defines *tao* as ‘a noble, a man belonging to the aristocratic class’. The corruption of *tao to tu* is not an isolated event, it also occurred in the old Chinese name for the mangosteen *tu-nien-tsü* 熊念子 noted in *LPL* ch.2 p.10, as a corruption of the name *tso-nien-tsü* 傣念子. A fanciful explanation is given for the origin of the name, ‘to pinch upside down’ (*tao-nien* 傣念) referring to the way the fruit is eaten holding on to the peduncle.
various small chiefdoms were in competition with each other, uniting sometimes against each other or in a show of military strength against Chinese administrative centres. Just how large these assembled war parties were can be estimated from scattered records. In the lands between Ho-p’u and the Red River Plain, the Li and Lao chiefstains of Shih-ch’i 石砲 14 provided 5,000 to 6,000 troops to help the rebel Lu Hsün attack Tu Hui-tu in 411. In the seventh century *tung* that were furthest from imperial administrative centres, were capable of raising armies of thousands. In 631 Fêng Ang led 20,000 troops against a rebellion in the Luo and Tou *tung* in which the rebel forces numbered in the tens of thousands, and during which his troops took a thousand heads. 15 Over 7,000 men and women were said to have been captured during a battle with the same *tung* in 640. 16 War parties numbering in the thousands probably involved alliances of many *tung*.

_Tung and Tu-lao in Retrospect_

Comparing the records of the *tu-lao* back to Han times, there are many similarities between them and the local ruling class in the Red River plain, who were also in possession of bronze drums. Those ‘selected by popular sentiment’ as the leaders for their time were common throughout the Two Rivers Region, and such rulers seem to have been able to raise large forces from disparate areas in very short periods of time. In 40 CE, the Chêng (Trung) Sisters of the Red River Plain were supported in their uprising by the people of Ho-p’u, Chiu-chên and Jih-nan. In 178 CE the Wu-hu Man of Chiao-chih and Ho-p’u rebelled, sparking off a rebellion against the Han which involved tens of thousands of people in all the commanderies to their south and west and which lasted four years. 17 They called up several tens of thousands of people of Chiu-chên and Jih-nan to attack and destroy commanderies and counties. 18 As mentioned previously, it is extremely unlikely that the Wu-hu of Ho-p’u and the people of Chiu-chên and the Red River Plain belonged to the same linguistic group. The widespread support for these uprisings beyond the boundaries of linguistic groups and local political structures may be evidence of what O.W. Wolters believed to be a

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14 SS 92: 5a.
15 HTS 110: 2a.
16 HTS 222c: 19a.
17 HHS 86: 14a.
18 HHS 8: 10a.
characteristic of Southeast Asian societies’ selection of leaders: ‘an indifference towards lineage descent and identification of personal achievement in each generation’. General Ma Yuan’s conquest of the Chêng (Trung) Sisters in 43 CE resulted in the destruction of this style of leadership in the Red River plain, and from that year onwards this region was ruled by titled officials in the same manner to other provinces of the Han Empire.

By the time P’ei Yuan wrote his description of bronze drum-owning chieftains, almost four centuries had passed since the extinction of this style of leader in the Red River Plain. The only leadership within living memory by this time in Chiao-chou held Chinese titles such as inspector and governor, and it is unlikely that anything was remembered about the former rulers there except in the remotest of legends. Since no such destruction occurred in the Li-Lao country, the bronze drum-owning tu-lao were able to outlive the native rulers of the Red River Plain by more than half a millennium. They were to meet their end in a different manner that did not involve any great upheaval or large-scale military action on the part of their conquerors. It was slow, localised, and demanded many concessions from the side of the imperial administrations.

Han to Chin: Proto-Commanderies and Left-hand Commanderies

How the Chinese empires initially gained the support of non-Sinitic local rulers was through a process of incorporating them into their own administrative systems whilst still guaranteeing their leaders rule over their own people. A continued policy of Chinese empires in the Two Rivers region (and elsewhere) was to allow local leaders to remain in control of their own chiefdoms or kingdoms, ritually investing them with imperial authority over their own people in exchange for their recognition of the superiority of the empire, tribute products or some kind of taxation. Such leaders were given seals and ribbons and ceremonial clothing as emblems of authority, and in later

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19 ‘Two sets of widespread cultural features which gave it a distinctive configuration. The first inherited from prehistory, comprised cognatic systems of kinship, indifference towards lineage descent, and therefore attached significance to identifying personal achievement in each generation’. Wolters, History, Culture and Region, p. 151.
periods they were allowed to take certain administrative titles. Yoshikai Masato has concluded from his study of Nan Yüeh-period seals found throughout the Two Rivers area that the Nan Yüeh kingdom practised this method of government in its outlying territories in which case later Empires were merely continuing a successful Nan-Yüeh policy. The practice went by many different names in different periods, in the pre-T’ang period the most common terms for administrative units based on it were ‘proto-commandery’ (ch’u-chüن 初郡), ‘dependent state’ (shu-kuo 屬國), and ‘left-hand commandery’ (ts‘o-chüん 左郡). During the T’ang it became known as ‘halter-and-bridle’ (chi-mi 磨馬) and the administrative units as ‘halter and bridle provinces’ (chi-mi-chou 磨馬州). ‘Loose control’ is probably a good covering description for all of these terms.

Details are scarce about the Two Rivers region during the Western Han (206 BCE-9 CE), but in most areas throughout the region local rulers seem to have continued to rule their own people and were recognised as the legitimate rulers of the area within units known as ‘proto-commanderies’. Szü-ma Ch’ien recorded that following the Han conquest of the Two Rivers region and the ‘barbarians of the south-west’ (Hsi nan yi 西南夷) in 111 BCE the Han Empire founded seventeen proto-commanderies in these territories distributed from the west of P’an-yü (Canton) to the south of Shu (Szechwan). Szü-ma Ch’ien also noted that the proto-commanderies were ‘governed in accordance with their old customs and were not subject to tax or corvee’. Three commanderies that are now in Vietnamese territory (Chiao-chih, Chiu-chên, and Jih-nan) were also given this status, but this was not exceptional. No special status was given to the areas of the Two Rivers region that were to eventually become Vietnamese that was not given to the rest of the region.

20 HHS 86: 2b-36b. records seven incidences of the Han Empire bestowing seals and ribbons (yin-shou 印授) on local leaders in this manner including those on the borders of Jih-nan, and those to the north of the Two Rivers region including Yeh-lang and Ch’ang-sha.
22 For a good overview of these systems throughout this period up to Sung times and their fundamental similarities, see Okuda Kōji 間田宏二, Chang kuo hua nan min tsu shê hui shih yen chiu 中國西南民族社會史研究, translated by Chao Ling-chih 趙令志 and Li Té-lung 李德龍, Peking, Min tsu ch’u pan shè. 2002 pp.1-18
23 SC 30:18a-b. For a detailed study on the ‘first time commanderies’ see Hu Shao-hua 胡紹華, Chang kuo nan fang min tsu shih yén chiu 中國南方民族史研究, Peking: Min tsu ch’u pan shè, 2004 pp. 34-46
Although the proto-commanderies were said to be exempt from taxation and corvée labour, this did not mean that they were exempt from the payment of tribute. Local leaders were responsible for collection of revenue for the empire in their own districts through local tribute products. Nor were native rulers left completely to rule their own people by themselves; in the heavily-populated regions of the Red River Plain and to the south, the Han was already sending officials to rule in parallel to local leaders, and the power struggle between the appointees from the north and the local ruling class was one of the contributing factors to the Chêng (Trưng) Sisters’ uprising of 40 CE.

There is no record of when the system of proto-commanderies was finally abandoned, but in the Red River Plain it almost certainly disappeared with Ma Yüan’s destruction of the native leadership, as subsequent administration of this area was the responsibility of appointed officials. Regular records of named Han administrators begin near the end of the Western Han, which suggests that rule of the commandery centres was beginning to pass out of the hands of locals at around this time. The major difference between the Red River Plain and the rest of the Two Rivers region was that Han administrative units in the Red River Plain were concentrated in great number together on the large plain, whereas administrative units in the rest of the region were isolated from one another and strung out along major river courses. Further away from these rivers were a few isolated outposts, but there were massive empty areas and this probably reflects the same situation that as T'ao Huang noted for the Wu, namely that most of the actual population of the area still lived outside the imperial administrative system.

Administrative incorporation of areas between the Two Rivers that were peripheral to the main Han administrative centres does not seem to have begun until the second half of the second century CE. Initially it involved the creation of administrative units (counties) within the territory of ‘barbarian’ groups controlled by their own rulers. The earliest example of this in the Li-Lao country concerns the area up the Yū River south west from the seat of Yū-lin commandery (modern Kuei-p’ing 桂平). The Hou Han shu records that in 170 CE, Ku Yung 谷永 governor of Yū-lin, gained the submission of over 100,000 Wu-hu people through his ‘kindness and trustworthiness’

24 The first recorded administrator in the Red River Plain, for example, was Hsi Kuang 西光 who served as inspector during the reign of Emperor P'ingg (1-5 CE) HHS 76.6b.
and proceeded to found seven counties on their territory and gave them hats and sashes. No records exist of the names of the seven counties or where they were founded but a T'ang commentator notes that they were in Yü-lin County belonging to Kuei-chou (modern Kuei County). Only six counties are recorded for Yü-lin commandery under the Wu, a reduction from the Han total of twelve. Despite the creation of the seven counties in Yü-lin, the territory covered by the Han commandery shows a decrease in registered population between the Western Han census of 2 CE and the Western Chin census of 280 (unfortunately no figures are available from the Eastern Han census of 140 CE). Since they were unnamed and uncounted, it is likely that these counties were not actually a properly functioning part of the imperial administrative system. As in the proto-commanderies political power probably remained in the hands of their local leaders, the only difference being that this was no longer part of a region-wide policy but rather a small-scale and localised affair.

The foundation by the Wu Empire of Chiu-tè (九德) commandery in the lands to the south of the Red River Plain a century later seems to have run along similar lines. According the Shui ching chu this area was once ruled by a Man barbarian named Lu Yu (盧暑). He was succeeded by his son Pao Kang (寶網) whose clan then ‘followed Wu to be transformed’. After this, the area was made into Chiu-tè Commandery and made subordinate to Wu. Although no date is attached to this record, a comparison with other texts makes it clear that Pao Kang’s eagerness to follow Wu had a lot to do with the military campaigns carried out by T'ao Huang, governor of Chiao-chou, against neighbouring groups of people. Wu-p'ing (武平 Commandery was founded after his military conquest on the territory of the Fu-yen barbarians (Fu yen yi 扶閩夷) in 271

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25 HHS 86; 14a. Obviously not all of the Wu-hu were happy with such arrangements, as the great rebellion of Wu-hu of 178 occurred only eight years after the foundation of these counties.
26 TPHYC 166: 11a. Although no record exists of these counties, comparison of the geographical treatises in the HHS 23: 21b and CS 15: 9b show that in the area that was the Han commandery of Yü-lin four counties were lost and eleven were gained. Only the location of one of these new counties is known, at Yü-p'ing (modern Kui County). A comparison of locations and names of counties that appear in the Hou Han shu geography based on the census of 140 CE with those of the new counties in the Chin shu geography dating from 280 CE seems to point towards the location of the counties in the area around the confluence of the Yü and T'an Rivers close to the seat of Yü-lin Commandery.
27 Liao, Li shih ii li hsueh pp. 115-116; 122-3
28 The territory of Yü-lin commandery in the Western Han census corresponds to that of Yü-lin and Kui-Lin Commanderies under the Chin. The figure for the households in the Western Han census of 2 CE (HS 28b: 10a-11b.) gives a household count of 12,415 compared to 8,000 for Yü-lin and Kui-Lin Commanderies combined in 280 (CS 15: 9b.).
29 SCC ch.36 p.1136
CE. Its establishment is noted in another text as connected to the foundation of Chiu-tê and Hsin-ch'ang 新昌 Commanderies. It was noted that before T'ao Huang made war on these areas, 'the lands that are now Wu-p'ing, Chiu-tê and Hsin-chang were steep and cut off, the Yi and Lao were stubborn and intractable and had not submitted for successive generations'. The foundation of Chiu-tê does not appear to have transformed Pao Kang's homeland into an ordinary functioning part of the Wu Empire. Ten years later in the Chin census of 280, no registered households were recorded in Chiu-tê suggesting that it existed initially as a commandery in name only and that the Chin administration did not or could not actually collect taxes there.

T'ao Huang's military campaigns leading to the establishment of the three new commanderies in 271 also resulted in the foundation of the dependent state of Chiu-chên and over thirty counties within it. This is significant as the first record for the Two Rivers region of a new type of administrative practice for dealing with non-Sinitic peoples. A dependent state (shu kuo 屬國) referred to 'non-Chinese states or peoples that accepted China's overlordship and submitted to the Chinese ruler'. Two of these are recorded for the Two Rivers region and both were attached to commanderies, one to Chiu-chên and the other to Ho-p'u. The location of the dependent state of Chiu-chên is unknown, and like Ku Yung's seven counties, the more than thirty counties mentioned as founded in the state do not seem to have been part of the functioning administrative system of the Chin. The Chin shu geography records only seven counties for Chiu-chên Commandery, suggesting again that these new counties were led by their own rulers and were different from the tax-paying counties in the Red River plain. The dependent state of Ho-p'u has a more obscure history. It was a small area along the Yü River at the northern end of the Ning-p'u Pass (modern Hêng County), and three early texts give three contradictory names and dates. Defenders were appointed to dependent states as

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30 SS 38: 40b. The commandery founded in this area was given the name Wu-p'ing 呉平 meaning 'militarily pacified'.
31 CS 57: 5b.
32 CS 16: 9a.
33 CS 57: 5b. Taylor construes this passage as meaning that the thirty counties were established in the three new prefectures but neglects to mention that they were within a dependent state.
34 Definition from Hacker, Dictionary of Official Titles p. 435: 'a reference to non-Chinese states or peoples that accepted China's overlordship and submitted to the Chinese ruler'.
35 SS 38: 38a quotes three sources: a T'ai-k'ang Geography (T'ai k'ang ti chih 太康地志, usually known as T'ai k'ang ti chi 太康地記) which noted that there was a dependent state of Ho-p'u there that survived until 286 when it was changed into Ning-p'u Commandery. Chang Po's Wu lu ti chi chih noted that a
well as to ordinary commanderies, and the post of defender of Northern Ho-p’u was probably filled by imperial appointees to ensure that the Ning-p’u Pass to Chiao-chou was kept open. The subsequent transformation from dependent state into Ning-p’u commandery at this time is part of a larger trend of expansion of imperial rule during the first decades of Chin rule in the T’ai-kang period (280-289) upstream along the Yü River reversing a long decline of imperial control since the Western Han. Chin-hsing 晉興 Commandery was founded in the area of what is now Nanning, and this the first time since the Han that any administrative unit had been founded to the west of Ling-fang 聯方 county (present-day Pin-yang in Kwangsi). As for administrative units to incorporate Li and Lao groups, Ting-liu 丁留 county, somewhere in Ts’ang-wu commandery was founded in 318, established as a result of the submission of the Man and Yi people of Ts’ang-wu. Another example of incorporation from around the same time was of the ‘bandit leader’ of Kao-liang, Ch’ien Po 錢搏 who in 291 surrendered to Lü Tai 呂岱, inspector of Chiao-chou and was subsequently given the title of protector of the western region of Kao-liang commandery.

Administrative incorporation of the Li and Lao as practiced from the Han to the Chin was initially to re-name areas controlled by well-disposed local leaders as, proto-commanderies, counties, or dependent states. This gave local leaders the legitimacy and prestige that came with the link to powerful outsiders, but without giving them the same administrative responsibilities as the appointed magistrates of true counties. In the six centuries from the first conquest of the Li-Lao country south of the Yü River this practice was carried out only within the areas close to imperial administrative centres. Judging by the few records and the number of empty spaces on map of Chin administrative units, Li and Lao away from the main river courses and cities still functioned according to their own rules under their own leaders. Judging by their spread and numbers, bronze drums remained a more important status symbol in these areas.

defender (tu-wei 都尉) or commander of military forces had been posted to the area, named as ‘defender of Northern Ho-p’u’ since 269, and an anonymous *Kuang chou chi* 廣州記 that states that a county was created there in 217 CE.

36 SS 38: 32b says it was founded in 318, but Pai Yao-t’ien makes a convincing argument for the earlier date 白鶴天 1997 Chin chih chin hsing chin k’ao 魏晉齊興郡時間考 in: *Kuang hsi ti fang chih* 1997. no.1 pp. 46-9.

37 SS 38: 25b.

38 SKC 60:8a-b.
than the seals, ribbons, or titles handed out to the Li and Lao who lived closer to the large rivers.

Sung to Sui – from Special Units to Grades of Administration

The Liu-Sung continued the expansion of administrative units up smaller watercourses further into the Li-Lao country. The new province of Yüeh-chou was founded in 471 from the eastern reaches of Chiao-chou and ruled from the Ho-p’u area. The foundation of the province is more connected to military campaigns against the Li-Lao than incorporation through administration, so it will be discussed in the following chapter. Under the Liu-Sung a new way of incorporating local rulers into the administrative system was to create ‘left-hand commanderies’ (tsao-chun 左郡) and ‘left-hand counties’ (tsao-hsien 左縣) which were auxiliary administrative units adjacent to ordinary commanderies and counties but ruled by local rulers. The Nan ch’i shu records five special commanderies for Lao, the lao-chün 猴郡 in the valleys of the upper Yangtze, but there is only one named case of a special unit in the Two Rivers region, somewhere in Yüeh-chou, a ‘Li commandery’ (li-chün 俚郡) named Wu-ch’ün 吳春 and founded in 488. Its actual location has been lost. It did not contain any subordinate counties, suggesting that it was of a similar status to the dependent states of the Wu and Chin, untaxed and ruled by local leaders.

The Southern Dynasties marked the end of specially-named administrative units for the Li and Lao From this time onwards, there is a distinction made only between ordinary units of administration such as counties and commanderies, and the independent chiefdoms – the tung. However, this distinction gives no indication of the nature of the rulers. When the term tung is mentioned it is safe to assume that we are dealing with a text relating to Li and Lao, but the status of local administrators is much less clear. This situation was the result of a long-term trend of extension of administrative appointments to Li-Lao rulers. The Sui shu treatise on food and goods

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39 Kawahara Masahiro 河原正博, Kan minzoku Kanan hattenshi kenkyū 漢民族華南發展史研究, Tokyo, Yoshikawa Kōbunshan, 1984 pp 65-81. Kawahara explains the system in great detail, but his conclusion that tsao 左 derives from the name of the old kingdom of Ch’u 楚 seems a little far-fetched.

40 NCS 15:29a/b.

41 NCS 14:28a.
offers a description of the usual policy for Li-Lao chieftains under the Southern Dynasties:

The customs south of the Yangtze are fire-ploughing and water-weeding, the earth is poor and wet and the and there are no assets of farm-animals. All the Man hide in Li grottoes. From those who have become civilized, tribute is collected according to their level, to provide for the state, then there are the chieftains from beyond the passes who, on account of the abundance of slaves, pearls, rhinoceros and elephants, are the masters of their small domains. Because of this the imperial courts gave many of them temporary appointments to obtain benefits from them. Throughout the Sung, Ch’i, Liang and Ch’èn this was the case and was not reformed.\footnote{SuS 24: 3b.}

‘Chieftains from beyond the passes’ is a reference to the Li-Lao rulers of the Two Rivers region.\footnote{Because this referred to the land ‘beyond the Passes’ both Katakura, ‘Chūgoku shihaika no beironamu’ p. 31, and Liu, Pel shu shih tai ti yieh ran, p. 99, believed that this system was relevant to the discussion of situation in the Red River plain, however, ‘chieftain’ was a term confined to those who did not have political legitimacy in the eyes of the court and was not applied to the rulers of the Red River Plain.} Their economic strength as the proprietors of luxury goods enabled them both to remain ‘masters of their small domains’ and to gain temporary appointments from the southern dynasties in exchange for the supply of such goods. Precisely which goods the Li-Lao were trading and where they were getting them will be discussed in chapter six, but for the moment let us consider the effect of this practice on Li-Lao leadership in general.

This administrative incorporation of the Li-Lao chieftains was not a conquest which deprived the Li-Lao leadership of legitimacy or assimilated them to Sinitic models of behaviour. It was a symbiotic arrangement that cemented the Li-Lao chieftains in power over their own districts, and allowing them to become richer and more influential in their own areas at a time when the imperial military machine and dynastic government were weak. Side-effects of this relationship for the Li-Lao seem to have been the growth of inherited rule rather than the popular selection of rulers based on popular choice, and an increase in the territory under the control of a single chief. By the beginning of the seventh century it is evident that people known as Li-Lao rulers
had become local dynasties ruling over territories the size of provinces (chou). Unlike the nameless Wu-hu chiefs of old, by the beginning of the seventh century members of these dynasties were the powerful heads of well-known local clans and it was essential for the imperial court to gain their co-operation in order to have passage through their territory, obtain sought-after luxury items, and avoid armed conflict. This is confirmed by descriptions of Sui and T'ang dealings with the Li and Lao south of the Yü River. Up until the middle of the seventh century there were regular insurrections in this area, even though it was not classed as newly-conquered territory. The last great administrative expansion into the heart of the Li-Lao country south of the Yü River had occurred one hundred years during the third decade of the reign of Emperor Wu of the Liang (r.502-550) and its military underpinnings are detailed in the following chapter. Map Four, showing the commanderies founded at that time, seems to leave few gaps for the Li-Lao tung even in the mountainous areas between modern Pei-liu and Hsin-i. Nevertheless, forty years after the end of Emperor Wu's reign, the Sui Empire, although strong enough to conquer the Ch'ên, was still reliant on the co-operation of powerful local leaders to gain control of the area, and sixty years later the T'ang still had problems controlling the Li and Lao there.

There is a discrepancy between the increase and spread of administrative units in the Li-Lao country and the lack of efficacy of the central administration there which can be explained by the manner in which the increase in units came about and the way administrators were chosen for new units. As far as the number and spread of administrative units is concerned, the reign of Emperor Wu was a time of great expansion. The number of provinces in the Liang Empire in 511 had increased to 107 by the end of the Ta-t'ung 大同 period. (535-546). 44 Liao Yu-hua believed that administrative expansion under the Liang was more of a cosmetic measure than a necessity, since the number of administrative units at the sub-commandery level (particularly counties) showed no substantial increase. 45 He quotes Li Po-yao 李百藥, author of the Pei ch'i shu who wryly commented that provinces were founded for towns of one hundred houses and commanderies founded for three households to inflate

44 Sus 29: 2a-b.
45 Liao, Li shih ti li hsien p. 71. In the Red River Plain the number of commanderies remained unchanged but the number of counties decreased from thirty to twenty-seven (see table in Holmgren, Chinese Colonisation, p.169) note that Holmgren uses the term prefecture rather than county.
their number'. A reorganisation of provinces carried out in 539 at the request of senior recorder Chu I supports Liao’s belief to a certain degree. In that year Chu I submitted a memorial to the throne requesting the division of provinces into five different grades. It is clear from this memorial that by the sixth century the term ‘province’ no longer referred to units of uniform size, and that Chu I merely wished to recognize this formally in administrative regulations. The specifications for the upper four grades of province are not given in the record of the memorial, but the following text gives details about the lowest grade of province, of which there were to be twenty-one:

At that time they [the Liang Empire] had just been concerned with military campaigns to enlarge the borders, crossing the Huai and Ju in the north, defending P’êng-ch’êng in the east, opening up Tsang-k’o in the west and pacifying the Li tung in the south. There was an abundance of disorder, so Chu I asked that they should be divided up. The provinces of the lowest grade were all occupied by foreigners (i kuo chih jên 異國之人). Where provinces existed in name only and had no territory, or at villages where the people of the wild borderlands dwell, provinces, commanderies and counties were founded employing their own people as governors, prefects, and magistrates.

So the lowest grade of province was to be found around the ‘wild borderlands’ or where foreigners dwelt. The mention of the opening up of Tsang-k’o and the pacification of the Li tung confirms that it was in these areas that most of the lowest-grade provinces were concentrated, as the northern and eastern campaigns were carried out against the armies of the northern dynasties with the hope regaining control of the old Chinese cultural heartland, not against the ‘people of the wild borderlands’. Most significantly it is clear that these provinces were not to be controlled by officials sent from Chien-k’ang, but by local leaders themselves. This is the key to understanding the continuation of independent Li-Lao power structures over the following century-and-a-half.

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46 PCS 4:25b.
47 TCTC 158: 4903-4. The commentary adds ‘this means they employed local people from the area’.
In the Two Rivers region, Emperor Wu’s reign saw an increase of provinces from four to thirteen. South of the Yü River three of the new provinces (Luo-chou, Shuang-chou, and Chien-chou) were closer to the heart of the bronze drum country than any previous administrative centre. Aside from provinces, the Liang founded many new commanderies south of the Yü River, perhaps as many as eighteen. The two significant commanderies were Liang-tê 粱德 commandery and Chien-ling 建陵 commandery, both of which were well within the area where Heger type II drum finds are concentrated. Taking the numbers of new administrative units at face value would seem to represent a consolidation of Liang power upstream along smaller rivers towards the last Li-Lao chiefdoms, but the details of Chu I’s administrative reform show the actual workings of the Liang administrative system towards the Li and Lao was much the same as the systems of administrative incorporation carried out by previous empires, and it had similar results. Several characteristics of the new commanderies founded by the Liang between the Two Rivers made them different from those of other areas and eras. They were much smaller than the units of identical name under previous dynasties, and many contained only a single subordinate county, and many were in territory not previously subject to any administrative unit. Similar to the dependent states and counties founded by earlier empires and ruled by local rulers, many of the new commanderies founded by the Liang south of the Yü River were also short-lived and were downgraded to counties after the Sui conquest as the Sui made the commandery the new basic unit of local administration to replace the province or chou. It is significant that in the heart of the Li-Lao country some commanderies were not merely downgraded but abandoned altogether although some were reinstated as counties under the T’ang. The ephemeral nature of these commanderies, their later history as centres

48 Since no geographical treatise survives from Liang times this figure is an approximation based on PLCYC pp.4893-905
49 YTKC 37: 3b.
50 SuS 31: 11a.
51 Liao, Li shih ti li hsueh pp. 67-71. Single-county commanderies were especially common in the land between the Lei-chou Peninsula and the south bank of the Yü River. Kao-chou 廈州 had six out of a total of eleven, to its north, all three commanderies subordinate to Shuang-chou 灬州 were single-county commanderies, and the entire province of Luo-chou to its west consisted of a single commandery containing one county. In contrast, the reduced province of Kuang-chou 倉州 which by the end of the Liang only controlled the area around Canton, contained five subordinate commanderies with a combined total of twenty-eight subordinate counties.
52 Some examples: Liang founded Nan-pu 南浦 commandery to the west of the present-day city of Kao-chou, which was downgraded to a county under the Sui (TMTC 81: 23b). K’ai-yang 開陽 and
of Li-Lao rebellion and the fact that they contained only single counties suggests that these areas were also part of the system of temporary appointments described in the Sui shu as the usual policy of the Chien-k’ang Empires towards local chieftains.

Results of Administrative Incorporation
The long-term result of the policies of administrative incorporation was a change in the way the Li-Lao governed themselves. From the third century onwards the leaders of Li-Lao societies south of the Yü River gradually shifted from complete independence to containment within a system of temporary appointments, which finally led to a system based on hereditary rule over defined territories that reached its peak under the Sui and early T’ang. As Li-Lao leaders were increasingly named with official titles and their territories corresponded to or were part of imperial administrative units, it became harder for those who described them to distinguish them from the local ruling class whose ancestors were of northern Sinic extraction. The similarity of the Li-Lao leadership to the local Chinese ruling classes did not mean that Li-Lao rulers were cooperative; on the contrary, in the later Six Dynasties period title seldom dictated behaviour, and they seem to be as fond of rebellion and warfare as their Chinese counterparts. There were also Li and Lao who were outside the administrative systems and still appeared in texts with titles that implied their political illegitimacy within the imperial administrative system, such as ‘leader’ or ‘chief’ most of whom were on the receiving end of imperial military campaigns.

Administrative Change from the Chinese Side
The merging of some Li and Lao political structures into imperial administrative practices can be read as a step on the one-way street towards eventual assimilation to Chinese norms of government, as can the confusion discussed in the previous chapter, between who was Li or Lao and who was simply a ‘person’ or ‘subject’. To view this transformation solely as a result of change amongst the Li and Lao neglects the changes

commandery south of present-day Liao-ting was abandoned completely by the Sui (TMITC 81: 13b.)
Another abandoned commandery was Hai-ch’ang 海昌 (SuS 31: 9b.) which lay very close to the heartland of the bronze drum producing area, inland from modern Mao-ming city.
that occurred over the same period in Chinese administrative practices. It was not merely a case of the Li and Lao leaders looking more like Chinese administrators, but also of the Chinese administrators looking more like Li and Lao leaders to a point that they became difficult to distinguish. As Li and Lao political structures grew in size, the Chinese commanderies and provinces shrank. As families of Li and Lao chieftains were given imperial titles and were recognised as hereditary rulers over certain areas by the Southern Dynasties, inspectorates and governorships began to be inherited within local powerful families rather than appointed from outside, especially in the Red River plain. The imperial courts were forced to rely on the co-operation of these local dynasties for economic and political control of areas outside the immediate vicinity of Chien-k’ang, just as they were forced to rely on the Li and Lao chieftains for the supply of local products. These changes not only made chieftains look like governors, they also made governors look like chieftains.

First, there is the question of size. By the mid-sixth century a province (chou 州) referred to an administrative unit only a fraction of the size of its Han namesake, and some commanderies had shrunk to the size of large tung. As noted above, under the Southern Dynasties and particularly the Liang there was a proliferation in the number of new provinces. A province in the Han administrative system had no similarly-sized equivalent under the Liang system, but the name of the primary unit of local government, the chou, remained unchanged until it was abolished under the Sui in 583. Under the Han, the single province of Chiao-chou encompassed the entire Two Rivers region, but by the mid-sixth century there were nineteen provinces covering the same area. South of the Yü River there were more provinces in the area covered by Ho-p’u commandery in Han times than there had been counties subordinate to the commandery under the Han.53 What this meant was that sixth century inspectors of provinces (ts’i-ših 刺史) and especially commandery governors (t’ai-shou 太守) had authority over much smaller areas than those who had held the same titles under the Han. In Han times, commanderies would have dwarfed tiny tung chieftoms, but by the sixth century some of them had become comparable in size. As previously mentioned, by the sixth century names for administrative units no longer indicated an equal administrative status. Some

53 HS 28b: 11a. In 2 CE Ho-p’u Commandery had only five subordinate counties, but by 550 the same area contained seven provinces – Yüeh-chou 戀州, Lu-chou 霸州, Ho-chou 合州, An-chou 安州, Huang-chou 荒州, Shuang-chou 瀛州 and Kao-chou 高州.
provinces were large, populous and contained many subordinate commanderies and counties. Within the provinces, commanderies were similarly varied in their sizes and functions; some contained over ten subordinate counties, and others only single counties.\textsuperscript{54} The basic pattern of distribution was that the commanderies in provinces near to older established administrative centres in the Two Rivers region (Kuang-chou, Kao-liang, Ho-p‘u, Chiao-chou) had many subordinate counties and resembled more closely the administrative pattern of the areas around the imperial capital Chien-k‘ang. Those remote from such centres, and especially those that were distant from the main river courses and contained only one or two counties, came to look close to the \textit{tung} in size, location, and function.

Second, there was a shift from appointments to inherited administrative positions. In the Two Rivers region under the Han, the high-level positions of inspector and governor were mostly held by outsiders and there was a clear-cut distinction between holders of imperial authority and local barbarian chiefs. However, after Han times it became increasingly common for administrative positions to be inherited within powerful families local to the area, with the agreement of the imperial court. The inheritance of positions within powerful local families was a common practice throughout the Chin Empire and the early Liu-Sung. In reference to the situation in the Red River plain, Holmgren calls this ‘a semi-independent Vietnemised bureaucracy with hereditary privileges’ and notes that the process of their creation began with the Shih family in the third century.\textsuperscript{55} Shih Hsieh士燮 (173-226), who ruled the Red River Plain during the chaotic period from the downfall of the Han, was written into Vietnamese national histories of later periods as a specifically Vietnamese character. However, the Shih family did not come from the Red River Plain, nor was their influence limited to within the boundaries of present-day Vietnam. In the early third century, members of the Shih clan also controlled areas of what is now China. Even though his father had served as governor of Jih-nan Commandery in the far south, he himself did not begin his life in the Red River plain, but in Kuang-hsin, the commandery seat of Ts‘ang-wu. His brother Shih I士壹 had control over Ho-p‘u, and

his next eldest brother, Shih Wei 士雋, was originally county magistrate of Hsū-wên before Shih Hsieh appointed him as governor of Chiu-chên. Shih Hsieh also made his youngest brother Shih Wu 士武 governor of Nan-hai (Canton).  

The development of such localised hereditary bureaucracies was not confined to the Red River plain, but was part of a larger trend in imperial politics from the fall of the Western Han onwards which began to favour hereditary privilege over merit for the selection of official posts. The development of local gubernatorial dynasties was a typical feature of imperial rule throughout the entire Two Rivers region from the third century up until the end of the fifth century, and many of the families Holmgren and Taylor mention as ‘Vietnamised’ actually held positions throughout the whole of the Two Rivers region, not just in the area that became Vietnam. In addition to the Red River plain, they held positions in future Chinese areas such as Ts'ang-wu, Ho-p'u and Nan-hai. Referring to these families as ‘Vietnamised’ is therefore not only anachronistic but also geographically inaccurate. Some examples of localised families in the Two Rivers region are the the T'ao, the Tu and the T'êng.

The T'ao 陶 family was the most politically influential family in the Red River Plain in the second half of the third century, and four generations served as inspectors of Chiao-chou. T'ao Chi 陶基 had been inspector of Chiao-chou under the Wu, his son T'ao Huang 陶璜, T'ao Huang’s son T'ao Wei 陶威, younger son T'ao Shu 陶淑, and T'ao Wei’s son T'ao Sui 陶綏 all served as inspectors of Chiao-chou. However, like the Shih family, members of the family held posts outside the Red River Plain in Kuang-chou. Both T'ao Huang and his son T'ao Wei served as governors of Ts'ang-wu Commandery, so although the later members of the family became settled in the Red River plain, the two middle generations were also connected to Ts'ang-wu.

The Tu 杜 family held the post of inspectorate of Chiao for three generations over twenty-eight years from 399 to 427. This family was much more localised in the Red River Plain than the aforementioned two families. Tu Yüan 杜瑗 was officially inspector of Chiao Province for ten years from 399, but had probably held de facto

56 SKC 49: 9a-b.
57 CS 57: 4b-6b.
power since around 380.\(^{58}\) His ancestor Tu Yüan 杜元 was said to have served as governor of Ning-p’u. Tu Yüan’s son Tu Hui-tu 杜慧度 was born in the Red River Plain and served as inspector of Chiao-chou there for over a decade until his death, and his son Tu Hung-wên 杜弘文 also served in the post. Some time during his father’s tenure as inspector, Tu Hung-wên led an army of 3,000 soldiers to Canton with the intention of aiding in a campaign against the Northern Wei in Luo-yang, and later in 427, despite ill health, he set off to court when summoned and died during the journey at Canton.\(^{59}\) These two events show that even after generations in the Red River Plain the Tu did not necessarily think of themselves as outside the imperial administrative system.

The T’êng 滕 family were a localized family of Kuang-chou. T’êng Hsiu 滕修 was twice inspector of Kuang-chou under the Wu. His grandson T’êng K’an 滕含 was inspector of Kuang-chou and K’an’s nephew T’êng Tun-chih 滕遵之 was sent to serve as inspector of Chiao-chou in 380 but was supposedly prevented from taking up office there by a local named Li Hsün 李遯 (Lý Tôn).\(^{60}\) There were many more families such as these in the Two Rivers region in the fourth century.\(^{61}\)

Hereditary dynasties of governors began to spring up in Kuang-chou area during the same period as in Chiao-chou, although their inheritance of positions seldom reached to four generations like that of the T’ao. At the same time it is important to note that control through localised dynasties, although a growing trend from the end of the Han onwards, was not constant; there were also periods in which governors and inspectors were appointed who do not seem to have come from localised families. From 269 to 322 the position of inspector of Chiao-chou lay mostly in the hands of localised families, the T’ao and the Ku, and the Tu family controlled the post from 399 to 427. But in the gap from 322 until 399 there was a succession of ten court appointees who do not follow this pattern,\(^{62}\) although Holmgren suggests that they were mainly sent to deal

\(^{58}\) Holmgren, *Chinese Colonisation*, p.123

\(^{59}\) SS 92: 9a-8b.

\(^{60}\) Taylor, *Birth*, p. 110.

\(^{61}\) Hu, *Lîng nàn ku shih*, pp. 130-49 lists a Hsiu family, a Wang family, and two Liu families, the members of which inherited positions in the Pearl River drainage area in the fourth century.

\(^{62}\) Holmgren, *Chinese Colonisation*, p. 116. The ten listed in Holmgren’s table are Wang Liang 王嶽, Liang Shao 梁頡 (Holmgren romanises this as Liang Shih), T’ao K’an 陶侃, Juan Fang 阮放, Chang Lien 張瓊, Chiang Chuang 姜壯, Chu Fan 朱蕃, Yang P’ing 楊平, Juan Fu 阮敷, and Wên Fang-chih 溫放之.
with the Chams, and that the real control of the area lay with the great families rather than the appointees from outside. In a later period the composition of leadership in the Red River Plain began to diverge further from that of Kuang-chou, this occurred only in the late fifth century.

By this time Kuang-chou was usually ruled by non-hereditary appointees posted from Chien-k’ang and increasingly by members of the imperial household of each dynasty, whereas the Red River area came ever-increasingly under control of powerful local families. Despite their local power base, these local leaders do not seem to have been interested in leading the people of the Red River Plain as kings or emperors. Even those celebrated as national heroes in later Vietnamese histories, such as Li Ch’ang-jên 李長仁 (Lý Trường Nhân) and his cousin Li Shu-hsien 李叔獻 (Lý Thúc Hiền), were only interested in imperial recognition of their self-appointment as inspectors of Chiao-chou, and Li Shu-hsien was actually eventually granted that post by the Southern Ch’i in 479.

In the sixth century the Liang and Ch’ên Empires were never able to gain firm control over the Red River plain, and the area enjoyed a de facto independence for most of the first half of the sixth century, with a twenty-five-year period (516-541) in which no inspectors were even appointed to the region. Even though rulers of the Red River Plain did enjoy a kind of dynastic status and during the sixth century exceptionally long periods of independence, this should be seen in the context of the general weakness and instability of the short-lived Ch’i, Liang, and Ch’ên Empires, rather than as an indication of the Vietnamese recovering their long-lost independence under new leaders.

The Liang Empire took a different approach to ruling the Two Rivers region by appointing members of the royal house as administrators in the main provincial seats. Eight members of the imperial family were appointed to Kuang-chou as inspectors and governors under the Liang, but it was difficult to do this in the Red River Plain, where local families had developed their own power base in isolation from the rest of the Empire. The imposition of a member of the imperial household in the Red River Plain was met with opposition from the local ruling families. After the twenty-five year period of not appointing inspectors, Hsiao Tzŭ 蕭詗, a nephew of Emperor Wu was

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63 Ibid, pp.121-2
64 For Li Ch’ang-jên, see SS 8: 16b, and for Li Shu-hsien, NCS 2: 6a.
appointed as inspector of Chiao-chou but is said to have lost the hearts of the people through his cruelty and violence, and the famous Li Pi (Lý Bôn) was able to group together the local powerful families of several provinces and lead them in revolt. Li Pi eventually went so far as to declare himself Emperor of Yûeh in 544, but his initial frustrations with the Liang Empire were to due to resentment at his inability to advance in the administrative system.\(^{66}\) It is important to note that Li Pi was not considered a foreigner or a barbarian: in the eyes of those who wrote of his deeds in the Nan chî i chu and Ch'ên shu he appears simply as another rebellious upstart from a regional governing elite who had wished to found his own dynasty. This is typical treatment of administrators from localised families in the Red River plain; whether rebellious or obedient to the court in Chien-k'ang, they were still considered as part of the civilised world by those who wrote about them. They were never referred to as anything other than 'people' (jên) and were usually known by their administrative titles of governor and inspector.

What made the Red River Plain really different from those of the lands close to Chien-k'ang was that they were cut off from the danger of competing with other powerful factions for centuries by the Li and Lao chieftains. In other parts of the empire, families who supported regional upstarts risked attack and punishment by rivals who might act out of their own interests but in the name of loyalty to the emperor. The Red River Plain was fairly rich, self-sufficient in agriculture, and isolated from strong rivals to leadership positions, and the result of this isolation was that local dynasties became more ingrained in the local society and tended to last through more generations than the areas around Canton.

Chinese sources from the later Southern Dynasties usually record only more important appointments in the larger urban centres. In smaller administrative units the picture is less clear. Records survive of the names of Liang inspectors of Kuei-chou, Ting-chou 定州 (former Yûlin), Hsin-chou 新州, Kao-chou 高州 and Kuang-chou, but not of the other smaller provinces. In areas away from the provincial capitals the administration remained in the hands of local families. A record from the Ch'ên shu notes that local government in the south of the Empire had the following characteristics: ‘At the time in the provinces of the south, most of the administrators were village

\(^{66}\) TCTC ch. 158 p. 4909
strongmen who did not obey official decrees, so Emperor Wên sent Hao to control them with the law.\textsuperscript{67} The ‘provinces of the south’ here is almost certainly a reference to the Two Rivers region, since this area made up most of the southern region of the Ch‘ên Empire. In these areas the decline of centralised power is evident in the increased use of local strong families as administrators. Whether these village strongmen were descended from migrants from the north or were Li-Lao chieftains is unclear, as the practice of using members of localised families as officials and giving chieftains official appointments blurred any distinction between the two. The changes in administration and the trend towards hereditary dynasties of governors in the smaller provinces of the Two Rivers region combined with the ‘halter-and-bridle’-style administration adopted by the Southern Dynasties caused a merging of the Li-Lao leadership with the newly migrated leadership. This was very much a meeting in the middle, as neither group was completely swallowed up or transformed into the other. At times when centralised rule was weak, localised families of Sinitic origin would have to rely on the will of the local people for their political legitimacy, and if these local people spoke non-Sinitic languages and had non-Sinitic social customs, it is only natural that their rulers would pick up local traits such as language or displays of prestige such as bronze drums, and in so doing they would become indistinguishable from the Li and Lao chieftains who were at the same time, gradually becoming more like them.

Conclusion

The willingness of local rulers to ally themselves with larger empires has traditionally been interpreted in Chinese scholarship as a result of the prestige of the superior civilisation, and granting of administrative titles and use of ‘halter-and-bridle’-style practices as evidence of the beneficence of imperial power that could use persuasion rather than brute force to gain its ends.

The long-term continued use of such strategies by the Chinese empires in their interactions with the Li and Lao shows that the empires after the Han were too weak to control them directly. Although there must have been prestige attached to the awards of temporary appointments for the Li-Lao chieftains, the need for compromise with the

\textsuperscript{67} ChS 20:6a-b.
powerful local leadership in order to collect the required tribute products gave the ultimate advantage not to the imperial court, but to the Li-Lao chieftains themselves, and it ended up having the opposite results from what was perhaps hoped. From an imperial perspective, this was a chance to tame and civilise, but for the chieftains it was a chance to enrich themselves and consolidate their rule over their own people. By the sixth century, prolonged contact with the imperial administrations resulted in local families whose members were considered civilised enough (and rich enough) for intermarriage with Sinitic people (such as the Fèng and Lady Hsien). In Han times the Li-Lao were utterly beyond the pale, but by the sixth century some of their leaders had gained sufficient respectability and influence that it was impossible to ignore them when attempting to rule the Two Rivers region. Conversely, some families of Han ancestry who had once been quite distinct from the Li and Lao had become so similar in behaviour and status to Li people that outsiders considered them to be Li and Lao.
Map Three: Provincial and commandery centres between the Two Rivers ca. 300 CE

Map Four: Provincial and commandery centres between the Two Rivers ca. 550 CE
Chapter Five: Military Subjugation

Interactions between the Southern Dynasties and the Li and Lao were by no means limited to peaceful integration and co-operation. There are also many records of warfare, but it is significant that these were mostly on a small scale, and ultimately unsuccessful when it came to gaining a permanent foothold for the Southern Dynasties south of the Yü River. Native political structures of the Two Rivers were no match for the military might of the Han Empire. The Han armies conquered further to the south than any of their successors and had the capacity to defeat large and widespread uprisings in the region. The Han focussed on securing the Red River Plain and the regions further south as the gateways to the trade with Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean, but their strategic mistake for the long term to neglect the security of the country that offered them overland access to these gateways at this time of military supremacy. After the fall of the Han, no successor empire had sufficient military power to impose its will on the areas that had been bypassed in the initial expansion to the south. Not only were the post-Han empires smaller and militarily weaker, from the mid-fourth century onwards they also had the added distraction of competing empires to the north, and were more concerned with defending their northern borders or defending themselves from internal military uprisings that threatened to replace the ruling dynasty. From the fifth century onwards, beginning with the rule of the Liu-Sung in the Two Rivers area, the two main trends were: an initial increase in the number of counties and commanderies along rivers to encircle the Li-Lao chieftains and secure trade routes. During the Southern Dynasties, armies were often sent southwards to protect the southern borders from the encroachment of Lin-i in present-day central Vietnam, but military action against the Li and Lao remained sporadic and localised. P'êng's study of the policy of the Southern dynasties towards the Li and Lao notes several characteristics of imperial military actions: only a few were ordered directly by the court, and most were organised by local administrators. Although the action overall was long-lasting (from the Sung to the Ch'ên), it was localised, and although it occurred frequently, it was never concentrated in a single area.¹

¹ P'êng, 'Nan ch'ao ling nan min tsu chêng tsê', p. 95.
A Different Foundation – Comparing the Li-Lao Country and Chiao-chou

In the Red River Plain, Ma Yüan’s destruction of the indigenous ruling elite after the Chêng (Trung) Sisters’ uprising meant that for the next few centuries the plain was ruled mainly by officials appointed directly from the north and thereafter increasingly by local great families. Even though his troops passed through the Li-Lao country on their way to Chiao-chih, there is no evidence that Ma Yüan engaged in a large-scale destruction of the local ruling elite in the Li-Lao country, despite the fact that some of them had been supportive of the Chêng (Trung) sisters’ uprising.

Left to their own devices in this way, the Li and Lao in between the Two Rivers began to make trouble for the Han. Their first great uprising occurred in 115, over seventy years after Ma Yüan’s defeat of the Chêng (Trung) Sisters when the Man and Yi of Ts’ang-wu rebelled and in following year led a force of thousands of Man and Han from Yü-lin and Ho-p’u to attack Ts’ang-wu Commandery. Instead of conquering them, Empress Dowager Têng sent attendant censor Jên Ch’êo 任逵 with a proclamation to grant them amnesty. The next uprising occurred in 178, and was started by the Wu-hu Man of Chiao-chih and Ho-p’u, who managed to assemble a force of tens of thousands of people from Chiu-chên and Jih-nan to attack and take commanderies and counties. This time inspector of Chiao-chih, Chu Chüan 朱犍 went to attack them and defeated them. It is highly unlikely that even the Chiao-chih Wu-hu were inhabitants of the Red River Plain, as almost all the references to the Wu-hu show them as hill peoples inhabiting the country to the northeast of the Plain. In 248 Lu Yin 骊胤 was appointed as inspector of Chiao-chou and commandant for the pacification of the south; he was then sent to deal with uprisings of the Yi of Chiao-chih and Chiu-chên who had attacked and occupied cities and commanderies. Other sources note that a certain Lady Chiao (Triêu Áu 趙嫍) was involved in the uprising at Chiu-chên. Although the Chêng

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2 HHS 86: 10b.
3 HHS 8: 10b.
4 HHS 8: 13a.
5 SKC 61: 13a-13b.
6 Taylor, Birth, p.90, says that the Lady Chiao is not mentioned in Chinese sources, but this is mistaken. The first and most detailed record of her, upon which all subsequent records are based, is in Liu Hsin-ch’i’s Chiao chou chi, quoted at length in TPYL 371: 3b. and 499: 10a-b.
(Trung) Sisters and Lady Chao are connected in Vietnamese national history of the struggle to end foreign domination, the uprisings of 248 had a different origin from that of two centuries earlier. Like those of the second century, the 248 uprisings did not originate in the centres of imperial administration, but were initiated by the peoples of the peripheral hill country. Lu Yin’s first task upon entering the south was to deal with Huang Wu 黃吳, a commander (chú shuai 桀帥) from Kao-liang who was also in rebellion, and to obtain his surrender with favours and trust, and let him lead out over 3,000 of the families under his control to surrender as well. The term ‘commander’ was not an imperial administrative post, it usually referred to local leaders outside imperial control, so Huang Wu, judging by his title and where he lived, was probably a leader of Li and Lao. After dealing with the situation in the Red River Plain he returned to attack the ‘bandits’ of Chien-ling 建陵 (East of modern Liu-chou) in Ts'ang-wu. In 291 the ‘Yi bandits’ (yì t'ai 夷賊) of Yu-lin attacked and surrounded the commandery and county seats, but were defeated by Lü Tai, inspector of Chiao-chou. The last armed conflict between the Li and Lao and imperial forces for about two hundred years occurred around the end of the third century, when T'eng Hsiu 滕修 (then inspector of Kuang-chou) told T'ao Huang, inspector of Chiao-chou, that he had attacked the ‘southern bandits’ many times but was unable to control them. T'ao Huang’s solution to the problem was as follows: ‘Those on the south bank look to us for salt and iron. If we cut off our trade with them they will melt down (their weapons) to make farming tools, if we do that for two years then we can wipe them out in one battle’ It is recorded that Hsiu was able to defeat them by following this plan. The south bank referred to the lands to the south of the Yü River, and ‘bandits’ was a term often used for those outside the imperial administrative system, and was often prefixed with a ‘barbarian’ term, such as the ‘Yi bandits’ above. The fact that they needed iron for farming tools and were able to trade goods for it (although what they were trading is not mentioned)

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7 SKC 61: 13a/b.
8 SKC 60: 8a/b.
9 CS 57: 5a. This probably took place in the last years of the Wu Dynasty (220-280). T'eng Hsiu served under the Wu as the regional inspector of Kuang-chou in 277 and died in 288; Tao Huang was the prefect of Ts'ang-wu around that time.
10 Taylor, Birth, p.96, has used the same quote as if the ‘southern bandits’ referred to Lin-i. However, T'eng Hsiu's post was in Kuang-chou, not Chiao-chou, and elsewhere in Tao Huang's biography (CS 57: 6a) the 'south bank' is a definite reference to the lands south of Kuang-chou.
suggests that they leading a settled existence based on farming and trading, rather than bandit raiding of Chinese-settled areas.

After T'êng Hsiu's battles, no insurrections requiring outside military assistance occurred between the Two Rivers, and the Li and Lao caused little trouble for the Chin in the way of uprisings or raids. This peaceful situation corresponds to a halt and slow retreat of the imperial presence in the west of the Two Rivers region from the end of the third century until the middle of the fifth. This was the period in which the Li and Lao chieftdoms flourished, there was little migration into their territory and the only administrative expansion was that of giving Li-Lao chieftains the titles and privileges outlined in the previous chapter rather than direct control by officials appointed by the court. This quiet period seems to have coincided with a change in Li and Lao military technology from dependence on the supply of iron from outside to self-sufficiency in the production of iron weapons.

Changes in Li-Lao Military Technology

The record of T'êng Hsiu's plan for defeating those on the south bank is particularly significant as it suggests that the Li and Lao were dependent on trade with the Chinese for these commodities. Higham believes that iron was known in the Ling-nan region as early as the fourth century BCE,\(^\text{11}\) and a large collection of iron artefacts was found in a pre-Ch'in tomb on Yin-shan 銀山 P'ing-lo, along the Li River on a main route to the north. However it is well-known that during the time of the Nan Yüeh kingdom (204-111 BCE), that the Empress Kao was convinced to prohibit the importation of iron weapons into Nan Yüeh in the hope that this would have an adverse influence on its military strength.\(^\text{12}\) After the Han conquest in 111 BCE no officials were appointed to the Two Rivers region under the Han to oversee the state monopoly in iron, which suggests that there was only minimal production of the metal there. There were iron tools found at Kui county in the Luo-po-wan tomb which dated from the Nan Yüeh period, but these were inscribed with place-names from the north and therefore unlikely

\(^{11}\) Higham, *The Bronze Age of Southeast Asia*, p. 135.
\(^{12}\) SC 113: 2a/b.
to have been of local production. In other tombs, however, there were iron implements such as *ting* tripods which gave away their local origin by their local design.\textsuperscript{13}

The use of iron tools seems to have been mainly by people who lived along the main river courses. The tombs where iron implements were Han tombs found are in areas close to Rivers and the concentrations of Han administrative units. The sites of iron foundries dating from Han times have been found in P'ing-nan County, only thirty kilometres away from a bronze foundry at Pei-liu where drums were cast.\textsuperscript{14} Away from these areas, knowledge of casting iron does not seem to have been widespread.

Many swords, spears and daggers have been excavated from tombs predating the Han, but these are made of bronze rather than iron. Short double-edged swords and crossbows were the most typical weapons,\textsuperscript{15} and these weapons were frequently depicted on the cliff paintings at Hua Shan, in addition to long swords and spears.\textsuperscript{16} The early written records of the Li and Lao do not describe them using such swords, but mention instead their use of more exotic weapons such as poisoned arrows, and bamboo crossbows known as 'fox crossbows' (*hu nu* 狐弩).\textsuperscript{17} The Wu-hu were also known to use bronze for the tips of their bamboo arrows. It is also significant that there is no common term for iron in the modern Tai languages of the Two Rivers region – central and southwestern varieties have words as different as *lek*, *va*, and *thit*,\textsuperscript{18} the last of which is a Sinitic loan. It is therefore unlikely that knowledge of the use of iron was universally known throughout the Tai speaking peoples.

Aside from T'ao Huang's comment on the reliance of the 'bandits' of the south bank being dependent on salt and iron, another piece of written evidence suggests that the Li and Lao between the Two Rivers probably did not have widespread knowledge of iron metallurgy during the third century CE, and that knowledge of this skill did not

\textsuperscript{13} Chêng Ch'ao-hsiung 鄭祖銘, ‘Kuan yü ling-nan yeh t'ieh yeh ch'i-yüan ti juo kan wên t'i’ 關於嶺南冶鑄業起始的若干問題 *Kuang hsi min tso yen chiu* 廣西民族研究 1996 vol. 45 no.3 pp. 50-6.

\textsuperscript{14} Chêng T'uan yü Ling-nan yeh t'ieh ch'i’, pp. 51-52.


\textsuperscript{17} TPYL 756: 3a. Perhaps the swords were left unmentioned because they were not an exotic weapon in the eyes of the Chinese.

\textsuperscript{18} Chang, *Chuang yü fang yen*, p. 601.
became widespread until the first half of the fourth century. The Chin shu records that before Emperor K‘ang’s accession to the throne (in 343)

There had been many taxes and corvée in the East [referring to the eastern coast of central China] and the result of this was an out-migration of common people over the sea to Kuang-chou. The inspector Têng Yüeh 鄧嶽 opened many foundries, and because of this all the barbarians found out how to make weapons. I sent a memorial to the throne saying that the eastern regions are an asset of the state, and that with the unending disturbances abscondsers had gradually increased in number, and that the barbarians were always spying, and that once they found out the benefits of iron metallurgy it would become impossible to prevent them from doing it.19

Aside from ‘spying’, trade and the close proximity of the Li and Lao chiefdoms to Chinese centres were probably responsible for an improvement in Li-Lao knowledge of military technology. If this was indeed the transitional period from imported iron to self-sufficiency in the casting of iron weapons between the Two Rivers it may well explain the ability of the Li and Lao between the rivers to defend themselves against the military incursions of the following two centuries. A new upsurge of military activity against the Li and Lao between the Two Rivers in the last two decades of the Liu-Sung marked a change in the policy of the Southern Dynasties towards the Li and Lao, and records of military attacks against them become ever more frequent, finally reaching a climax in the mid-sixth century.

The Protector of the West River and the Foundation of Yüeh-chou
The foundation of new commanderies and counties between the two rivers began in earnest under the Liu-Sung. Maps Three and Four show a gradual encirclement of the mountainous area to the north of the Lei-chou Peninsula by administrative units further

19 CS 73: 10b. Yet, even as late as the twelfth century, iron does not seem to have been universally available. Chou Ch‘i-Fei (LWTT ch. 6 p. 218) noted that people who along the coast south-west of Canton could not easily procure the iron nails used for making larger boats, and had to make do with rafts made from planks lashed together with vines.
up the major river sources and into the interior hill country. Many of these were probably counties in name only and were still ruled by their own people, but records of the military manoeuvres of the Liu-Sung that show the empire had become interested in acquiring a greater degree of control over territories where the imperial presence had formerly been minimal, and many of these bear the hallmarks of conquest (albeit small-scale) rather than a replacement of rulers or deputation of authority.

The first record of such activity relates to a ‘pacifying’ campaign carried out by the Liu-Sung General T'an Tao-ch'ih 檀道濟, which was connected to the building of a stone fortress at the mouth of the Ling-luo River (modern Chiu-chou-Chiang 九洲江). This was supposed to have happened in 426.\(^{20}\) Apart from securing a port, control of the river mouth would have helped in making inroads to much of the land between modern Lu-ch'uan and Sui-hsi.

This was followed soon after by the foundation of the post of ‘Protector of the Western Rivers’ (hsi ch'iang tu hu 西江督護). According to the Nan Chi'i shu, this position was established especially for the purposes of attacking recalcitrant Li and Lao.\(^{21}\) The first recorded appointee to this position was Liu Mien 劉勔 in 459, governor of Yü-lin, who went to fight against the forces of the ‘great leader’ (ta shuai 大帥) Ch'ên T'an 陳檀 of Ho-p'u.\(^{22}\) Another administrator, Fei Shên 費沈 had previously attacked Ch'ên T'an but had been unable to defeat him, so Liu Mien took over and was able to bring him to surrender.\(^{23}\) After Ch'ên T'an had submitted to imperial authority he was given the post of Dragon Galloping General, then in 460 he sent a request for an army to go and attack ‘those who had not yet submitted’, and was rewarded for his loyalty to the Liu-Sung with an official post as governor of Kao-hsing 高興 alongside his post of general.\(^{24}\) The method of dealing with Ch'ên T'an is an example of both military conquest and co-option into the administrative system, showing that both methods could be used concurrently.

\(^{20}\) TPHYC 167: 9a.
\(^{21}\) NCS 14: 20a-b. P'eng, 'Hsi ch'iang tu hu', pp. 63-4, argues that the term had a broader meaning than the West River of the present day, and therefore I translate the title with a plural as 'Protector of the Western Rivers'.
\(^{22}\) SS 97: 4a.
\(^{23}\) SS 86: 4a-b.
\(^{24}\) SS 97: 4a.
Further inroads were made into the territory of the Li-Lao north of Ho-p’u following the foundation of Yüeh Province in 471 by Ch’ên Po-shao 陳伯紹, who also held the post of Protector of the Western Rivers. The Nan Ch’i Shu notes:

Yüeh province is controlled from Lin-chang 臨漳 Commandery. Originally it formed the northern frontier area of Ho-p’u. Mobs of Yi and Lao live there, lurking in the crags and blocked-off places. They commit banditry and for the most part are not entered in the population registers as citizens. In the T’ai-shih (465-472) period, Ch’ên Po-shao, protector of the Western Rivers, was hunting in the north when he saw two black buffalo run startled into the bushes. He sent people to pursue them but they couldn’t catch them. He then marked the place, saying that it had a strange, auspicious omen and founded Yüeh-chou there. In the seventh year he founded the six commanderies Po-liang 百梁, Lung-su 隆穗, Yung-ning 永寧, An-ch’ang 安昌, Fu-ch’ang 富昌, and Nan-liu 南流. In the second year of Yüan-hui 元徽 (474) Po-shao was made inspector and for the first time a provincial centre was established to control it [the province]. He cut through the mountains to make a gate for the city, to overawe the Li and Lao...

Over four hundred years had passed since Ma Yüan’s campaign against the Ch’êng Sisters and yet the people of these ‘crags and blocked off places’, who were geographically closer than the Red River Plain to Canton and the imperial capital in Chien-k’ang, had been largely left alone until this time. Yüeh Province was founded to secure the routes up the Nan-Liu River to the Yü River tributaries. In this way it was a true frontier province, controlled from an inland citadel, which was a military outpost built to control the newly-conquered surrounding countryside. It was said that the governor spent much of his time on horseback fighting battles and Ch’ên Po-shao seems to have been fairly independent in his actions. According to one later source he declared himself a prince. Liao states that the administrative structure of Yüeh-chou was founded purely for military purposes. He notes the lack of registered population.

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25 SS 38: 43b.
26 NCS 14: 25b-26a.
27 NCS 14: 26a.
28 TPHYC 167: 9a.
figures for any of the commanderies in the treatise on geography in the Sung Shu, and the lack of subordinate counties for certain commanderies, which suggests that many of the new administrative areas existed in name only at the time the list was made. An alternative explanation for this is that the Sung geographical chapters were based on a census from 464 that pre-dated the foundation of Yüeh-chou and that only the names of administrative units could be added into the treatise.

Taylor previously named Yüeh province the ‘new frontier of the Chinese Empire’, but he was referring to it as the borderland between China and the future Vietnamese state. Yüeh-chou was indeed a frontier province, but the frontier lay in the opposite direction from the Red River Plain in the expanse of hilly country to the north and east of Ho-p’u. It was the people of this area that the fortification at Yüeh-chou was to guard against, not those of the Red River Plain. The building of forts and battles with locals to bring territory under imperial control had not been a feature of life on the Red River Plain for over four centuries.

Under Ch’ên Po-shao’s rule as protector, the Liu-Sung also began to put military pressure on the Li, moving southwards from the Yü River. Li Ssû-tao 李思道, governor of Chin-k’ang 晉康, led an army to attack the Li but lost the advantage by disobeying orders and was later punished for this by Ch’ên Po-shao. This Chin-k’ang was located on the south bank of the Yü River close to the Yün-k’ai mountain range.

The short-lived Southern Ch’i dynasty (497-502) did very little as regards administrative expansion south of the Yü River. The most significant new commandery was Kuang-hsi 廣熙 south of modern Luo-ting. The Ch’i court retained the position of protector of the Western Rivers and although one of the protectors Chou Shih-hsiung 周世雄 is known by name, no details survive of military campaigns against the Li-Lao in this period.

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29 Liao Li shih ti li hsiêh, p.133 notes three other commanderies in Yüeh-chou without subordinate counties.
30 Taylor, Birth, p.122: ‘In 471 Yüeh Province was organised from portions of Kuang and Chiao. The immediate reason for this was to recognise those portions of Chiao that were still under imperial authority, most important being the prefecture of Ho-p’u, which became the headquarters of the new province. Yüeh Province in effect became the new frontier of the empire’.
31 SS 54: 10b.
The Li wars under the Liang Empire

At the commencement of the reign of Emperor Wu of the Liang in 502, the entire Two Rivers Region was divided into only four different provinces. By the end of his reign in 550, however, the number of provinces had more than tripled to fifteen. Most of this administrative growth seems to have taken place in the period between 523 and 545. At around the same time there are frequent records of open warfare with Li people, usually referred to as ‘pacification of the Li tung’ (p’ing li tung 平俚獠). Although the foundation of provinces and the need for ‘pacification’ are almost certainly connected, a lack of precise dates and information means it is difficult to establish any pattern of cause and effect. The first recorded Liang military campaign was in Yü-lin Commandery, in which Hsün Fei 菽菨, governor of Yü-lin, went to fight ‘Li bandits’ but was hit by a stray arrow and died in battle. This occurred around 503.\(^{32}\)

In 507 Hsiang-chou and Kuang-chou were split to make Hêng-chou 衡州 (in the vicinity of modern Shao-kuan),\(^{33}\) and Kuei-chou 桂州 (centred on modern Kuei-lin) was split off from Kuang-chou.\(^{34}\) Kuei-chou 桂州 was originally Kui-lin Commandery on the T’an River and was upgraded to an independent province controlling the northern tributaries of the West River. In 523 three new chou were formed from Kuang-chou by upgrading the status of former commanderies. These were Chien-chou 建州 centred on Kuang-hsi Commandery 廣熙,\(^{35}\) Chêng-chou 成州 centred on Ts’ang-wu, and Nang-ting-Chou 南定州 made up from what had been left of Yü-lin Commandery after the detachment of Kui-chou in the north-east.\(^{36}\) Yüeh-chou was renamed Nan-ho-chou 南合州 and was still centred on Ho-p’u. The foundation dates of other new provinces are obscure, but many of them can be dated approximately to the same period (Ta t’ung 大

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\(^{32}\) LS 47: 4b. The approximate time is calculated from the time of his father Hsün Fa-chao’s 菽法超 death in office as magistrate of An-fu 安復 at the end of the Hsing-chung 廣中 period of Ch’î (501-502). His brother Hsün Chiang 菽匠 had not yet finished his three years of ritual mourning before he was killed, but Hsün Chiang was eventually appointed as senior attendant-in-ordinary (tsao ch’üang shih 左常侍) to Emperor Kao’s second son, the prince of Yü-chang who had this title from 504 onwards. Hsün Chiang died at age 21.

\(^{33}\) LS 2: 15a.

\(^{34}\) LS 2: 15b.

\(^{35}\) This was further subdivided into Shuang-chou. See Chapter Four footnote six.

\(^{36}\) LS 3: 4b.
The next new administrative unit was Kao-chou (高州) which was said to have been ‘founded by the Liang after pacifying Li tung’. It was founded either during the Ta-t'ung (大通) period (527-529) or in 535. As previously mentioned, the status of the Kao-liang area had long been unclear: the Liu-Sung had founded a Kao-hsing Commandery in the area, but soon abandoned it, whereupon it was ‘occupied by Yi and Lao’. The upgrade of Kao-liang commandery to a province was the suggestion of the former regional inspector of Kuang-chou, Hsiao Mai (謝勳). He had recommended this to the throne as a necessary strengthening of defences on the South River where he considered the situation to be dangerous. Hsiao Mai was himself appointed as Protector of the West River. The foundation dates of other provinces are obscure, but most of them can be pinned down to the Ta-t'ung period (535-46) or before. South of the Yü River were An-chou (安州), Luo-chou (羅州), and Hsin-chou (新州), the first two were founded before 542, and the last some time during or before the Ta-T'ung period. A new province was also founded during Ta-t'ung (535-546) when the ‘Twin-head Tung’ (Shuang t'ou tung (雙頭頌)) was split off to form Shuang-chou (雙州 or 龍州).

The foundation of the provinces of Kao-chou, Hsin-chou, Chien-chou, Luo-chou, and Shuang-chou could be seen to represent a consolidation of Liang power upstream along smaller rivers towards the heart of the Li-Lao country. Although only the foundation of Kao-chou is explicitly mentioned in connection with military defences against the Li and Lao, the number of records of warfare (usually referred to by the euphemism p'ing (平) which I translate ‘pacification’) against them dating from the same

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37 There are two reign periods transcribed identically as ‘Ta-t'ung’, to avoid confusion I have provided the characters for the first appearance of the period, and thereafter the dates for each mention.
38 Fragment of a lost chapter of YHCHC, quoted in YTCS 117: 1b.
39 SuS 31: 12a. There is some confusion over the foundation date of Kao-chou. SuS says it was perhaps split off from P'an-chou (潘州), but this is an anachronism as P'an-chou was not founded until the Sui, so this is likely to be a mistake for Kuang-chou. NS 51: 4a-b says that it was upgraded after the defeat of the Li commandery Ch'ên Wên-ch'ê, which must have been after 535 (see below).
40 YHCHC quoted in YTCS ibid.
41 NS 51: 4a-b.
42 An-chou was upgraded from Sung-chou Commandery. Luo-chou was founded in Sung and Ch'i as a county at the northern end of the Li-chou peninsula, although the name ending in -chou makes it appear to be a province. According to LS 3: 26b, these two provinces already had governors by 542. YHCHC ch. 38 p. 952 says An-chou was founded by Emperor Wu of the Liang and centred on Ch'ên-chiang (欽江), on the Ch'in River.
43 ChS 8: 1a-b. Hsin-chou was upgraded from the former Hsin-ning (新宁) Commandery.
44 TPHYC 164: 4b, 5a. TPYL 172 both sources mention these two versions of the name. Both characters are and were historically homophones.
period indicates considerable resistance to the rule of the Liang Empire among the Li and Lao. The *Sui shu* recorded the phrase ‘pacifying the Li tung’ in a list of military campaigns under Emperor Wu which saw the number of provinces in the empire increase from twenty-three provinces to one hundred and seven between the T’ien-chien 天監 (502-520) and the Ta-t’ung (535-546) periods.\(^45\) This was said to have followed (among others) the recent ‘opening up’ of Tsang-k’o in the west, and the ‘pacification of Li tung’ in the south.\(^46\) Aside from these references, there are several more specific records of warfare with the Li and Lao around Canton, and two that refer specifically to the Li and Lao on the South bank of the Yü River.

The *Ch’èn Shu* records that during the Ta-t’ung 大同 period Tu Tsêng-ming 杜僧明, his brother Tu T’ien-ho 杜天合, and Chou Wên-yü 周文育 had been very successful in expeditions against the Li and Lao for Lu An-hsing 盧安興, Protector of the South River at Canton, so they were appointed as the assistant defenders of Hsin-chou 新州.\(^47\) The *Ch’èn Shu* also records a deputy official (*shih lang* 侍郎) of Wu-ling 武陵 (modern Hu Ying 胡穎) as having gone out from P’an-yü to attack the Li tung.\(^48\) This was before 545 when he accompanied Protector of the West River (and later emperor) Ch’ên Pa-hsien to battle with Li Pi in the Red River plain. Records such as these which refer only to raids on ‘Li tung’ without specifying location are difficult to place, but the lack of records of Li to the east of Canton prior to the Sui (589-618) and the fact that the area directly to the north of the provincial seat at Canton was under the jurisdiction of a different province throughout the Six Dynasties Period, make it more likely that these raids were against people who lived to the south and west.

The Li commander (*Li shuai* 俚帥) Ch’ên Wên-ch’ê 陳文徹 fought with Liang forces some time during the Ta-t’ung (535-546) period.\(^49\) Three versions of the story are found in three different biographies, and all of them supply details missing from the other versions. Hsiao Mai’s biography records that Ch’ên Wên-ch’ê, Li commander

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\(^45\) SuS 29: 2a-b.
\(^46\) TCTC ch.158: 4903-4
\(^47\) ChS 8: 1a-b.
\(^48\) ChS 12: 1a.
\(^49\) If’ Lan Ch’in’s biography in LS 32: 10a-12a was arranged in chronological order, the battle with Ch’ên Wên-ch’ê can be dated to after 535, as the passage immediately preceding the description records a gift of horses from the Western Wei general Yü-wên-hêi-t’ai 宇文黑泰, and the Western Wei was not founded until 535.
from west of the river (chiang hsi 江西)\textsuperscript{50} came out to plunder Kao-yao 高要 (modern Chao-ch'ing), at which time Hsiao Mai was ordered to increase the length of his office as inspector (presumably with the intent of defeating Ch'ên Wên-ch'ê) and Wên-ch'ê surrendered not long after that.\textsuperscript{51} Lan Ch'in 蘭欽 was a military official who had held various positions in the Two Rivers Region including overseer of military affairs in Hêng-chou and Kui-chou. His biography tells that he passed through Kuang-chou and defeated Ch'ên Wên-ch'ê and his brothers in battle, taking them alive, and that when he arrived at Hêng-chou he was promoted to ‘general who pacifies the South’.\textsuperscript{52} Ou-yang Wei 歐陽頠 had been friends with Lan Ch'in since he was young, and his biography records that Lan Ch'in went south from Hêng-chou to attack the ‘Yî and Lào’, capturing Ch'ên Wên-ch'ê alive and acquiring at the same time an ‘uncountable number of things’ among which was a huge bronze drum ‘the like of which had not been seen for generations’ that he presented to the emperor as tribute.\textsuperscript{53} The size of the bronze drum probably indicates a Heger II drum, and suggests that Ch'ên Wên-ch'ê came from somewhere to the south of the Yü River, as no Heger II drums have been found north of the Yü River to the east of modern Kuei-p'ing.

These records provide a little information about the type of society that existed outside the Liang imperial administration. Leaders like Ch'ên Wên-ch'ê were rich, they were organised enough to make raids on commanderies, and they commanded armies of thousands rather than hundreds. They were threatening enough for imperial administrators to institute special positions and found new administrative units for the purpose of defending against them. The motives for the ‘pacification’ of the Li t'ung or Ch'ên Wên-ch'ê's raid on Kao-yao are not mentioned in the Chinese texts. Barbarians lurk around the edges of civilised districts as mere troublemakers. Their own motives go unexplained, and the motives of those who attack them are implied as benevolent through the use of words such as ‘pacify’. However, through comparison of the timescale of the records of warfare with those of the Liang administrative expansion, it becomes clear that the two are closely connected. The Liang encroachment into the Li-

\textsuperscript{50} Near to Kao-yao the Yü River actually does flow in a north-south direction rather than from west to east, so the description ‘west of the river’ probably refers to the south bank.

\textsuperscript{51} NS 51: 4a.

\textsuperscript{52} LS 32: 11b.

\textsuperscript{53} ChS 9: 6b.
Lao country continues the trend begun under the Liu-Sung of a slowly tightening noose of military and administrative control around the Li and Lao chiefdoms. The rapid and heightened control of the Liang Empire in the country south of the Yü River was unprecedented, and it was not achieved peacefully. The consolidation of Liang power in the Two Rivers area ended as attention was diverted to the rebellion of the general Hou Ching in 549. After he sacked the Liang capital, local officials around Kuang-chou began to fight amongst themselves to extend their own power bases, and the Liang wars against the Li were effectively at an end.\footnote{ChS 9: 7a.}

The Ch’ên Empire was founded by Ch’ên Pa-hsien, a former holder of the post of Protector of the Western Rivers, but the Ch’ên did not make any more significant territorial advances into the Li-Lao country south of the Yü River. The Ch’ên empire was unable to concentrate its efforts on controlling even more important areas such as the Red River Plain, so it was unlikely to have been able to carry out military and administrative expansion in remote districts like the Li-Lao country. The initial weakness of the Ch’ên corresponds to a lack of records of attacks on the Li 
\textit{tung} for two or three decades until near the end of the reign of Emperor Hsüan \textit{宣} (reigned 569-83) when it was recorded that the regional inspector of Kuang-chou Ma Ching 馬靖 and his well-trained soldiers would go deep into the Li 
\textit{tung} every year and that they were repeatedly victorious in these expeditions.\footnote{ChS 21: 17a.} Unfortunately this record refers only to raids on ‘Li 
\textit{tung}’ without specifying location, and since the jurisdiction of Ch’ên Kuang-chou no longer extended far to the west, it is possible that it these raids occurred in the Eastern half of Kuang-chou rather than south of the Yü River.

Regional inspector Shên Chûn-kao 沈君高 was appointed to Kuang-chou in 576 and (according to his biography) was a literary official with no military ability who chose to deal with the Li-Lao in a peaceful manner. Apparently the Li and Lao had been fighting and attacking each other for generations, and through his determined efforts he was able to achieve peace among them.\footnote{ChS 23: 3b.} Unfortunately he died in office after only two years, and his manner of dealing with the Li-Lao seems to have been atypical. What is interesting to note here is that Li-Lao were still recorded as frequently fighting amongst themselves and never seem to have managed to achieve a greater unity to fight against
imperial troops. This probably had something to do with the localised nature of the military action against them.

Conclusion

The concentrated attacks on the Li and Lao south of the Yü River had the result of replacing the empty spaces on the Chinese map with a patchwork of provinces and commanderies. Significantly as P’êng points out, this was in the same area that was under the jurisdiction of the protector of the Western Rivers.\textsuperscript{57} However, the persistence of a strong Li and Lao leadership in the area after this time shows that neither the military campaigns nor the administrative expansion of the Southern Dynasties were effective in gaining completely centralised control over the Li and Lao. The localised and small-scale nature of attacks was probably why they were ultimately unsuccessful.

Without a Ma Yüan-style eradication and replacement of local ruling elites, the Li and Lao tu-lao of old were slowly transformed into nominal inspectors and governors whose positions were inherited within their own clans. As they became more involved with the Southern Dynasties, local rulers slowly began to look similar to the lineages imported from the north.\textsuperscript{58} The Southern Dynasties' inability to carry out a complete conquest of the Two Rivers region was one of the reasons for the system of loose control offered to its leaders.

During the sixth century a few of these clans began to control much larger areas than the small tung and their rulers began to control larger armed forces, making the region even more difficult for the weak southern dynasties to bring under control by force of arms. Negotiation became a necessity. This was an admission that the Southern Dynasties could not conquer the Li and Lao. That loose control systems were offered to them at all rather than just leaving them to their own devices is partly a result of this admission, but was mainly due to the fact that the Li and Lao chieftains occupied territories abundant in resources that were sought after in Chinese cities. If one could

\textsuperscript{57} P’êng, ‘Hsi chiang tu-hu’, p. 64
\textsuperscript{58} This was not true everywhere, however, and in even in areas that are now undoubtedly 'Chinese' a more traditional Li-Lao structure of small-scale leadership survived well into the seventh century in small tung south of the Yü River from which ‘wild’ Li and Lao chieftains led uprisings from the 630s to the 650s. These were in what later became the three districts of Yü-chou 楚州, I-chou 義州 and Tou-chou 寶州 were at the heart of the bronze drum country and distant from the main river routes, in the districts of present-day Lu-ch’uan, Pei-liu and Hsin-i. The first uprising occurred in 631 (TCTC ch.193 p. 6092), another occurred in 640 (HTS 222e: 19a) and the last in 651-652 (TCTC ch. 199 p. 6276).
not simply go and occupy the country that produced these resources, it was necessary to
go and engage its leaders in a trade relationship. The nature of the trade relationship and
its effects on Li-Lao society, are the subject of the following chapter.
Chapter Six: The Economics of the People In-between

People’s desire to own a drum between the Rivers is illustrated by a proclamation from the third year of the T’ai-yüan 太元 period of Emperor Hsiao-wu 孝武 (378 CE) which stated:

Money is the precious treasure of the realm, so when mean folk desirous of profit constantly melt it down and destroy it, officials ought to do something about it. The Yi people of Kuang-chou esteem bronze drums highly as a great treasure, but Kuang-chou produces no copper, so I have heard that under these circumstances officials and private merchants are greedy and weigh coins incorrectly in order to take them to Kuang-chou and sell them to the Yi people, who then melt them down to make drums. This is to be strictly prohibited and those who receive them will be punished.¹

Although the text refers to the drum owners only as Yi who live in Kuang-chou, the spread of drum finds and the administrative boundaries of the time make it almost certain that the Yi people referred to here were those who dwelt south of the Yü River. What were these people trading in order to obtain copper cash, and why was it that the copper held so little value for them in the form of coins that they acquired cash only for the material with which to cast drums?

We have already seen that the Li and Lao had special relationships with the Chin and the southern dynasties allowed the Li and Lao chieftains to function for centuries as the rulers of their own people beyond the direct authority of the Chinese empires. These special relationships were based on trade in the sought-after products of the Two Rivers region. In the very earliest Chinese records the Two Rivers region was noted as an area rich in luxury goods. The *Huai nän tszu* compiled during the Western Han (206 BCE-9 CE) noted that it was first emperor of Ch’in’s desire for the luxury goods of Yüeh such as rhinoceros horn, ivory, kingfisher feathers and the pearls that made him wish to

¹ CS 26: 11a.
conquer the area. The *Han shu* also noted that the commandery of Ho-p’u, which under the Han was said to control of the country south of the Yü River (although it is doubtful that it controlled much of the country beyond the commandery centre) ‘abounded in rhinoceros and elephant, tortoiseshell, pearls, silver, copper, fruit and cloth’.  

The Han and Ch’in Empires had the military strength to conquer vast new territories to their south, but as outlined in chapter two, they chose only to concentrate their efforts on controlling the populations of the highly fertile areas at river mouths and points along the larger rivers and the coast that they considered to be of strategic and economic importance. The surrounding hills and plains, and large stretches of the coast remained in the hands of the Li and Lao chieftains. These were areas that were not only rich in the aforementioned luxury items so sought after in the north, but also in mineral resources such gold, silver and copper. The Li and Lao chieftains occupied some of the richest gold and silver resources at a time when gold and silver were used as the main trading currency in the neighbouring urban areas. They also would have been able to organise the collection of products such as aromatics, and plants that were mainly found in the higher country of the tung-controlled regions. There is much evidence to show that trade in the luxury goods of the hill country was reliant on the co-operation of local people who were familiar with the areas where particular flora and fauna could be collected. Some of this evidence is through direct citation, some is indicated only by geographical reference and then some only by clues in the names of products traded, which seem to indicate the connection of the products to peoples speaking Tai-Kadai languages.  

Not only did the Li and Lao have the advantage of living in an area rich in goods sought after by outsiders, they had an added advantage of being agriculturally self-sufficient, as their tung were situated in the fertile climate of the lands south of the Yü River which was warm enough for two harvests of rice per year. A double crop of rice was a well-known feature of the Red River Plain during the Southern Dynasties, and Hsü-wên on the Lei-chou peninsula had a double crop of rice that was so well-known there was even a saying: ‘If you wish to lift yourself out of poverty, go to Hsü-wên’.  

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2 HNT 18: 18a.  
3 HS 28b: 36b.  
4 CMYS 10: 1b.  
5 TPHYC 169: 6b.
the present day a double harvest of rice is possible in all the lands south of the Yü River and most of the modern provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi. The possibility of harvesting a double crop of rice was probably the basis for economic self-sufficiency of the tung valleys, as well as a factor that encouraged their autonomous political development.

Yet another advantage for the Li and Lao between the Two Rivers was that they occupied a strategic geographical position between the two great trading centres of the region to which they could trade these goods. The weaker successor empires to the Han and Ch’in no longer had a strong military advantage over the Li and Lao and were therefore no longer capable of trying to impose their will on the unconquered areas by military force. They could not appoint administrators to the Li-Lao country, nor could they tax the Li-Lao as registered citizens. Therefore, in order to obtain the products they desired, it was necessary for the people of the Southern Dynasties to engage the Li and Lao leaders in trade relationships. Despite the necessity of doing so they seem to have had very little to trade in return, and only the three products salt, iron, and copper have been recorded as having been traded into the lands of the Li and Lao. In this way the Li and Lao trade relationship with the lowlands resembled those typical of Southeast Asian lowland-highland trade patterns: mutually beneficial forms of exchange in which highland peoples would gather forest products in exchange for salt and other trade products of the coast.

With little to trade in return for the luxury goods, the Southern Dynasties bestowed recognition on the Li-Lao chieftains as leaders in their own right through the consistent policy of ‘temporary appointments’ outlined in chapter four. P’êng (2004) has suggested that this trade in luxury goods during the fourth and fifth centuries was a burdensome forced taxation and that the local leaders received no benefit from it. The problem with this conclusion is that it ignores the changes that occurred between the Two Rivers over this period which witnessed the growth of Li-Lao chieftoms from small tung to large alliances of many tung under powerful Li commanders, the enrichment of many Li commanders and their families, and their retention of political autonomy. A temporary appointment in exchange for a supply of luxury goods was an agreement between the Southern Dynasties and a chieftain, and would have had in itself

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6 Spencer, Asia East by South, p. 322.
7 P’êng Pêng-wên, ‘Nan ch’ao ling nan min tsu chêng ts’ê’ p. 97.
the benefit of guaranteeing the safety of the Li-Lao appointees and their people from the depredations of greedy officials.

Such a process of enrichment through trade relations with a large and distant state had a precursor in the Two Rivers region during the Warring States period when according to Francis Allard, local leaders prospered through their control of the sources in the trade in luxury goods with the state of Ch’u, and the graves that indicated the most prosperous leaders were mainly concentrated along the river routes connecting the Pearl River drainage area to the north (the Nan-k’ang 南康, Shih-an 始安, and Lin-ho 隨賀 passes detailed in chapter two). The proliferation of bronze drums in the archaeological record suggests that the Li-Lao chieftains were enriched, both materially and politically through their contact with the Chinese Empires. The existence of large numbers of drums, like the presence of rich burials indicates the existence of stratified societies able to support teams of artisans for their creation. Like the Ling-nan bronze cultures described by Allard, the bronze drum cultures of the Li and Lao lay outside the direct political control of centralised states (Ch’u and the Southern Dynasties). The significant difference between these graves and the bronze drums of the Li and Lao is that is that the distribution of drums is mainly concentrated away from the main river routes that passed through the area connecting Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou, making it unlikely that it was the trade between Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou which made the Li-Lao chieftains rich. Instead it suggests that their power grew out of a trade relationship between forested uplands under Li-Lao control and the two heavily populated centres on rice-cultivating plains.

I digress for a moment to note that there was an attempt under the Chin to tax ‘barbarians’, and that this may have included some of the Li-Lao who lived adjacent to commanderies and counties. In 280 the Chin introduced a household taxation system (hu-tiao-shih 戶調式) with grades based on age and physical distance from the capital. ‘Barbarians’ were also included in this system and were taxed differently from ordinary citizens. Their distance from the capital or from the commandery seat also had an effect on the amount of tax they paid.

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After conquering Wu, the Chin made a system of household taxation, a household led by a man of full age had to give three bolts of cloth, and three catties of floss silk, households led by women or men not of full age would have to give half this amount. Those who lived in the border commanderies would give two-thirds of this and those who lived far away would give only a third. Barbarians would give a “barbarian cloth tax”, each household had to give a bolt of cloth, the distant barbarians would only have to give a chang [about 2.5 metres]... The distant barbarians who paid no tax on their fields had to give three bushels of public rice, and five pecks for those who live further away. For those who lived furthest away the tax was paid in cash, at twenty-eight pieces per person.  

This probably did not affect the Li and Lao who lived to the south of Ts’ang-wu. T’ao Huang’s letter to Emperor Wên quoted in Chapter Two was written at around the same time as the application of this new taxation system and noted the fifty-thousand households who would not submit to authority on the south bank of the Yü River. This makes it seem highly unlikely that the Li and Lao of the interior were included in this system, not even in the category of ‘distant barbarians’. For the most part the average members of a Li or Lao chieftdom would have had no relationship whatsoever with the imperial administration, and its influence was probably confined to the indirect order through a chief for the collection or supply of particular products. The nature of these products and the effects the necessity of their collection had on the society of the Li and Lao chieftdoms is outlined below.

*Gold and Silver*

This chapter began with an edict from 378 describing what the ‘barbarians of Kuang-chou’ did with the smuggled copper coins they had procured from the north. These people had no interest in copper in the form of coins and wished only to transform them into drums, as these were status symbols that made sense in the context of their own society. The concentration of excavated bronze drum finds indicates the districts where

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9 CS 16: 7b-8a.
these ‘barbarians’ lived. These were the lands south of the Yü River to the west of modern Canton, stretching as far west as the Yun-k’ai Mountains. This was the only area belonging to the province of Kuang-chou at the time when drums were being produced. Wu-shu coinage has been found in the Han Dynasty tombs along the coast and the great river courses, but not in the heart of the Li-Lao country. Finds of other coins from the pre-T’ang period are rare.\textsuperscript{10}

These areas actually produced metals that were much sought after in the cities of the empire, particularly gold and silver, but the extent of these resources was probably not well-known until after the fall of the Han. The Han do not seem to have been aware of the mineral riches that were hidden away in the Li-Lao country, and although the earliest surviving record of the products of the Two Rivers region from that period does mention silver and copper resources, the people of the Han, and perhaps the Li and Lao themselves, were probably not aware of the amount of gold and silver that lay in the ground between the Two Rivers,\textsuperscript{11} and the Han and Wu Empires were mainly interested in its exotica such as aromatics, pearls, rhinoceros horn and ivory. By the time the Chinese empires were aware of the gold and silver resources of the interior of the Li-Lao country, they no longer had sufficient military power to conduct an all-out conquest of the region.

By the Six Dynasties it was not only the Li and Lao who had little use for copper coinage. Even the people of Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou were not incorporated into the imperial cash economy, and preferred instead to trade in gold or silver or in kind. The importance of gold and silver as currency in the two main imperial administrative centres is well-documented. A geographical work dating from the Chin notes that in the markets of Kuang-chou, officials exchanged silver for grain.\textsuperscript{12} The Sui shu notes that around the time of the foundation of the Liang Empire at the beginning of the sixth century the provinces of Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou used gold and silver for


\textsuperscript{11} HS 28b: 36b.

\textsuperscript{12} KCC quoted in TPYL 812: 6a. CHC 27:4a has a slightly different version meaning ‘the officials use silver and grain to trade’. This work could be either P’ei Yüan’s 裴耀 or Ku Wei’s 魯微 Kuang chou ch’i, both date from the Chin but the author of this particular fragment is not specified in either source.
currency.\textsuperscript{13} The same work noted that by the commencement of the Ch‘ên dynasty the people of the provinces of Ling-nan mostly bartered with salt, rice, and cloth rather than using cash, which is perhaps an indication of an economic downturn in a time of political chaos.\textsuperscript{14} Discussing the records of the use of gold and silver coinage in Kuang-chou during this period, Wang and Wang chose to view these as evidence for the importance of Kuang-chou as the major end point of the maritime silk route and its connection to inter-regional trade networks, and suggested that the gold and silver arrived there as a result of maritime trade.\textsuperscript{15} The immense gold and silver wealth held by Lin-i, which offered tribute of tens of thousands of catties of both metals,\textsuperscript{16} and the finds of Persian silver coins at Ying-tê 英德, Ch‘ü-chiang 曲江, and Sui-hsi 逓溪 certainly seem to confirm that this was often the case,\textsuperscript{17} but there is an abundance of evidence pointing to the lands occupied by the Li-Lao chieftains as the origin of some of the gold and silver that was circulated as currency in Kuang-chou and Chiao-chou, and in particular towards the lands between the Two Rivers.

\textsuperscript{13} SuS 24:20a. The text includes information about what was used for currency in other parts of the empire: use of copper cash was limited to the area around the capital at Chien-k‘ang, along the southeast coast and the provinces along the Yangtse as far west as Yunnan, whereas the remaining provinces traded using a mixture of grains and silks.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. 24: 21a.


\textsuperscript{16} NCS 58: 4b.

Map Five: Districts recorded as giving tribute in gold or silver from the sixth to tenth centuries CE (From records in CTS, TT, TPHYC)
The gold and silver resources were certainly there for the taking, as later records from the Sui and T’ang show a distribution of gold and silver given as tribute that corresponds to many of the areas where bronze drum finds are concentrated. Even in the present day in the same area, gold dust is to be found in rivers and gold nuggets are still found in the ground.\textsuperscript{18} The paucity of early records directly related to the Li and Lao ownership and exploitation of these resources is most likely due to ignorance. As mentioned in chapter two, imperial ignorance of the interior of the Li-Lao country in this period is reflected in the fantastic and menacing descriptions of the area and its inhabitants. It should come as no surprise that the edict of 378 was also incorrect in stating that ‘Kuang-chou produces no copper’. This may have been true of the eastern half of Kuang-chou close to Canton, but the western region of Kuang-chou was actually extremely rich in copper resources. South of the Yü River, the component metals for bronze smelting were easy to find. The area around modern Pei-liu and Yü-lin where finds of Heger II drums are most concentrated had abundant natural resources of copper. Three drum production sites dating from the Six Dynasties period have also been found near Pei-liu, lying right at the heart of the concentration of type II drum finds.\textsuperscript{19} The statement ‘Kuang-chou produces no copper’ was probably made out of ignorance. Much of the territory supposedly under the control of Kuang-chou was not actually part of the administrative system, and was therefore largely beyond the limits of Chin knowledge. Although mentioned in the \textit{Han shu}, the copper resources of this area seem to have passed out of the knowledge of the centres of imperial power, until they were rediscovered in T’ang times.\textsuperscript{20} It is likely that there was a similar level of ignorance regarding the extent of gold and silver resources of the area.

\textsuperscript{18} Chu Hsia 朱夏 \textit{Chung kao ti chin} 中國的金. Shanghai: Shang wu ch’u pan shè, 1953 pp. 72-3. These are the modern districts of T’eng county 腾縣, Jung county 容縣, Ho county 贺縣 Shao-p’ing 昭平, Ts’ang-wu 茶梧, Pei-liu 北流, Lu-ch’uan 琅川, Po-pai 博白, Yung-ning 隆寧, Pin-yang 彭陽, and Shang-lin 上林.

\textsuperscript{19} Yao Shun-an 姚舜安 1988 Pei liu hsing t’ung ku chu tao i chih ch’u t’an 北流型銅鼓舞遺址初探. \textit{K’ao-ku} 1988 no. 6 pp. 558-60.

\textsuperscript{20} Chou Ch’ü-fei writing in the twelfth century, mentions the abundance of copper resources in the modern Kwangsi area, particularly around what is now Nanning (LWTT ch. 7 p. 276). TPHYC 164:13a records a copper mountain, copper lake and cinnabar sand to the south-west of Jung-ch’êng 戚城 county on the south bank of the Yü River. The geography of the \textit{Hsin T’ang shu} records copper resources between the Two Rivers at a place called ‘copper mound’ (T’ang-ling 铜陵) Ch’in-chou 勤州, just to the north of present-day Yang-chun (HTS 43a: 3a.), but mainly to the north of the Yü River at Ho-chou 賀州 and Lien-chou 鬱州 present day counties of Ho and Lien (ibid. 66-7a).
Before the sixth century, most of the records of gold and silver come from Shên Huai-yüan’s *Non Yüeh chih* and relate to areas on the edge of the Li-Lao country with which the Chinese were most familiar, namely those close to Canton and the main river courses. Shên Huai-yüan noted that Ning-p’u 寧浦 in Hêng-chou was known as the ‘Golden City’ during the Chin because of its abundance of gold.\(^{21}\) It was noted that there was a ‘silver cave’ near Sui-ch’êng 遂成 county on the south bank of the Yû River near to Ts’ang-wu.\(^{22}\) Szü-hui 四會 county had a Gold Mountain, where one could find gold dust, and people who passed by the mountain often saw gold by its side.\(^{23}\) Another Gold Mountain near Canton produced gold dust and had a visible spirit in the golden figure of a man who was often seen on its peak.\(^{24}\) Gold dust could also be collected from the Kettle Pond (Fu-t’ang 釜塘) in Jung-ch’êng County near to Ts’ang-wu.\(^{25}\) Kang-chou 岡州, one of the territories controlled by the Fêng family under the Sui and T’ang was named on account of the Gold Hill (*Chin kang* 金岡) there.\(^{26}\)

A fuller picture of the spread of gold resources available to the Li and Lao chieftains can be gleaned from the tribute lists of T’ang and Sung geographies.\(^{27}\) The T’ang records of tribute in the *Hsin T’ang shu* treatise on geography shows tribute of gold from twenty-eight provinces, eleven of which had territory south of the Yû River in Li-Lao-controlled areas before the sixth century.\(^{28}\) According to the records of tribute in the first years of the T’ang contained in the *T’ung-tien* almost all of the commanderies south of the Yû River gave a tribute of twenty taels of gold, and Hsin-hsing (modern Hsin-hsing) gave fifty taels. Records of silver tribute are even more highly concentrated in the Li-Lao country; of the forty-six provinces recorded as giving

\(^{21}\) TPHYC 166: 14a.
\(^{22}\) TPYL 812: 6a; CHC 27: 4a.
\(^{23}\) IWLC 6: 4b.
\(^{24}\) NYC quoted in TPHYC 157: 6b.
\(^{25}\) NYC quoted in TPYL 74: 1b. The name Jung-ch’êng is misprinted as Tan-ch’êng 丹城.
\(^{26}\) TCTC ch.190 p.5969
\(^{27}\) A study has been made of these: Chung kuo lien ho chun pei yin bang tiao ch’a shih 中國聯合準備銀行調查室. *T’ang sung shih tai chin yin chih yun chu* 唐末時代金銀之研究. Peking: Chung kuo lien ho chun pei yin bang tiao ch’a shih, 1944.
\(^{28}\) HTS 43a: 2a-8b. These eleven provinces were K’ang-chou 廬州, Hsin-chou 新州, Ch’in-chou 勤州, Èn-chou 恩州, Yung-chou 雲州, Hêng-chou 橫州, Hsin-chou 榮州, Ch’in-chou 喜州, Pai-chou 白州, Hsiu-chou 險州, and Tang-chou 唐州. Four provinces from north of the Yû River also gave gold tribute, as did five of the provinces of Hainan, and live from Annam (northern Vietnam).
tribute in silver, twenty-five are in Li-Lao areas south of the Yü River. Although it is possible that some of the gold and silver given as tribute may have been traded into the area from elsewhere, the tenth-century geography T'ai p'îng huan yü chi records gold as a local product of Yü-lin, Hêng, Kui, Ên and Hsin provinces, and silver as a local product of Yü-lin, Ên, Hsin, and Kui provinces. The same book records that there were three gold mines near to Wu-chou, and that the rebel Lu Hsün had collected silver in Hsin-chou in the fifth century.

The occupation of lands containing gold and silver resources is one thing, and the exploitation of such resources is another. The Chin records of the bronze drum ceremonies of the tu-lao suggest very strongly that the Li and Lao had gold and silver to spare and were well aware of its value, and were quite capable of extracting and working it. East of a Fu-jên Mountain in Sui-ch'êng county 達城縣 was a silver cave 銀穴 where the Li would collect silver dust and smelt it into silver. Feng Ang's kinsman Tsû-ŷu 子猷 (who is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven) was also very liberal with his gifts of gold and silver and was said to have taken a barge of gold to the T'ang court. So it is likely that at least from the fifth century onwards, the Li and Lao chieftains were at a great advantage when trading with the nearby urban areas which relied on gold and silver rather than copper coinage as their main currency. The extraction of gold and silver would have required a large labour force, and probably encouraged competition between the Li-Lao chieftains over control of gold and silver resources, as well as over the people employed in their extraction, either through mining or through panning.

31 TPHYC 164: 10b.
32 TPHYC 163: 5a.
33 NYC, quoted in TPHYC 164:12a.
Human Traffic - Slaves

The attraction of slaves for the Li-Lao chieftains probably reflects the need to increase food production, increase military manpower and increase the labour-intensive extraction of gold, silver, and ores used in the manufacture of weaponry and status symbols such as the bronze drums. However, human trafficking out of the Li-Lao country also became commonplace in the sixth century, and slaves were noted as one of the benefits that the Southern Dynasties gained through the co-option of the Li-Lao chieftains. Human trafficking out of the Li-Lao country during this period reached its height in the sixth century, and continued on well into the ninth century. 34 Nan-hai Commandery was said to have imported slaves from Kao-liang around the beginning of the T’ien-chien period (502-520). 35 These were probably people captured in conflict amongst different Li and Lao groups and subsequently sold into slavery or those captured in Chinese raids against them. Many imperial administrators at this time treated Li-Lao people as the plunder of conquest. The attitude towards them as mere chattels is apparent from the description of the activities of Hsiao Mai, inspector of Kuang-chou during the T’ien-chien period:

When he attacked recalcitrant Li, he would take slaves and treasures and keep only what was required for the upkeep of the military, and offer the rest to the throne, unlike other inspectors who would keep hold of such things in order to enrich themselves. Because of this he was considered to be an upright official. 36

Similarly, Ou-yang Wei and his brothers oversaw the military affairs of three provinces of Kuang-chou, Hêng-chou and Chiao-chou under the early Ch’ên dynasty (Wei died in 563), and during this time supplied slaves, bronze drums, and other rarities to the Ch’ên

34 The practice continued well into T’ang times. See Schafer, Vermilion Bird pp. 55-6, for a description of the continued T’ang trade in slaves from the Two Rivers region.
35 LS 32:2b. James K. Chin, ‘Ports, Merchants, Chieftains and Eunuchs: Reading Maritime Commerce of Early Guangdong’. In: Guangdong: Archaeology and Early Texts ed. Shing Muller, Thomas Hoffmann, and Putao Gui. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004 p.228, and Geoff Wade, The Lady Sinn, p. 134, have both construed this passage to mean that the slaves were the goods sold for half-price, but it is more likely that the slaves from Kao-liang and the foreign merchant ships are mentioned as two separate sources of wealth, not that the Kao-liang slaves were actually brought to Canton on such ships. Wang Gungwu, Nan-hai Trade, p. 91-2 agrees with my interpretation.
36 NS 51: 4a.
court. This seems to have been a common pastime of Ch‘ên officials; before Emperor Wên of the Sui attacked the Ch‘ên, he made an announcement criticising them for their activities against people of the south-west, which included annual military attacks and enslavement of the population. ‘The south-west’ was an obvious reference to the Li-Lao country as the Ch‘ên had little effective control over the Red River Plain at the time.

It is unlikely that the Li-Lao chieftains would have happily sold their own people into slavery as that would have reduced the amount of labour and military force under their own control. It is more likely that they acquired captives through warfare and that those surplus to requirements could be sold for profit down the rivers to the people of the provinces and commanderies. As for the leaders of the Li and Lao themselves, the seventh-century leader Fêng Ang was said to have owned over 10,000 slaves. It is doubtful that he was exceptional among his class as a slave owner.

Amongst individual Li-Lao there were also people who would choose to sell members of their families. The third-century Nan chou i wu chih notes that the Li were not interested in their own flesh and blood, but were greedy for treasures, and that if they saw a merchant with riches or livestock, they will swap their sons for it. There was also the ‘pointing at belly sale’ through a pregnant woman would arrange in advance for the sale of her unborn child to be handed over when the child had reached a certain height. These records may well have been attempts to de-humanise the Li and Lao by example of their behaviour running counter to the familiar relations that were norms of civilised behaviour for those who could write in Chinese, but it does have parallels in later Southeast Asian societies, where people had become aware that even they themselves had a tradable value as assets.

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37 ChS 9: 6b. It is interesting that these seem to have been armed sorties for raiding, which suggests the difficulty of occupying the lands by force. Perhaps this was due to the small, localised nature of the conflicts, and the fact that the Ch‘ên had bigger problems to deal with, such as internal conflict and the military threat of the northern dynasties, the Ch‘i and the Chou.
38 CSW 17: 5b.
39 CTS 109: 1b.
40 TTYL 492: 4b.
41 Schäfer, Vermiton Bird, p. 56.
42 Concrete records of are lacking, but Li-Lao involvement in capture and trade of slaves from rival groups was perhaps similar to that encountered by Europeans in Southeast Asia a thousand years later where control over manpower was seen as the important indicator of status and power. For a fuller discussion of slavery in premodern Southeast Asian societies see Anthony Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce pp. 129-36.
Kingfisher Feathers

Kingfisher feathers were used to make a blue pigment for jewellery and costume and had been part of the tribute of luxury items from the Two Rivers Region even in Han times when Chao T'o the king of Nan Yueh had presented one thousand dead and forty pairs of live kingfishers to the Han court. They are constantly mentioned as a special product of the south. The feathers probably came from either Halcyon smyrnensis perpurhre, the white-throated kingfisher, or Halcyon pileata, the black-capped kingfisher. Both of these species have iridescent blue feathers and at present both are found in the Two Rivers region. The white-throated kingfisher is more widely distributed than the black-capped variety, which is found year-round only in the coastal regions east of the Lei-chou Peninsula. One Southern Dynasties record notes the birds as native to the lands to the south and west of the Li-Lao country in Chiu-chên, Chiao-chih and Hsing-ku, but that the people who caught them ate their meat without knowing the value of the feathers. Some locals certainly considered the feathers as treasures; a very early text, perhaps from Han times, notes that Wu-hu people lived in the mountains and shot kingfishers in order to collect their feathers, and Kuo I-kung’s Kuang chih notes that the people of Chiao-chih and Ts’ang-wu had the habit of using kingfisher feathers in turbans or conical caps or headdresses. Perhaps these, together with peacock feathers, were used in the construction of large elaborate headaddresses depicted on Heger type I bronze drums and the cliff paintings at Hua-shan. The kingfisher is an extremely territorial bird; a study of the density of the white-throated kingfisher in marshlands Bangladesh noted an average of only 4.58 individuals per square kilometre, and although the more sparsely-populated lands between the Two

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43 For the many uses to which the kingfisher feathers were put, see Beverly Jackson, Kingfisher Blue, Treasures of an Ancient Chinese Art. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2001.
44 HS 95: 12a. In addition to this, he sent ten rhinoceros horns, five hundred purple cowries, a jar of beetles that lived on cassia bark and two pairs of peacocks.
46 NCPCIWC (an anonymous work that predates the Chi min yao shu of the sixth century) quoted in TPYL 941: 7b.
47 CCIWC quoted in TPYL 941: 6a.
48 TPYL 687: 3b.
Rivers could probably support a more highly concentrated population, collection of large amounts of feathers would have required a leader to control a large territory.

*Ivory and Rhinoceros Horn*

By the fourth century, elephants were still common in the Two Rivers area, and they continued to inhabit isolated areas right up until the eleventh century.\(^{50}\) Ivory and rhinoceros horn were two of the products mentioned as sought after by the Chinese empires in exchange for temporary appointments. Unfortunately there are few records from the Six Dynasties that deal directly with Li-Lao involvement in the collection and trade of ivory and rhinoceros horn, only those which note where elephants are found.

From Han times onwards there are records of live elephants being sent to the court in the north. Many of these seem to have come from areas further south, such as Chiu-chêん and Jih-nan. At one time the use of elephants for riding or warfare was common as far east as Fukien. The Liang dynasty work *Chien-an chi* recorded that in ancient times the king of Yüeh had rode an elephant to go hunting.\(^{51}\) There were occasional references to elephant tribute from the Two Rivers region, but usually these tended to come from further south. In the T’ai-k’ang period (280-290) after the conquest of Wu, Nan Yüeh (probably Kuang-chou) sent tribute of tame elephants to the Chin court. The emperor asked for a huge cart to be built for the elephants to push and for Yüeh people to ride the elephant.\(^{52}\) During the second month of 531, a tame elephant sent as tribute to the Liang court from Nan Yüeh (again, probably from Kuang-chou) went mad and trampled people.\(^{53}\) There was also a myth recounted over the centuries that elephants shed their tusks annually and buried them in a certain place. Those who wished to collect this ivory would have to make imitation tusks to replace those they had taken, otherwise the elephant would realise the loss and find a new place to bury the tusks.\(^{54}\) Elephants do not actually shed their tusks more than once in a lifetime and the story of them burying their tusks seems to be a local variation on the more recent myth

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\(^{51}\) CAC quoted in TPHYC: 106: 13b.

\(^{52}\) CS 25: 4a.

\(^{53}\) LS 42: 2b.

\(^{54}\) NCIWC quoted in CHC 29: 3b.
of the elephants' graveyard, where piles of ivory await discovery by adventurous explorers.

As for rhinoceros horn, the third-century work Nan chou i wu chih noted huge rhinoceros living on the sea coast in P'ing county in Kao-chou. Shên Huai-yüan noted that the Li and Lao of Hsin-ning 新寧 county were skilled at making armour from rhinoceros skin, which they plated with tin, but it seems that the wild rhinoceros was already scarce in the Li-Lao country by T'ang times. TPHYC notes the presence of rhinoceros only in Yü-lin Chou, and the T'ang tribute in rhinoceros horn is mainly from other areas (Yunnan, Hunan, Kweichow). By the Sung rhinoceros horn was being traded by 'Chiao people' (i.e. people from the former Chiao-chou) at Yung-chou (Nanning) and Ch'in-chou, so presumably by this time there were few rhinoceros left in the country nearer to Canton. Again, a chieftain would have needed control over large tracts of land to be able to collect and send regular supplies of ivory and rhinoceros horn to the Chinese empires.

Cassia Bark and Other Plants

Another product that was probably traded by the Li-Lao was the bark of the cassia or cinnamon tree (kuei 桂). This tree was native to the Two Rivers area, and its bark was used as medicine and as well as a condiment for food, and was perhaps traded out of the area to as far away as India. The fourth century botanical work Nan fang ts'ao mu chuang 南方草木狀 noted the following: 'The kuei is found in Ho-p'u growing on the top of high mountains. It is always green in Summer and Winter. The tree forms a pure forest of its own without mixing with other kinds of trees. In Chiao-chih there are established gardens of kuei'. The high mountains in Ho-p'u commandery at this time were mostly away from the flatter country on the coast where the Sinitic people dwelt,
so many of the natural stands of cassia undoubtedly lay within the territories of Li-Lao chieftains.

Even the people whom the Chinese texts described as the most primitive, who were said to nest in the trees and eat their food raw, made their living from collecting aromatics for trade.\(^{61}\) There are also a few records of Li and Lao collecting and even cultivating other kinds of plants that grew within their territories. The sixth century agricultural manual *Ch’i min yao shu* recorded that the Wu-hu of Chin-feng Mountain 金封山\(^{62}\) were involved in the collection and selling of chiao vine (*chiao t’êng* 椒藤) which could produce a red dye. This vine was said to come from Hsing-ku, to the far west of the Li Lao country. There is also two records from the Three Kingdoms state of Wu of people growing tropical fruits highly prized by the Chinese: it was known that lychees were grown in the mountains of Kao-yao 高要 County in Ts’ang-wu,\(^{63}\) and that people who lived in the mountains of Ts’ang-wu Chiao-chih, Ho-p’u and Nan-hai would also grow longans.\(^{64}\) Other plants are barely mentioned as trade products, but there was presumably a trade in timber from the mountains downriver as well, but there are few records of this in pre-T’ang texts.

*Trade products of the Sea*

There are several early records that refer to trade in products of the sea from Yü-lin Commandery. Jen Fang’s 任昉 *Shu i chi* 述異記, compiled in the first decade of the sixth century:

In 111 CE Yü-lin Commandery gave a coral woman as tribute, and the emperor commanded that it placed in front of the palace and called it “woman coral”

Suddenly one morning it burst into branch and leaf, but by the time of Emperor

\(^{61}\) SCC ch. 36 p. 1138. The passage comes from a book entitled *Lin i chi* 林邑記 written some time between the foundation of Lin-i in 192 CE and the compilation of the *Shui cheng chiu* in 500 CE.

\(^{62}\) CMYS 10: 36b. There is a Feng-shan 封山 commandery in the north-west of Yueh-chou, which contained a county called An-chin 安金. It is probable that this name was garbled, as the area could conceivably be Hsing-ku, and it is part of the area where Wu-hu lived.

\(^{63}\) WLTLC quoted in TPYL 971: 8a.

\(^{64}\) CNINIFC quoted in Wu tu fu 吳都賦 (Rhapsody on the Wu capital), WH ch. 5 p. 100.
Ling the branches had died, and all thought of it as an omen that the house of the Han would soon perish.\textsuperscript{65}

Another quote (probably from the same work) says that:

In Yü-lin Commandery there is a coral market, a place where sailors can sell coral. Coral is emerald green in colour and grows at the bottom of the ocean, one tree has ten branches, but there are no leaves among the branches, big trees can be five or six \textit{ch'i}h tall and even especially small ones are more than one \textit{ch'i}h long. Mermaids it is said, have a palace of coral on the sea.\textsuperscript{66}

A Chin work contains two records of pearls coming from Yü-lin in Han times: In 89 CE a large pearl from Yü-lin Commandery was found that was three inches around, and in 103 CE the surrendered peoples of Yü-lin had found a large pearl five inches around that they presented as tribute.\textsuperscript{67} The Governor of Shih-an Liu Mien 劉勔 reported that auspicious intertwined coral grew in Yü-lin in 463.\textsuperscript{68}

The geographical inaccuracy in these records is highly significant. The entire coast west of the Lei-chou Peninsula up to the modern Sino-Vietnamese border was said to have been under the jurisdiction of Ho-p’u commandery, and the coast westwards from that point was believed to have belonged to Chiao-chih commandery. This would have made Yü-lin a completely landlocked commandery throughout its existence, but the records show that there was actually some confusion about its boundaries. A probable explanation is that like the interior of the Li-Lao country, there were areas along the coast which lay outside Chinese administrative systems. It is natural that any trade that was carried inland through these ungoverned areas into the lands drained by the Yü River would be classed as taking place at Yü-lin. Until the fifth century there was no imperial administrative centre on the coast west from Ho-p’u until the county of Hai-p’ing (in the vicinity of modern Hà Long) situated on the coast to the east of Chiao-

\textsuperscript{65} TPYL 807: 4b.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ku chin chu} 古今注 dating from the fourth century quoted in TPYL 803: 5a. ‘The surrendered folk’ probably refers to people who had submitted to the Han.
\textsuperscript{68} SS 29: 42a.
chih. Along the coast stretching south west of Canton down to Chu-yai Commandery on the southern tip of the Lei-chou Peninsula, there were only three commanderies at Hsin-hui (present-day Chiang-mên) Kao-liang and Kao-hsing (both close to present-day Yang-chiang), up until under the Ch'i (479-502) when a new commandery by the name of Kao-hsing was founded in the vicinity of present-day Hua-chou. This meant that up until the second half of the fifth century most of this coastal region was still in the hands of the Li and Lao, and that the imperial presence was limited to isolated outposts near river mouths. This southern coast produced an abundance of sought-after luxury goods from the sea such as pearls, coral, and cowry shells, and there is also evidence that there were Li and Lao dwelling along the coast, and that they were involved in the collection and trade of these.

The most famous product of the sea coast was undoubtedly its pearls. These were a famous trade product even in the times of the Nan Yüeh kingdom. Schafer has already made a detailed study of the pearl trade in the gulf of Tongking. It is my purpose here only to conjecture how the Li and Lao were involved in this trade. The tomb of the third ruler of the Nan Yüeh kingdom, Chao Ying-ch'i (reigned 113-2 BCE) was ransacked by assistant inspector of Chiao-chou, 呂瑜 by imperial order in 226 CE and contained several barrels of golden silkworms and white pearls. The South Sea coast certainly had the most abundant pearl fisheries in the Chinese Empires, particularly the area around Ho-p'u. Ho-p'u seems to have been able to survive economically from this trade in pearls and relied on the Red River Plain for supplies of rice in exchange for the pearls. Once the pearl supply ran out through overfishing, and the people of Ho-p'u died of starvation on the roads. In the late third century, T'ao Huang reported to the throne that Ho-p'u had a rocky soil unsuited for farming, and so

69 Until the foundation of Sung-shou commandery under the Liu-Sung Empire (in the vicinity of modern Ch'in-chou), a trade could have been carried on here without imperial involvement, perhaps up the Ch'in River passing from the coast into the territory of Yü-lin before being transferred north.
70 The name first appears in this context in NCS 14:27b.
71 NCIWC, quoted in WLC 84: 6b in regard to large variegated purple cowries that were found in the South Sea 'north of Chiao-chih'. WLTLC quoted in TPHYC 170: 5a notes that coral was also a prized product of the area around Chiao-chou, and was collected from the bottom of the sea with iron nets.
73 KCC (Ku Wei) quoted in TPYL 825: 5b. The character 'white' (pai ē?) in this text is corrupted to (yueh ē?) 'to say'.
74 HHS 76: 19a. See Schafer, Pearl Fisheries, pp. 156-157 for a translation and explanation of the full text.
the local people did not farm, but only collected pearls, which they traded with merchants for rice. The Wu had forbidden the locals from collecting pearls privately out of fear that they would take the best specimens. This also resulted in starvation as the local people had nothing to trade for food.\(^{75}\)

Although the imperial authorities could make rulings on pearl collection, these were not always strictly obeyed. The local people were skilled at diving down to collect pearls for themselves, and when officials forbade them from doing so they would simply dive down and cut the pearl oysters open underwater, and hide the pearls in their mouths when they came to the surface.\(^{76}\)

As for the people who lived outside the control of the imperial administrations, they were obviously free to do as they pleased, and there are a few records of Wu-hu as collectors of pearls, and of areas that produced pearls but were far from any administrative seat. Aside from mentioning the Wu-hu as collectors of kingfisher feathers, the Chiao-chou i wu chih notes: ‘The Wu-hu live in the mountains, they shoot kingfishers for the feathers and cut open oysters for the pearls’.\(^ {77}\) Presumably these were mountainous areas close to the sea coast, perhaps those between Ho-p’u and Chiao-chou.

The book Kuang-chih records how the Lao of Tsang-k’o, Hsing-ku, Yü-lin, Chiao-chih and Ts’ang-wu stuck pearls on to hides to make helmets.\(^ {78}\) This suggests, like the records of pearls from Yü-lin commandery, that there was an internal trade in luxury items from the sea from the coast to the inland through channels other than the main sea trade and river routes to and from Chiao-chou and Kuang-chou. Pai-chou 白州, east of Ho-p’u was said to have a stream known as ‘Green Pearl Well’ (Lu Chu ching 綠珠井) where an official of the Liang had gathered three barrels of pearls.\(^ {79}\) In the tenth century Hua-chou 化州 and Po-chou were still both noted for their pearls.\(^ {80}\) Prior to the foundation of Yüeh-chou in 474 there were no counties or commanderies in these areas, but there must certainly have been Li and Lao living along the coast before this time. The Nan Ch’i shu tells of a Li of Kao-liang 高涼 to the south of Yüeh-chou somewhere along the Lei-chou peninsula) who dredged up a bronze statue of an animal while he

\(^{75}\) CS 57: 6a-b.
\(^{76}\) NCWIC quoted in TPY 803: 10b.
\(^{77}\) Quoted in TPY 941: 6a.
\(^{78}\) TPY 356: 7b.
\(^{79}\) LPLI ch.1 p.2: ‘Green Pearl’ was the name of a woman, however, not of a type of pearl.
\(^{80}\) TPHYC 167: 8a; 167: 11b.
was out fishing in 485,81 and another record from the T’ang notes that in Lei-chou 雷州 along the corners of the coast the people were still all Yi and Lao mixed together who lived in lan 棚 (the Tai word for ‘house’ borrowed into Chinese in the sense of ‘stilt house’)82 to avoid the frequent pestilences.83 So not only were there populations of Li and Lao along the coast, some must also have made their livelihood from fishing, and they were surely aware of the value those who dwelt inland attached to pearls, coral and cowries.

Another economic activity was the collection of shell aromatic (chia hsiang 甲香). This was an aromatic substance made by the burning of sea-snail opurcula and good for preventing stomachaches and diarrhoea.84 The T’ai p‘ing huan yü chi at Ho-p’u there are ‘barbarians’ called Yüeh-i 越呂, who made their living from the collection of shell aromatic.85 Much further along the coast, closer to Canton, the people of En-chou were also said to make their livelihood through its collection.86

Cultural exchanges through trade interactions

There are a few indications that the material culture of the Li and Lao had some influence on the material culture of the Chinese over the long-term. Cultural transmissions seem mainly limited to knowledge of materia medica and the use of plants. They may have been the result of the trade in commodities into the city, but may also have been transmitted by the slave trade, which would have brought populations of Li and Lao into Chinese cities.87

One of the most interesting cultural borrowings is that of the medicinal use of the python. Two species of python are found in the Two Rivers region at present, these

81 NCS 18: 24a. Kao-liang was actually meant to be under the jurisdiction of Kuang-chou, so this is perhaps a mistake for Kao-hsing commandery, which had been made subordinate to the province of Yüeh-chou. 82 See Li, T’ung t’ai yü yen, pp. 239-240. 83 TPHVC 169: 6a. 84 HIPT ch. 16 p. 251. Schafer and Wallacker, ‘Local Tribute Products’ p. 232, translate it as ‘plate aromatic’. 85 TPYL 167: 4a. This is from an obscure work entitled Chün kao chih 郵國志 which I have been unable to trace. 86 TPHYC 158: 6a. 87 Bryce Beemer has argued for the importance of captured Thai slaves in Burma in the transmission of culture in more recent times, as a case study of a wider, but neglected field of study. Bryce Beemer, ‘Southeast Asian Slavery and Slave Gathering Warfare as a Vector for Cultural Transmission: The Case of Burma and Thailand’. The Historian. 2009 vol. 71 no. 3, pp.481-506.
are the Burmese or Indian python *python molurus bivittatus* (Thai nguu laam) and reticulated python *python reticulatus* (Thai nguai leuam). While the reticulated python does not seem to be present in southern China it is still found in northern Vietnam.\(^{88}\) The name, geographical location and records of use all point to the snake as a probable trade product from the Li-Lao country. The name of this python in old Chinese texts is now pronounced *jan*, but according to Pulleyblank’s reconstruction, the Early Middle Chinese pronunciation was *ji’am*. This word first appeared written with the character for ‘beard’ 鬚 which led some writers to assume it was a bearded snake.\(^{89}\) In the Sinitic languages spoken in the region at present, the python is known by names sounding similar to *naam* which are usually associated with the character 蟒.\(^{90}\) Li Fang-kuei’s reconstruction of proto-Tai would give the ancestral form of the word in the three varieties of Tai as *h spacecraft* which is very close to the Early Middle Chinese pronunciation. The first pharmacopoeia to note the medicinal use of the snake was the mid-seventh century *Hsin hsiu pên ts’ao* which noted the medicinal properties of its gall and fat.\(^{91}\) Modern Chinese pharmacopoeia state that the *jan* snake is used for its meat, fat and gall,\(^{92}\) and that the gall is used to clear the lungs, stop coughing, stop vomiting, calm the stomach, melt phlegm and calm someone who has suffered shock.\(^{93}\) The reticulated python was the one usually used in Thai traditional medicine.\(^{94}\)

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\(^{89}\) This usage occurs in with the ‘hair’ radical *pien* 彈 and uses the character originally reserved for writing a word for ‘beard’: *jan* 鬚 (HNT 12: 14a). The form with the ‘insect’ radical *hui* 蟒: *jan* 蟒 also appears very early as the form recorded in the dictionary *Shuo wen*. TPHYC mainly uses the ‘insect’ form, but uses the ‘beard’ form once and notes that the snake was so-called because of its profuse beard (TPHYC 159: 3a).

\(^{90}\) From my own personal knowledge. The literary reading of this character in Cantonese is *im*, which would correspond to Early Middle Chinese *ji’am* as the initial *j* (corresponding to Mandarin *f*) disappears in Cantonese. Meyer, Bernard F., and Wempe, Theodore F. *The Student’s Cantonese Dictionary*. Hong Kong: Catholic Truth Society, 1947 p. 151, use the reading *im* and define it as an ‘edible snake’. It is a paradox why the usual pronunciation *naam* seems to be borrowed from the Tai word for a reticulated python, rather than the Burmese variety, when reticulated pythons are not known in China.

\(^{91}\) HHPT ch. 16 p. 244


\(^{94}\) Jean Mulholland notes that in Thailand it is the reticulated python that is usually used for medicinal purposes. Jean Mulholland, *Herbal Medicine in Paediatrics: translation of a Thai book of Genesis*
The *Huai nan tsū*, records: ‘When the Yiē 越 people catch a *jan* 焦 snake they regard it as the greatest delicacy, but when the people of the central lands (*chung kuo 中國*) catch one they throw it away as useless’. The second-century dictionary *Shuo wen chiēh tsū* defines it succinctly as ‘a large snake which can be eaten’, but makes no mention of eating it as a specifically southern custom. An early description from an Eastern Han work notes: ‘The *jan* is a large snake, not only large but also very long. It is variegated in colour like the pattern of a tapestry; it eats pigs and swallows deer’. The *Shui ching chu* notes how the people of Wu-p’ing kill snakes that have just fed for food: ‘When the Yi of the mountains see that the snake is not moving they take large bamboo skewers and skewer the snake through from its head to its tail. Having killed it they then eat it, considering it to be a rare treat’. The *T’ai p’ing huan yu chi* quotes a *Chiao chih chi* 交趾記 as an authority for the following quote about the *jan* snake under the entry on Long-hsiēh Mountain 龍穴山 in the vicinity of Wu-p’ing: ‘The *jan* snake comes from the south. It is several metres (*chang*) long. It swallows deer right up to their antlers, waiting for them to digest and rot inside after gulping them down. The Lao people eat its fat and gall in order to cure all kinds of illnesses’. This record of the medicinal use of snake fat and gall by the Lao as medicine is interesting, and suggests, along with the quote from the *Huai nan tsū* that the use of the snake for medicine and food was a piece of Li-Lao medical knowledge adopted by the Chinese. The earliest record of its medicinal use by Chinese dates from the fourth century. A certain Yen Han 頗含 wished to cure the sickness of his sister-in-law, who had lost consciousness. A doctor told him to use python gall as a remedy, but he couldn’t get it anywhere, eventually it was delivered to him by a fairy boy wearing green clothes who gave him a green bag containing some gall, upon which he changed into a bird and flew away. Although this actually predates the piece from the *Chiao chih chi*, the natural
distribution of the python and its name in Chinese  
*jan* both point to the transmission of medical knowledge from the Li-Lao to the Chinese during the Six Dynasties period.

Descriptions of the snake in early Mediaeval texts locate its habitat in the Red River valley and the three commanderies of Wu-p’ing 武平, Chin-hsing 晉興, and Chin-an 晉安. Records from the T’ang and early Sung show a similar distribution. The T’ang work *Pei hu lu* 北戶錄 records that the four provinces of Kuei-chou 桂州, Ho-chou 賀州, Ch’üan-chou 泉州, and Kuang-chou 廣州 had to alternate in giving a tribute of python gall. T’ung-tien 通典 in a list of tribute from different Sui commanderies, notes python gall as tribute from the commanderies of Ch’ao-yang 潮陽, Nan-hai 南海, An-nam 安南, Kao-liang 高涼, and Hai-fêng 海豐. The T’ai ping huan yü chi notes eight provinces as producers of python gall, all but one of them in the Two Rivers region. The python is also mentioned in connection with Yü-lin-chou 鄦林州. So overall the records of this snake are limited to the provinces along the south-east coast of China and north-east from the Red River Delta. Python gall was a sought-after tribute product, the Burmese python was common in Li-Lao areas and the name and earliest records of the snake indicate that they were an important trade product for mountain dwellers who knew their habitat and traded into urban areas.

Clues to a trade in plants, or at the very least the acquisition of botanical knowledge from the Li-Lao may be seen in the names of forest products found in the oldest botanical works. Some of the plants noted as native to Kuang-chou and Chiao-chou in the *Ch’i min yao shu*, are prefixed with the character *ku* (古, Early Middle Chinese pronunciation *kɔ*), which is very close to the proto-Tai numerical coefficient.

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101 The last three place-names correspond to the hill country north of Hanoi (SCC ch.37 p. 1156), the area around Nanning (P’ei Yuän’s KCC quoted in TPYL 934; 1b-2a), and southern Fukien (NS 70; 15a-b) respectively.
102 PHIL ch.1 p.8.
103 TT ch. 6 pp. 34-8
104 TPHYC 161: 3a-107: 11a. These are Shao-chou 越州 in present-day northern Kwangtung and Ho-chou 賀州 and Kui-chou 桂州 in northern Kwangsi, Kao-chou 高州, Yung-chou 蘇州 (Nanning), and Feng-chou 嶺 in the Red River Plain and the outlier Ch’üan-chou 泉州 (TPHYC 102: 3a) in Fukien. Edward Schafer, and Benjamin E. Wallacker, ‘Local Tribute Products of the T’ang Dynasty’. *Journal of Oriental Studies* 1957, no. 4 p. 226, note a similar distribution from T’ang tribute lists, translating it into English as ‘whiskered snake bile’.
105 TPHYC 165: 5a.
for trees and plants in Tai languages spoken throughout Kwangsi and Yunnan. The ku-tu 古度 tree was mentioned first in the Rhapsody on the Wu Capital, and refers to one of four species of fig tree. This is actually very close to the name of the fig tree in modern Thai ma deuaa where the ma is the numerical coefficient for trees, in place of the ko prefix. The earliest word for the cotton tree Bombax malabaricum in Chinese is ku-pei 古貝 which was pronounced something like *kə-pei⁸ in Early Middle Chinese. The name is faaι, phaaι, waaι in most Tai languages. The ku-pei was first recorded in the Nan-shih as the name of a tree in Lin-i, although it had been described earlier in Chang Po’s Wu lu ti lu chih as mu-mien (木棉) a product of Chiao-chou and Yung-ch’ang 永昌 (present day Yunnan). The phonetic form of the prefix and the word in modern Tai languages suggest that this word was actually borrowed first into a proto-Tai language, in which the plant prefix added in place of the first syllable, and then subsequently into Chinese. The cotton plant Gossypium herbaceum was first named as the ku-chung vine (ku chung t’ẹng 古終藤) recorded in Shen Huai-yuan’s Nan Yüeh chih, as a product of Feng-shui county in Kuei-chou, which the Li people would weave into cloth. Other plants with a similar prefix are the citron kou-yuan-tzu 鉤緣子

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106 Chang Chün-ju, Chuang yì fang yén, p.794.
107 The Rhapsody on the Wu Capital also contains reference to a kind of cotton tree called the chia-lang (Early Middle Chinese *kua-lang) from Kuang-chou which possibly contains the same prefix (WH ch. 5 p. 98).
108 The modern equivalents of all the plant names in this paragraph come from Kao Ming-kan 高明乾, Chhih wu ku han ming t’s k’ao 禮物古漢漢考, Chih-chou: Ta hsiang ch’ü pan shē, 2006 pp.86-7
109 CMY 10: 50a-b quotes a KCC and CCC for the name.
110 The reconstruction is according to Pulleyblank, Dictionary of Reconstructed Pronunciation. In later texts such as the Ling wui tai ta the spelling is chi-pei 吉貝 (Early Middle Chinese *kjir-pa⁷), but this was probably a graphical error, Chou Ch’ü-fei (LWTT ch. 6 p. 228) states that it is actually the 古貝 spelling that is the corruption. Paul Pelliot believed it originated in a Prakrit word karpāī descended from an earlier Sanskrit karpāsa. See Pelliot, Paul. 1957-73 Notes on Marco Polo: ouvrage posthume (3 vols.) Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, vol. 1 p. 429-59. Another form of the word may have arrived through the southern maritime route, the Malay kapas, which was also a Sanskrit loan. See Han Chên-hua 韓振華, Chu fan chih chü pu 詩蕃志注補, Centre of Asian Studies Occasional Papers and Monographs no. 134 vol. 2, Hong Kong, Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2000 pp. 386-94 for a discussion of the many different names of this plant. I believe the loan directly from the prakrit karpāī to be more likely as its phonetic form is a closer fit than kapas to the Early Middle Chinese *pa⁷.
111 According to the principles outlined in Li, Handbook of Comparative Tai, the proto-Tai reconstruction would be *faι it would have been borrowed into Early Middle Chinese as paι. The labiodental fricative f-sound had not yet developed in the Sinitic languages in the period under discussion in this thesis. Edwin G. Pulleyblank, Middle Chinese: a study in historical phonology. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983, pp. 68-9.
112 NS 68: 1b.
113 NYC quoted in TPYL 820: 6b. The attribution of this quote to the NYC is suspicious as Kuei-chou was not founded until the sixth century, so perhaps it belongs to a later work (see chapter four, footnotes
and the poisonous gelsemium vine *Gelsemium elegans*. The latter had Chinese name *Yeh ko* 決葛, but also had an name explicitly referenced in the *Non-chou i-wu-chih* in connection with Li people as *kou wăn 鉤挽* or 鉤吻 *kou wên*. It was said that the ‘Li bandits’ would eat this vine to commit suicide on the doorstep of someone who had an unpaid debt to their family with a view to getting it paid back.\(^{115}\)

A further cultural borrowing was the practice of growing living fences of bamboo around settlements as defensive walls. The earliest written reference is from a letter by Liu An 劉安 (179-122 BCE), prince of Huai-nan and author of the *Huai nan tsû*, written to dissuade the Emperor Wu from allowing troops to attack the kingdom of Min Yûeh 閩越 (present day Fukien). The letter describes ‘I have heard that the Yûeh have no cities, towns or villages, and live in small river valleys in bamboo thickets’.\(^{116}\) Later descriptions of life in the Two Rivers region make it clear that the people there were not simply living in the thickets; they had grown them as protective walls around their settlements. The species used for these walls was thorny bamboo *Bambusa stenostachya* known in Chinese as *lè chu 笋竹* or *ts'ê chu 萊竹*. The name *lè chu 笋竹* is a word peculiar to the Two Rivers region. Only *ts'ê chu* is used in modern Mandarin, but is found in Cantonese as *lak* meaning ‘thorny bamboo’.\(^{117}\) This type of bamboo grows in clumps, can reach heights of twenty metres, many branches sprout out from each section and the lower branches of the plant are hard and thorny. The use of this plant had been known for centuries. T’ai K’ai-chih’s manual of bamboo species, the *Chu pu*, records that it grows in all commanderies of Chiao-chou and that the people there grow it for walls, so that soldiers cannot attack them.\(^{118}\) The use of thorny bamboo was not limited to small settlements of locals who wished to keep imperial troops at bay, it was also adopted by the Chinese for the defence of larger administrative centres. T’ang sources record that it was grown as protective walls around Nan-ên chou 南恩

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\(^{114}\) Early Middle Chinese *kaw-jwlan*. the unrelated word *som* is the ordinary Tai for citrus in the present day.

\(^{115}\) NCIWC quoted in TPYL 990: 4b-5a.

\(^{116}\) HS 64a: 3a. The word used for ‘thicker’ is *huang 黃*.

\(^{117}\) It is also used in the compound *lak wai 笋圍* meaning ‘a hedge’. Meyer and Wempe, *Student’s Cantonese Dictionary*, pp. 298-9.

\(^{118}\) CP 1:4a.
Conclusion

The Li and Lao were fortunate enough to occupy areas of the Two Rivers region that were rich in the products desired by the people of the Chinese empires. They were also lucky that for several centuries the Chinese empires were not militarily capable of conquering them to acquire these products by force. During this period, the Li and Lao traded these products to the people of the Chinese Empires and in return they received copper, salt and iron and temporary appointments as administrators. A temporary appointment for a Li-Lao chieftain presumably had the dual advantage of raising his or her status amongst the local people as a great ruler and gaining recognition as the legitimate ruler of a defined area which would have reduced the possibility of harassment from imperial troops in his or her own affairs. The close contact with the Chinese empires throughout the Six Dynasties period seems not to have tamed the Li-

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119 YTCS 98: 3a. Present day En-p’ing.
120 LWT Tch. 8 pp. 296-7. Present-day Hsin-hsing.
121 LPLT h. 2 p. 10. Present-day Nanning.
122 HTS 167: 9b.
123 The meaning of the character is ‘bride’, but here it was obviously being used for its sound.
125 Luo, Yongxian. ‘Expanding the Proto-Tai Lexicon – A Supplement to Li (1977)’. Mon-Khmer Studies 1997 vol. 27, p. 293.
Lao leadership, nor did it assimilate them to Sinitic models of behaviour. Copper coinage held no prestige for the Li and Lao, and they were interested in acquiring it only for the material it gave them to make drums. These were a symbol of barbarism for imperial administrators, but a symbol of political legitimacy and power for the Li and Lao chieftains. Significantly, those Li and Lao who lived in the east nearer to Canton and away from the natural sources of copper in the ground gravitated towards the behaviour patterns of the Li and Lao further to the west rather than that of the imperial administrators in Canton. The quest for copper (in some areas), iron, and recognition as the leader of one's own people reinforced a sense of local independence by encouraging competition among the leaders of the tung to capture more territory and people in order to supply the demands for gold, silver, slaves, and luxury goods. In this way contact with the empires triggered the development from politically fragmented societies composed of individual tung in the third century into the larger conglomerations of many different tung under the control of powerful local dynasties that finally appeared in the seventh century.
Chapter Seven: The Rulers In-between

The decline of the drum-casting tradition was connected to the end of independent political structures amongst the Li and Lao. The Record of the Southern Barbarians contained in the Sui shu describes the demise of the Li and Lao like so:

The Southern Barbarians live mixed together with the Hua people. They are called Tan 畛, Jang 獨, Li 俚, Lao 劳, and I 包. None of them have lords, they live in the mountain valleys, and of old they were known as the Hundred Yteh, their custom is to crop their hair and tattoo their bodies, and they are fond of fighting with each other. They gradually became diminished and weakened, and gradually ended up belonging to the Central States, and were all arranged as commanderies and counties, and became the same as common people, and no more details of them were recorded. During the Ta-yeh reign (605-17) over ten countries (kuo 國) from the southern wildernesses presented tribute, but they have since all dissipated like wisps of smoke and no more is heard of them. Now only four countries are still recorded.¹

The description above is more a record of current events from the mid-seventh century, as the Sui shu was completed in 656. Looking back a century from this time to the mid-sixth century it certainly would have appeared that the Li and Lao were less powerful than they had been. This fits into the way the contact between non-Sinitic peoples and Chinese empires is usually portrayed, with administrative control leading to cultural assimilation and ultimately to disappearance. Although this was the long-term fate of the Li and Lao over the millennium of contact from the Han onwards, the situation over shorter term of three or four centuries between the end of the Han and the beginning of the T'ang shows a different process at work.

Here is Schafer’s overview of the situation in the Two Rivers region in the first centuries of the T'ang:

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¹ SuS: 82: 1a.
In the seventh century, native resistance [to the T’ang] was concentrated in the western administrations of Jung and Yung, especially in the coastal counties between Canton and Hanoi. The Fêng and Ning tribes were always prominent in this resistance, which always threatened the main line of communications through Nam Việt.²

The significant difference between this time period and that under the preceding Southern Dynasties is the political structure of Li and Lao society between the Two Rivers. By the T'ang it was no longer based on a honeycomb of small anonymous tung, but was instead controlled by a few large families who had connections to the court. This was a new class of rulers who had Chinese surnames, and controlled a more-or-less fixed territory in which they inherited administrative posts. They were a result of the administrative and economic policies of the Six Dynasties Empires towards the Li-Lao chieftains, and on a superficial level their resemblance to other great families backs up the theory of the transformative power of Chinese civilization. However, members of this ruling class were never considered to be ordinary civilised people, and always had an ambiguous status in the eyes of those who recorded their actions. These leaders constituted a group of their own, they commanded the loyalty of the Li-Lao people and could lead hosts of them in battle, but at the same time they enjoyed imperial titles and rewards. In the eyes of the centre, they were significantly less ‘Chinese’ than the administrators in the Red River Plain, and, from the records of bronze drum ownership and the size of their own private armies, it appears that their Li-Lao subjects considered them as a continuation of their ordinary leaders rather than an imposed group of rulers from outside. The Chinese titles gave them legitimacy at court, and their position as Li-Lao chieftains in a local context that gave them legitimacy in their respective districts, and made them useful allies of the T’ang court.

These leaders had an ambiguous status; sometimes they were referred to as barbarian chiefs, but at other times they were named with official administrative titles. They were neither completely the same as families from the north, nor were they the same as the smaller tung rulers described earlier. Some local leaders made arrangements with the empires to gain imperial titles and positions, some rebelled and raided

² Schafer. Vermilion Bird, p. 69
neighbouring districts, and some switched back and forth between both within a matter of years.

In this chapter I wish to give an overview of the three major families of this ambiguous status that flourished south of the Yü River throughout the sixth and seventh centuries: Schäfer mentions the Fêng 馮 who were influential along the coast and inland south-west of Canton south to Hainan; and the Ning 宁 along the coast and inland west of the Lei-chou peninsula, but there was also a very powerful Ch'ên 陳 family on the south bank of the Yü River. These families are the main representatives of the new Li-Lao ruling class, but there were certainly other smaller clans whose members controlled smaller areas.

Han or Man?

Scholarly discussion in Chinese on these people assumes a division between ‘Han’ and ‘Man’ that is concrete and definable based on ancestry,3 arguing that their portrayal as Li and Lao in T'ang texts was a case of mistaken identity since they were actually really only ‘Han’ people who had taken on elements of ‘Man’ culture through living amongst the Li and Lao for long periods of time.

There are three basic problems with this kind of discussion: the first is the idea that at the time there was some kind of static division between ‘Han’ and ‘Man’ to begin with. Han is a retrospective appellation which was rarely used in the Southern Dynasties or the early T’ang. The use of ‘barbarian terms’ (Man, Li, Lao, etc.) served only as an indicator of perceived difference in the eyes of the writers of texts, a difference based not only on behaviours, but also on administrative status and locale, and when writers perceived no difference they would no longer use barbarian terms. Since the centres where writing was carried out were not static themselves, different writers had different judgements on the people of the same locale at different times. The absence of a hard-and-fast distinction is obvious in the descriptions of the great families South of the Yü River. There was little consistency in the way writers applied names to

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3 Liao, Li shih ti li hsüeh pp. 253-8, refers to these people as ‘southern-barbarised Han people’ (man-hua han-jên 變化漢人). Chêng and T’an, Chuang tsu li shih wen hua, p. 480 refer to the Ning family as ‘Han people Yüeh-ised to a high degree’ (kao tu yüeh hua li han jên 高度越化的漢人).
members of the same family lineage, and the names used could change within an individual’s lifetime.

The second problem is the habit of uncritically accepting at face value claims of northern ancestry found in old Chinese genealogies. It has been shown that many such genealogies in the Two Rivers region were the inventions of later generations who wished to hide their shameful ‘barbarian’ ancestry.\(^4\) This is particularly relevant for discussion of the Ch’ên family, whose claim to northern ancestry does not appear in any text before the fifteenth century.

The third problem is an overemphasis on the importance of the paternal line in discussion of the great families. Chinese texts seldom elaborate on maternal lineages or family relationships in the maternal line. In doing so they automatically omit half the story of the first generation, and perhaps even as much as three-quarters in the second generation. The Fêng family are a notable exception to this, because of the fame of their matriarch, the Lady Hsien, but Liao insists on referring to them as ‘southern-barbarised Chinese’, assuming that the Chinese paternal line was a more important part of their identity when their influence in the region was more likely due to the Lady Hsien’s mana among the local rulers than that of their relatively unknown ‘Chinese’ ancestor.

Each of the three great families discussed below originated in a different way, the Fêng from a strategic marriage of a newcomer with a local, the Ning a localised family of northern origin and the Ch’ên most likely of local extraction. The similarities among the activities of the families and the way they were represented in Chinese texts far outweigh their differences in ancestral origin. They deserve attention as a class of their own, not as representatives of the last and most powerful generations of local rulers between the Two Rivers. All of the families belonging to this class had several things in common. They were all born out of the centuries-long interaction between the imperial administrations and the local chieftains, they were all close enough to the

\(^4\) Invoking a northern ancestry as proof of one’s ethnic status became particularly common in Kwangtung during Ming times, see David Faure, ‘Becoming Cantonese, the Ming Dynasty Transition’. In: *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China*, eds. David Faure and Tao Tao Liu. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996 pp.37-50. See also Su Kuan-ch’ang’s study of the invented ancestry of the Ts’ên 崇 family of Kwangsi (Su Kuan-ch’ang 蘇冠昌, ‘Kuang hsi t’u kuan min tsu ch’êng fên tsai t’an 廣西土官民族成份再探. *Hsüeh shu lun t’an 學術論壇*, 1981 vol. 2, pp. 83-6) and the example of the Wei family of Kwangsi (mostly classed as Chuang by the present government) who had invented a story of descent from the Han General Han Hsin 韓信 (Chêng and T’an, *Chuang tsu li shih wen hua*, p. 481).
people they ruled to be occasionally classified as barbarians along with the bronze-drum owning Li-Lao chieftains of the tung, and some of their family members were still tung chieftains. Viewed from another angle, they were all trusted servants of the Sui and T'ang courts, called on for military campaigns in the Korean Peninsula or closer to home, and in return for their participation the leaders of the families were given honours and positions at court. They were different from the appointed administrators of other regions in that they were a fixed ruling class who monopolised control of their own localities that derived from their own local prestige rather than from the authority of the court.

Aside from these three important families, there is evidence for the existence of other smaller ruling lineages who shared their ambiguous status, so the three families described in detail below can be said to be merely those who stand out from the crowd.

The Feng of Kao-chou

The Feng family is the most well-known of all the great families south of the Yü River. This is mainly due to the fame of its matriarch, the Lady Hsien, ‘Lady Defender of the Country’ (ch’iao kuo fu jên 誅國夫人) who has been appropriated over the years in pre-modern Chinese historiography as a loyal servant of the imperial dynasties, and more recently in Chinese national history as an example of a heroic minority leader who encouraged co-operation and peace amongst different min-tsu. Lady Hsien and the origins of the Feng family have already been given attention elsewhere in English, so here I shall only go into detail about her activities as they relate back to her Li-Lao ancestry. Lady Hsien’s biography describes her tribe as having over 100,000 households and that over a thousand tung in Hainan and Tan-erh had given her their allegiance. From these descriptions it is obvious that we are dealing here with a member of the Li-Lao ruling class rather than a migrant from the north.

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5 Geoff Wade, ‘The Lady Sinn’, pp. 139-40. The life and times of Lady Hsien have already been discussed in great detail in English and Chinese Wang Hsing-Jui 王興瑞, Hsien fu jên yó fēng shìh chia tsu – suí t'ang chien kuang tung nàn pu ti ch'i shè hū li shēh ti ch'u pu yén chihü 水夫人與馮氏家族－隋唐間廣東南部社會歷史的初步研究, 1984 Peking: Chung hua shu chú. 6 Sus 80: 4a. Wade, The Lady Sinn says that Hainan and Tan-erh refer to the Ling-nan region as a whole, not merely to the island of Hainan.
Lady Hsien came from Kao-chou, and was described as the daughter of a great Yüeh ruling family. She was married to the Ch’ên governor of Kao-liang, Fêng Pao 馮寶, who was the son of Fêng Jung 馮贊, the Liang inspector of Luo-chou, a province founded during the Ta-t'ung period (535-46). The descendants of this union are a perfect example of the hereditary ruling class between the rivers. They visited both Sui and T'ang courts, and members of the family had administrative and military posts under both of these dynasties. At the same time they had close connections back to the local societal structure of tung chieftains, and their descendents were therefore never considered to be ordinary people. The strategic alliance with the ruling courts of the Ch’ên, Sui, and T’ang courts rewarded the Fêng family with material goods and an enlarged political domain, and gave the northern courts the ability to keep the lands south of the Yü River and south-west along the coast from Canton on side without having to be involved in large-scale military conflict with the local people.

In Lady Hsien’s own lifetime (c.512-c. 602) she and the members of her family were awarded ever-higher positions in government over an ever-larger area of the country. Originally the territory under the direct control of the Fêng was confined to the Kao-chou area, but in reward for her loyalty to the northern courts, members of Lady Hsien’s family were given control over the northern end of the Lei-chou Peninsula at Luo-chou, and in 590 her son Fêng P’u 馮僩 became commander of Yai-chou 崖州 (Hainan), where a branch of her family lasted as a hereditary dynasty for more than two hundred years. Lady Hsien’s family were given the title ‘Defender of Yang-ch’un Commandery’ 陽春, and her grandsons Fêng Ang 馮盎 and Fêng Hsüan 馮暄 held the posts of inspector of Kao-chou and Luo-chou respectively. Lady Hsien also appears to have had authority over other local chieftains in the Pearl River drainage area. Four of these people were recorded as having met with Lady Hsien and having taken her command ‘back to their tribes’ (pu luo 部落), a wording that shows they belonged to the world of the hierarchy of tung rather than that of the Sui administration.

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7 HTS 110: 1a.
8 TCCTC ch. 177: p. 5534
9 Wang Hsien fu jên, pp. 53-4.
10 TCCTC Ibid.
11 SuS 68: 10a.
12 SuS 80: 66. These were Ch’ên T’an 陳坦 of Ts’ang-wu 蔡梧, Fêng Ts’ên-wêng 馮岑翁 of Kang-chou 鄰州 (probably a relation), Têng Ma-t’ou 鄭馬頭 of Liang-hua 梁化 (half way between modern Hong
The Lady Hsien’s grandson Feng Ang is a fascinating figure and more records exist about him than any other of the Lady Hsien’s descendants. The details of his life exhibit precisely the kind of ambiguity between ‘people’ and ‘barbarians’ that is evident from the more scattered references to other local ruling families. At the beginning of the Jen-shou period of the Sui (601-605), in his guise as an ordinary local official, he became the magistrate of Sung-k’ang 宋康 county (modern Yang-chiang). At this time, the Lao of five provinces including Ch’ao-chou 潮州 and Ch’eng-chou 成州 rebelled and Ang hastened to court requesting to be allowed to attack them. He was instructed to mobilise imperial troops from Chiang-nan and local troops from Ling-nan to attack the rebels. After he had conquered them he was appointed as governor of Han-yang 漢陽 (modern Wu-han in Hopei) outside his native district.  

A few years later Feng Ang went with Emperor Yang to attack Liao-tung (Korea) in the period 611-614 and was given the appointment of senior militant general. His positions and activities make him appear like any other loyal Sui official, yet senior supervisor Yang Su 楊素 thought of him in a different way. When Emperor Wen of the Sui sent Ang to go and discuss the layout of the rebels with him, Yang Su gasped in amazement at his abilities exclaiming ‘I had not expected that this man could be born among the Man and Yi’,  

Yang Su’s comment was not based merely on a prejudice against southerners. The governor of Han-yang had an alternate identity in the south as a ‘chieftain (ch’iu chang 豳長) of Kao-chou’. In the last year of the Sui (618) when the Empire was disintegrating, Feng Ang hurried back to his native place, where he obviously had a great degree of influence. The Hsin T’ang shu notes that when the Sui fell, Ang fled back to his home country where he was able to summon together many chieftains and assemble an army of 50,000 people.  

Like his grandmother, Ang does not seem to have been interested in complete political autonomy from the empires in the north. In the fourth month of 618 before the T’ang was installed at Ch’ang-an, Ang had turned over the districts of Ts’ang-wu, Kao-

Kong and Canton), Li Kuang-Fu 賴光勿 of T’eng-chou 潮州, and P’ang Ch’ing 張靖 of Luo-chou 羅州. The significance of several of these names will become clear when they appear later in this chapter.  

13 HTS 110: 1a-b.; TCTC ch. 179 p. 5589 the provincial seat of Ch’ang-chou lay on the Yu River near to modern Feng-k’ai 封開.  

14 HTS 110: 1a; TCTC ch. 179 p. 5589  

15 TCTC ibid.  

16 HTS ibid.
liang, Chu-yai and P’an-yü to Lin Shih-hung rather than attempting to rule them himself.17 His loyalty to Lin Shih-hung soon changed however. In 620 Ang moved against Kao Fa-ch’eng 高法澄 of P’an-yü and Hsien Pao-ch’e 洗寶徹 of Hsin-hsing 新興, two ‘rebel commanders’ who had taken orders from Lin Shih-hung to kill the remaining Sui officials in their respective areas. Ang defeated their forces once, but Hsien Pao-ch’e’s nephew Chih-ch’én 智臣 regrouped at Hsin-chou to fight a battle of resistance. What won the campaign for Ang was his reputation among the people of the south. At the beginning of the second battle he took off his helmet to show his face and shouted to the enemy forces ‘Don’t you recognise me?’ at which point most of them dropped their weapons, stripped to the waist and made obeisance to him.18 After dispersing their followers he was able to capture Hsien Pao-ch’e and Chih-ch’én and other leaders, and in doing so he brought the lands of P’an-yü, Ts’ang-wu and Chu-yai (Hainan) under his control and gave himself the title of area commander-in-chief (tsung-kuan 總管). It was at this time, after the Sui had collapsed but before the T’ang had consolidated enough power in the north to influence the politics of the Two Rivers region, that Fêng Ang was most powerful. Someone well-versed in the history of the area advised Ang:

The last of the Sui has fallen, and all within the seas is in upheaval. Although the T’ang has risen to meet the challenge, its authority has yet to spread to Nan Yüeh and the area is still not yet at peace. You, my lord, have already overcome more than twenty provinces. That is much more than the nine commanderies of Chao T’o! You should request to be given the title of king of Nan Yüeh.19

To which Ang replied:

We have lived here in Nan-Yüeh now for five generations, and only those of our household are appointed as the local dignitaries. I have sons and daughters, silks

17 TCTC ch. 185 p. 5790
18 TCTC ch. 188 pp. 5899-5900; HTS 110:1b. Although no texts mention the relationship, Hsien Pao-ch’e 洗寶徹 and his nephew Chih-ch’én 智臣 were almost certainly related to Fêng Ang through his famous grandmother.
19 Ibid.
and jades. It is very difficult to get to lead such luxurious life as this. I am always fearful that I will not be able to bear the burden of this and will let my inheritance be destroyed. The clothes and brocades of this province are already sufficient. What would I want with requesting anything else in addition? I won't hear of the title of King.20

Although he did not choose to follow the example Ch'in general Chao T'o in setting up his own independent kingdom, Féng Ang was the last leader in the Two Rivers region to give his loyalty to the T'ang, and it was not until the seventh month of 622 that he finally did so. This was described as 'surrendering the multitudes of Nan Yüeh'. Subsequently the T'ang emperor Kao-tsu divided his lands into the eight provinces of Kao-chou, Luo-chou, Ch'un-chou, Pai-chou, Yai-chou, Tan-chou, Lin-chou and Chen-chou,21 and bestowed on Ang the titles of Supreme Pillar of State, Commander-in-Chief of Kao-chou and Luo-chou, as well as enfeoffing him as 'Duke of the principedom of Wu' (Wu kuo kung 吳國公), a title which was soon altered to the more geographically appropriate 'Duke of the principedom of Yüeh' (Yüeh kuo kung 越國公). Emperor Kao-tsu also promoted Ang's sons Chih-tai 智戴 to the post of inspector of Ch'un-chou (modern Yang-ch'un in Kwangtung) and Chih-yü 智嶽 to the post of inspector of East Ho-chou (Tung ho chou 東合州 a province that covered most of the Lei-chou Peninsula).22 This was basically a continuation of the policy of earlier dynasties of bestowing official titles on local ruling families. However, Féng Ang was different from the earlier chiefs in two ways: he had served the former dynasty as an official and soldier far from his native district, and co-operation with the T'ang meant that he and his family members gained control over a much larger area than earlier chieftains had managed, west from Canton along the coast to Ho-p'u and south to Hainan. At the beginning of the Chên-kuan era (627-650), Ang's loyalty to the T'ang was in question, and the court received word that he had rebelled. Initially the Emperor T'ai-tsung summoned the general Lin Mu 岑暮 and ordered him to lead the best troops from the Yangtse and Huai River regions to attack Ang, but was dissuaded from this by an

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid. The first four provinces were on the coast south-west from Canton, and the second four were on Hainan
22 HTS 110: 1a.
official named Wei Chêng 魏征 who remonstrated against the military action, proposing instead to gain Ang’s loyalty through virtuous means. As a result of this, Ang’s son Chih-tai was sent to court as an ambassador to the emperor. This was probably a case of taking a hostage to procure Ang’s loyalty, which was considered a more virtuous action than going to war.

To the Sui, Fêng Ang had been a trustworthy administrator and soldier away from his own district, but by the early T’ang he had become comfortably ensconced in his own province, and the court was dependent on his agreement for peace in the area. For the T’ang, the loyalty of such a person was an expediency in the early days before T’ang power was properly consolidated; the reason that Wei Chêng had remonstrated with the Emperor against using military force to subdue Ang was not only because the reports of Ang’s rebellion were unproven rumour, but also because it was not certain that the T’ang troops would return victorious.

In the words of Schafer, Fêng Ang was ‘given the opportunity to prove his loyalty to the T’ang’ in 631 when he led troops against the Lao people of two tung named Luo and Tou. In fact, this test of loyalty held more advantage for Fêng Ang than it did for the T’ang court, as the following description shows:

In the fifth year of the Chên-kuan period (631), Ang came to court and was treated to many feasts and given many gifts. Suddenly the Lao of the Luo and Tou tung rebelled and Ang was ordered to lead 20,000 men to be the vanguard force to attack them. The bandits occupied strategic spots so they could not be attacked. Ang grasped his crossbow and told those around him “As I use up all of my arrows, so shall you know if we are to win or lose” and he let off seven arrows in succession, hitting seven people. The bandits all fled, and Ang released his soldiers to take advantage of this; they took over a thousand heads. For this it is noted that the emperor praised his merit, and before and after this bestowed on him uncountable rewards.

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23 HTS 110 1b-2a.
24 HTS ibid; TCTC ch. 192 pp. 6038-9
25 Schafer, Vermillion Bird, p. 62
26 TCTC ch. 193 p. 6092.
At the same time as he made war on smaller chiefdoms in the name of the T'ang, Ang was also eliminating the competing chiefdoms in his own neighbourhood and expanding his influence to the west, as well as enriching himself with gifts from the T'ang court.  

The *Hsin T'ang shu* records Ang’s government in glowing terms: ‘He was good at government, and examining documents and was the best at catching wicked people. He humbly received the joy of his people’. This agreeable description of Ang’s administrative activities makes him out to be a loyal servant of the T’ang, yet descriptions of his lifestyle indicate that his relationship with the T’ang court was also very much to his own advantage. Just like his famous grandmother, and like many of the Li-Lao chieftains who preceded him, Ang made a decision to accept the overlordship of a northern empire which did not result in a loss of *de facto* power over his own region. On the contrary, it cemented and widened his family’s grip on the area.

In his own district, Fêng Ang was more like a king than a governor. He had armies of thousands of his own troops, controlled over 2,000 *li* of territory (approximately 600 kilometers, and owned over ten thousand slaves, and he must have also been able to support many wives and concubines, as he managed to father thirty sons. The awe in which he was held by ordinary people in his district and the reaction of local troops to the sight of his face is also testament to his great *mana* over the people of the area, and his status as a local chieftain. In the context of his own region the T’ang administrative titles were surely ceremonial, as he was of quite a different status to the ordinary appointed governors in the north. For this reason he was referred to regularly as a chieftain or leader, and by Yang Su as a ‘southern barbarian’ (*nan man* 南蠻). It is telling that the details of his life in the *Hsin T’ang shu* were relegated to the end chapters of the book with the biographies of other ‘barbarian’ leaders.

Fêng Ang’s most famous son, Fêng Chih-tai received praise from the compilers of the *Hsin T’ang shu* who recorded that he was brave and skilled in strategy, able to soothe crowds, devoted all his might to his official duties and that chiefs and leaders

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27 There may also have been a strategic advantage for Fêng Ang in the conquest of the Luo and Tou *tung*. There was territorial competition between the Ning and Fêng clans for control of the Ho-p’u area. Fêng Ang’s brother Fêng Hsüan, was involved in battles with the Ning Clan (see below) who controlled the lands to the west of the Lei-chou peninsula.

28 HTS 110: 2a.

29 CTS 109: 1b. One T’ang *li* was equivalent to about a third of a kilometre

30 HTS 110: 2a.
(the vocabulary suggests that these were Li and Lao chiefs and rulers, not appointed administrators) were all happy to be his subordinates. Prior to this, during Sui times he seems to have had a long residence at the Sui capital. On accompanying his father to Loyang, he led his own tribe’s best troops on night duty in the palace. When Emperor Yang (the last emperor of the Sui) was killed in a mutiny by imperial troops in 618, Chih-tai left the capital for his home district with the troops under his command. At that time, there were many robbers and bandits and the roads over the passes were blocked, Chih-tai had to turn and fight while advancing southwards. When he reached Kao-yitan 高漵, the Li commanders Chih-tai was leading began to plot against him. Only when Ang arrived on the scene was Chih-tai able to leave with him. The significance of the reference to Kao-yitan is that it lay within the territory of the Luo and Tou tung, the same area which Feng Ang was ordered to attack twelve years later in 631. It appears that some of the Li commanders who plotted against Feng Chih-tai were originally part of his retinue at Luo-yang, and this further supports the argument that the Feng Ang did not attack Luo and Tou tung merely to subdue a local rebellion for the T’ang court, but that the attack was part of a local power struggle. The successful defeat of the two tung gave him the chance to conquer districts where the Li commanders had previously exhibited questionable loyalty to his own family. Later when Chih-tai attended the T’ang court with his father, his meeting with the Emperor is described as follows:

The Emperor rewarded them with gifts and promotions, making Chih-tai Lesser Chief Minister for the Palace Garrison (wei wei shao ch’ing 衛尉少卿). Having heard of his soldiering skills the Emperor pointed at the clouds, asking ‘if there are rebels underneath this kind of cloud, could we attack them now?’ To this Chih-tai answered ‘The cloud is in the shape of a tree, and at the moment it is the hour of metal; the sharpness of metal overcomes the softness of wood, which means if we attack we will win. The Emperor was surprised at his response and advanced his rank to left-hand militant general (tso wu wei chiang chtin 左武衛

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31 Ibid.
32 TMTC 8: 21a, and TSFYCY ch. 104 p. 4297 both say that this was situated to the north-east of Hsin-i. The Kao-yitan Pass was 100 li to the west of Hsin-i county seat, so it seems that they were returning home from the north-west, probably through the Magic Trench Canal route.
When he died he was given the posthumous title Commander-in-chief of Hung-chou.\(^{33}\)

The thirty years following the foundation of the T'ang in 618 was the time of greatest influence for the Feng family at court and in their own province. They were rewarded by the T'ang court and respected by their own people. The unquestioned supremacy of Feng Ang’s branch of the family began to fade the year after his death in 649, when the T'ang split Kao-chou into the three new provinces of Kao-chou, En-chou, and Pan-chou. Wang notes that this was an attempt to split up the concentrated power of a single member of the Feng family over such a large area.\(^{34}\) Ang’s two sons Chih-kuei 智猷 and Chih-tai 智岱 and his nephew Tzi-yu 子猷 were made inspectors of each of the three new provinces respectively,\(^{35}\) so despite the split into smaller provinces, control of the larger area was still officially recognised as being in the hands of the Feng clan. Apart from Chih-tai, Chih-yü, and Chih-kuei, Feng Ang’s other sons whose names are recorded were Chih-chi 智璵, and Chih-shih 智式.\(^{36}\) A T’ang official named Hsü Ching-tsung 許敬宗 married his daughter to one of these five, but it is unclear to whom.\(^{37}\) By the time Feng Ang’s grandson Feng Chun-heng 馮君衡 died in the Sheng-li 聖歷 period (698-700) of the T’ang, by this time the Feng family was no longer rich or particularly influential. Chun-heng’s son was sent to Ch’ang-an, and was made a eunuch. His name was changed to Kao Li-shih 高力士.\(^{38}\)

By their activities at court the Feng appear as loyal servants of the Sui and T’ang who became increasingly acculturated to Chinese norms over the seventh century to a point when they no were longer viewed as barbaric. They could marry into official families, meet with Emperors, and were trusted enough to serve as palace guards. After this the main branch of the family seems to have gradually lost its privileged position and riches, and by the beginning of the eighth century the T’ang was no longer

\(^{33}\) HTS 110: 2a.
\(^{34}\) Wang, Hsien yü-jen, p. 51.
\(^{35}\) CYKC ch. 22 p. 234. Here he is described as one of three sons, but his name is written with the homophone yu 游.
\(^{36}\) These two names appear in Wang, ibid. but no source is given.
\(^{37}\) HTS 223a: 1b.
\(^{38}\) His biography can be found in CTS 184: 3a-4b and HTS 207: 2a-3b. Details about Feng Chun-heng are from the text of a T'ang stele in CYCK ch. 16: pp. 169-70.
dependent on their co-operation for control of the lands between the Two Rivers. Other branches of the Fêng family fared differently and continued to have influence over pockets of the country south-west of Canton. Even as late as the second half of the eighth century, some members of the Fêng family ruled as local leaders (rather than appointed administrators) south-west of Canton, and on Hainan, but their power was no longer concentrated in a single region as it had been under Fêng Ang.

The alternative 'barbarian' role the Fêng played as Li-Lao chieftains is also evident throughout the records of other members of the family. Two more notable members were Fêng Shih-huai 馮士畿 and Fêng Tzu-yu 馮子猷. The records that exist of their deeds provide some extra details about the Fêng family which give us an indication of their status as chieftains of the tung.

Fêng Shih-huai was inspector of Kang-chou 嵩州 (in the lands to the south of modern Canton and to the north of Macau, also written Kang-chou 嵩州) and rebelled against the T'ang from Hsin-huai 新會 in the seventh month of 623. Shih-huai's precise relationship to Fêng Ang is unknown, but a 馮岑翁 Fêng Ts'en-weng was noted in Lady Hsien's biography as a local leader of Kang-chou 39 and he probably belonged to a different branch of the family. The result of his rebellion was that inspector of Kuang-chou Liu Kan 劉感 attacked and defeated him, but subsequently restored him to his post. 40 His restoration to his administrative post even after leading a rebellion probably indicates that it was not possible or prudent to remove him because of the power of his local connections. As we shall soon see, members of the Ning family who had previously been involved in rebellions also received similar treatment.

Fêng Ang’s nephew Tzŭ-yu 子猷 flourished in the middle decades of the seventh century, and despite the prolonged contact between his family and the T'ang court, and his investiture as inspector of P’an-chou, he definitely belonged to the world of the Li chieftains, rather than that of the T’ang officials. He is described alongside Fêng Ang’s biography in the Hsin t’ang shu which records:

He was famed for his military prowess. During the Chên-kuan (627-50) period he went to court, taking with him a barge of gold. During Kao-tsung’s time

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39 See footnote 11.
40 TCTC ch. 190 p. 5969-70
[628-83] the royal scribe Hsü Huan 許瓘 was sent to see his riches. When Huan reached the tung, Tzū-yu didn’t come out to welcome him, but afterwards he led tens of his sons and younger brothers to beat bronze drums and line up around him and he held Huan hostage and told him he was to blame. The Emperor dispatched ambassador Yang Ching 楊琛 to examine the situation. When he arrived he resolved the problem by humble use of words, saying that it was Huan who was to blame. Tzū-yu was so happy he gave him two hundred taels of gold and five hundred of silver. Ching would not accept it, so Tzū-yu said ‘If you don’t take this, then I shan’t let you leave’ So Ching took it and returned with his report, and the emperor commanded that it be accepted. 41

This passage shows that Fêng Ang’s relations were not nearly as close to the world of the T’ang court as might be expected from Fêng Ang’s position as administrator and his own northern ancestry. Not only did his relative Tzū-yu live in a tung, he was also the owner of many bronze drums, had gold to give away, just like the description of the tu-lao chieftains described previously. Tzū-yu is mentioned elsewhere as a ‘leader of Kao-chou’ (Kao-chou shou ling 高州首領),42 a ‘chief of Kao-chou’ (Kao-chou ch’iu chang 高州酋長),43 and a member of a ‘great clan of Kuang-chou’ (Kuang-chou ta tsu 廣州大族).44 On the one hand Tzū-yu seems to have treated the representatives of imperial authority with disdain, but on the other he was a keen participant in 687 in the army that went with Ts’ao Hsüan-ching 曹玄靜 to suppress the revolt of Li Szü-hsien in the Red River Plain for the T’ang.45 From what we know of Tzū-yu’s life we can see that despite a northern ancestry and a military campaign for the T’ang court, he was still functioning within the societal structure of the Li and Lao tu-lao.

The eventual disappearance of the Fêng as hereditary local rulers in the eighth century was probably related to their involvement in uprisings against the T’ang. First a leader from Kuang-chou, Fêng Jên-chih 馮仁智 took part in the 728 uprising against the T’ang, in which he took the title ‘King of Nan Yüeh’. His involvement almost certainly

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41 HTS 110: 2b.
42 CTS 67: 10b.
43 TCTC ch. 204 p. 6423
44 CTS 190a: 8b.
45 Ibid.
had adverse consequences for his family’s status in the eyes of the T’ang, and would have resulted in the deaths of many of his subjects. Since this uprising was started by a member of the Ch’ên family, I have gone into detail about it in the third section of this chapter.\footnote{CTS 8: 15a-b.}

Another uprising involving the Fêng was in the 760s, in a period of wider unrest that lasted from 756 to 771.\footnote{See Schafer, Vermilion Bird, pp. 63-4.} The ‘bandit commander of P’an-yü’ (P’an-yü tsei shuai 番禺賊帥) Fêng Ch’ung-tao 馮崇道 and rebel general 疏將 Chu Chi-shih 朱濟時 of Kuei-chou 桂州 and others, blocked off the tung and caused chaos, spreading over ten provinces. The imperial army attacked them for successive years, but was unable to overcome them. They were finally defeated and killed by the combined force of generals Li Kuan 李觀 and Wang Hung 王翃 in the third month of 771.\footnote{TCTC ch. 224 p. 7217} The motives for such uprisings are seldom noted in Chinese texts, but it is interesting that the last two members of the family involved in uprisings are labelled ‘commander’ or ‘bandit commander’, meaning that they held de facto power over their people but were not recognised as legitimate leaders by the T’ang. So even in the late eighth century there were still members of the Fêng family who retained positions of power outside the T’ang administrative system who were still connected to the world of the tung. It is reasonable to hypothesise that friction between the Fêng and the T’ang came about because members of the Fêng family felt that the T’ang was encroaching on their territory and that they were increasingly being excluded from local administrative positions in their home area, as these were replaced by officials appointed by the court as was customary in the areas closer to the capital. Whatever the reasons for the rebellions, the consequence of their involvement was that the Fêng ceased to be a local dynasty and no longer appears in the records in their former capacity of local dynastic rulers.

*The Ning Family of Ch’in-chou*

For over one hundred years from the late sixth century, the Ning 南 family controlled the land drained by the Nan-Liu and Ch’ìn Rivers. It was this family who surrendered
access to the Red River Plain through the Ghost Gate Pass to the T’ang in 622. Schäfer was convinced that the Ning were a local indigenous group, which is not surprising since the same opinion was held by most of the pre-modern writers who described them. The Hsin T’ang shu describes the Ning family in two separate entries under the Lao of Nan-p’ing (Nan-p’ing lao 南平獠) and Man of the Western Plains (Hsi-yüan man 西原蠻). The first entry explains that the family are ‘great leaders of Nan-p’ing’ and the second that they were the local strongmen (hao 豪) of the lands south and of Kuang-chou and Jung-chou, and west of Yung-chou (Nanning) and Kuei-chou (Liu-chou). But again even in these old texts the members of the Ning family are ambiguous in status, appearing both in the guise of literate officials, and as barbarian chiefs.

The most notable members of the family in the late sixth century exemplify this ambiguity. Details of Ning Mêng-li’s (522-c.601) life appear in the biography of Ling-hu Hsi 令狐熙 in the Sui shu. Mêng-li was born on the same day as the second Ch’ên emperor, occupied Nan-hai in Ch’ên times, and was given the post of inspector of An-chou 安州 as a pacification measure by the first Sui Emperor after the conquest of the Ch’ên Empire in 589. The use of the verb fü 撫 (to placate, soothe or pacify) suggests that the appointment was recognition of de facto power in An-chou rather than the will of the court. When the Sui abolished province administration in the newly-conquered south, they gave the name ‘Ning-Yüeh commandery’ 宁越郡 to the territory around modern Ch’in-chou and up the Ch’in River. This was presumably a recognition of the Ning as the de facto local rulers. In the Sui shu it was written that this appointment made Mêng-li arrogant so that he relied on his remote and strategic position, and never went to pay homage to the emperor. A later record suggests a different reason for Mêng-li’s refusal to attend court: the propitious date of his birth apparently led him to delusions of grandeur and he believed that he should replace the last Ch’ên emperor as the Son of Heaven. The same text notes that the swamp miasmas

49 He refers to the Ning tribe as Ning Ch’ang-chên a ‘converted aborigine’
50 HTS 222c: 18a.
51 HTS 222c: 17a.
52 SuS 56: 4b.
53 The case is for this is strengthened by the fact that when Sui abolished provinces in the 590s the new commandery centred on An-chou bore the Ning family’s own name: Ning-yüeh 宁越 Commandery, which can be interpreted with the meaning ‘the Yüeh belonging to the Ning’.
of the region did an effective job of keeping the Sui troops out of his domain. Ling-hu Hsi managed to convince him to change his attitude. Hsi was the commander in-chief of Kuei-chou and oversaw the military affairs of fourteen provinces in the Two Rivers region, probably all those to the west of Canton. He befriended Meng-li by writing to him and sending him medicine for his sick mother. The *Sui shu* also relates how Meng-li later came to be on friendly terms with the Sui court through his relationship to Ho Ch’ou 何稠, sent to quell an uprising of various leaders in the Two Rivers region in the last years of the K’ai-huang 開皇 Era (581-601):

The inspector of Ch’in-chou, Ning Meng-li led a host to meet [Ho Ch’ou’s] army. Initially Meng-li obstinately held out in his *tung* in the mountains, and had the intention of rebellion, but by this time he had become fearful, and he requested that he might be able to visit court. Ho Ch’ou considered his haste as a sign of his honesty and that he had no intention of betrayal and sent him to back to his province, making an agreement with him saying that he would be summoned to the capital within eight or nine months. Ho Ch’ou returned and reported this to the throne, but the emperor was not pleased. However in the tenth month of that year Meng-li died, and the emperor said to Ho Ch’ou ‘You didn’t bring Meng-li with you in the past, and now he has died’. Ho Ch’ou replied ‘Meng-li made an agreement with me, and if he has died, then we ought to summon his son to come and attend. The Yueh people are upright in character, so his son will surely come’. Before, when Meng-li was about to die, he instructed his son Ch’ang-ch’en ‘I made an agreement with an official, and one must not lose the trust of officers of the state. Once I am buried, you must start the journey to the capital’. Ch’ang-ch’en did as instructed and went to court. The emperor was delighted and said “this was only achievable through Ho Ch’ou gaining the trust of the barbarians (*man-yi*)” and for this honour he bestowed upon Ho Ch’ou the post of commander.

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54 HTS ibid.
55 This I infer from the advice Hsi gave to the throne on changing the names of five provinces scattered throughout the region (An-chou 安州 to Ch’in-chou 楚州, Huang-chou 湖州 to Feng-chou 萍州, Li-chou 利州 to Chih-chou 醴州, Tse-chou 德州 to Huan-chou 湘州, and Tung-ning 東寧 to Jung-chou 濱州) and the approximate number of provinces west of the Pearl River delta at the time.
56 SuS 56: 4b.
57 SuS 68: 9a-10b. An-chou was renamed Ch’in-chou in 599 (Sus 31: 12a).
It is already evident from these texts that Méng-lí had multiple identities. He was given an administrative position as inspector of An-chou (this is one of the provinces that had its name changed at the request of Ling-hu Hsi, and is the same place as Ch’ìn-chou), and yet he lived in a tung in the mountains. It seems he was literate in Chinese, and yet Ho Ch’ou calls him a Yüeh person and the Sui emperor goes so far as to call him a southern barbarian.\textsuperscript{58}

Méng-lí’s son Ch’ang-chên was a contemporary of Fêng Ang, and like him has an ambiguous status somewhere between an official and Li commander. In the first month of 605 he was sent in his official capacity as the inspector of Ch’ìn-chou to accompany the general Liu Fang 劉方 and Li Hun 李暘, governor of Huan-chou 蘧州 on an unsuccessful expedition to plunder Lin-i of its rare treasures.\textsuperscript{59} Like Fêng Ang, Ch’ang-chên also led ‘several thousands of his tribe’ on one of the Sui campaigns against Liao-tung 遼東 (Korean Peninsula) in the period 611-614. For this the second Sui emperor (Yang) summoned him to court and sent him home with the honorary titles of Chief Ceremonial Minister (Hung lu ch’ing 溝漉卿) and Commander-in-Chief of Pacification (an fu ta shih 安撫大使).\textsuperscript{60} A few years later, during the political confusion between the downfall of the Sui and the consolidation of T’ang power, Ch’ang-chên was an extremely influential leader in west of the region. When he heard of the end of the Sui he was said to have led several provinces and counties of Ling-nan to give their allegiance to Hsiao Hsien 蕭銑, a descendent of the Liang royal house who in 618 declared himself emperor of a restored Liang empire.\textsuperscript{61} In the same year Hsiao Hsien sent an envoy to Ch’iu Ho 丘和, governor of Chiao-chih, who refused to recognise him as he did not know that the Sui Empire had been overthrown. Hsiao Hsien had heard that the lands to the west of Lin-i sent Ch’iu Ho pearls, patterned rhinoceros horns and golden treasures, so that Ho was as rich as a king. Hsien desired its benefit, and ordered Ning Ch’ang-chên to lead a force of the Hundred Yüeh over the sea to attack Ch’iu Ho.\textsuperscript{62} In the campaign against Lin-i, Ch’ang-chên took part in leading a larger force of

\textsuperscript{58} TCTC ch. 178 p. 5553 refers to the same event but calls him a Li commander
\textsuperscript{59} TCTC ch. 180 p. 5616; SuS: 82. 2b.
\textsuperscript{60} HTS 222c:18a. Hucker, Dictionary of Official Titles, p.104, describes the latter title as ‘an occasional honorary designation granted to a southwestern aboriginal chief’.
\textsuperscript{61} HTS 87:1a-b.
\textsuperscript{62} CTS 59:4b-5a. This is an interesting way to put it, as it shows that at the time, the people of the Red River Plain were not considered as part of the ‘Hundred Yüeh’.
over ten-thousand, but how many were directly under his control in this campaign is not mentioned. By the time of his attack on Chiao-chih it appears that he had his own standing army as well as the ships needed to transport it to Chiao. The size of his force also seems to have been comparable to that under the command of Ch’iu Ho for the defence of the Red River Plain. Chiu Ho had to be talked out of surrendering to Ch’ang-chên by his administrative clerk Kao Shih-lien 高士廉, who assured him that although Ch’ang-chên was leading many soldiers, they would be fatigued from the long journey and would not be able to keep up the fight for very long.\(^63\) When referring to his attack on Chiao-chou, the Chiu T’ang shu refers to him as ‘Ning Ch’ang-chên of Ch’in-chou’ but in the Hsin T’ang shu description of the same event he is called a ‘Li commander’ (li shuai 位列). In the summer of 622, Ning Ch’ang-chên finally surrendered Yü-lin and Ning-yüeh commanderies to the T’ang general Li Ching 李靖 and was given the title of commander-in-chief of Ch’in-chou.\(^64\) This is yet another example of *de facto* power in the district remaining the hands of a local leader whose power was recognised by the bestowal of titles upon an agreement of loyalty.

From this time onward the politics of Ch’in-chou are confused, and to make sense of them we need to step back to consider events involving another branch of the Ning family descended from Mêng-li’s relative Ning Hsüan 宁宣. When the T’ang came to power in the north, Ning Hsüan sent an ambassador to announce his submission to the T’ang, but died before the court received it.\(^65\) His son Ning Ch’un 宁纯 was given the post of governor of Lien-chou – a province named after the newly-conquered t’ung. In the fourth month of 623, Ning Ch’un went to fight a group of three members of the great families who lived to the east. These were P’ang Hsiao-t’ai 彭孝泰,\(^66\) governor of Nan-chou (later Pai-chou), Ning Tao-ming 宁道明 from Nan-yüeh-chou, and Fêng-Ang’s brother Fêng Hsüan 馮暄 (described here as a ‘commander’) from Kao-chou. They had already taken control of southern Ho-p’u and were advancing to attack the province of Chiang-chou 姜州 (near modern P’u-pei) to the north before Ning Ch’un

\(^{63}\) TCTC ch. 185 p. 5790.

\(^{64}\) TCTC ch. 190 p. 5949.

\(^{65}\) HTS 222c: 18b. TCTC ch. 190 p. 5951 counts him among a list of ‘bandit commanders’ (*tsei shuai* 賊帥) and dates his surrender to the T’ang in the fourth month of 622.

\(^{66}\) HTS 222c: 18a refers to the first leader as P’ang Hsiao-kung 彭, this is most likely a mistake for the character t’ai 奉 more commonly used elsewhere.
led his troops to (note that the other three are called rebels) rescue it. Ning Tao-ming’s family relationships are unclear; although it is not recorded that he was a member of the same Ning family, the rarity of the surname and its connection with the Ho-p’u and Ch’in-chou areas make it more than likely that he was a relative. The next mention of him is in 626 as ‘Inspector Tao Ming’ was killed in a rebellion by a man of Yüeh-chou named Lu Nan 露南. Within three years, Ning Tao-ming had shifted from a rebel in the eyes of the T’ang, to the status of governor.

Ning Tao-ming was not the only one to be both governor and rebel. Returning to the story of Ning Ch’ang-chên in 625, he is recorded as having begun an insurrection by the capture of Feng-shan County 封山縣, (again, near to modern P’u-pei). The man who led a force against him was none other than the former rebel P’ang Hsiao-t’ai now made inspector of Ch’ang-chou 昌州. P’ang Hsiao-t’ai fought and routed among others his former ally Feng Hsüan of Kao-chou. Ch’ang Chên died the year after his rebellion in 626 and his son Ning Chu 甯據 was said to have taken over his post. It seems strange that so many leaders known as rebels retained their administrative titles and went on to battle other rebels. Sometimes these were the very people with whom they had previously fought as rebels themselves. The confusion in the descriptions of outsiders over who is rebelling and who is upholding imperial order is probably indicative that these were local conflicts fought between the ruling families of the area for their own interests rather than those of the T’ang court.

Another relation, a ‘commander’ of Ch’in-chou named either Ning Shih-sung or Shih-ching (南師宗 or 師京) was ordered by the Duke of Ch’ing-p’ing 清平 Li Hung-chueh 李宏節 to ‘open up’ the lands of the Yi and Lao to found Jang-chou 潭州 to connect to Chiao-chih in 637. When considered in the light of the Feng clan expanding their influence over Hainan and the battle over the control of the province of Ch’ang-chou, the foundation of Jang-chou seems less of an imperial order, and more of a convenient excuse for the member of the Ning clan to expand his territory.

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67 TCTC ch. 190 p. 5967; HTS 222c: 18a-b records the same event but mentions only the three names Ning Tao-ming, and two leaders from Kao-chou, Feng Hsüan and T’an Tien 諧顯.
68 TCTC ch. 191 p. 6003. Yüeh-chou was later renamed Lien-chou 濟州, it is now the district of Ho-p’u.
69 HTS 222c: 18a-b.
70 HTS 222c: 18b; Chêng and T’an, Chuang tsu li shih wen hua, p.488, note that this is incorrect, as the protectorate was actually abolished at that time.
Relying on the descriptions from transmitted written records alone, the Ning family appears to have been of Li-Lao origin, local chieftains who had received a sufficient amount of Chinese education and military training that they were entrusted with administrative posts either as an expediency or as a reward for their services to the imperial courts. Two stelae dating from the seventh century show that the Ning were not descended from the local Li and Lao chieftains at all, but were actually the descendents (in the male line at least) of migrants who had lived only a generation in the south before they came to be regarded as barbarians. These stelae were unearthed in the Ch’in-chou area and their inscriptions provide not only much information relating to the origins of the Ning family, but also provide us with the only view of how the Ning family (or any people known as Li or Lao) actually thought of themselves, and the image is quite different from that gleaned from descriptions penned by outsiders.\(^\text{72}\)

The earlier inscription was the memorial tablet for the tomb of Ch’ang-chên’s younger brother Hsüan 謹, excavated in 1826 and bearing the date of the fifth month of 609. The inscription explains that the Ning family had originally come from Chi-chou 冀州.\(^\text{73}\) Chêng and T’an suggested that their ancestors took refuge in the south when this province was lost by the Liu-Sung to the Northern Wei.\(^\text{74}\) It notes further that the family came to the area when Emperor Wu of the Liang first appointed Ning Mêng-li’s father, Ning K’uei 靳逵 as inspector of Ting-chou 定州 (seat at Yü-lin, modern Kuei-p’ing) and military overseer of nine provinces.\(^\text{75}\) Emperor Hsüan-wu 宣武 of the Chên then gave him the post of inspector of An-chou 安州, the former name for the province of Ch’in-chou. The information contained in this stele paints a very different picture of the Ning family than that contained in the standard histories. The stele is

\(^{72}\) Yang Hsao 楊濠, ‘Lîng nàn nîng shih chia tsu yün liu hsîn chêng’ 嶺南甯氏家族源流新證, *K’ao ku 考古* 1989, 3 pp. 269-273, has the texts of the two stelae, but for dates and a more scholarly interpretation see Chêng and T’an, *Chuang tsu li shih wên hua*, pp. 477-83.

\(^{73}\) Modern Ch’î-han in northern China.


\(^{75}\) This would have been between 543 and 550, when Emperor Wu died. There were earlier written references to a possible member of the Ning family in 543 (LS 3: 26b) when the inspector of Luo-chou 羅州 Ning Chî 聂巨 was sent off to fight Li Pi in the Red River Delta. At that time the inspector of An-chou (later Ch’in-chou) was named Li Chih 李智. This suggests that the Ning family already had a presence in the area but were yet to gain control of Ch’in-chou.

\(^{76}\) There was not actually a Ch’en emperor with such a name, but there were two emperors named Wu 武 (reigned 557-9) and Hsiün 宣 (reigned 569-82), perhaps both emperors had appointed Ning K’uei with this title.
inscribed in a flowery style and extols Ning Hsüan’s virtues and the depth of his learning. On the occasion of his visit to the Sui court in 594 the inscription notes that the emperor regarded Hsüan as a ‘descendent of gentlefolk’ rather different from his comments about ‘barbarians’ recorded in the Sui shu concerning Hsüan’s brother Ch’ang-chên’s visit – even though they probably attended court together. Whoever composed Ning Hsüan’s stele was careful to distinguish him from the ‘barbarians’, noting that his ‘fame was broadcast to the Hundred Man’ and that he ‘punished and regulated the customs of the Hundred Yüeh’.

The contrast between their own records carved into stone, and those of the court written on paper is surprising. In stone, the Ning depict themselves as a family of capable rulers and loyal generals. On paper they are quite different. Unlike the Ch’ên family’s ancestry which appeared a millennium after the fact, the inscription of Ning Hsüan’s ancestry was made so close to the time it describes that it is unlikely to be fraudulent, but this meant that it took only a generation of residence in the Ch’in-ch’ou area to transform the image of the Ning at court from ordinary people into southern barbarians. Even though a member of the Ning family Ning Yüan-t’i 南原悌 was ranked ninth presented scholar (chin-shih) in the 689 examinations in Ch’ang-an, his relations were still mentioned as chieftains of the southern barbarians. Like the Fêng, the Ning had two faces, and although they presented themselves as civilised people, the nature of their rule and the people they ruled ensured that they could never quite escape from the stigma of barbarism as far as the people of the capital were concerned.

The end of the Ning as an effective force in Ch’in-ch’ou is similar to that of the Fêng, a combination of administrative reform and a final military defeat. Like the Fêng, the Ning had outlived their usefulness in securing a peaceful takeover of the Two Rivers region and they became an impediment to centralised rule by appointed bureaucrats. After the death of Ning Ch’ang-chên, the T’ang strengthened their rule over the Ch’in-ch’ou area. According to the Hsin T’ang shu geographical treatise, T’ang T’ai-tsung split Ch’in-ch’ou to found Yüeh-chou in 627, and then soon afterwards made it subordinate to Lien-chou and abolished the protectorate of Ning-chou. In 679 the old territory of the protectorate was made subordinate to Jung-chou, and it was restored as Ch’in-ch’ou again only in 758. 77 This was similar to the way the T’ang dealt with the Fêng family,

77 HTS 43:9a.
rearranging and increasing the number of administrative units in the area where their power was most concentrated. During this time the T'ang appointed new administrators to these areas, and the Ning were given less important positions. 78 Despite this they were still the local dignitaries in the Ch’in-chou area. This continued up until 706, when the ‘Man chieflain’ Ning Ch’eng-chi 章承基 made the mistake of demanding a daughter in marriage from the wife of Wei Hsuan 韋玄 surnamed Ts’ui 崔, a relative of an empress who had been exiled to the south by the Empress Wu, and died in Ch’in-chou. When this was refused, Ch’eng-chi killed her and her four sons. In retaliation Chou Jen-kuei 周仁軒 the 都督 of Kuang-chou was ordered to attack him, and took a force of 20,000 to drive Ch’eng-chi and his forces into the sea. They pursued him and killed him, offering his head in sacrifice to the lady Ts’ui, and captured and exterminated his whole family. 79

This marked the end of the Ning as the local dynasty in Ch’in-chou. Other clans became more influential there in the eighth century, such as the Huang 黃 and Nung 農, but the period of their rise to power lies outside the time period covered in this thesis. 80

The Ch’en of Shuang-chou

The Ch’en were another influential family in the Li-Lao country between the Two Rivers from the Sui to the mid-T’ang. Like the Ning, they had dominion over a reasonably well-defined geographical area, and also like the Ning, writers were unsure of whether to name them as Li or Lao chieflains, or as inspectors or governors. Although the story of the Ch’en family is not nearly as cohesive as that of the Feng and Ning, and the surname is common enough for the different recorded individuals to have possibly come from different families, their shared district of origin and their ambiguous status as Li or governors in these districts points to a probable relationship between them.

78 Ch’eng and T’ian, Chuang tso t’i shih wen hua, pp. 486-7 provide the following information but do not provide a source. Ch’u’s son Ning Tao-wu was the county magistrate of Hsiang-chou 襄州, the new province to the west of Ch’in-chou, then he was made the Commander of Lung-chou, and then was shifted off to Ai-chou, to the south of the Red River Plain. His son Ning Ch’i-lan 階岐然是 given the lowly position of Assistant Magistrate (ch’u-pu 主簿) in Shih-an and Kuei-lin, both well outside the home territory of the Ning clan.
79 TCTC ch.208 pp. 6603-4
80 Schaefer, Vermilion Bird, p. 63, notes the four most important families in the 740s as the Huang, Nung, Cho, and Wei. These families dwelt further to the north in the regions north and west of modern Nanning.
This Ch’ên family was associated with the Shuang-chou 灰州 area, a hilly province founded on the district of a tung, only fifty years before mention of their first notable member, Ch’ên Fo-chih 陳佛智 in the year 590. Ch’ên Fo-chih was known as a ‘bandit general’ who joined the Li Commander Wang Chung-hsüan 王仲宣 in his siege of Kuang-chou in late 590 and was killed by Fêng Ang.81 His son Ch’ên Lung-shu 陳龍樹 served as the inspector of Ch’in-chou and his grandson Ch’ên Chi-yüan 陳欽原 was given the post of general during the reign of Empress Wu (690-705).82 Ch’ên Chi-yüan’s short biography records him as a native of K’ai-yang 開陽 (a town in Shuang-chou) and that his ancestors had been chiefs of the land beyond the passes (i.e. the Two Rivers region) for generations.83 Another notable Li person of the district was named Ch’ên P’u-kuang 陳普光. He was supposed to have founded a Buddhist temple with a stone carved Buddha in Huai-tê 懷德 in 621.84

Liao believes that the family arrived in the area from the north only during Liang times, and bases it on his biography in the fifteenth-century gazetteer of the Ming Empire, the Ta-ming i t’ung chih which stated that his ancestors came from Yen-ling 雁陵 in what is now Ho-nan.85 Although this is a very late text, the level of detail in the biographies of four generations of the Ch’ên family is surprising. It records that they lived the Shuang River 灰水 and had inherited the post of Duke of Yung-p’ing Commandery 永平郡公 for generations. The various posts held by members of the family are as follows: Ch’ên Fo-chih’s father Ch’ên Fa-nien, 陳法念 who was inspector of Hsin-chou 新州 and Shih-chou 石州 both of which lay south of the Yü River and to the east and west of Shuang-chou, Fo-chih himself served as inspector of Luo-chou 羅州 and Hsi-hêng-chou 西衡州 during the Ta-chien era (569-583) under the Ch’ên empire (modern Hêng-yang 衡陽 in Hunan). Lung-shu served the T’ang as inspector of six provinces, beginning with his native Shuang-chou, then Nan-fu-chou 南扶州, then

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81 SS 81: 6a; 7a.
82 CTS 188: 4a.
83 Ibid.
84 KTTC 53: 52a. The inscription is at Lung-k’ an Grotto 龍龕岩洞 in T’an-li Village 諧裡村, part of P’in-t’ung town under the jurisdiction of Luo-ting in Kwangtung. The text uses 里 rather than 里.
86 This was founded in 621 and after many changes of name was finally named Tou-chou 翟州 after the
at Chien-chou (northern Fukien) and then at three provinces in the north of the T'ang Empire.  

The earliest posts held by the first three generations of the Ch'ên family lay on the south bank of the Yü River in fairly close proximity to Shuang-chou. This record of the four generations of Ch'êns indicates a rise in their status from a local family holding hereditary posts to positions in high levels of government far beyond their own local sphere of influence. Although the connection of the family to the Li-Lao country and their rise up the administrative ladder to office in the capital are confirmed by earlier texts, there are several problems with the Ming text that deserve attention.

Fo-chih was said to have been the governor of Nan-ching 南靖 at the beginning of the Kuang-ta period (567-9) of the Ch'ên Empire, during which time he was said to have 'trained the customs of the southern barbarians in filial piety and virtue' this place name is an anachronism, as Nan-ching did not come into existence until five hundred years later. The Ming text also mentions that Fo-chih was enfeoffed as Duke of An-ching commandery (an ching chün kung 安靖郡公), but not only was there no place named An-ching during Ch'ên times, the title of commandery duke (chün kung 郡公) was also usually reserved for members of the imperial house and was unlikely to have been held by someone from the wild frontier of the Li-Lao country. Finally, for some reason the Ming text also neglects to mention that Ch'ên Lung-shu served as inspector of Ch'in-chou.

What is most significant for placing the anachronisms in context is that the Ming text completely contradicts the image of Ch'ên Fo-chih given in the earlier sources as a local "bandit leader" by portraying him as a respected official and great civiliser and transformer of barbarian customs. Though it is conceivable that this is based on the difference in time between the actions of a successful official under the Ch'ên Empire and those of a disaffected official who rebelled because he had not received a new posting under the new regime of the Sui, the problems with the text suggest that it is not an accurate record of the Ch'ên family history. It is highly probable that it is part of an

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Luo-lou 望楼 a place that lay somewhere in the province, see TPHYC 163; 5a-6b.
87 These were Wan-chou 萬州, Chin-chou 晉州 and Nan-shih-chou 南始州
88 Yung-p'ing Commandery lay at the mouth of the Pei-lju River as it joined the Yü River, Hsin-chou, and Shih-chou lay to the east and west of present-day Wu-chou respectively.
89 Hacker, Dictionary of Official Title, p.202 also notes that the title was only used from T'ang to T'ouen times, so its application twice to the sixih century is a suspicious anachronism.
illustrious ancestry created at a later date by the descendents of the Ch’ên who had risen
to prestigious positions in order to conceal their barbarian origins. Therefore, the
northern ancestry of the Ch’ên of Shuang-chou is possible, but it is suspicious on
account of its first appearance in such a late text full of so many inaccuracies.

In addition to the Ch’ên family discussed above, there were several other Li-Lao
leaders surnamed Ch’ên who dwelt south of the Yü River. The earliest recorded
individual was the ‘great leader’ Ch’ên T’an 陳檀 of Ho-p’u who was alive during the
Ta-ming period (457-65). 90 His barbarian status is indicated by the title ‘great
commander’ (ta shuai 大帥) – a term for a local ruler outside the administrative system
rather than an appointed official – and his appearance in a section of the Sung shu
dealing with ‘southern barbarians’. The case of Ch’ên T’an shows that there were
barbarian leaders living in the area surnamed Ch’ên whose presence pre-dated the Liang,
but the surname is too common to indicate a definite relationship with the Ch’ên family
of Shuang-chou.

Less than a century after Ch’ên T’an, appears Ch’ên Wên-ch’ê 陳文徹 the ‘Li
commander who led an attack on Kao-yao commandery some time during the Ta-t’ung
period. The location of the commandery he attacked and his ownership of a large bronze
drum indicate almost certainly that he came from south of the Yü River and probably
near to Shuang-chou. 91 Another leader with the surname Ch’ên appears around the same
time connected to the country near to Shuang-chou. In the last decade of the sixth
century a ‘leader’ (shou ling) 首領 of Ts’ang-wu 蒼梧 named Ch’ên T’an 陳坦 was a
contemporary of Lady Hsien and was mentioned in the list of local rulers who received
her instructions. 92

Over a century later the figure of Ch’ên Hsing-fan 陳行範 emerges, also from
Shuang-chou and therefore very likely to be a member of the same family. He is
variously described as a Shuang-chou man (瀘州蠻) 93 and ‘Lao leader’ (Lao shou ling
蠻首領), but at the same time also seems to have held the official post of inspector of

90 SS 97: 4a.
91 Liao, Li shih ti li hsüeh, p. 522, believes him to be related to the Ch’ên family of Shuang-chou, which
would seem to contradict his belief in the northern origins of the family during Liang times.
92 See footnote 11.
93 HTS 207: 2a.
Shuang-chou.\textsuperscript{94} In the third month of 728 he declared himself emperor and took forty walled cities. He was accompanied by the ‘Lao of Kuang-chou’ Fêng Lin 馮璘, and Ho Yu-lu 何遊魯 who declared themselves respectively ‘King of Nan Yüeh’ (Nan yüeh wâng 南越王) and ‘Great General who Settles the Country’ (ting kuo chiang chîn 定國大將軍). Yang Szū-hsü 楊思眾\textsuperscript{95} took a force of 100,000 to fight them and defeated them in the twelfth month, first capturing and beheading Fêng Lin and Ho Yu-lu, but with Hsing-fan escaping to two tung named Yûn-chi 雲際 and P’an-liâo 盤遙.\textsuperscript{96} Yang Szū-hsü attacked him there and beheaded him along with a supposed 60,000 of his followers, capturing a great abundance of slaves, horses, gold, and jade.\textsuperscript{97} The details of Ch'ên Hsing-fan’s life show that the Li and Lao leadership did not disappear in some areas even a century after provinces had been founded in the area. Even though some Li and Lao held imperial administrative titles, this did not mean that they were necessarily loyal servants of the court. Members of Ch'ên Hsing-fan’s family had risen to high positions in the T'ang government over the years, but he himself retained his connections to and influence on the rulers of tung, and was still capable of raising an army large enough to carry out a nine-month long rebellion against the T'ang.

Yang Szū-hsü’s defeat of the Ch'ên uprising struck a fatal blow at one of the last centres of Li-Lao society between the Two Rivers, with an effect similar to Ma Yüan’s defeat of the Chêng (Trung) Sisters in the Red River Plain almost seven centuries previously. It led to the destruction of the local ruling class and probably resulted in a mass depopulation. The Ch'ên family’s power base at Shuang-chou was one of the last areas where the Southern Dynasties had founded administrative units, and it lay close to the Yün-k’ai Mountains which were the heartland of the bronze drum country. The total of people killed by Yang Szū-hsü was numbered at sixty thousand, a number which, although undoubtedly exaggerated, shows both the extent of Ch'ên Hsing-fan’s

\textsuperscript{94} CTS 8: 15a-b.
\textsuperscript{95} According to his biography (CTS 148: 2a) Yang Szū-hsü was himself a native of Luo-chou, to the east of Ho-p’u, so his employment in dealing with uprisings between the Two Rivers may very well have been based on his local knowledge of the area.
\textsuperscript{96} TCTC ch. 219 pp. 6781-2; CTS 184: 2b-3a; HTS 207: 1b-2a. These two names are probably Tai names, the characters p'ûn and yûn were pronounced (according to Pulleyblank, Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation) as *tan and *wan making it likely that they begin with the word kaan, Tai for ‘village’ for the meaning of such names beginning with similar-sounding characters see Hsu, Yüeh chiang pp. 205-6; Li, Tung t'ai yû yen, pp. 237-238; 298.
\textsuperscript{97} CTS 8: 15a-b.
following, and offers a reason for the lack of any significant Li-Lao leadership by the Ch’ên family, or any other family as Li commanders or Man Chieftains after this time. In the census made in the K’ai-yüan period (742) the number of registered households in Shuang-chou was only 714, a tiny number of registered households compared to those recorded in the census made under the Sui over a century previously, when Yung-hsi 永熙 commandery, covering roughly the same territory as Shuang-chou, boasted 14,319 registered households. This was probably a result of the large numbers of people killed by Yang Szü-hsû and his troops.

Whether some of those surnamed Ch’ên were related or not, there is a constant thread of ‘barbarian’ terminology used to refer to them. If not stated directly, it is suggested with terms such as ‘leader’ or ‘chief’ in place of official titles, and ‘tribe’ in the place of ‘people’. Just like the Fêng and Ning, the Ch’ên had a multifaceted existence as either Li or Lao, or officials. They may well have been the descendents of a male ancestor from the far north, but this impossible to know with any certainty. Although it became important to their descendents later on, at the time it was of no relevance to their status as leaders of the Li and Lao, and not important for the people who wrote about them and named them Li, chieftains, strongmen and so on.

Other Localised Dynasties
The Fêng, Ning, and Ch’ên were the most powerful of the Li and Lao ruling families in the Pearl River Drainage area, but they were not the only ones. There are scattered records of similar people who probably represented lineages of less powerful rulers. They share the characteristics of the three families described above. They have Chinese surnames and power bases in specific districts, they sometimes work as part of the imperial administrative system or serve in the army, but at the same time they are the de facto rulers in their own localities and are frequently referred to by ‘barbarian’ names. The existence of these other families suggests that the three great families stand only as the most prominent representatives of a ruling class that was widespread throughout the Two Rivers region.

98 TPHYC 164: 2b.
99 SuS 31: 10a.
Some of these have already appeared earlier in connection with the Ning and Fêng. East of Ho-p’u was a family surnamed P’ang 馮. Sixty years earlier P’ang Ching 馮靖 the ‘rebellious commander’ and native of the province of Luo-chou who was a contemporary of Lady Hsien.\(^{100}\) The previously-mentioned Governor P’ang Hsiao-t’ai 蒋昭泰 who later died leading troops from Ling-nan against the Koreans in 662 also came from this area.\(^{101}\)

A family surnamed Li 李 dwelt north of the Yü River at Kuei-chou and T’êng-chou. A Li Kuang-lüeh 李光略 of T’êng-chou 滕州 is mentioned in the list of tribal leaders of Ling-nan who met with the Lady Hsien,\(^{102}\) and a Li of Kuei-chou 桂州 named Li Kuang-shih 李光仕 was said to have assembled hordes in rebellion at the end of the K’ai-huang period of the Sui (581-601).\(^{103}\) There was also a Li Kuang-tu 李光度 who was protector of Nan-yin-chou 南尹州 (modern Kui County), in 624,\(^{104}\) but had formerly served as governor of Yung-p’ing 永平 commandery under the Sui.\(^{105}\) He was mentioned along with Ning Ch’ang-chên and Fêng Ang as one of the great leaders 大酋 whom it was necessary for the T’ang general Li Ching to placate upon his entry into the Two Rivers region.\(^{106}\) Although the relationship between these three is unclear, the similarity in the names seems to point to a localized dynasty of Li hired as officials in the lands to the north and west of modern Wu-chou.

Isolated records of individuals also probably stand for local lineages. Close to Canton lived the previously mentioned Li commander, Wang Chung-hsüan 王仲宣 of Kuang-chou, who led an uprising in 590.\(^{107}\) To the east of Canton lived Li commander Yang Shih-lüeh 楊世略, who controlled the two provinces of Hsün-chou 復州 and Ch’iao-chou 高州 and surrendered them to the T’ang in the first month of 622.\(^{108}\)

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\(^{100}\) SuS 68: 10a. He is also mentioned as one of the tribal leaders who met with the Lady Hsien. See footnote 11.

\(^{101}\) HTS 3: 5b; CTS 82: 2b confirms that he came from Pai-chou 白州, which was in the same district as Luo-chou.

\(^{102}\) See footnote 11

\(^{103}\) SuS 68: 9b.

\(^{104}\) TCTC ch.191 p.5984

\(^{105}\) CTS 59: 8a.

\(^{106}\) CTS 67: 2b.

\(^{107}\) SuS 65: 10b; TCTC ch. 177 pp. 5532-3

\(^{108}\) TCTC ch. 190 p. 5949
There were undoubtedly many more of these small localised dynasties which provided the governors of small provinces and counties. In certain areas these dynasties survived until the late T'ang or perhaps even later. A tenth-century gazetteer records a family of Li people of Kuei-chou with the surname of T'eng 腹 were said to still be in possession of seals called ‘bamboo emissary seals’ (chu shih fu 竹使符) and bronze tiger tallies’ (t'ung hu fu 銅虎符) said to have bestowed on their family by the Han.\(^{109}\) Although the meaning of ‘bamboo emissary’ is a mystery, tiger tallies are well-known emblems of military authority. These were bronze tiger figurines divided in half, with one half given to a troop commander or local official and the other kept by the government in the capital; troops could only be called up or set in motion when the two halves were matched.\(^{110}\) Another family with the surname of Lu 蘆 in nearby Pin-chou 賓州 was in possession of not only ‘bronze tiger seals’ but also silver seals and bronze tiger tallies with green ribbons that were said to have been the precious heirlooms of generations.\(^{111}\) Pin-chou was the approximate location of Ling-fang 領方, a county founded during the Western Han which had its own head of military forces (tu-wel 都尉).\(^{112}\) The T'eng and Lu families may well have been the descendants of the Wu-hu or leaders who had transformed their chiefdoms into counties, or they may have been descendants of Chinese migrants sent to the area as administrators. Like the other families described above, although they might have been descendants of migrants from elsewhere, their ultimate origins were less important factors in deciding whether they would be described as barbarians than the people they ruled, the manner in which they ruled them, and their relationship to the imperial administrative system.

**Conclusion**

The story of the three great families and their eventual downfall and disappearance is the final chapter in the story of the development of the Li and Lao political structures

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\(^{109}\) TPHYC 116: 11b. This work dates from the tenth century, but its contents may well have been culled from a T'ang work.

\(^{110}\) This definition is from Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare* p.26. They were first mentioned in the Shih chi for the year 177 BCE (SC 10:10b-11a). By the T'ang these had been replaced with tallies in the shape of a fish (see Graff, ibid. p 119), which suggests that the gift of the tiger-shaped tallies to the families predated the T'ang.

\(^{111}\) TPHYC 165: 7b.

\(^{112}\) HS 8b: 10b.
south of the Yü River. By the foundation of the Sui Empire, these families were stronger and richer rulers than any of the Li-Lao rulers of previous centuries and they had consolidated power over many smaller *tung*. This new ruling class was the result of long term interaction between the societies of the *tung* and the imperial administrative systems but also of acculturation of northern migrants into local ways of life between the Two Rivers. This makes it almost impossible to distinguish between families of purportedly northern origin such as the Ning, families of known mixed origin, such as the Fêng, and families more likely to have been of local origin, such as the Ch’ên. The question of who was truly ‘native’ is not as important as the fact that people had ‘gone native’, since ‘going native’ implies the attraction of the way things were done in the Li-Lao *tung* at certain times outweighed the attraction of the behaviour of people in Chinese.

From the texts it appears that leaders of these families had, as individuals, mastered the art of being several different things to different people – to their subjects who still spoke Tai-Kadai languages they probably had a status similar to *tu-lao*, but to the imperial court in Chien-k’ang or the governorship of P’an-yü they could be either Li commanders, chiefs, or governors depending on the relationships they had negotiated. The families finally outlived their usefulness to the T’ang in the late seventh century, and their power was destroyed by a combination of administrative reforms and increasing military force over the next eighty years. Yang Szü-hstü’s defeat of the Ch’ên and Fêng forces was the final event that decimated local leadership in the heart of the bronze drum country. Although there were uprisings in the 750s and 760s, these were concentrated to the west and north in Jung-chou. The lands to the east of the Yun-k’ai Mountains were no longer the hotbed of anti-T’ang activities.

The end of rule by great families such as the Fêng, Ch’ên, and Ning, was also the end of the autonomous Li-Lao political structures that had developed out of the *tung* between the Two Rivers, although more powerful *tung* continued to exist north of the West River. While Li-Lao continued to inhabit villages and rural areas, and their presence was still noted two centuries later in tenth and eleventh century geographies, by this time they were leaderless peoples dwelling on the margins of T’ang and Sung provinces and counties. The disappearance of their ruling class is demonstrated not only by their absence from the later written record, but also by the end of the Heger type II
drum tradition south of the river, as Li and Lao societies were no longer rich or powerful enough to produce them.
Conclusion

I have argued that the maintenance of local rulers in the area was the result of the Han Empire having bypassed the lands between the Two Rivers and concentrating its attention on controlling the Red River Plain and the major tributaries of the Pearl River system. This left a large unconquered territory outside the administrative system of the empire which was inhabited for the most part by small autonomous chiefdoms. Because they inhabited an area that the Chinese empires did not initially consider to be of great economic or strategic value, these were mostly left to their own devices, but those in the vicinity of the Yü River began to be offered systems of ‘loose control’. In fact, the Li and Lao chiefdoms did occupy an area of strategic importance on overland trade routes from the Red River Plain, and this area also had the economic benefits of gold and silver resources, as well trade items sought after by the people of the Chinese cities. By the time the Southern Dynasties came to realise the importance of the area, they had more pressing problems with their rival northern empires and internal stability, and they were not capable of simply marching in and occupying all the land between the Two Rivers. It was therefore easier for them to engage in trade relationships with the chieftains of the Li and Lao in order to procure the items they desired, trading salt, iron, sometimes copper, and recognition with administrative appointments in return for ivory, kingfisher feathers, gold, and silver. I argue that it was these trade relationships that were the major trigger for the growth in size and power of the Li and Lao chiefdoms. The collection of the items sought after by outsiders required rule over large territories and the involvement of large groups of people, which would have encouraged competition amongst chiefdoms for land and subjects. A temporary appointment with a Chinese administrative title may look at first like a beginning step on the road to eventual Sinification, but this was not the case between the Two Rivers, where trade relationships had the opposite effect of strengthening local leadership. Leaders who could negotiate a trade relationship and gain a temporary appointment would have a powerful ally and would be immune from the small-scale military raiding by local officials that became common from the fifth century onwards. They would also be able to make their own military raids or conquests of other chiefdoms who did not have a trade relationship without fear of retribution.
The system of temporary appointments did not go any way to acculturating the Li and Lao leaders to Chinese norms of behaviour, because it was still leaving them to their own devices as far as rule of their own people was concerned. The Southern Dynasties were more interested in material goods than in civilising missions, and the Li and Lao rulers seem to have been more interested in their prestige in the eyes of their own people than in the models of authority provided by the Chinese empires. The growth of the bronze drum casting tradition throughout the Six Dynasties was spurred on through the rise in wealth and power of the Li-Lao chieftains, which was a result of economic and political contact with the Chinese empires. For at least three centuries contact with the Chinese had a ‘de-Sinifying’ effect on the Li and Lao, and a ‘Li-Lao-ifying’ effect on some Chinese who lived amongst them.

The growth of the chieftoms was initially conducive to the autonomous political development of the Li and Lao, as large, militarily powerful chieftoms were more difficult for the Southern Dynasties to deal with. In the long term the effect was opposite, once the T’ang Empire had consolidated its power, the large and powerful clans were easier to negotiate with than dozens of tiny chieftoms, and once the ruling clan of a certain area was ingrained within the imperial administrative system, it was easier to remove it by reorganising administrative units, clearing up those pockets of resistant leaders and finally incorporating their lands fully into the imperial administrative system. This is what happened during late seventh and early eighth centuries. Leaderless Li and Lao remained on the edges of T’ang and Sung administrative units for three or four hundred more years, and as their descendents gradually abandoned their language and their separate identity, they no longer recognised that the drums they occasionally came across when ploughing fields or digging ditches, were actually the relics of their ancestors.
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