

Crucible of War: Burma and the Ming in the Tai Frontier Zone (1382-1454)⁷⁷

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Bangkok Post

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⁷⁷ The author would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers who reviewed this paper for their invaluable suggestions and corrections as well as Dr. Michael Charney in London, Dr. Liew Foon Ming in Germany, Dr. Christian Daniels in Tokyo, Dr. Maung Aung Myoe in Singapore, Dr. Donald Stadtner in San Francisco, Terry Fredrickson in Bangkok, and Saisunee Galin and Mae Dah in Chiang Rai for their help and encouragement. Hopefully, opportunities to collaborate with historians and scholars in Myanmar-Burma will become more frequent in the future.

1. Introduction: In Search of “Mong Mao”

The dirty little secret is that for most of ‘Burmese’ history there was no state in any robust sense of the term. There were, instead small scale local chiefs, confederations of villages, warlords, bandits, multiple sovereigns contending ... Might it be possible to imagine a history written systematically from this perspective – a kind of anarchist history...? (James Scott, 2000).

Historians write of a Tai state named Mong Mao existing during the Ming dynasty near the present-day Myanmar-Yunnan border. Ming military expeditions into Yunnan, first in the 1380s, then again in the 1440s, broke up this state, dispersed and atomized the power of its ruling elites, and put an end to an ongoing process of state formation. In one counterfactual world, Mong Mao was even a state destined to rival Sukhothai or Lan-Xang to the south (Harvey, 1925; Sai Kam Mong, 2005; Liew Foon Ming, 1996; Daniels, 2006; Tapp, 2000; Wade, 2004, 31; Aye Chan, 2006; Ferguson, 1997 for counterfactuals)

Political power in the Mong Mao area had long been diffuse before the Ming arrived in Yunnan in 1382. Mountainous geography, endemic warfare, inter-elite struggles for power, and overlapping spheres of Chinese and Burmese influence had all contributed to this diffusion of power. Ming frontier policy transformed this diffuse power in various ways over a roughly 150-year period from 1382 to 1524 through a combination of diplomacy, military and police action, tribute, taxation, and settlement. Starting in 1524, Mong Mao's former rulers, displaced westwards to Mong Yang, played a significant albeit short role in mainland Southeast Asian history when Tai forces swept down upon Upper Burma and established Tai rule over Upper Burma for 28 years. The Burmese reconquest and depopulation of the Shan or Tai states in 1557 brought with it a final "reduction and dismantling" of Tai political power in the Mong Mao region and completed the process that the Ming invasion began in 1382 (Wade, 2004, 31; Fernquest, 2005b, 2005c)

State or chieftainship?

Did Mong Mao ever actually reach the degree of integration that would justify calling it a state or was anarchy the norm? The notions of mandala, segmentary state, and galactic polity have been used to describe diffuse political power in Southeast Asia (Chutintaranond, 1990; Stuart-Fox, 1998; Wolters, 1999; Lieberman, 2003, 33; Reynolds, 2006; Beekman, 1997). Whitmore's narrative brings the military, political, and economic dynamics of the Mandala alive. Vietnamese domination over the Chams had a “mandala nature”:

... the Vietnamese defeated the defending forces, seized the city, looted it of wealth and manpower (as well as of females), and returned home, having placed another Cham prince as their vassal on the throne... This was standard South East Asian procedure. The goal was political subordination and loot, not territorial conquest or the reformulation of the local civilization. Within the ‘mandala’ nature of these early polities, the power of the capital radiated outward (and weakened progressively) over localities that stretched towards other competing capitals. Strictly speaking, there were no boundaries, merely the range of localities linked more or less strongly to the capital. The capital, centred on a royal Hindu-Buddhist cult, sought to dominate, politically and religiously, these localities and their own particular cults. The goal of the capital was not to change the local ways of life, only to gain human and material resources from them... Thus, what for Đại Việt is generally seen as a thousand-year Nam-tien (Southern Advance) was really, in these early centuries, a series of conquests and withdrawals down and back up the eastern coastal plain of the South East Asian mainland (Whitmore, 2004, 119-120).

The “mandala” pattern of warfare and political domination is not unique to Southeast Asia. Political anthropology uses the term ‘chieftainship’ (chiefdom) for a political entity that is less integrated, more diffuse, and more formative than a fully developed state. This more universal terminology was once employed in Southeast Asian history but has fallen out of use (e.g. Wheatley, 1983, 43-93) Chieftainships are the first kind of emergent “regional organisation” to “arise out of formerly fragmented local groups” and as the scale of political integration increases, chieftainships develop into states. Warfare plays a central role in this integration. Rather than linear development, counter-cyclical tendencies of collapse and dispersal intervene and retard the progress of integration:

Chieftoms develop in societies in which warfare between groups is endemic but directed towards conquest and incorporation...Always in search for new sources of revenue, chiefs seek to expand their territorial control by conquest. Here a typical *cyclical pattern* is found as local communities and thousands of *people incorporate under the control of an effective chief only to fragment at his death into constituent communities* (Johnson and Earle, 2000, 34, my italics).

The cyclical pattern is driven by the success or failure of individual chieftains in warfare. From among many similar local settlements, a single settlement comes to dominate and organize the rest:

Mechanically, ... new integrative institutions such as the village or chieftom are formed by 'promotion': ... from among the original autonomous units, one becomes dominant and subordinates the others...a single local lineage may expand by conquest to form a regional chieftom (Johnson and Earle, 2000, 34).

The fortunes of chieftainships are typically tied to individual rulers and their family with the political center relocating quite freely and frequently. Chieftainships take a mobile and flexible approach to where they locate often temporary administrative centers. Pre-modern Southeast Asian political centers were likewise flexible.

Lieberman (66, 1980) notes that the "Burmese and allied peoples did not regard the simultaneous existence of multiple royal capitals as a logical impossibility," and that the Burmese kings Anaukpetlun (Nyaungyan) and Thailun (Ava) though their origins and main capitals were in Upper Burma, "dwelt at Pegu for varying periods in order to conciliate the Mon population of the south, to renew commerce, and...supervise military operations" (Lieberman, 1980, 66). Temporary shifts of residence were also common among Tai rulers of the pre-modern period with instances to be found in the Tai chronicles that Scott collected in his *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States* (GUBSS, Hsipaw, v. 1, 219, 218, 222). Temporary residence overcame the limitations of geography on transportation and communication allowing control to be asserted over a region, both ritually and militarily, for sustained periods of time. Capitals were also strategically relocated to distance a subordinate ruler from the threat of attack by larger states (Barlow, 1987, 257; MSL 12 1449; LFM: 190-191). "Administrative center" is probably a more appropriate term, since the word "capital" conjures up images of permanence and immobility (cf Wheatley, 1983, 10; Tilly, 1992). The temporary capitals of Burmese and Tai rulers sometimes resemble in their function, the temporary palaces and camps of their near-contemporaneous Mughal neighbors in India described by a western traveler as an "ambulans republica, a walking republic" (Gascoigne, 154; see also pp. 191, 209, 236). Similarly, the late Roman Empire was sometimes likened to a military camp on the march (Luttwak, 1976, 57). The alternating power of some Tai chieftainships between two neighboring poles such as Mohnyin-Mogaung and Onpaung-Hsipaw is also perhaps evidence of mobile and flexible centers. The Mon *rajawan* genre of royal history also indicates short-lived, ambiguous, and quickly changing centers were the norm in Lower Burma:

The dynastic succession which it is their central purpose to record is at times tenuous; they span without embarrassment periods when the throne stood long unoccupied and the city 'became a collection of large villages', and tell of kings ruling in Ramanna at times when the orthodox account presents it merely as a province of Ava, so that the records of its final extinction vary. Geographically, the history of the Mon embraces the three capitals of Thaton, Martaban, and Pegu, though there is a tradition of other Mon kingdoms at Bassein, Dalla, and Lagunbyin in the fourteenth century, and we know from an inscription that Moulmein claimed to be a kingdom in the sixteenth (Shorto, 1961, 65-66).

The first impulse is to use traditional European political categories and call Mong Mao a "kingdom" and the smaller subordinate Tai settlements, "principalities" or "feudal lords". This terminology adds an element of European dignity and grandeur, provides an appropriate context of gravity and respect for legal texts (cf Okudaira and Huxley, 2001), and supports present-day group legitimacy and solidarity, but does it have any explanatory power for the processes of state formation that were going on at the time? As Johnson and Earle (2000, 307) note: "By referring to leaders of the Middle Ages as 'kings' and 'emperors' scholars have tended to exaggerate the extent and depth of centralized power available to those leaders." In fact, both medieval Japan and France were "populated with communities ranging from simple to complex chieftoms, with many areas not integrated beyond the family level or the local group." Any reference to a political entity in this paper should not be construed as an attempt to lessen the status or historical importance of any ethnic group. Mongol ethnic groups to China's north

played an important role in Chinese history yet were enmeshed in a process of emergent state formation (Di Cosmo, 1999).

That statehood, even in the distant past, can be a controversial and dangerous topic can be seen in the life of one Chinese historian during the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese historian Huang Xianfan was denounced as a Tai Zhuang “separatist” in 1957 and his writings were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The historian was eventually rehabilitated shortly before his death in the 1980s and his books reissued with notes indicating only that some historians disagreed (Barlow, 1987, 266-267, citing Moseley, 1973; Huang Xianfan, 1983). Huang Xianfan held that the Tai Zhuang were effectively a state as early as the Qin dynasty:

Huang simply states that the extended Zhuang resistance against the Qin, the highly organized Zhuang army, the common concern for territory, a common tongue, and the suggestions of a class system which can be inferred from feudal ranks among the resisters, all indicate the presence of a state which had recently emerged from the tribal level... This position supports the Marxist argument that the state emerges from the tribal level, a position supported by many western anthropologists. (Barlow, 1987; for a dissenting opinion see Fried, 1983, also see Haas, 1982)

The essence of Huang Xianfan’s Zhuang state argument clearly indicates that a more rigorous and common taxonomy of different degrees of political integration, such as Johnson and Earle’s (2000), are needed to facilitate comparison and avoid ambiguity. This would be an improvement over currently ambiguous and sometimes politically sensitive and dangerous references to “state” and “chieftainship”:

Many of the institutions of European feudalism have been found more generally in chieftainships. This includes “the establishment of personal bonds of fealty between lord and vassal, the obligation of military service to the lord, and the granting of estates in land to loyal vassals” (Johnson and Earle, 2000, 307; Bloch, 1961), territory settled by “subsistence farming communities” at “low population densities,” and endemic warfare with “political life centered around war chiefs allied in tenuous confederations... islands of control... surrounded by dangerous, unstable territories” controlled by the ruler “in name only” (Johnson and Earle, 2000, 308, 252-253; Earle, 1997). Feudal Europe shares these features in common with Tai and Burmese societies of the Ava period (1365-1527) (for examples see San Lwin, n.d.; Fernquest, 2006; Fernquest 2005b, 2005c). The historian Marc Bloch addressed the wider applicability of feudal institutions with the question: “Has there been more than one feudalism?” quoting Voltaire: “Feudalism is not an event; it is a very old form which, with differences in its working, subsists in three-quarters of our hemisphere” (Voltaire “Spirit of the Laws” cited in Bloch, 1961, 441).

Chiefs “allied in tenuous confederations” is a common theme in Tai history. Zhuang political organization has been described alternatively as a “temporary coalition of chieftaincies,” a “league of chieftains,” or a “march-lord loosely associated with” a more powerful state (Barlow, 1987). With respect to Mong Mao, the historian of China Christian Daniels also emphasizes “tenuous confederations” adding the Weberian characterization of these rulers as “charismatic”:

Everywhere Tay [Tai] polities seemed to have been leagues or alliances of basin polities that were frequently prone to fission on the downfall of charismatic leaders. As far as I know we have no evidence for the existence of a central bureaucracy which administrated the whole league of any Tay Kingdom; each basin had its own caw: phaa. [Chao Paw] who owed allegiance to an overlord, perhaps a number of overlords. Thus, individual caw; phaa. at times could conduct raids on neighbouring areas to enhance their own power and wealth, especially if the areas being plundered were not lieges of the central overlord. What I am suggesting is that attacks on Ava did not necessarily have to be concerted efforts; they could be conducted individually by polities with strong ties to the central overlord (Daniels, 2006b).

In summary, extrapolation from raw historical facts as found in primary sources and using them as grist in the mill of political theory has been going on at least since the time of the European Enlightenment. This historical extrapolation has at times been life-threatening as it was in the case of Huang Xianfan and certainly has injected a large element of ambiguity into the analysis of political structure. With this in mind, the analysis of this paper aims to fly low over the surface of historical times and places, making only modest extrapolations and generalizations in the form of tentative hypotheses along the way.

Historical over-extrapolation: Unified states and Southern Advances

To return to the question of whether Mong Mao ever reached the degree of integration of a state. The historian Michael Vickery poses a similar question for the history of the Chams in southern Vietnam. He asks:

...was there a single unitary state/kingdom of Champas depicted in the standard classical scholarship, a federation of polities dominated by the Austronesian-speaking Cham, or two or more quite distinct, sometimes competing, polities? (Vickery, 2005, 4).

Vickery argues that "there never was a unified Champa" and that this interpretation was based on flawed logic: "*events recorded for one part of Champa, whatever the source, may not be extrapolated to the rest*" (Vickery, 2005, 80). Similarly, Taylor throws into question the widely believed notion of a "Namtien," a Vietnamese Southern Advance over a thousand-year-long period (Taylor, 1998). He calls for historians to take a closer look at historical sources and posits a more variegated history: "a series of different episodes responding to particular events and opportunities" (Vickery, 2005, 29, citing Taylor, 1998, 951, 960 and Li Tana, 1998, 19, 21, 28) with an orientation toward the "surface of times and places" rather than an "imagined unifying depth" (Taylor, 1998, 949). Besides oversimplified models of state and society, there are other likely sources for over-extrapolation and imagined unifying depth. Periodizations that are not fine enough, maps that are not detailed enough, or a search for reassuring certainty in the face of the ambiguous detail of primary sources, can all distort history. Western historiography has also been affected by it. According to Fischer (1970, 236-240), a "fallacy of cross-grouping" occurs when a historian uses a misleading "conceptualization of one group in terms of another," in other words, falsely extrapolating of the features of one group to another group, as Vickery claims the "standard classical scholarship" of Cham history does.

Extrapolation has also been common in Burmese and Tai history. The hypothesis of a Tai Southern Advance focuses mainly on the period before written historical sources (Baker, 2002; Stuart-Fox, 1998, 22-29). The historian of Burma Harvey (1925) characterized the whole Ava period of Burmese history as a period of "Shan Dominion (1287-1531)." Aung-Thwin (1996) has revealed the shortcomings of this extrapolation. The theory of a Tai Southern Advance widely held by scholars circa 1958 is enunciated by the historian of Burma Luce in his famous paper on the study of the Tai through Chinese sources: "...the earlier period, say 1250 to 1450 AD, is the time of the mass movements of the Dai [Tai] southward from Western Yunnan, radiating all over Further India and beyond" (Luce, 1958, 123). Baker (2002, 8) also attributes to Luce a tentative but more refined hypothesis that Tai expansion to the south resulted from the Mongol invasions of 1277-1279 and 1283-1284. Baker (2002) reviews the relevant literature to-date for the Tai Southern Advance hypothesis and suggests ways in which it can be further refined.

Vickery does not treat periods lacking inscriptional evidence. Historical epochs like Medieval Europe have thrived on literary evidence with inscriptional sources playing only a minor role (cf Cantor, 1991). Inscriptions provide only limited kinds of historical data. Even one of the most important uses of inscriptions, establishing accurate dates for the reigns of rulers, is of limited use if it does not provide any indication of the succession struggles before the succession. The succession struggles of Ava kings in 1400 and 1426 are not found in inscriptions (Tin Hla Thaw, 1959, 135-137). What would make the hiding of a succession struggle by an inscription less likely than the spurious addition of a succession struggle in the recopying of a chronicle manuscript? Are court elites striking the correct pose less likely to do so in stone? The Ava period is well-endowed with inscriptional sources (See Burma, 1972-1987; Duroiselle, 1921; Than Tun, 1959; Tin Hla Thaw, 1959; Tun Nyein, 1899; Bennett, 1971; all cited in Aung-Thwin, 1996; also Aung-Thwin, 1985, 249-251; and Tin Htway, 2001 for bibliography). Mong Mao does not seem to have gone through an inscriptional phase like Keng-tung which falls within the well-endowed Lanna cultural orbit (Luce, 1957, 123, 173). The same problems of diverging chronicle traditions and of matching names in chronicles with names in inscriptions that Vickery cites are also problems with Ava period inscriptions.

Burmese and Tai chronicle texts have many of the same shortcomings as Chinese written texts. Vickery (2005, 10) notes that Chinese histories of Champa were "compiled long after the event, and obviously at second hand." Parts of them were lost and then later reassembled. He concludes that "given these conditions, it *requires religious faith* to insist that all their details...must be accepted as factual, and their inconsistencies require close attention" (my italics). The composition of U Kala's version of the Burmese chronicle resembles that of a religious text. A large fraction of the chronicle falls between the beginning of the universe and the dawn of recorded history. The chronicle also repeatedly stresses the charisma of the Burmese King and the religious sources of his power. Even for the more accurate post-Pagan period "what actually happened" may be deeply embedded within a chrysalis of religious emplotment and elaboration (White, 2001; Baker, 2002). This is perhaps the best argument to

place the highest value on the original manuscript, publishing it in as many forms, translated or transliterated, as there are interested parties as Anatole-Roger Peltier and Victor Grabowsky (1999a) have done. This would provide the basis for both: 1. the analysis and explication of closed self-referential religious-literary textual systems, as well as 2. more skeptical but controversial Rankean lines of inquiry along the lines of Crone (1987, 2004) and Wansbrough (1977) who have questioned the accepted historical traditions of early Islamic civilization.

Geography: Where was Mong Mao?

The geography of Mong Mao consisted of successive "zones of influence" much as the Braudel's Mediterranean did:

... the Mediterranean must be accepted as a wide zone, extending well beyond the shores of the sea in all directions. We might compare it to an electric or magnetic field, or more simply to a radiant center whose light grows less as one moves away from it, without one's being able to define the exact boundary between light and shade (Braudel, 1966, 168).

The toponym 'Mong Mao' has been mapped to physical territory in different ways. The broadest descriptions of Mong Mao's sphere of influence are found in Tai chronicles and include territory all the way up to India in the west, Tibet in the north, Sipsongpanna, Chiang Rai, and Upper Burma in the south, and Dali in the East (Daniels, 2006, 29). The names of these far-flung states conjure up images of great territorial size, but each of these names is also associated with localities that have their own independent historical chronicles in which Mong Mao hardly occupies a central position.

A smaller and more reasonable sphere of influence for Mong Mao would have been roughly the territory from the Upper Irrawaddy River in the west to the Upper Salween in the east (LFM: 64). Ming lists of domains under Luchuan-Pingmian's control help fill in the details. Domains included the three large domains of Luchuan-Pingmian (Mong Mao proper, Mong Wan, Longchuan), Mong Yang (Chinese: Meng Yang), and Hsenwi (Chinese: Mu Bang). There were several smaller chieftainships including Mong Ting (Chinese: Meng-ding), Lujiang (Yongchang), Nandian, Ganyai, Zheledian, Dahou, Wandian, Weiyuan, Zhenkang, and perhaps Mong Lem (Chinese: Meng-lian) (LFM 167; Wade, 2004, 4; Daniels, 2006, 30-32, and map p. 27). A slightly larger area is "Yunnan's Southwest crescent" that Giersch (2001, 68-69) defined for the Qing period, stretching along the present-day Sino-Chinese border and including Tai settlements from Sipsongpanna to Ganyai north of Mong Mao.

An even smaller core area of control is easier to delineate. The core area covered the Upper Shweli river valley (also known as the Ruili, Longchuan, or Nam Mao River) as well as the "adjacent mountainous region' around Gaoligong mountain (LFM: 64). A well-defined geographical boundary for this core area is given in the *Bai-yi Zhuan* of 1396 which lists the rivers and mountains that surrounded it:

... To the north, there are the Gao-liang-gong Mountains, and they extend for over 200 li. They are over 50 li high and they follow the Nu river. To the west are the Ma-an [Horse saddle] Mountains. These mountains have a pass that if guarded by even a single person, can make it difficult for even a force of 10,000 to pass through. To the east is the Lu-chuan River which is navigable by boat. To the south this joins with the Jin-sha [Gold Dust, *Irrawaddy*] River, and then flows into the Western Sea ... (Wade, 1996, appendix II, 8, my italics)

Mong Mao's capital or administrative center seems to have been based in Luchuan with a capital near the modern-day border town of Ruili (Zhelan) until 1438 when it shifted northwestwards to Mong Yang under military pressure from the Ming. The degree of unity of the various subordinate chieftainships within the sphere of influence fluctuated greatly over time. At times they were unified under one strong leader; at other times there was little unity at all (Sai Kam Mong, 2004, 10, Jiang Yingliang, 1983). Although Tai elite held the top levels of political control at Mong Mao, lower levels of the hierarchy (or territory that did not figure into the hierarchy at all) were inhabited by a diversity of ethnic groups of Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer ethnicity that resembled the modern-day hilltribes of the region. These ethnic groups underwent some assimilation as Leach's (1954) research on the Kachin indicates. Despite the historical importance of this ethnic diversity, these subordinate tribes are hidden to written historical sources with some notable exceptions found in the work of Daniels (2001), O'Connor (1995), and Wade (2004, 14).

The words used to identify the origins of Tai attacks in Burmese historical sources indicate that the center of Tai military power shifted frequently. From the immediate post-Pagan period to the early 1400s (c. 1342-1426), the words that identify Tais in Burmese historical sources change from more general all-inclusive words to words that identify specific local settlements of Tais (See Table 1). The word used also varies with the nature of the historical source, whether it is a chronicle or an inscription. Ming sources refer to Mong Mao as "Luchuan" or "Luchuan-Pingmian." However, in the *Bai-yi Zhuan* circa 1396 the geographical terms "Luchuan" and "Pingmian" are not used at all, only the earlier "Bai-yi" is used. This raises the question of how Ming geographical divisions evolved from earlier divisions and what role tribute missions and proactive attempts by Tai elite to obtain Ming recognition, such as Si Lun-fa's, played in the process. The *Bai-yi Zhuan* also does not explicitly recognize the political entity that they visited as Tai, although there are enough Tai words and names cited that the implication is clearly that the language of ruling elite was Tai. The actual toponym "Mao" actually occurs a lot less frequently in historical sources than the historical events that have been attributed to "Mong Mao."

Table 1: Tai attacks on Ava

Year	Tai reference to	Source	Nature
1342	Syam	(Than Tun, 1959, 111)	Inscription
1356	Mao	(Than Tun, 1959, 112)	Inscription
1357	Syam	(Than Tun, 1959, 112)	Inscription
1359	Syam	(Than Tun, 1959, 108)	Inscription
1362	Syam	(Than Tun, 1959, 108)	Inscription
1364	Syam	(Than Tun, 1959, 110)	Inscription
1364	Shan	(UKI: 407-408)	Chronicle
1371	Mong Yang, Kale	(UKI: 429-430)	Chronicle
1373	Mong Yang	(UKI: 430)	Chronicle
1393	Mong Yang	(UKI: 458-461)	Chronicle

Specifically, prior to the establishment of Ava in 1364 inscriptions usually use "Syam" with the Burmese chronicle using "Shan." Tai ethnonyms became more localized starting with the death of Si Ke-fa in 1371 and the ascendance of Mong Yang. After Ava began indirect rule over Tai chieftainships in 1401 the variety of specific references to chieftainships increases significantly, including Hsenwi, Onpaung, Mong Yang, and Kale. The names of southern Tai chieftainships such as Yawksawk and Naungmun appear after 1426.

A Tai Frontier?

The notion of a "frontier" is an inherently slippery notion. "Frontier of what?" or "whose frontier?" are questions that naturally arise when the term "frontier" is thrown about loosely. A "frontier" is here defined as a geographical area between two or more powerful societies (states, political entities) that contains smaller less powerful societies (chieftainships, tribes, bands). Power over these less powerful societies is "contested" by the more powerful societies (or "hegemons") and these less powerful societies must often forge multiple allegiances and loyalties with the more powerful hegemons which surround them (cf Giersch, 2001, 68-69, 72). To answer the first question, this paper is about "the frontier of" the two powerful hegemons Ming China and Burma (c. 1382-1454). A "frontier" is what separated Burma from China.

Whose frontier was it? Tai and hill-dwelling ethnic groups lived within the frontier and some Burmese and Chinese from outside the frontier settled within the frontier. In addition to being territory that separated, a frontier was also a "middle ground", a "zone of contact", or "broad zone of multiple cultural interactions" between the peoples of the dominant and subordinate groups (Giersch, 2001, 72; Perdue, 2005, 520; Turchin, 2003a).

Whereas the notion of "Tai Realm" captures the territorial extent of Tai settlements (c.1350-1600), the notion of a "Tai Frontier" (or "borderlands") between mainland Southeast Asia and China, defines a cultural "middle ground" between the Ming and the Burmese, occupied by the Tai. Questions still remain about the role of other

ethnic groups in this frontier region, groups whose history is barely addressed in written sources, the predecessors of the modern day hill tribes (cf Daniels, n.d.; Reid, 2006).

At a larger scale, there was also a frontier between mainland Southeast Asia and China. This large-scale frontier was a patchwork quilt or system of frontiers between different spheres of influence and activities. As the French historian Braudel once suggested, "we should imagine a hundred frontiers, not one, some political, some economic, and some cultural" (Braudel, 1966, 170). In the hinterlands that separated mainland Southeast Asia from China, frontiers fell between Burma and the Ming, between Vietnam and the Ming, the Ahom and India, and Ayutthaya and Cambodia.

In recent Southeast Asian historiography, the relevance of the "Southeast Asia" region for pre-modern history has been challenged. Some recent works are predicated on thinking outside of the regional box as do Subrahmanyam (1997, 1999), Prakash and Lombard (1999), and Emmerson (1984). Subrahmanyam (1999) suggests that the Bay of Bengal was a conduit conveying Persian intellectual traditions to Southeast Asia. In a similar fashion, the influence of Buddhist monks on the Tai Frontier was felt from both the Chinese and the Southeast Asian sides, bringing with it the gradual spreading and adoption of the new universal religion that spread more slowly in the mountainous Tai Frontier area than it did in lowland and maritime areas. The circulation of religious elites proceeded at a much faster pace between Sri Lanka and Pegu (Pranke, 2004, 167-188), Sri Lanka and Arakan (Raymond, 1999), Mon Lower Burma and Lanna (Swearer and Premchit, 1978), Lanna and Upper Burma (Luce and Ba Shin, 1961), and Arakan and Upper Burma (Charney, 1999, 79-112; Charney, 2002).

Given the greater military might and markets of the Ming, one would expect the Ming to be the ultimate arbiter of resource distribution in the frontier. The tax-tribute base, silver, and abundant luxury goods of the frontier were at least potentially all under their control (SLC: 97-198). Later, during the Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns (c. 1436-1454), the Burmese fought Ming wars as a Ming proxy in anticipation of territorial rights being granted by the Ming.

The Tai Frontier seen from the perspective of the Ming court was part of Ming "foreign policy" (Wang Gungwu, 1998) or "Grand Strategy" (Luttwak, 1976). During the Qing dynasty, the Chinese state "adopted different policies for different frontiers, based on its assessment of strategic significance, revenue potential and control costs" (Shepherd, 1993, 398, cited in Giersch, 2001, 72). Likewise, Ming grand strategy can be conceptualized as undergoing significant changes with each successive Ming emperor. The northern Mongolian frontier usually eclipsed the Southeast Asian frontier in importance, but occasionally a conjunction of events led to heightened attention as it did during the period this paper focuses on. Administrative strategies ranged from the ancient strategy of divide-and-rule to promoting one all-inclusive client state on the frontier. The remoteness of Yunnan, the great distance to the Ming capital, with a tropical climate difficult to endure, featuring diseases to which the Ming were not accustomed (Reid and Jiang Na, 2006, 5; LFM: 178) meant that Ming officials in Yunnan often made their own independent on-the-spot policy decisions. This independent action ran counter to the tendency of proclamations issued by the Ming court to direct policy in a detailed and hands-on fashion. Using the term "grand strategy" may impute far too much determinism in policies that were largely subject to the random influences of person and place.

How can a notion of a Tai Frontier, or that of a greater frontier between Ming China and Southeast Asia, help to better define exactly what Mong Mao was? First of all, the wider definitions of Mong Mao have equated it with the whole Tai frontier itself. Mong Mao was located in a mountainous region in which transportation and communication were inherently more difficult than in the lowlands. Although Mong Mao may have been roughly at the center of the Tai frontier for over 100 years, its control over wide stretches of the Tai Frontier would have been tenuous at best. Furthermore, at the end of Mong Mao's life during the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (1438-1454), Mong Yang replaced Mong Mao as the dominant power center in the northern Tai Frontier. Another way of looking at Mong Mao's demise is that the center of the chieftainship merely moved northwestwards to Mong Yang, with the core element of chieftainship political structure, family relations among the Tai elite, remaining intact.

History of the Tai Frontier: Public or hidden?

The anthropologist James Scott proposed the terms "public transcript" and "hidden transcript" to represent the effect that power relations between dominant and subordinate groups have on the presentation of information (Scott, 1990). The pronouncements sent by the Ming court to the Tai and Ava courts are recorded in the public transcript of the *Ming Annals* or *Ming Shi-lu*. These pronouncements make judgments about the indigenous inhabitants of the Tai Frontier, regarding their trustworthiness, motives, past behaviour, and anticipated future behaviour. One approach is to dismiss these judgments as superfluous rhetoric meant for internal consumption only to justify forceful

military or administrative action. How seriously or ironically were the flamboyant turns of phrase of Ming imperial proclamations actually taken by the indigenous inhabitants who received them? Were they even translated adequately into the indigenous languages? There are some indications that various cultural artifacts such as local chronicles and even elite clothing formed a hidden transcript on which Tai elite recorded their dissent. One Tai chronicle, for instance, records that the Tai ruler only handed over his seal of office after the Chinese official got him drunk (Elias, 1876, 21). The ostentatious clothing worn by Si Ke-fa's son on his visit to the Yuan court seems to have been a form of dissent or flouting of the rules that barely fell within the bounds of acceptability (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 1).

The most visible public transcripts consisted of Ming communications and orders to the Burmese and the Tais copied almost verbatim into the *Ming Shi-lu*. Draft versions of the official Ming history known as the *Ming Shi-gao* (Liew Foon Ming, forthcoming; also 2003, 144,158) and unofficial primary sources reveal a hidden transcript concealed to protect the honour and dignity of Ming functionaries in Yunnan like Mu Sheng, the hereditary Ming ruler of Yunnan who committed suicide in the wake of the Ming's first defeat in the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns. The public transcript of the official history was modified to protect his good name (LFM: 173-174). Critical personal relationships between key historical actors also do not make their way into the official transcript, like that between Mu Sheng and Mong Mao ruler Si Ren-fa (LFM: 174-175).

The differential between public and hidden transcripts has an obvious application to the histories of frontiers that lie astride the historical writings of disparate and often incompatible historical traditions. Parallel to the physical Tai Frontier there was also an intellectual or discourse frontier of contemporaneous communications between and within the Ming, Burmese, and Tai courts, and of historical chronicles and inscriptions composed within these courts. Although hidden transcripts are by their very nature more ephemeral and hidden from view, Tai and Burmese chronicle and oral traditions, if they managed to survive, often constitute a transcript hidden from Ming view. The visibility of Tai local chronicles to the gaze of dominant state administrative apparatuses, however, might have transformed these hidden transcripts of dissent into public transcripts with pressures towards self-censorship (Fernquest, 2005c, 1173).

Goals, conventions, sources, and analytical frameworks

This goal of this paper is to contribute to the growing literature on pre-modern Burmese history as evidenced most recently by Charney (2006) and Thant Myint-U (2006), the latter author stressing the importance of a better understanding of Myanmar-Burma's history in finding a solution to the political impasse that has plagued the country for almost twenty years. This paper also seeks to extend the military history that Charney (2004) began in his survey of Southeast Asian warfare (c. 1300-1900).

A framework from the anthropology of warfare will be used to analyze the factors that lead to warfare. Ferguson (1999) presents, in a manner similar to Braudel (1966), a paradigm or framework for analyzing the factors that lead to warfare. This paradigm originates in the "anthropology of war" literature, seeking factors having cross-cultural relevance for non-western warfare as well as western warfare which is the focus of most current research. This paradigm is applicable to both pre-modern as well as modern warfare. The factors influencing the incidence of warfare are broken into three categories: infrastructure, structure, and superstructure. Infrastructure includes "interaction with the physical environment, population characteristics and trends, technology, and the labor techniques of applying technology, which affect a people's physical existence and relation to nature." Structure includes "organized social life, patterns of interpersonal connections and divisions sorted into social organization, economics, and politics." Superstructure includes "the mental constructs of culture, its belief systems, and patterned emotional dispositions." The paradigm also divides factors into intra-polity factors (within the political entity) and inter-polity factors (relations between political entities) (Ferguson, 1999, 389-390).

A brief note on sources, the critical use of sources, as well as the role of narrative in this history are needed. The main Burmese source used here is U Kala's *Mahayazawingyi*, being the earliest rendition of the Burmese chronicle (U Kala, 1961). Citations are to chapters within volumes (e.g. "UKII: 230" means "U Kala, 1961, Volume 2, Chapter 230). Over the course of last year, a newly edited version of U Kala's history has been published in Yangon (U Kala, 2006). This new version was published too late to be utilized in the current paper. Thanks to detailed references provided by Maung Aung Myoe of the National University of Singapore, the *Mahayazawinthat*, a revised and amended version of U Kala's *Mahayazawingyi*, has also been used in places.

With greater access to original primary source manuscripts and more critical comparison and editing of these sources by historians specializing in the respective Tai, Ming, and Burmese historical traditions, it will be

possible to zero in on a precise core history of “what actually happened.” However, in a fundamental sense much of these historical traditions may remain incommensurable due to the basic literary nature of much of the historical sources. Fictional elaboration, at least in the Burmese case, was often didactic in nature, added to educate future rulers, and for this reason, exactly what made these historical sources useful and led to their repeated recopying and survival. That’s why the approach of this paper is to aim for a large-scale macro-narrative in the manner of McNeil that is of broader relevance to World History and is also a narrative to provide a context in which to place more detailed verified historical facts as critical work progresses. To focus exclusively on “what actually happened,” for instance, by valorizing inscriptional sources to the exclusion of chronicle narrative, will simply further delay an extensive macro-history and perpetuate the reliance on Harvey’s 1925 history or even Phayre’s (1883) history from the nineteenth century.

Charney (2006) unravels the processes of court politics that guided and influenced the composition of texts such as chronicles. Although U Kala’s text is technically a secondary source compiled from primary sources, it is the earliest and most complete of the chronicle secondary sources. Critical review and sorting out of Burmese chronicle secondary sources is a huge project that is already underway (see Tun Aung Chain, 2004; Charney, 2006; Kirichenko, 2006). Further progress may be made when manuscripts in Great Britain, Myanmar, and Thailand become available. As the Russian historian of Burma Kirichenko observes:

More consistent research into the development of Burman yazawin-writing would require a search for a number of known early texts to trace the initial stages of this textual activity, preparation of critical editions of surviving yazawins taking account of as much available manuscripts copies as possible, and refining the analytical apparatus with which we approach available texts (Kirichenko, 2006, 9).

Some notes on the conventions used are in order. Than Tun’s calendar is used for dating. To get the Buddhist Era (BE) dates from the western dates just subtract 638. When only a date is given in the Burmese chronicle, instead of the more accurate but more verbose date pair of Wyatt and Wichienkeo (1995), e.g. 1385/86, I simply give the first date of the pair, the one obtained by subtracting 638, e.g. 1385. A slight variation of Lieberman’s (2003) geographical terminology is used with: Lower Burma, Upper Burma, Arakan, and the Tai Frontier Zone. Lower Burma is used instead of “Mon Land” because Rajadhirat was the first extensive Mon state-building ruler of the era and it is still unclear what role other ethnicities played in Lower Burma at this time (Aung-Thwin, 2005). To label the whole region “Mon Land” or the “Mon realm” seems, based on the existing evidence, to overstate the degree of unity and control.

Table 2: Mong Mao Rulers (or Tai Chieftain Hegemons)

Chinese	Transliterated	(1) Tai and (2) Burmese	Reign (termination factor)	Cycle
Location: Mong Mao				
	Si Ke-fa	(1) Sa Khaan Pha, Soe Khan Fa, Chau-ki-pha, Tai-Pong, Hso-Kip-Hpa	1340-1371 (died)	++
	Zhao Bing-fa		1371-1378 (natural)	-
	Tai Bian		1378/79 (murdered)	-
	Zhao Xiao-fa		1379/80	-
	Si Wa-fa	(1) Hso-Wak-Pha	? (murdered)	-
思倫發	Si Lun-fa	(1) Hso Long Pha, Tai-lung	1382-1399 (died)	++
思行發	Si Xing-fa	(1) Chau-Tit-Pha, Tau-Lwei	1404-1413 (abdicated)	+
思任發	Si Ren-fa	(1) Chau-Ngan-Pha, Hso Wen Hpa, Sa Ngam Pha (2) Tho-ngan-bwa	1413-1445 (executed)	+
Location: Mong Yang				
思機發	Si Ji-fa	(1) Chau-Si-pha, Sa Ki Pha (2) Tho-kyein-bwa	1445-1454 (executed)	--
思卜法	Si Bu-fa	(2) Tho-pok-bwa	1449-?	-
思洪法	Si Hong-fa, Si Jue-fa	(2) Tho-han-bwa	1465?-1479?	-
思倫	Si Lun, Si Lu-fa, Si Liu-fa	(2) Sawlon	1482?-1532 (assassinated)	++

(Sources: LFM:167, 169, 198; Liew Foon Ming, 2006; Elias, 1876, 27; GUBSS, U Kala, note that the author contributed a similar table to Wikipedia)

The simple renderings of personal and place names that were used in colonial era sources (e.g. Pegu, Toungoo, Ava) are used, fully acknowledging that the current transcription standard used in Myanmar-Burma often does a better job conveying the sound of the word. Although the transliteration of indigenous names using indigenous pronunciation is always preferred, the uncertainty that still surrounds the Tai pronunciation of Mong Mao ruler names, along with the fact that the bulk of the historical references to them are in Chinese sources, has led to the use of their Chinese names in this paper, although a table of names found in extant secondary sources has been provided for comparison (see Table 2 below). The Chinese name of Mong Mao ruler "Si Ke-fa" particularly needs to be replaced since the three Chinese characters in his name were deliberately chosen to have an insulting meaning: "die-can-be-chastened." A rigorous multi-lingual analysis of names remains to be done.

2. Tai raids and the founding of Ava (1301-1382)

As late as 1276, Burma's first charter kingdom at Pagan was still in the ascendant, waging war against chieftainships in Yunnan. Expeditions to Upper Burma by the Chinese Yuan-Mongol dynasty (1284, 1287, 1300-01) hastened the collapse of Pagan. As Pagan's strength waned, power in Upper Burma passed from Pagan to two centers at Pinya and Sagaing (Luce, 1958-59, 63, 82-83; Huber, 1909; Lieberman, 2003, 119-123; Bennett, 1971, 26-27; Maung Aung Myoe, 2006).

Mong Mao arose in the power vacuum. The kingdom of Dali had long provided political unity to the diverse ethnic groups of Yunnan's western frontier. In 1253-54 Kubilai Khan descended upon Yunnan from Tibet, took Dali, and marched on to Kunming. The next year a Yuan general marched south and subjugated Mong Mao. A garrison was established at Jinchi, the latter serving as a gateway into the Tai Frontier. The tropical weather of the Tai Frontier kept Chinese officials, used to more temperate climates, away: "When it was necessary to exercise supervision, officials were sent into the area, but they returned with the coming of spring, in order to avoid the miasmatic vapours" (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 1). As Wade observes, the unfamiliarity with the frontier region that Yuan texts exhibit is evidence that the Mongol Yuan dynasty did not exert a very rigorous or exacting political control over the Tai Frontier (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 6).

This kingdom of Mong Mao first registers in Chinese sources in a significant way starting in 1340 when Si Ke-fa (r. 1340-71) became king. Si Ke-fa engaged in expansionary warfare, attacking neighboring Tai chieftains as well as Upper Burma. In response, the Chinese Yuan court sent several expeditions against Mong Mao. The *Bai-yi Zhuan* stresses Si Ke-fa's imperial ambition:

In...[1348/49], the Lu-chuan native official Si Ke-fa repeatedly raided and harassed the various routes. The [Yuan] general Da-shi-ba-du-lu went to punish him, but was unable to subdue him. Si Ke-fa continued to absorb other routes, but sent his son Man-sa to the court to convey his sentiments and offer his allegiance. While he accepted the Court's calendar and offered tribute, his clothing, paraphernalia and systems remained that of a king (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 1).

Repeated conflicts with the Yuan eventually led to an accommodation with the Ming:

In 1342, 1346, 1347, and 1348, the Yuan armies fought with Luchuan four times, and the first war lasted for four years. In 1355, Si Ke-fa nominally acknowledged the authority of the Yuan court and the later set up Si Ke-fa's territory as 'Pingmian pacification commission' (Sun, Laichen, 2000, 225; citing Jiang Yingliang, 1983, and Chen Yi-sein, 1969-1970).

Mong Mao under Si Ke-fa was not the only Tai chieftainship that the Yuan considered rebellious. In 1346 a punitive expedition was also sent against Hsenwi (Sainson, 1904, 129-130).

During the period 1359-1368, Tai attacks on Upper Burma intensified and ultimately caused much more "serious economic and social disruption" than the previous Chinese invasions, throwing Upper Burma into a period of crisis (Bennett, 1971, 27). The response to this crisis led to the founding of the Ava dynasty. Power was once again concentrated at a single center in Upper Burma, albeit a much weakened center.

In the lead-up to the crisis of the 1360s, the Yuan dynasty sent representatives to Pinya and other places in Burma in 1338, but they were withdrawn in 1342 (Parker, 1893, 43). Although the Burmese won some military engagements against Tai forces around 1342 (Than Tun, 1959, 129), in the period leading up to the crisis of 1359-1364

Tai raids intensified. We are left with only cryptic intimations in inscriptions of what these raids were like: “In 1356, when Prince Sinkapaty was in control, he left the headman of Khamwan fight the battle of Khyantwan. As he won the battle, the Prince was pleased. Maw was besieged...Rewards were given” (Than Tun, 1959, 129). Another inscription in 1357 compares the Tai raids to those of the Cola attacks on Sri Lanka (Than Tun, 1959, 130).

Tai raids, a period of crisis, and the founding of Ava (1359-1368)

The period of crisis 1359-1364 took place during the reign of Si Ke-fa (r. 1340-1371) over Mong Mao (UKII: 407-418). In 1359, Pinya was carrying out the first inquest of towns and villages within its domains in order to consolidate its power (Than Tun, 1983-1986, v. 2, p. viii). Kyawswa, ruler of Pinya, died in 1359 and was succeeded by his younger brother Narathu. Toungoo raided Upper Burma’s critical Kyaukse food supply. The Tais struck Upper Burma once again in 1362 when Narathu of Pinya allied himself with the Tai invaders aiming to destroy rival Sagaing. A joint Pinya-Tai campaign was sent against Sagaing in 1364, but the Tai side reneged on the alliance, claiming that the troops committed by Narathu were insufficient. After Narathu was taken captive and carted back north by his Tai allies, a young Burmese nobleman by the name of Thadominpya seized control of what was left and moved his center of operations to the confluence of the Irrawaddy and Myitnge rivers at the entry point to the Kyaukse granary and food supply and on 26 January 1365 he founded what would later be known as the royal capital of Ava.

Thadominpya started from a small core area of control and gradually expanded his power, waging war without cease during his short life that ended three years later (UKI: 409-418; Harvey, 1925, 80-81). Thadominpya recruited support wherever he could find it. A notorious bandit was even recruited to his side. During 1365-67, Thadominpya led two campaigns to extend and consolidate his domains to the south. In 1365 he subjugated Taungdwingyi and in July of 1365 he set off down the Irrawaddy on an expedition against Sagu near Pagan. The historian Paul Bennett speculates that the hardships of a population subject to the sequestering of troops motivated the following well-known inscription by the wife of a local lord. It describes the hardships of a population living in a war zone:

After the death of my husband, when the great king of Ava marched thrice to battle, all men, monks, and brahman starved. Then I gave cooked food to 37 monks and uncooked food to 200. When men died of starvation, I had compassion on them as I had on myself, (and therefore) I had 50 khwak of rice cooked twice-night and day, daily, and gave them away. When the Lords (of the Religion) became uncomfortable due to the wars, I made them comfortable by giving them complete sets of four requisites [life necessities of monks] (Than Tun, 1959, 129-130; Bennett, 1971, p. 24-25).

This inscription was made in 1375 by the widow of the Toungoo ruler Pyanchi’s father Theingathu who died in 1367. Bennett argues that July “would be a time of year when men were needed in the fields, and if the king ordered a levee en-masse, hardship might easily have followed.” During the campaign against Sagu Thadominpya contracted a disease that has been interpreted by later historians as smallpox (cf Reid and Jiang Na, 2006), and died at age twenty-five in 1368 (UKI: 418; Harvey, 1925, 81). To summarise, Ava was founded in 1364 in the middle of a crisis that lasted from 1359 to 1368, a crisis brought on by Tai raids that reached a peak in 1364. The resolution of the crisis began with the founding of Ava in 1364, was bolstered by the military conquests during the short reign of Thadominpya (r. 1364-1368), and was finally consolidated into a lasting state during the long reign of Minkyiswasawke (r. 1368-1401).

Mingyiswasawke builds the state of Ava (1368-1400)

After Thadominpya's death, his brother-in-law Mingyiswasawke rose to power (UKI: 419-420, 423; Harvey, 1925, 81, Than Tun, 1959, 128; Bennett, 1971, 21). In 1368, he laid down a set of well-defined administrative guidelines that would effectively work as a royal constitution over his long 32-year reign (Than Tun, 1983-1986, v. 1, 2-4, 149-153; ZOK, 60-62). Under the long peaceful reign of Mingyiswasawke regional power was consolidated at Ava and a secure foundation for the Burmese state was built through administrative reform. The Zidaw weir in Kyaukse was built and the irrigation infrastructure at Meiktila Lake was improved (UKI: 424; Harvey, 1925, 81).

Mong Mao’s ruler Si Ke-fa, the power behind much of the Tai raids against Ava of the 1360s, died in 1371 not long after Thadominpya. After his death, Mong Mao fell into a period of political instability. Leadership passed

hands frequently and violently among members of the Tai ruling families. Coinciding with Si Ke-fa's death, the two Tai chieftainships of Mong Yang and Kale that stretched across the northern limits of Ava's control went to war with each other. Both requested the aid of Ava in 1371, but Ava waited until the two chieftains had reduced their strength from the attrition of continued warfare and then used this opportunity to set up boundary markers (UKI: 429-31) as part of a new series of land inquests to put political control and taxation on a firmer footing (UKI: 429-430; Harvey, 1925, p. 85).

Tai raids, though less intense, continued to pose a threat at intervals. Mingyiswasawke's attempt to play Kale and Mong Yang off of one another and reduce their power was a failure, for with the power of Mong Mao in eclipse, Mong Yang rose to the position of new *primus-inter-pares* in the Tai Frontier. The source of Tai attacks on Ava switched to Mong Yang from Mong Mao (See Table 3). Mong Yang attacked Ava's northern outpost Myedu in 1373 (UKI: 431). Ava recovered quickly from these attacks. After more than a decade long delay, the Ming intervened on Ava's behalf in 1384 (Harvey, 1925, 8; Parker, 1893, 49; Sai Kam Mong, 2004, 23, 28). By 1373, the political situation at Ava was stable enough for Mingyiswasawke to hold a convention of learned monks and religious examinations (Than Tun, 1983-86, v. 2, pp. viii-ix). An inscription dated 7 February 1375 once again indicates growing peace and stability, but Ava had still not fully consolidated control over its southern domains (Than Tun, 1983-86, pt. 2, p. ix; UKI: 434; Harvey, 1925, 123-124). While Mingyiswasawke was working towards a stronger Ava state, the very Tai military force that had thrown Upper Burma into crisis during the 1360s was entering into a period of crisis itself. The newly emergent Ming dynasty of China invaded Yunnan in 1382.

3. The Ming conquest of the Tai Frontier (1382-1398)

The Ming conquest of the Tai-Yunnan frontier took a long sixteen years. Through the eyes of the Ming, the actions of one Tai leader named Si Lun-fa (r. 1382-1398) dominated this period. Almost all the historical sources that describe him were written by the Ming. Lacking a balanced perspective, questions naturally arise. What was Si Lun-fa's role among Tai elites or in Tai military action against the Burmese and the Ming? Ming sources only provide hints. Two extreme interpretations span a spectrum of possible answers to these questions.

Mong Mao's relations with the Ming drives the depiction of Mong Mao ruler Si Lun-fa found in Ming sources such as the *Ming Shi-lu* [*Ming Court Annals*] (Wade, 2005) and the *Bai-yi Zhuan* (Wade, 1996; Jiang Ying Liang, 1983). Several factors have to be considered when interpreting these depictions of Si Lun-fa including: the distance of the Ming Court from the Tai Frontier (cf Brooks, 1998, 30-56), a rigid preconceived view of politics, and the heavy usage of rhetoric in Ming court texts.

Si Lun-fa is often depicted as a strong ruler of a unified state. When he dealt with the Ming, he acted strategically in the best interests of Mong Mao often deceiving the Ming court. The observations of Ming envoys to the Tai frontier region circa 1396 who wrote the *Bai-yi Zhuan*, a travelogue rich in ethnographic detail, sometimes reveal that Si Lun-fa was weaker and had a lot less control of Tai ruling elite than Ming court pronouncements imply. Si Lun-fa derived political power that ensured a long reign in part from Ming support and legitimacy.

The initial Ming attempts to win Yunnan over (1369-1380)

The first communications between the new Ming Dynasty and Yunnan were prescient of Yunnan's future. Ritualistic language in formal letters of instruction clearly signaled future Ming policy. The stature and prestige of the Ming court was at stake from the very beginning and would loom large over the next two centuries of Ming-Tai relations. As the royal proclamation had it, submission to the Ming was the next inevitable step in the cosmological order:

From ancient times, those who have been lords of all under Heaven have looked on that which is covered by Heaven, that which is contained by the Earth and that on which the sun and moon shine, and regardless of whether the place was near or far, or what manner of people they are, there was no place for which they did not wish a peaceful land and a prosperous existence. *It is natural that when China is governed peacefully, foreign countries would come and submit...* I am anxious that, as you are secluded in your distant places, you have not yet heard of my will. Thus, I am sending envoys to go and instruct you, so that you will all know of this (MSL 14 Jul 1370).

The Mongol prince Basalawarmi, a holdover from the Yuan dynasty, ruled over Yunnan from the capital in Kunming. He ruled indirectly over an ethnically diverse collection of small polities and chieftainships in Yunnan. The most powerful of these was controlled by the Duan family ruling over the area surrounding Dali Lake (Langlois, 1988, 143-44). Envoys were sent to coax the rulers of Yunnan in 1371 (MSL 8 Oct 1371). In 1372 the famous scholar Wang Wei offered terms of surrender to Yunnan as an envoy, but he was murdered in 1374 and another mission was sent in 1375. Once again the mission failed (Langlois, 1988, 143-144). A diplomatic mission was sent to Burma in 1374, but because Annam was at war with Champa the roads were blocked and the mission was recalled (MSL 1 Jan 1374). By 1380, the Ming were sending more forceful demands for submission (Wade, 2004, 4). Ming diplomacy was soon followed by war.

The Ming invasion and conquest of Yunnan (1380-1383)

In 1380, the Ming emperor began to forge a more active Yunnan policy. In the founding of the previous Yuan dynasty, Yunnan's location had been of strategic importance and now figured into Ming geopolitical strategy. The Yuan had conquered the Dali region in Yunnan in order to surround the Southern Song, the last remnants of the Song dynasty. Remnants of the Mongol Yuan dynasty now remained as a threat for the Ming:

... the Mongols were still occupying the Mongolian Grassland, and could launch southern expeditions at any time they wished. More importantly, the Mongols still occupied Yunnan. If the Mongols attacked Ming China both from the north and from the southwest, the Ming court would have battles on two fronts. Therefore, in the 1370s, the Ming dynasty was facing a situation that was similar to what the Southern Song failed to cope with when Kublai Khan took over the Dali Kingdom. Such an international pattern pushed the Ming ruler to launch a campaign against Yunnan in order to avoid the fate of the Southern Song (Bin Yang, 2004, 51-52, 54).

Citing a precedent in the Han dynasty for tighter control, a military expedition was organized to conquer Yunnan. Troops were mustered and money distributed (MSL 20 Aug 1380). In September 1381, Fu You-de was appointed commander of Yunnan expeditionary forces with Lan Yu and Mu Ying, well-hardened veterans of early Ming campaigns in the Mongol north, as his assistants. The expeditionary forces amounted to 300,000 troops and were split into a larger force and a smaller diversionary force. Yunnan was quickly taken:

Fu Yu-te's [Fu You-de] army reached Hu-kuang in October. In December he sent the smaller force to Yung-ning and Wu-sa, while he led the larger forces as planned into Yunnan. Balaswarmi sent 100,000 troops to guard Chuching, but Fu Yu-te and Mu Ying captured the enemy general and 20,000 of his troops. Fu Yu-te then quickly led a smaller force to aid the army at Wu-sa, while Lan Yu and Mu Ying hastened toward K'un-ming. On 6 January 1382, Balaswarmi, who had fled his city, burned his princely robes, drove his wife to her death in a lake and then committed suicide together with his chief ministers (Langlois, 1988, 144-46).

By February 1382, the Ming had extended control over the Kunming area and a further expedition was sent west to Dali. The ruling Duan family at Dali tried to negotiate to continue their autonomous ruler over the Dali area. The Ming general Fu Youde eventually lost his patience, attacked, defeated, and deported the Duan family en masse to the Ming capital at Nanjing (Bin Yang, 2004, 52-3). In 1383, the expedition to Yunnan returned to the Ming capital under Fu You-de and Lan Yu with Mu Ying remaining behind as the hereditary military governor of Yunnan (Langlois, 1988, 146). Altogether 160 people together with 170 horses for the Ming emperor were escorted back including two former officials of the Yuan court in Yunnan, native chieftains from Yunnan, and Guan-yin-bao who was appointed commander of the strategic Jin-chi garrison and given the name Li Guan (MSL 30 Mar 1383).

Steps were also taken to ensure a food supply for the large Chinese garrisons that remained in Yunnan after the campaigns. An envoy was sent from the Ming capital to Annam, in modern-day northern Vietnam, with a request for grain. Grain (5,000 *shi*) was sent to Shui-wei on the Lin-an border of Yunnan. The Annam ruler Pan refused to accept the gifts of gold and silks sent by the Chinese court (MSL 5 Aug 1384). The provincial government of Yunnan used their salt monopoly to ensure that the supply of rice in Yunnan was adequate:

Under the old precedents, merchants brought rice to Jin-chi [Baoshan] and for every dou, they were given one yin of salt. This was allowed to ensure grain supplies. Thus the merchants collected there and the supplies were more than sufficient. Later, officials did not allow the transport of grain and the merchants rarely went there.

Thus, the troops now have no means of ration supply. It is requested that the old system be followed (MSL 4 Feb 1386).

The precedent of using salt for military rice procurement (the "kai-zhong" system) must have been effective in the early 1380s when Ming forces had just newly arrived in Yunnan. The food supply in Yunnan was not sufficient to support the population increase that followed the establishment of Ming garrisons. Yunnan was endowed with a more than adequate salt supply though. The Ming created a narrowly delimited and tightly regulated exchange process to make up for a lack of rice markets in Yunnan.

The Chinese court also took measures to curb corruption. Chinese administrators who were appointed from outside localities in Yunnan were provided with adequate means of support, so they did not have to resort to bribery, which could have been a cause of resentment and rebellion among the local inhabitants:

Those who have inherited posts have long lived in their territories and they have their own stores and means of livelihood. It is thus not necessary to provide them with salaries and allowances. Those who are appointed have generally come to sojourn...in these areas and because they have won the support of the local people we are employing them for a time. If we do not give them salaries, they will have no means of sustaining a livelihood. The law officials are more likely to accept bribes (MSL 2 Dec 1384).

By 1384, the Ming had established a modicum of control over Yunnan, a control that would soon be challenged.

Si Lun-fa seizes power and submits to the Ming (1382)

Realignments were taking place in Mong Mao among the Tai ruling elite at the same time as the Ming invasion of Yunnan in 1382. Si Wa-fa, regarded as the ruler of Pingmian by the Chinese (Mong Mao by Tais) attacked Jin-chi. The garrison at Jin-chi was a pivotal gateway and staging point for expeditions into the frontier region (Wade, 1996, app. 2, p. 1).

News of the Ming invasion in the north reached the Tai Frontier and spurred a group of Tai elites into action. During the winter, while Si Wa-fa was away hunting in Nan-dian, when a high ranking member of the Tai elite by the name of Da-lu-fang assassinated him and installed Si Lun-fa, a legitimate heir, as ruler of Mong Mao (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 1, 11). Si Lun-fa marched immediately to Jinchi and submitted to the Ming (LFM: 163). In April 1382, Pingmian was made into an indigenous autonomous region by the Ming and Si Lun-fa was appointed governor there. In August 1384, Si Lun-fa sent a tribute mission to the Ming court in Nanjing under the leadership of Dao Ling-meng, initiating a "tribute system of regulated trade" with Tai chieftainships that would serve "its function well of maintaining Ming honor and security over long intervals of peace" (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 325). The regularity and importance of tribute missions from the Tai Frontier to the Ming Court over hundreds of years can be seen in the great bulk of entries devoted to this activity in Geoff Wade's *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu* (2005).

While Si Lun-fa's diplomatic mission resided at the Ming court, the court proceeded to concentrate political power and legitimacy vis-vis the Ming in Si Lun-fa and Mong Mao. The seal of authority issued to Pingmian by the previous Yuan court was surrendered and Pingmian was promoted to a higher level of indigenous autonomous region. In September of 1384, the adjacent Tai state of Luchuan was merged with Pingmian and also given to Si Lun-fa. During the Yuan dynasty, Luchuan and Pingmian had been ruled separately (MSL 14 Sep 1384, MSL 21 Aug 1384). The large Tai Chieftainship of Hsenwi [Mu-bang] also came within Mong Mao's control (Daniels, 2006, 31). In 1384, the Ming court sent a diplomat to put an end to the Tai attacks against Ava (Harvey, 1925, 8; Parker, 1893, 49). The Pegu-Ava War (1383-1325) also began in the early 1380s. Tai manpower would eventually provide a large share of Ava's military force in these wars.

A Tai challenge to Ming rule in Yunnan (1382-1388)

After the Ming conquest of Yunnan, Tai leaders launched a series of counter-attacks against the Ming at Jing-dong, and then Ding-bian (MSL 11 Mar 1396). In January 1386, Tai forces attacked Ming controlled Jingdong and the newly appointed Jingdong governor E-tao fled to a place named Baiyai Chuan near Dali. The official Feng Chong was sent to deal with the problem, but encountering fog and bad weather, his forces were defeated by the Tais (MSL 2 Jan 1391; LFM: 165). Following this humiliating defeat at Jingdong, the Chinese censor Li Yuanming was sent from the Ming capital to the Tai Frontier to investigate the situation. When he returned to the capital in May

1387 his report displeased the emperor. According to the report the Tai presence along the frontier presented a security risk for several reasons. First, there was the issue of deception, the emperor asserted that the Tais simply could not be trusted:

Recently, the Censor Li Yuan-ming returned from Ping-mian. I have listened to his words and know of the deception and deceitfulness of the Bai-yi [Tai]. Even in tens of thousands of their words, not one can be believed. I have observed that the man and the *yi* [ethnic groups under native rule in Yunnan] have rebelled and are watching, ready to make use of opportunities. They present a danger to our borders (MSL 28 May 1387).

Accusations of deception are a common way that dominant elites signal breeches in the public transcript by subordinates. According to the Ming court, the authority of Ming rule had been compromised by a lack of respect for the Ming institutions of rule, perhaps indicating that the conventions of the Ming public transcript had yet to be mastered by the Tai chieftains:

Last year, the central Yun-nan military commander sent people to the Bai-yi [Tai] and these people demanded much property and goods. They did not consider the seriousness of the situation and, displaying their power, acted in a martial manner and ridiculed the various man [ethnic groups]. Also, because the Jing-jiang Prince was without abilities, the Da-li seal [from the Yuan dynasty] was used to issue orders. All of these acts were wrong and even insulting to the Emperor and embarrassing to the Court (MSL 28 May 1387).

The emperor ordered military defences to be prepared at Jin-chi, Chu-xiong, Pin Dian, Lan-cang and Jiang-zhong with "high walls and deep moats, firm palisades and many cannons for defence" (MSL 28 May 1387).

The imperial proclamation makes a questionable assumption that there was centralized and coordinated control and action among the leaders of the Tai frontier states. The emperor decides on diplomatic isolation as a solution:

From now on, no-one is permitted to go to Ping-mian. It should be treated with coolness. If it sends a despatch, a brief response is to be made, but if it does not send any despatches, no actions are to be initiated. If they send tribute products, they are not to be received. Then in a few years, the territory of Lu-chuan will be included on the maps as part of the Empire. Ministers, you must firmly observe my words and must not be remiss in this! (MSL 28 May 1387).

In the wake of this diplomatic isolation in February 1388, Tai forces attacked and took Mo-sha-le stockade. Mu Ying sent troops to uproot the Tais. Under the leadership of Dao Si-lang, the Tais gathered over 100,000 soldiers and one hundred elephants, but were overwhelmed by the Chinese who killed over fifteen hundred Tais, including two generals, and seized Tai elephants and horses. The remaining Tai troops fled (MSL 3 Jun 1396, MSL 13 Feb 1388, Cambridge; LFM: 165). After the defeat at the Mo-sha-le stockade, repeated attacks were made on Ding-bian in Chu-xiong prefecture, threatening to make a breach into the parts of Yunnan directly administered by the Ming. Chinese sources suggest that containing the Tai to the west bank of the Mekong River was part of Ming strategy (Daniels, 2006b):

Si Lun-fa had raised a force of 300,000 men and over 100 elephants and had repeatedly attacked Ding-bian. He wanted to gain revenge for the Mo-sha-le campaign and his force was extremely violent. The newly attached man and the *yi* secretly formed alliances and they all had rebellious inclinations (MSL 6 May 1388).

Si Lun-fa later denied that he was the one who carried out these attacks and there is some evidence that the Tai leader Diao Si-lang acted independently from Si Lun-fa in attacking Dingbian since he was the only one captured. Two passages from the *Bai-yi Zhuan* support this interpretation:

In ... [1386/87] ... [Tai forces] attacked Jing-dong. The following year, a subordinate named Diao Si-lang attacked Ding-bian. The Son of Heaven [Chinese] ordered the Xi-ping Marquis Mu Ying to take on command of the troops and destroy him. Diao Si-lang was captured and the *yi* people [Tais] submitted through fear... (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 2).

And once again:

... Dao Si-lang did not obey your commands [from the emperor] and plundered Ding-bian. While you were unable to bring an end to those hostilities, Heaven provided majesty to our border commanders and thereby Dao Silang and the others were immediately exterminated (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 11).

Power among Tai elites seems to have been overall diffuse and fragmented. Even by 1391 many of the Tai elite were still not under Si Lun-fa's control (MSL 2 Jan 1391). Several Tai leaders appear to have been individually responsible for Tai military actions in the period following the Ming conquest (1382-1388). By 1388, though, different Tai chieftains who may have been acting independently in the past may have been joining together into a more centralized and coordinated confederation and working together toward common goals. Along the lines of the Di Cosmo-Andreski model of state formation (Di Cosmo, 1999; Andreski, 1968; Fernquest, 2005b, 373-377), in the face of a rising crisis, the Tai Frontier may have been moving towards a larger and more integrated chieftainship and towards becoming a state. The most prominent Tai leader in Ming relations, Si Lun-fa, dominates the public transcript of Ming-Tai relations (c. 1382-1398) despite the fact that another Tai chieftainship Mong Yang played a more prominent role in conflicts with Burmese Ava to the south during this period.

The Battle for Dingbian 1388: A Ming punitive expedition against the Tais

Tai attacks on Ming frontier outposts eventually led to a large-scale Ming punitive expedition. The governor of Yunnan, Mu Ying, received orders to punish Si Lun-fa. A military training mission was sent to Yunnan and to ensure an adequate food supply for a large expedition. An official was sent to Sichuan with thirty-two thousand *ding* of paper money to purchase ten thousand head of ploughing buffalo. Plans were made to set up state farms and grain stores to provide a food supply for the increased troops in Yunnan (MSL 1 Oct 1387). Local rulers loyal to the Ming asked for troop reinforcements (MSL 6 Jul 1387). With a cavalry force of thirty thousand, Mu Ying marched towards Dingbian on the Tai frontier. Arriving near the Tai encampment after fifteen days, he built defensive fortifications for battle. The *Ming Shi-lu* relates:

First 300 light cavalymen were sent to provoke them [the Tais]. The Bai-yi [Tais] met them with 10,000 men and 30 vanguard elephants to do battle. Zhang Yin, commander of the Yun-nan Forward Guard, led 50-plus cavalymen as a vanguard, while the chieftains, astride their huge elephants, proceeded forward. Our army let fly with their arrows and these hit an elephant in the left knee and the ribs. The elephant fell to the ground and the chieftain was also hit, but fled. He was pursued and killed with arrows. Then, with great screams, the troops rushed forward and hundreds of heads were taken. The army took advantage of the victory and proceeded forward with a great uproar. The bandit forces thus drew back (MSL 6 May 1388).

The next morning, Mu Ying brought his generals and aides together and addressed them to spur them into battle and brought a special repeating crossbow weapon into the battle:

[Mu Ying] issued orders to the army to set up guns and 'mystical-mechanism arrows' in three lines within the ranks. Then when the elephants advanced, the front line of guns was to fire its arrows. If the elephants did not retreat, the second line was to fire off its arrows. If the elephants still did not fall back, the third line was to fire its arrows (MSL 6 May 1388).

The *Ming Shi-lu* describes the Tai battle array:

[The Tais] came out of their camp and joined ranks to meet them. The chieftains, local commanders and the zhao-gang [Mong Mao lord controlling 1000 people, see Wade, 1996, app. 2, p. 2] all rode on elephants. The elephants were all armoured and on their backs they bore a battle-turret like a parapet, while bamboo tubes hung on the two sides. Short lances were placed between these prepared for attacks. When the forces were about to meet, the massed elephants rushed forward. Our army attacked them and fired off arrows and stones. The sound shook the mountains and valleys and the elephants, shaking with fear, fled (MSL 6 May 1388).

The Ming forces pursued the Tai forces right up to their stockade and lit the stockade on fire. The *Ming Shi-lu* describes how discipline increased the intensity of battle:

From a high vantage point Mu Ying saw that the left force of our army had retreated a little. He thus sent urgent orders that the force commander be beheaded. The force commander was thus frightened and roused and, with a yell, rushed into the fray. The troops followed him and each was worth 100 men (MSL 6 May 1388).

Intense fighting led to heavy casualties among the defeated Tai forces with thirty thousand dead and ten thousand prisoners taken. Half the elephants died in battle. A mere thirty-seven were taken captive. In the flight and pursuit that followed, many Tais died from their wounds and starvation (MSL 6 May 1388). Mu Ying sent word of the victory to the capital and led his troops back.

The pursuit of Si Lun-fa and war reparations (1388)

The defeated Tai forces retreated to Jing-dong and Ding-bian and Mu Ying received instructions from the Ming capital to move against them and “exert gradual pressure” on their new base at Jing-dong (MSL 25 May 1388). Particular attention was again paid to ensuring an adequate food supply to support the soldiers on the expedition:

Ding-bian is distant from the Yun-nan lake by at least 10 days by slow march. If the troops proceed there at a fast march, they will find it difficult to do battle. You should ensure security, state farms should be opened up, and firm walls should be erected so that battle can be done with them. When the Great Army is collected and ready, the advance should begin” (MSL 25 May 1388).

Mu Ying was also instructed to give the Tai leaders the option of paying an indemnity if they wished to surrender:

If they want to offer tribute and request that the troops be withdrawn, you should instruct them in the Great Precepts of Right Conduct, require them to repay the funds (Alt: food) we have expended and have them present to the Court 15,000 horses and the troops who were killed in Jing-dong. They are also to be instructed to offer as tribute 500 elephants, 30,000 buffalo and 300 elephant attendants. If they listen to orders and offer tribute in the amounts specified, their request to surrender should be allowed (MSL 25 May 1388).

The Tai leader Si Lun-fa sent a mission to Kunming to submit to the Ming, but blamed two other Tai leaders, Dao Si-lang and Dao Si-yang, for the military actions against the Ming. Mu Ying sent word of the Tai submission to the capital and an official named Da-yong was sent to deal with the matter. The envoy carried with him a message for Si Lun-fa from the emperor. Si Lun-fa’s domain, Luchuan was seen as a distant and strange place in this rather assertive public transcript:

... Lu-chuan [Mong Mao] is secluded in the South-west, 10,000 li in the distance. It is not in China’s maps. Why is Lu-chuan alone like this? Like in Yun-nan’s territory, the roads are precipitous, the people make their lairs on cliffs and have to drink their water from the springs and rivers below. They have animal form and *yi* appearance and their ways are lacking in moral principles (MSL 28 Nov 1389).

The emperor recounts all the problems that Tai resistance had caused for the Ming conquest of Yunnan, the two Jinchi and Jing-dong campaigns they waged, the intransigence of the Tai leader whom he likened to the previous Mongol-Yuan ruler of Yunnan, Balaswarmi. In the end, the solution to these problems was military occupation, troops would “establish camps and fields where they could both plant crops and protect our territory.” (MSL 28 Nov 1389). The emperor admitted that he was not certain that Si Lun-fa was completely in control of the Tai forces that attacked the Ming:

Now, you have come and claimed that the previous violations on the border were not your doing but rather the acts of Dao Si-lang and so on. I have not examined whether this is so or not (MSL 28 Nov 1389).

He admitted that he could have been wrong to attribute all Tai attacks to Si Lun-fa, but he demanded that Si Lun-fa pay an indemnity to “assuage the anger of the various generals.” The emperor also demanded that Si Lun-fa join with Chinese forces in a punitive expedition against a Yunnan leader named Zhi-chun. Shortly afterwards, in 1390,

Si-Lun-fa sent yet another tribute mission to the capital (MSL 26 Oct 1390). Two garrisons were established at Jing-dong and Meng-hua around 1391 (MSL 2 Jan 1391).

An experience by a Ming diplomat in the Tai Frontier around 1390 highlights the cultural misunderstanding that plagued Ming-Tai relations. The Ming appointed an official to deliver credentials and orders of instruction to Luchuan-Pingmian-Mong-Mao. When he arrived, Tai ruling elite presented him with gifts including gold which he refused. He was told: "if you do not accept this display of kindness, the man [barbarian] people may well harbour suspicion and engage in rebellion. It is better to accept the presents," so he accepted them and then quickly handed them over to the Yunnan provincial administration. Following his successful mission, he was promoted to a new post (MSL 16 Oct 1390).

A wholly sino-centric Ming approach sees the conquest uncritically through the eyes of the abundant Ming sources. A wholly Tai-centric approach sees everything the Ming did as effective exploitation. Si Lun-fa derived some temporary power by falling in line with the Ming emperor's plans for the Tai Frontier and bringing in line a Tai elite at Mong Mao who lacked unity and coordination. The Ming court, immersed in the metaphysics of their political philosophy where Ming rule was an essential part of order in the universe, misunderstood the nature of political control in the Tai-Yunnan frontier region, attributing to Si Lun-fa the leadership of a centralized, unified state, and in the end through Ming support, Si Lun-fa effectively became a Ming agent in the frontier region, an agency relationship that was quickly challenged.

Tai attacks against Ava and a Ming mission to the region (1393-1396)

Tai raids against Burmese Ava escalated once again in the early 1390s as they had done during the period of crisis at Ava from 1359 to 1368. In 1393, Mong Yang attacked Ava territory and the ruler of Legaing [Minbu] led troops against them, but was driven back to Sagaing. Tai forces laid siege to Sagaing, burning buildings, and surrounding the town walls, but Thilawa, ruler of Yamethin to the south of Ava, led troops to Sagaing and ended the siege. Thilawa drove the Tai attackers off as far as Shangon, twenty miles to the northwest of Sagaing, where he defeated them in battle (UKI: 458-461; Harvey, 85). The Burmese sought Chinese help to put an end to Tai intrusions. In 1395, Ava sent a mission to the Ming court seeking their support and asking Ming envoys to mediate. In response the Ming established the "Mianzhong" pacification commission at Ava (SLC: 79, 234).

Continuing the long succession of missions that had been sent from the Ming capital to the Tai Frontier, Li Si-cong and Qian Gu-xun were sent in 1396 on a much longer mission to Burma and the Tai Frontier. At the end of their mission in 1497, Li Si-cong and Qian Gu-xun wrote the now famous account of life in the Tai Frontier, the *Bai-yi Zhuan*, essentially an ethnography or travelogue of their journey. The mission was sent to put an end to warfare in the Tai Frontier (MSL 11 Mar 1396). They record that Ava had been "engaged in armed conflict" with the Tai for several years and in the winter of 1395-96 Ava made a formal complaint to the Ming court (Wade, 1996, app. 2, 8). There were raids against other locations besides Ava including Sipsongpanna-Cheli, Chiang Mai, and Kale (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

The *Bai-yi Zhuan* portrays Tai leadership as less unified than the *Ming Shi-lu* does. Unlike official histories such as the *Ming Shi* or *Ming Shi-lu*, the *Bai-yi Zhuan* was composed on the scene, on the Tai-Yunnan frontier by the envoys themselves who talked to the very historical actors who had participated in the Tai-Ming warfare of the 1380s. The emperor wrote long messages of instruction to both the rulers of Burma and Si Lun-fa for the envoys to take with them on their journey. The imperial message to the Burmese king of Ava describes the distance and separation between the Chinese capital and Burmese Ava quite poetically:

The roads are long and dangerous, the mountains and rivers present great obstacles and your customs and practices are different. These situations were created by Heaven and fixed by Earth. You have been diligent in sending an envoy on the long and dangerous journey, to cross neighbouring states, to rush through mist and push through fog, to push onward at dawn and not rest till dusk, and to suffer the wind and the cold until he reached China. It is indeed a difficult journey. The ancients had a saying: 'When a superior man wishes to undertake some matter at a distant place, even though it be more than a thousand li away, spirit will communicate and intent will be understood.' Now, from 10,000 li distant, you have diligently sent an envoy over such a distance. This demonstration of worthiness would have been extraordinary in the past, and is quite singular today (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

The Ming emperor aiming for a state of peace between the Burmese and Tais, sweetened his call for peace with a rhetoric that made peace more palatable to both sides.

... bring an end to the problems, allowing both sides to be done with warfare, so as to preserve your people's happiness both in the towns and throughout the countryside. The people of your two countries, although living in their separate places, could live in peace with nothing more required than the maintenance of careful inspections at the border passes and markets (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

The message of instruction that the Ming emperor presented to Si Lun-fa outlined nine kinds of punitive military expedition in Chinese political traditions and finds Si Lun-fa guilty of violating one of them, "the crime of taking advantage of weakness to attack an isolated state," because every year he had used his troops to attack Sipsongpanna-Cheli, Chiang Mai, Jia-li, and Burma. The Ming emperor condemned these attacks: "They are small states and their people few and now you have taken them." He also condemned Tai attacks to the west, towards the heartland of Yunnan, on such places as Jin-chi, Jing-dong, and Ding-dian. The emperor expected further attacks and issued a severe warning:

Recently, I have heard that you have foolishly aggressed against your neighbouring states, with the intention of expanding your territory and illegally gaining more people. Also, you plan to attack our South-west. Verily, this cannot be permitted! ... You, Si Lun-fa have not maintained good relations with your neighbours, and instead have sent troops in three directions, stupidly annexing other states. Such is your greed and your plotting. The states surrounding Lu-chuan have, from ancient times until now, all had their own rulers. They have never been united...But I now warn you to content yourself with what you have at present. If you are not satisfied with what you have at present and move to take more, then you will either lose everything or perish. Thus, would it not be best to just look after that which you have at present? (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

On hearing these orders, Si Lun-fa was frightened and quickly complied with the emperor's wishes, according the Ming Annals. Si Lun-fa walked a rather thin tightrope. In essence, please the Ming or please the Tai elites back home in Mong Mao.

Shortly after reaching an accommodation with the Ming, one of Si Lun-fa's subordinate chiefs Dao Gan-meng rebelled. Si Lun-fa believed that he could use the envoy from the Ming court, Si-cong, to force their submission, so he wouldn't let Si-cong leave and presented him with elephants, horses, gold and precious stones as gifts, but Si-cong refused the gifts, rebuffed Si Lun-fa, and asked to be released:

China does not consider elephants, horses, gold and jade as valuables; what it values is only loyal subjects, noble statesmen, strong soldiers, gallant generals, filial sons and obedient grandsons. You should send us envoys back to the Court and in future should not engage in raiding and trouble-making. Thus will you be showing your spirit as a loyal prince (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

Si Lun-fa invited Si-cong to a feast and afterwards had them escorted to the border. On his return to the capital, the emperor was impressed with the work of the envoys and presented them with gifts as a token of his esteem (MSL 11 Mar 1396).

Si Lun-fa deposed by a rival Tai leader (1397)

A year before the first Ming emperor died in 1398, the Tai-Yunnan frontier descended into chaos. After the Ming envoys return to the capital, Si Lun-fa welcomed even more outsiders into his domain and control over the frontier slipped quickly from his hands. First, he played host to itinerant Buddhist monks:

Initially, the people in Ping-mian did not believe in Buddhism. A monk went there from Yun-nan and spoke well about the effects of one's actions in successive lives [karma] . Si Lun-fa placed great trust in his words (MSL 10 Oct 1397).

After his apparent conversion to Buddhism (LFM: 166, note: 18), Si Lun-fa next played host to renegade Chinese soldiers, fascinated by their mastery over military technologies:

...some border troops from Jin-chi fled to his territory. They were familiar with cannons and guns. Si Lun-fa was pleased with their abilities. Thus he gave them gold belts and, with the monk, placed them above the various tribes" (MSL 10 Oct 1397).

Welcoming outsiders and giving them higher status than the ruling elite at his own court led to enmity and fissions among the Tai leaders surrounding him. In the face of decreasing power, Si Lun-fa was forced to flee to the Ming and seek Chinese protection. Dao Gan-meng was the leader of the faction that eventually seized power:

Dao Gan-meng hated them [the outsiders] and thus, together with his subordinates, rebelled. He then led his troops to attack Teng-chong Prefecture [to the east into Ming controlled Yunnan]. Si Lun-fa, afraid of Gan-meng's power, fled to Yun-nan and the Xi-ping Marquis Mu Chun sent him to the [Ming] capital (MSL 10 Oct 1397).

When Si Lun-fa arrived at the Ming capital, the emperor sympathized with him and made military appointments to support him against Dao Gan-meng. The emperor was concerned that the proper steps be taken to thwart the power of Dao Gan-meng:

A guard will be established at Teng-chong to monitor the situation. Wei-yuan and Yuan-gan have already come to the allegiance of the Court and other places are heeding orders. Thus, the force of Dao Gan-meng's rebellion is growing increasingly less and an increasing number of his supporters are coming to allegiance. Your return to your country can only be a matter of days. However, if the advance is made without caution and Dao Gan-meng's power is still substantial, his supporters in the country will not dare oppose him. Then the territory will never be yours (MSL 14 Dec 1397).

Si Lun-fa was finally sent back to Yunnan with "one hundred liang of gold, 150 liang of silver and 500 ding of paper money" and a good upbraiding from the emperor. The emperor invokes the natural order once again in words of admonition (reminiscent of modern democracy) as he sends Si Lun-fa on his journey:

In ancient times, there was a saying: 'Find pleasure in that which the people find pleasure in, and hate that which the people hate.' This was said to those who look after the people, and meant that where the people's hearts lie, there also lie the principles of Heaven. Those who are good at ruling the people must seek the people's feelings. Now you, Si Lun-fa, are head of the region of Ping-mian. However, you became divorced from the likes and dislikes of the people. The people under you could not tolerate this and thus you fled to us. I know that your ancestors benefited the people for generations and thus the people appointed you. However, when you lost the people's support, you turned your back on your country and your ancestor's graves, left your relatives and came here. If you long remain here and do not return, the territory will no longer be yours. However, you must recognize that right and wrong are always clear and Heaven's punishment is always correct. Generals have been sent to punish the crimes of Dao Gan-meng and thus I am ordering you to return to your old state (MSL 15 Jan 1398).

Blamed for not looking out for the interests of his own people, Si Lun-fa seems more a willing policy instrument in a "unite [under one leader] and conquer" strategy than the traditional "divide and conquer" strategy. In hindsight, the interests of the Ming emperor and Si Lun-fa's Tai subjects were irreconcilable. Pressed in these two opposing directions, Si Lun-fa met his downfall. Ironically, dependence on the Ming emperor sorely tested his legitimacy with his own people. Instructions were given to a Chinese official, the Xi-ping Marquis Mu Chun to escort Si Lun-fa back to Yunnan and to support him militarily. Nowadays, we might call such an outside support of a ruler who had lost his legitimacy, a puppet government.

Dao Gan-meng was quick to seek legitimacy from the Ming. He sent an envoy to Mu Chun requesting permission to offer tribute and, before a reply was even received, the rebel leader "sent people with local products and requested that he be appointed as native official. He was then attacked by Dao De-nong of Da-dian." Dao Gan-meng was unable to defend himself against Dao Denong and requested an opportunity to petition the Ming court for help. The Ming commander Mu Chun allowed him to make the petition (MSL 15 Jan 1398). Dao Gan-meng's power was short-lived. Dao Gan-meng claimed in his petition that control of Mong Mao was faced an even further challenge by other Tai leaders in Si Lun-fa's clan and that the Ming court should send military aid to support him against these other dangerous Tai elite. The rebel was, in turn, quickly rebelled against:

Hu-du of Si Lun-fa's tribe, has occupied Teng-chong and Nu-jiang, as well as Jing-dong, Yi-wai and Wei-yuan, and all these places have inclined to culture and allied themselves with the Court. Dao Gan-meng is afraid of being attacked and he wants to use the Court's might to repel Hu-du. [name of the rebel] His claimed desire to come and offer tribute should not, I fear, be too readily believed. The troops which we were ordered to assemble now await deployment (MSL 11 Mar 1398a).

This threat by Tai elites provided Dao Gan-meng with a convenient opportunity to seek Ming help, but there could well have been an element of truth in it. The Tai chieftainship of Mong Mao lacked the essential integration and cohesion of a full-fledged state.

The emperor admitted that Dao Gan-meng was probably trying to deceive him, and was willing to allow Dao Gan-meng a chance to submit and offer tribute, if he did so in good faith and followed Chinese traditions in the matter:

The distant *yi* are indeed guileful and deceitful. However, I am leniently allowing the request to see if he will change. Those routes occupied by Hu-du you should pacify and instruct as the situations dictate. If Dao Gan-meng is being deceitful, you should make careful preparations and then punish him. Do not lose the opportunity (MSL 11 Mar 1398).

Si Lun-fa was already enroute from the Ming capital to re-assume control.

The reinstatement of Si Lun-fa (1398)

Mu Chun provided a military escort for Si Lun-fa back to Yunnan. Mu Chun stayed with Si Lun-fa in Jinchi and sent a commander by the name of Fu with a force of some five thousand troops to attack the rebel Dao Gan-meng:

Fu...crossed the Gao-liang-gong Mountains and directly attacked Nan Dian, greatly destroying it and killing the chieftain Dao Ming-meng [rebel and the first envoy Si Lun-fa sent to the Ming capital], and killing or capturing a large number of people. They then took the troops back to attack Jing-han Stockade, but the stockade, relying on its high and dangerous location, held out and did not fall. As the government troops' grain and weapons were nearly depleted and the bandits' strength was growing, he sent a messenger to urgently advise [Mu] Chun of the emergency.

[Mu] Chun led 500 cavalymen to relieve them. Taking advantage of the night, they moved to Nu-jiang and the following morning proceeded directly there. He ordered the cavalymen to gallop to below the stockade and raise dust to scare them. The bandits in their high position saw the dust clouds rising to Heaven and, having not expected the troops of the Great Army to arrive, were greatly shocked and frightened. Thus, they led their troops in surrender. Chun took advantage of the victory to also attack Kong-dong Stockade. The bandits there fled by night (MSL 11 Mar 1398-b).

Mu Chun died of an illness and the official who replaced him (He Fu) was able to capture Dao Gan-meng and install Si Lun-fa as ruler once again.

Si Lun-fa is not heard from again, however, and a completely new group of Tai elite rose in his place and embarked on a short-lived campaign of local raiding. As the Ming Shi-lu reports: "his [Si Lun-fa's] son San-peng [Si Xing-fa], together with Dao Hun and Dao Cuan pillaged the residents in Bai-mam and Wei-yuan." Wang You of the Yunnan guard struck back and put an end to these raids (MSL 14 May 1403). A state of continual chaos then swirled around Mong Mao. In the next few years, Beijing, Yunnan, and Ava as well as Luchuan-Pingmian would all experience an almost complete change of leadership.

4. The Ava-Pegu and Ming-Vietnam wars (1401-1427)

The accession of the Yongle emperor (r. 1402-1424) signaled a fundamental change in Ming grand strategy. A new foreign policy activism with interventionist goals pushed Ming state institutions to the breaking point. As Wang Gungwu explains:

... the traditional tribute system was never meant to support active international politics. It had been evolved over centuries to encourage regular but minimal foreign relations, to provide an instrument for imperial defense policy, and to satisfy some of the trading requirements of foreign rulers and Chinese merchants. In sum, the Yung-lo [Yongle] emperor's new activism was actually built on his father's reorganised foreign policy system, which had been carefully constructed to limit further foreign contacts. The use of that same system to pursue interventionist goals suggests that the Yung-lo emperor's ambition ran far ahead of his understanding of the nature of traditional foreign relations with China's Southeast Asian neighbors ... He clearly wanted to elicit signs of respect from the smaller and weaker states in the south (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 322).

In the early decades of the fifteenth century, two wars had a profound effect on the geopolitics of mainland Southeast Asia's hinterlands. The Ava-Pegu War (1383-1425) engaged a whole generation of elites in Upper and Lower Burma (San Lwin, n.d.; Fernquest, 2006), while the Ming-Vietnam war, occupation, and transformation of northern Vietnam into the Ming province of Jiao-zhi (c. 1406-1427), likewise engaged a whole generation of elites from the Ming and Dai Viet courts (Whitmore, 1985; Taylor, 1998, 955-957). The royal courts involved in these conflicts mobilized massive quantities of military man and animal power and displaced large numbers of humans and animals from one geographical region to another. Much of the Ming military manpower in Yunnan was mobilized for the Ming war and occupation in Vietnam (MSL 12 May 1406; MSL 18 Jul 1406; MSL 24 Jul 1406, MSL 25 Aug 1406; MSL 31 Aug 1408). With these large-scale movements came potential for contention over resources.

From 1401 to 1416, the Tai realm became a military resource base for the Ava-Pegu war. Ava's war in Lower Burma was fueled by a desire for Tai manpower and animals. Later, after the war ended in 1425, Tai intervention in the politics of Upper Burma was a major factor preventing a return to peaceful rule. The Ming invasion and occupation of northern Vietnam in starting in 1406 drained Yunnan of Ming elites and military manpower many of whom may have returned at the end of the occupation in 1427.

Ming frontier administration reorganized (1402-1406)

The first Ming emperor died in 1398. Political turmoil and civil war accompanied a long succession crisis and hiatus in political control (c. 1398-1404). When the succession crisis had finally settled and the new Yongle emperor was securely in possession of the Ming throne, Yunnan's territorial organisation and governance underwent radical change. Succession occurred at every level of leadership. The Yongle emperor, son of the first Hongwu emperor, prevailed at the Ming court (*Cambridge History of China*, v. 7, *Ming Dynasty*, pp. 184-204). After a long struggle at Ava, rule passed from the long reigning Minkyiswasawke to a younger son Mingaung kept out of harm's way (Fernquest, 2006, 10, 25). After Si Lun-fa's death, probably in 1399 (LFM: 167), the mantle of Tai leadership at Mong Mao passed on to his son Si Xing-fa. The governorship of Yunnan passed to Mu Sheng after the death of his father Mu Ying, hereditary ruler of Yunnan and adopted son of the first Ming emperor. Hsenwi's ruler Nang Fa Hom Muang (r. 1395-1405) also changed (Witthayasakphan, 2001b, 20). Even the peaceful successions in Yunnan, far away from the Ming capital, described summarily without any details, might have been contested with murder and expulsion, despite historical records that claim natural death and orderly succession from father to son.

The Ming created a new administrative organization and policies for the Tai Frontier. Policies included: (1) divide-and-rule by breaking larger Tai domains into smaller ones, (2) Si Lun-fa's former all-inclusive domain of Luchuan-Pingmian was reduced in size, (3) a tally system for reliable communication of orders between the distant Ming capital and the Tai frontier, (4) increased taxation, (5) strengthening the Tengchong and Yongchang garrisons that served as gateways into the Tai frontier (Wade, 2004, 9), and most importantly, (6) a continued commitment to diplomacy, as opposed to military intervention, to put an end to Tai-Burmese warfare. Yongle, pursued an aggressive policy of warfare from 1406 in Annam, modern-day northern Vietnam, which pulled Ming troops out of Yunnan, leaving a vacuum in military.

From 1402, the new emperor made a flurry of administrative changes. After almost twenty years of failure in governance over the Tai-Yunnan frontier, Ming officials seem to have had second thoughts about raising a single Tai leader to rule over all the others. The large all-inclusive Luchuan-Pingmian domains of Si Lun-fa were replaced with smaller administrative divisions (MSL 20 Dec 1436). The territory of Luchuan-Pingmian (Mong Mao) was partitioned into three pieces that were to become known as the three *fus* (prefectures): Meng Yang [Mong Yang], Mu Bang [Hsenwi], and Meng-ding.

Larger territorial divisions and jurisdictions were broken into smaller ones. Divide and rule was a long-standing principle in Chinese political theory. This policy sought to lessen the power of domains under native rule and make them less of a threat to the Chinese state by dividing a larger political domain into smaller ones, sponsoring alternative rulers, and transforming local rulers into rivals (Wade, 2004, 23-25). This was a distinct break from the previous attempt to rule the frontier under one Tai leader. The turn of the century and need to consolidate Ming rule and maintain the momentum of the first Hongwu emperor, revived this ancient practice. The Ming court only gradually discovered the contributory role this policy played in transforming the Tai Frontier into a region of endemic warfare along the Tai-Yunnan frontier. Ming forward garrisons at Tengchong and Yongchang established control over the Tai frontier (Wade, 2004, 9). Four smaller Chieftain Commissions, Lujiang, Ganyai, Dahou, and Wandian, were also established under the Jinchi garrison (Sun Laichen, 2000, 233; Jiang Yingliang, 1983, 244; Liew Foon Ming, 1996, 165).

Tax collection was deemed less of a priority by the Yong-le emperor than tightening administrative control over the Tai Frontier. Starting in the 1390s, after the Tai challenges to Ming rule in Yunnan of the 1380's, Si Lun-fa was to pay the Ming court an annual silver tax instead of corvee labor. This tax was sporadically, if ever, collected and was finally cancelled after Si Lun-fa's death in 1403 because it was considered too much of a burden on the local population (Liew Foon Ming, 1996, 168; Wade, 2004, 5). The first priority of frontier policy was to foster loyalty to the Ming court, not extract taxes (MSL 12 Mar 1403).

The Ava-Pegu War: Irregular cavalry forces from the Tai frontier (1401-1406)

The death of Ava's king Minkyiswasawke after thirty years of consolidating rule brought a reversal in military action along the Upper Burma-Yunnan axis. Burmese expeditions into the Tai Frontier replaced the Tai raids into Upper Burma of the previous century. Tai-Ava warfare had abated for a time after the diplomatic efforts of the Ming in the 1390s, but rose once again after 1401. Ava sent expeditions into the Tai region against Hsenwi, Mong Yang, Bhamo, and Mong Mao [Mawdon Mawke] to augment man, horse, and elephant power in the long war against Rajadhirat's Pegu in the south (1383-1425). The Ming made efforts both diplomatic and military to put an end to these Tai-Burmese hostilities and the latter finally ground to a halt around 1416 with Ava's last largescale Tai campaign. By this time, a new Mong Mao ruler Si Ren-fa had risen to power. Si Ren-fa would shift his focus from Ava in the west towards Chinese directly ruled heartlands of Yunnan in the east.

Early in the reign of the Ava king Mingaung I (r. 1401-1422), the Burmese began using Tai military man and animal power to augment their military strength. Tai warriors quickly gained a reputation as cavalrymen traveling in the vanguard of Ava's army in the south. While the Ava-Pegu war entered its second decade, driven by offensive actions on both sides, several devastating events struck Ava. Ava suffered a large-scale Tai attack in the 1490s and a succession crisis weakened Ava at the beginning of Mingaung I's reign. To recover from these events and renew its military power, Ava targeted Tai chieftainships to the north as a supply of horses and manpower. *Rajadhirat Ayeidawpon* provides many examples of the prominence of Tai cavalry in the Ava-Pegu War (See Fernquest, 2006, 11, 13-16). The *Rajadhirat Ayeidawpon* also indicates that the participation of Tai forces, though initially coerced through military conquest, may later have been motivated by the prospect of booty and plunder (Fernquest, 2006, 14, citing SL: 95), perhaps making this period different from later periods such as the large-scale mobilization of the Tai for expansionary warfare by King Bayinnaung (r. 1551-1581) whose forced migration and resettlement of Tais is a major theme in the Burmese chronicle. Not unlike the controversial story of the "Three Shan Brothers," Tai military participation in Burmese wars and the earlier appointment by Ava of Burmese rulers over Tai domains (c. 1401-1406) seem to be additional examples of inter-regional circulation and mixing of elites across the Tai realm, Upper Burma, Lower Burma, and the Bay of Bengal (Aung-Thwin, 1996, 887; Aye Chan, 2006, 34-35).

The new king, Mingaung I, subjugated Tai chieftainships and appointed rulers from the Ava court to rule over them. The Tai state of Kale became subject to some degree of control by Ava in 1401 (SL: 57). Minkyei, lord of Thichit, had governed the Tai state of Kale. When Minkyei died in 1401, Maung Nyo, son of Mingaung's brother Tarabya, married Minkyei's daughter. He was given the name Kyeitaungnyo and sent to govern the Tai chieftainship of Kale (Bagshawe, 1981, 57). In 1404, Onpaung became the next Tai chieftainship targeted. The Tai chieftain was not replaced (UKI: 472; SL: 54-55). In 1406, Mong Yang, even further north and closer to Ming China, was targeted with a Burmese governor appointed to rule it (UKI: 504). According to Scott's synopsis of the Mong Yang chronicle, Ava intervened in a war between Tai Kale and Mong Yang, killing the Mong Yang chieftain. The Ming eventually drove the Burmese out and installed their own Tai ruler:

During the reign of Yung-lo [Ming Yongle emperor] ... the suan-wei-chi Tao Muh-tan [ruler of Mong Yang] was at war with Kah-li (apparently Kale in the Kabaw valley). The Burmese chief Na-lo-tah surprised and killed Tao-Muh-tan, with his son, and proceeded to occupy his land; but in the year 1406, Chang Hung was sent to order its surrender to the rightful owner (GUBSS, Mohnyin, 346).

Twenty years later, the governor that Ava appointed to rule over Mong Yang [Mohnyin] would become king of Ava and be known as Mohnyin Mintaya [Mohnyin King] or Mohnyinthado [Mong Yang prince]. The Tai chieftains of Kale and Onpaung would both play important roles in his succession. One can conclude that alliances based on inter-marriage blur the lines of ethnicity among the ruling elite in Upper Burma and the Tai Frontier during this period. These Ava-appointed appanage holders or rulers of Tai domains, from Ava adopted the Tai chieftainship or proto-state as their own state, choosing a paternalistic approach to governance favoring diplomacy and positive incentives over military action.

According to the *Maniyadanabon* [Relations of Min Yaza] tradition of political didactic literature at the Burmese court (Charney, 2006, 81, 117; Kirichenko, 2006), the Burmese overlords of Tai domains and the indigenous Tai rulers themselves actually had cordial relations. Perhaps there was some degree of harmony due to long-standing marriage ties between the Burmese and Tai courts. Davies' (1990, 59-65) study of the relations between the early English and Welsh ruling classes shows that there were dimensions of cordiality in what was on the surface a pure relation of domination. Ava-appointed Burmese rulers such as Kyeitaungnyo are said to have employed a paternalistic approach to governance, favoring positive incentives and diplomacy over military action to hold other Tai states in check and prevent them from raiding Ava:

... no enemy could raid his [Kyeitaungnyo's] territory; he kept them in check. While Kyeitaungnyo was governor of Kalemnyo, the Khasi chief of Htinyutaungbyin came to make a raid. Kyeitaungnyo made up his mind that it would be best to seek the friendship of all the neighboring chiefs, whoever they were, and that when he had sought and won their friendship, then no outsiders could come to harass his people and he would be able to make proper plans for them. With proper planning, much could be accomplished and his villages would prosper. If the villages prospered, what enemy could vie with him? He therefore spoke softly and in a friendly fashion, sending him presents. Like coaxing chickens into the henhouse, he brought him in, persuading into a retainer's position and thus he became his follower (Bagshawe, 1981, 57).

The Ming occupation of northern Vietnam affected all of Yunnan including the western Tai frontier. The Ming pulled forces out of Yunnan to use in massive campaigns into northern Vietnam in 1406 (Wade, 2004, 7-8; Whitmore, 1985). This troop pullout coincided roughly with the heightened use of Tai forces by Ava in campaigns against Pegu in the south. In 1406, Ava led a military expedition to Bhamo, MongYang, and Kale in the Shan states and took large quantities of Tai war captives, war captives that were used the same year in an expedition against Pegu in the south (SL, 92, Fernquest, 2006, 12-13). Tai cavalry was ever-present in the Ava-Pegu wars from 1401, to such a great an extent that the Ava side is often referred to as 'Shan,' the Burmese ethnonym for the Tai ethnic group.

Tai cavalry came to play an important role in the battles of the Ava-Pegu war. Cavalry played its most important role in warfare along the approaches to Pegu on the Yamethin-Toungoo-Pegu axis. Since the Sittang River could not be used to transport forces all the way from Ava's capital into Lower Burma, overland forces were more important than river-based forces there than they were along the Irrawaddy to the west. Towards the end of the Ava-Pegu war Ava's penetration into the south slowly approached the Lower Burma delta region and the coast. In this terrain, Tai cavalry lost their military advantage. In 1408, Pegu employed the action of the tides in a riverbed to confuse and destroy Ava's Tai cavalry for the latter were not familiar with the ocean and tides (SL 95-96). In 1409, Mingaung again quickly combined Tai troops from Onpaung (Hsipaw), Kale, and Mong Yang that he had just brought back with him from the north with Ava's troops for a campaign against Pegu in the south (UKII: 2).

Ava's 1406 military expeditions against the Tais led to Tai requests for Ming diplomatic intervention to restrain the Burmese. A whole stream of envoys traveled to the Ming capital from the Tai frontier. First, in 1406, Yunnan officials sent word to the Ming capital that Ava and Kale had attacked Mong Yang and killed its ruler Dao Mu-dan and his son. The Ming sent the envoy Zhang Hong on a long mission to Burma to end these Burmese aggressions against the Tais (Huber, 1904; MSL 25 Aug 1406).

Mong Mao and Ava both sent a tribute mission to the Ming capital in 1408. The Ava representative sent a formal apology to the Ming emperor for "having occupied his younger brother's [Mong Mao or Luchuan-Pingmian] land

and taken his property without authority" (28 May 1408). The eunuch Yun Xian was sent on a mission to Luchuan-Pingmian (Mong Mao) (MSL 27 Jul 1409). Shortly after he left, representatives from Hsenwi [Mu-bang] also arrived at the capital with more complaints about Ava. Reporting that Ava had encouraged them to rebel, they encouraged the Ming to send troops against Ava (MSL 5 Sep 1409). Pleased with Hsenwi's loyalty, the Ming emperor sent a eunuch to Hsenwi with a message of praise and gifts. Encouraged by his success in northern Vietnam, the Yong-le emperor drew up plans for a punitive expedition against Ava that would be delivered partly by sea as well as by land, in a fashion similar to Zheng He's maritime expeditions, a zenith for the emperor's activist foreign policy in the Tai Frontier that was never reached (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 322):

You have also strongly opposed Na-luo-ta's [Burmese king] disloyal words. I can thus truly see your loyalty and sincerity. Na-luo-ta, with his petty piece of land, is double-hearted and is acting wrongly. I have long known of this. The reason I have not sent troops there is that I am concerned that good people will be hurt. I have already sent people with instructions requiring him to change his ways and start anew. If he does not reform, I will then order the generals to despatch the army. The troops will attack from the ocean route and you can arrange to have your native cavalry attack overland. The despicable fellow will not be equal to that (MSL 5 Sep 1409).

Meanwhile, when the eunuch Yun Xian arrived at Luchuan-Pingmian, he encountered certain violations in protocol in the way that he was received so he quickly returned to the Ming capital. After a delay Mong Mao sent an envoy with an offering of gifts to make amends for the breach in protocol that arrived at the Ming Capital in 1411. Relations between the Ming court and Mong Mao were reestablished with gifts of brocade and silk woven with gold thread being sent to Mong Mao (MSL 11 Aug 1411). In 1413, a full two to three years after the indiscretion, Si Xing-fa formally asked the Ming emperor permission to abdicate in favor of his younger brother Si Ren-fa (MSL 26 Feb 1413). Si Xing-fa died, but it is not clear how or why. As Liew Foon Ming notes: "Concerning the death of Si Xing-fa there are several versions. Not only does the Mau-Shan version differ from the Chinese version, but also the various Chinese sources differ from one another" (LFM: 169).

Further inroads into the Tai Frontier by Ava under Minyekyawswa (1406-1414)

After becoming Ava's crown prince, Minyekyawswa played an increasingly important role in warfare in both Lower Burma and the Tai Frontier. Evidence from several sources indicates that he may have led military campaigns into the Tai Frontier for as long as eight years from 1406 until his death in 1414 (Sai Kam Mong, 2004, 28)

The earlier U Kala chronicle dates Minyekyawswa's elevation to crown prince to 1411, while the later *Hmannan* and *Mahayazawinthat* dates it to 1406 (UK2006: 31-33, HMII: 21; TWI: 268). "Crown prince" seems to be confused with "King" in the version of the Hsenwi chronicle used by Scott in his *Gazetteer*, perhaps because Minyekyawswa played such a prominent role in warfare after becoming crown prince. An independent ruler at Pagan is mysteriously said to have initiated the attack:

In 1409, Mong Pu Hkam, king of Pagan, raised an army and invaded Hsenwi. In the same year Min-ye-kyawswa became king of Ava and joined Meng Pu hkam in the attack on Wing Hham Hkai Lai, but in 1418 the warring states signed a treaty and returned to their own territories. 'According to the South Hsenwi chronicle, this is the date of the overthrow of Hsenwi' (GUBSS, Hsenwi, pt. 1, v. 1, p. 244).

Irrespective of when Minyekyawswa actually became crown prince, it seems clear that, following the disastrous retreat of Ava forces around Lower Burma around 1409, Minyekyawswa took over much his father's role as Ava's commander-in-chief and began launching campaigns against the south with increased vigor (Harvey, 1925, 94; Fernquest, 2006, 16; Sai Kam Mong, 2004, 28).

The Burmese-Tai conflict entered a new period of intensity around 1408 at approximately the same time as Minyekyawswa became crown prince. The Tai chieftainships of Hsenwi and Mong Mao [Mawdon Mawke] dominate the Tai-Burmese warfare of this period. According to the biography of a ruler of Hsenwi:

... Minye Kyawswa was sent to subjugate Hsenwi, but it took eight years with a heavy toll on the local population. Eventually, the people of Hsenwi pleaded with their sawbwa [ruler] to surrender which he did in 1416 (Sai Kam Mong, 2004, p. 28; citing Luang Tha Aye, 1974, p. 85).

The events surrounding Ava's conflicts with Hsenwi under Minyekyawswa are complicated and rendered in many different ways by the existent historical sources. There are four Burmese sources for the historical narrative and dating of events: 1. the *Rajadhirat Ayeidawon* (San Lwin, n.d), 2. U Kala's chronicle (U Kala 1961, 2006), 3. the later Hmannan (2006) and *New Chronicle* (Twinthintai kwun Mahasithu, 1968), and 4. the *Maniyadanabon* or *Relations of Min Yaza*. The narratives of the U Kala, the *New Chronicle*, and *Hmannan* are the same. The dates differ in each of the four sets of sources. More accurate dating of events was one of the goals in compiling the later *Hmannan*, but the rationale behind the improved dating has yet to be analyzed in detail. Charney (2006) investigates the socio-political context at the Konbaung court in which the later historical texts were composed. The *Hmannan* and *New Chronicle* dating of 1406 for crown prince status and 1414 for Minyekyawswa's death seem to be critical to constraining the dates of the Hsenwi campaigns to the eight year window given by other texts.

After Minyekyawswa became crown prince of Ava, the Ava-Pegu war in the south continued with unabated ferocity. In 1410, Minye Kyawswa led his forces by river and land south, unsuccessfully attacking Myaungmya, Bassein, and Khebaung in the western delta region of Lower Burma. Marching on to Arakan, he took the capital, appointed a ruler, and marched back to Ava. In 1411, Pegu recaptured Arakan and strengthened the capital's defenses. Minyekyawswa marched south, attempted to retake Arakan, but failed (HMII: 4-7; TWI: 285-287).

In 1412, Hsenwi forces marched towards Ava but were intercepted by Minyekyawswa who drove them back to Hsenwi which he laid siege to. After five months he had still failed to take the city (HMII: 9). Meanwhile, probably seeking to exploit this vulnerability, Pegu attacked Prome. Minyekyawswa was called back to Ava from Hsenwi and led the river force in the southern expedition. A naval battle was fought, the Mon warrior Lagun Ein was killed in battle, Pegu was defeated, and retreated back to the capital Pegu.

In early 1413, with Ava forces encamped in Dagon near Pegu, Pegu tried to "enlist military assistance from Hsenwi, knowing that Hsenwi had been at war with Ava from time to time. Hsenwi sent a messenger with five elephants and seven viss of gold to the Hsenwi sawbwa [ruler] via Chiang Mai" (HMII: 16; TWI: 296; SL: 120; Maung Aung Myoe, 2006). About this time, Mingaung and Minyekyawswa led forces south to attack Pegu in May of 1413 (TWI: 297). Ava encamped near Pegu waiting through the whole rainy season, from May into October 1413.

Hsenwi attacked the northernmost garrison of Myedu as well as villages in Ava's territory in 1413 (HMII: 20; TWI: 299; SL 126), but Ava quickly sent retaliatory forces against Hsenwi under the crown prince Minyekyawswa. The ruler of Hsenwi was defeated and died in battle (UKII: 8). His sons retreated behind the city walls for protection and called for Ming help. Minyekyawswa attacked and defeated a Ming relief force before they arrived at Hsenwi and then returned to continue the siege (UKII: 9). In September 1413, a report was made to the Ming court on recent Tai-Burmese relations. Hsenwi had already engaged in warfare once with Ava and captured elephants and horses. The Ming authorised further attacks by Hsenwi in retaliation for alleged Ava attacks on Mong Yang, implying some sort of supportive relationship between Hsenwi and Mong Yang perhaps based on family ties. At this time, Hsenwi appears to have been militarily stronger than Mong Yang:

The chieftain Dao Bu-da (Alt: Diao Bu-da) and others who had been sent by Han Bin-fa, the Military and Civilian Pacification Superintendent of Mu-bang [Hsenwi], came and presented the elephants, horses and other goods which had been captured from the Ava-Burma native official Na-luo-ta [Nawratha]. Na-luo-ta had not respected the orders of the Court and had attacked and occupied the territory of Meng-yang [Mong Yang, Mohnyin]. Han Bin-fa requested permission to use *yi* troops to punish him. The Emperor approved this. Han Bin-fa then sent the chieftain Dao San-meng and others to attack him and they destroyed over 20 cities and stockades in Ava-Burma. Many people were killed or captured. The elephants, horses and other goods which had been captured were, at this time, all presented in the capital (MSL 23 Sep 1413).

The Hsenwi campaigns at the intersection of Burmese, Tai, and Ming history

The Burmese chronicle provides many details not found in Chinese sources on the Hsenwi campaigns. One possibility that emerges from a careful reading of this narrative is that Ava may have been involved in the death of the Mong Mao ruler Si Xing-fa and the succession of his brother Si Ren-fa. Combining facts from both the Burmese and Ming historical traditions leads to one reasonable narrative that partially explains the mystery of Si Xing-fa's abdication and/or death. This analysis is necessarily tentative.

The details from U Kala run as follows. In 1411, Ava learned that Hsenwi was marching towards Ava via Onpaung. Ava sent Minyekyawswa to meet them before they reached Ava. When Minyekyawswa reached a placed

named Hsin-kaung Wet-win, he met the cavalry of the Hsenwi sawbwa and defeated them in a battle dominated by elephant fighting. In the end, six elephants and two hundred horses and eight hundred captives were taken. About three hundred Tai soldiers died. The ruler of Hsenwi also died and the Tai forces gathered together and returned to where they had come from (UKII: 8). Minyekyawswa ordered that the elephants and horses that he had taken captive be handed over to his father king Mingaung.

Hsenwi had called the Chinese to come and help them and in the meantime strengthened its defenses and stored provisions within the town. Although Minyekyawswa attacked Hsenwi repeatedly, he could not take the town and laid siege to it for five months. At the end of this period Minyekyawswa heard that Chinese forces were approaching to provide aid to Hsenwi, so he departed at night from Hsenwi with his forces and attacked the Chinese in advance of their arrival at Hsenwi. They took captive five Chinese officials along with horses. Defeating the Chinese, they continued their siege of Hsenwi (UKII: 9)

In the year 1412, Mong Mao [Mawdon Mawke] attacked Ava's northern-most garrison Myedu. Minyekyawswa was sent from Ava and defeated them at Myedu. Two of the siblings of the Mong Mao ruler Si Xing-fa fled eastwards towards China with as many people as they could gather together. Minyekyawswa took his wife, children, horses, elephants, and many of his people captive and returned to Ava (UKII: 14; SL: 131). The brothers of Si Xing-fa managed to flee into Chinese territory and enlist the support of the Ming to get their brother's wife and children back (Bagshawe, 1981, 131). It was apparently one of Si Xing-fa's brothers, Si Ren-fa who became ruler of Mong Mao after their brother's death.

In 1414, the Burmese historical tradition records a heroic duel on horseback between Ava and China (HMII: 21-29; TWI: 301-309). After Minyekyawswa had taken the family of Si Xing-fa ruler captive and his brothers had fled to seek help from the Chinese. The Chinese enlisted the support of other Tai chieftainships to help Si Xing-fa get his family back from Ava. Not heeding a request to return the family, the joint Ming-Tai expedition marched south. When they arrived at Yaw-wa-ka fort, Kyei-myin-taing, Bilu Mountain, Loun Daw, and all the way up to Bauk, they settled down and built fortified positions. King Mingaung prepared his forces for a large-scale battle (UKII: 17).

The Ming sent a message to the Ava ruler: "You do not come out to fight us and neither do you initiate negotiations with us. We are prepared to lay siege even for three full years but if you agree to a tournament of single combat on horseback between your champion and ours, it will be held under the condition that if our champion wins we will take Ava, while if we lose we will turn back and go home" (UKII: 18). In the Burmese chronicle the conflict was finally resolved in a duel between two warrior heroes, a Mon cavalry officer and a Ming cavalry officer and the Ming finally retreated leaving Mong Mao to the Burmese (UKII: 17-19; SL: 138-140). Si Xing-fa died rather mysteriously in 1414 whether in captivity, battle, or peacefully at home in his capital is not clear (MSL 6 May 1428; Elias, 1876, 21; LFM: 169). His brothers, not wishing to raise the ire of the Ming, always suspicious of events far away in the Tai Realm, simply sought a peaceful succession.

Meanwhile the war in the south raged on. Rajadhirat moved south to Martaban [Mottama] and resided there until returning to Pegu in January of 1415 (TWI: 307, 310). Rajadhirat consulted monks on an auspicious day to engage in battle with the Ava crown prince Minyekyawswa. On the day that the monks determined, 13 March 1415 on a Wednesday, Minyekyawswa was killed in battle (HMII: 30; TWI: 310). At the time of his death, Minyekyawswa's son Minngekyawhtin, later an important figure in court politics, was only eight years old.

After Minyekyawswa's death Tai Onpaung moved quickly against Ava. The ruler of Onpaung Sao Kem Hpa marched to Ava in February of 1415 arriving at a place named Htunton-Putet near Ava (or "Htuntaya Htunton", Than Tun, 2005). Onpaung encamped and "erected defence bulwarks of stone, and dug trenches around the camp." A messenger was sent to Ava to provide an opportunity to surrender before being attacked. Mingaung surrendered, offering his niece Princess Min Sanda in marriage to the Onpaung ruler (Sai Aung Tun, 2004, 153-154). The Onpaung-Hsipaw chronicle's version of events claims a pre-existing disagreement as the cause of the conflict and stresses the peace agreement sealed by a marriage alliance that brought the conflict to a peaceful end:

Sao Kem Hpa [ruler of Onpaung-Hsipaw] quarreled with the King of Burma, Mingaung I, and marched against him, and camped before Hsakawng (Sagaing). Mingaung was forced to submit and gave Sao Kem Hpa his daughter Santa in marriage, when peace was concluded (GUBSS, vol. 1, pp. 218-219).

After the death of Minyekyawswa in March of 1415, two years passed before Mingaung's son Thihathu became crown prince in 1417. Thihathu was also married to the wife of his deceased brother Minyekyawswa Saw Minhla (UK2006II: 54; HMII: 47). At the death of Mingaung I in 1422, Thihathu became king of Ava.

To summarize, Tai manpower and animals were captured by Ava and employed in the south in the Ava-Pegu War. Permanent resettlement of Tai war captives (forced migration southwards) into Upper Burma likely accompanied the Tai cavalry's long-term involvement in the Ava-Pegu war. During the last years of the war, the major elite participants in war, the Ava prince Minyekyawswa, the king of Ava Mingaung, and the Mon king of Pegu Rajadhirat all died and the war lost momentum. Conflict, though not ceasing altogether, slowed to a trickle and reduced in intensity. Most of the fighting took place in the delta regions of Lower Burma where river warfare in boats played a more important role than previously. In historical sources, references to Tai cavalry contingents become less frequent. Tai migration from the Tai-Yunnan frontier southwards into Upper Burma started the decline in population concentration at Mong Mao that only accelerated after Burma's conquest in 1557. In the decades after the end of the war, Tais played an important role in the politics of Upper Burma, as we shall see.

5. A crucible of war: the aftermath of the Ava-Pegu and Ming-Vietnam Wars (1426-1438)

With the accession of the new Xuande Ming emperor in 1425, Ming grand strategy underwent fundamental changes. The activism and interventionism of the Yongle emperor was reversed, and there was a return to the more humble foreign policy goals of the founding Hungwu emperor:

It is not surprising, then, that his [the Yongle emperor's] more conventional grandson, backed by civil officials loyal to Confucian principles as well as to the first emperor's specific injunctions, decided to reverse the Yung-lo [Yongle] emperor's policies within a few years of his death. His grandson decided to end the war in Vietnam and concluded that the great naval expedition of 1431-33 would have to be the last (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 322).

The aftermath of the Ming-Vietnam and Ava-Pegu wars had a deep impact on the Tai frontier zone from 1426 to 1438. After 1426, the Tai frontier zone bifurcated into northern and southern halves with Tai military involvement in each half having a substantially different character. In the northern half, Tai banditry and expansionary warfare against the Ming was predominant. In the southern half, rulers at Ava changed frequently and were barely able to hold Upper Burma together.

What factors influenced the different nature of warfare in the north and south? Were elite motives of revenge and opportunism at the level of ideas or superstructure the only ones operative? Were factors at the socio-political level (structure) or at the environmental level (infrastructure) also operative? Using Ferguson's paradigm (1999) outlined earlier, in the north, at the level of superstructure or ideas, Mong Mao may have been motivated to engage in expansionary warfare to regain territory that the Ming had taken away in the 1380s (LFM: 169). Alternatively, the Ming defeat in Vietnam and the new passivity of the Xuande emperor's foreign policy may have triggered a strategic motive of "opportunism" at Mong Mao to exploit Ming vulnerability and gain as much territory as they could, while they could. According to the analysis of Wang Gungwu, the Ming defeat in Vietnam during the 1420s led to a loss of Chinese authority in the Tai Frontier. Ming grand strategy became reactive:

The re-emergence of the Maw Shan chieftains of Lu-ch'uan followed on the withdrawal of Ming armies from Vietnam in 1427. *Knowing that the Ming court was in no condition to fight on the Yunnan border, the Maw Shan tribes became increasingly ambitious during the next few years...* Throughout this period neither tributary diplomacy nor the administrative mechanisms of the aboriginal offices system could prevent war. When the imperial forces won some victories along the northwestern frontiers, strong voices were raised in favor of sending a full-scale expeditionary army to Lu-ch'uan in 1440 (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 325-326).

In the north, at the level of structure or social relations, as the Ming pulled out of northern Vietnam in 1427, Chinese manpower, officials, and soldiers perhaps returned to Yunnan with resettled soldiers perhaps contending for food and resettled officials contending for taxes or other extractable resources. The territorial divisions that the Yongle emperor had put in place in the early 1400s may have been renewed with increased vigor. A frontier society conducive to higher levels of banditry and warfare may have been the end result of these pressures and resource contentions.

Relationships between Mong Mao elite and Ming elite in Yunnan connected the realm of social relations with that of ideas, superstructure with superstructure. Mu Sheng, the hereditary governor of Yunnan, was connected by friendship to the ruling house of Mong Mao. Mong Mao ruler Si Ren-fa "grew up in the residence of the powerful Mu family in Yunnan prefecture and Mu Sheng had no serious intention to suppress his childhood friend." (LFM:

174-175). This fact is hidden from the purely public historical transcript of the Ming Shi-lu. In the Tai chronicle collected by Elias (1876), the transcript of the chronicle hidden from Ming view, has the young Si Ren-fa witness the cheating of his father by a Chinese "emperor" in Yunnan:

Chau-Tit-Pha, or Tau-Lwei [Si Xing-fa, 1404-1413]...appears to have carried on certain negotiations with the Chinese during the early part of his reign, and in...1411...to have gone on a visit to the governor of Yunnan...he went to Mung-Kyei [Kunming], the capital of Mithila, to consult with the emperor, and...during the interview with the latter, in which he was accompanied by his son Chau-Ngan-Pha [Si Ren-fa], he was given a cup of spirit to drink, which so completely intoxicated him that the Emperor, at the instigation of a Minister named Maw-pi, obtained from him his royal seal and thus rendered his country tributary (Elias, 1876, 21).

In the south, the main causal factors seemed to have been at the middle level of structure or social relations. The Burmese governors appointed by Ava (1401-1406) had only tenuous power over the Tai chieftainships in their sphere of influence. As the forty-year Ava-Pegu War drew to a close, a Tai army invaded and killed the king of Ava and Upper Burma splintered into several pieces, each guarding its independence with a vengeance. Upper Burma returned to a situation very similar to the immediate post-Pagan period. Ava was prevented from asserting its control outside of the immediate vicinity of the capital. The involvement of Tai chieftains aggravated the conflicts raging within Ava's domains.

Finally, for both the north and the south, at the infrastructural level, weather and monetary fluctuations in the 1430s likely aggravated problems, with unsettled weather conditions (c. 1435-9) affecting agriculture and a silver contraction (c. 1430-70) affecting trade (Atwell, 2002, 1998).

The North: Mong Mao expansionary warfare eastwards into Ming Yunnan (1427-1438)

The Ming withdrawal from Vietnam in 1427 refocused Ming attention on the Tai-Yunnan frontier. As the Ming reasserted control over Yunnan, incidents of rebellion, banditry, and internecine warfare increased. The new Xuan-zong emperor who followed the Yongle emperor tightened up administration and taxation in Yunnan (Wade, 2004, 13-14). In only eleven years, this renewed pressure on Yunnan would lead to a disastrous Ming military intervention.

Under Si Ren-fa, Mong Mao began to wage expansionary warfare against its neighbors. The likely motive was to reassert control over the domains that the Ming had taken away from Mong Mao in their administrative reforms of the early 1400s. Mong Yang to the northwest fell under the control of Mong Mao in 1426 (Daniels, 2006, 31; MSL 15 Sep 1430). Si Ren-fa seized villages and stockades and occupied territory to the north of Mong Mao around Nandian, Tengchong, Yongchang [Lujiang] in 1428. Yunnan requested fifty thousand government and native troops to send in a punitive expedition. In its reply, the Ming court observed that feuding and banditry were common in frontier regions and warned that "raising troops and deploying forces truly brings great suffering," that "you must always think long and hard about such actions." The court instructed them to use diplomacy instead of military means and to "seek negotiated pacification," but also to make "preparations for border defenses" by building up stores of grain (MSL 6 May 1428, May 17 1428, 1 June 1428). Luchuan under Si Ren-fa was not the only chieftainship to attack neighbors though.

Banditry became a widespread problem in Yunnan. Sipsongpanna-Cheli reported to the Ming court that its territory was "frequently being attacked and occupied by troops who had deserted, civilian fugitives or *yi* persons from beyond the borders (MSL 16 Jun 1428). Bandits typically plundered property, burnt dwellings, and killed people (MSL 13 Aug 1428). Areas remote from administrative centers were particularly susceptible, often attacked by "foreign" bandits outside the sphere of Ming control in Yunnan. In 1430, foreign bandits attacked remote settlements in Meng-mian's domains (27 Jun 1430). Local officials often tolerated bandits (2 Nov 1433). Soldiers and civilians fleeing justice in Yunnan and heading south along the road to Sipsongpanna and Chiang Mai would lie saying that they were official envoys to force people to ferry them across the dangerous rivers that had to be crossed "often resulting in deaths" (2 Nov 1433).

Sometimes the threat of banditry even came from within the Ming administration itself. Even Ming military officers engaged in banditry such as Dao Bu-lang-ban, the battalion commander of Yongchang, who attacked the domains of Lujiang. The governor of Lujiang, Nang-bi, fled to Jinchi and enlisted Ming help to repair the situation. It is notable that no punishment was meted out to the military commander. He was merely asked to return what he had taken and return to his normal place of residence and normal tax-paying habits (17 Feb 1430).

Disorder in the Tai frontier zone began to intensify in the early 1430s. Many small acts of raiding and land seizure were reported (MSL 30 Sep 1431). It mattered little that by 1433 Mong Mao had returned much of the land it had taken, the chaos that reigned in the Tai Frontier made the main arteries through the region dangerous to pass through. For instance, tribute missions to the Ming court found it difficult to travel. The constant unrelenting banditry had also caused high levels of peasant flight, making Ming administration and control of manpower that much more difficult (MSL 22 Oct 1433). Yunnan reported that Luchuan was no longer alone in waging expansionary war against its neighbors in 1433. Han Men-fa of Mu-bang (Hsenwi) claimed that Luchuan had attacked them, but both Luchuan and Ava claimed that Hsenwi had attacked them. Nearby, Meng-lian reported that Meng-dian had invaded and occupied their territory (MSL 15 Nov 1433).

With the increased division of territory into separate distinct domains, came a blurring of the lines of authority that increased contention and conflict. According to the *Ming Shi-lu*, around 1433, Dong-tang near Bhamo faced a military threat from Ava. Mang Zhi, the son of Dong-tang's Burmese ruler "Xin-ba-di" was sent to the Ming court with tribute. He reported to the Ming court that "Xi-de" the ruler of Ava was planning to attack Dong-tang to kill its ruler Xin-ba-di and seize its territory. The Ming then established the Dong-tang Chief's Office and Xin-ba-di was appointed as chief but was ultimately "left under the jurisdiction of Ava, implying that any differences between the Burmese ruler of Dong-tang and Ava had been healed (MSL 10 Nov 1433). The Dong-tang incident of 1433 demonstrates the contention between the Burmese and the Ming over territory in the Tai Frontier and that if a historian focuses exclusively on sources in one language tradition, they stand a good chance of only viewing a skewed fraction of the whole historical transcript.

The Ming court had issued orders to mobilize an army to be sent against Mong Mao in 1434. However, Yingzong emperor, a young boy only eight years in age, ascended the Ming throne soon after. This was enough to gain Si Ren-fa a temporary respite from war. Si Ren-fa quickly made a petition to the Ming court to have his outstanding tax debts of 2,500 *taels* of silver [3,250 ounces] cancelled. The ascension of a new emperor in no way dissuaded Si Ren-fa from his plans to expand. In 1437, Mong Mao attacked and took 278 villages in Nandian to the north (MSL 12 Nov 1437). In 1438, reports streamed in to the Ming court on Si Ren-fa's repeated attacks on a whole string of settlements in Yunnan including Teng-chong, Lu-jian, Jin-chi, Gan-yai, Meng-ding, Mong Yang (Meng-yang), and many other places protected by government authorised troops (MSL 28 Jun 1438, MSL 10 Oct 1438, MSL 2 Sep 1438). Si Ren-fa followed up these attacks by occupying Lu-jian and other territories and resettling over ten thousand inhabitants from his own domains into these areas. Reports of boat building and imminent plans to employ the rivers of Yunnan in warfare were also received (MSL 15 Aug 1438). Si Ren-fa was warned once again, and once again he sent a tribute mission to the Ming court, but by this time the tribute missions were regarded by the Ming court as deceptions used to buy more time (MSL 8 Aug 1438).

The strategy of divide and rule that the Ming had intensified in 1404 sometimes seems to be at the root of these problems. In 1438, the Ming eliminated 199 "native-office interpreters and local commanders," observing that, in recent years, the number had expanded greatly. These local officials had "with military and civilian servants, laborers and roguish followers, made all sorts of demands and through overbearing actions, oppressed the people and brought calamities to many" (MSL 10 Jul 1438). The very number of these local points of power and control had perhaps contributed towards the balkanization and political entropy of the Tai Frontier. The oft-cited divide and rule strategy of the Ming court had, in fact, backfired and led to loss of control rather than greater control. The re-imposition of control over Yunnan after the Ming withdrawal from northern Vietnam in 1427 may also have become a factor.

The year 1438 was the turning point from diplomatic to military action in Yunnan. Orders to muster troops for an imminent campaign were sent to both places outside Yunnan, like Gui-zhou, and places well within the frontier, like Mu-bang (Hsenwi) (MSL 6 Oct, 1438; MSL 17 Oct 1438). As Southeast Asia entered its cool season, Mu Sheng, the regional commander of Yunnan, received orders from the Ming emperor to take advantage of the cool weather and attack (MSL 8 Dec 1438). The Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns had begun.

Political disorder and uncertainty in the Tai frontier: A small case study

The *Ming Shi-lu* contains one long story of how local elite contention for resources and power combined with the corruption of Ming officials might have added momentum to chaos and disorder. The story was spread out over the course of several years. In 1421, the Tai ruler of Sipsongpanna-Cheli, Dao Nong, was accused by a relative named Dao Shuang-meng, of repeatedly attacking and plundering his domains. A petition was sent to the Ming

court to separate a part of the Cheli domains and hand it over to Dao Shuang-meng to govern as an independent domain named Jing-an (MSL 22 Feb 1421). This was a clear instance of local rulers taking the lead in fragmenting political authority, not a "divide and rule" strategy imposed from the Ming center.

Ming tax collectors entered this chaotic situation in 1429. A Ming official named Hong Yi accused the two Tai rulers of feuding and killing. Dao Nong abandoned his territory, fled, and pledged fealty to Laos (MSL 22 Jan 1429). Two years later, another expedition was sent to Cheli and the mother of Dao Nong related to the Ming officials what had happened. The Ming official Liu Heng collect a gold and silver tax from Cheli in 1428 and told the local inhabitants that they had earned a tax exemption. When another official Hong Yi was sent the next year to collect the tax that they were supposedly exempt from, local elite accused Dao Nong of lying. Dao Nong had taken flight to Laos for refuge; when he returned he was killed. Dao Shuang-meng eventually died also (MSL 1 Aug 1431).

Uncertainty is an important part of this incident. Even now, several hundreds of years later, like Ming officials at the capital, readers have to make a choice to either believe the Ming official's version or believe Dao Nong's mother's version of events. Either: (1) Ming officials embezzled money in the course of their tax collecting duties and then bore false witness against local Tais to get rid of and neutralize them, or (2) Dao Nong and his uncle embezzled money and blamed it on the Ming. Under both versions of events, we can conclude that in the hinterlands of Yunnan there was: (1) a high level of contention among local elites for power and resources, (2) high level of uncertainty regarding the truth, regarding what actually happened in any series of events, (3) that someone knew what actually happened, and thus (4) some party to the events took strategic action based on this uncertainty (or information asymmetry). The tally system instituted under the Yong-le emperor in 1402 was a measure to deal with such uncertainty. The tally verified both the identity of the Ming official and the local lord thus reducing possibilities for the dissemination of misinformation. This sort of incident has a certain universal quality about it. Russian tribute collection in remote Siberia was plagued by similar information asymmetry problems (Longworth, 2005, 131-132).

The South: Tai involvement in Ava's domestic politics (1426-1440)

While Mong Mao pushed eastwards into Yunnan, Ava and Upper Burma to the south was also plagued by disorder. Tai forces attacked Ava in 1426 and put Upper Burma into disarray. According to the Burmese chronicle, Thihathu who had only been king of Ava for five years, was killed while overseeing the construction of irrigation works in an attack by Tai Onpaung.

Onpaung was ruled autonomously by a Tai ruler Hsan Pa. Kale and Mong Yang both had Burmese members of the Ava court as appanage holders involved in their governance. After becoming ruler of Onpaung, Hsan Hpa had married his father's Burmese wife Sanda, presented to his father in a marriage alliance with Ava in 1393, so he had connections to the court of Ava. To complicate things even further, both the Burmese and Hsipaw-Onpaung chronicles claim that the Ava queen Shin Bo Me conspired with Hsan Hpa and requested his intervention in Ava politics. Some sources go further and suggest a rivalry between Shin Bo Me and the Mon queen Shin Saw Bu resident at Ava as a result of a marriage alliance with Pegu (Fernquest, 2006b, "Shin Saw Bu").

After the death of Thihathu, Onpaung was defeated and driven back north by Min-Nge-Swa of Ava. Hsan Hpa then enlisted the support of Kyetaungnyo, the Burmese appanage holder of Kale who took Ava and imprisoned Min-Nge-Swa (GUBSS, v. 1, 219). Chinese sources indicate that Hsenwi was also involved in the attack on Ava, raising the possibility that the Tai invasion was a joint effort between Onpaung-Hsipaw, Hsenwi, and Kale (MSL 2 Oct 1427). Wherever the boundary between fact, later historiographical fictional elaboration, and just plain uncertainty, rumour, and lack of information, actually lies, it seems for certain that court intrigue played a significant role in political change during this period and that the distinction between different Tai chieftainships in military campaigns against Upper Burma and even the distinction between the Burmese ruling elite of Ava and the Tai ruling elite was often blurred.

Kyetaungnyo could not hold power for long and was quickly overthrown by yet another member of the Burmese ruling elite Mohnyin Mintaya (r. 1427-40) also known as Mohnyin Thado or Mang De-la, the Chinese transliteration of Burmese "Min-taya". The new Ava king had been awarded with the appanage of Mohnyin for his relief of the siege of Prome in 1406 during the Ava-Pegu War. "Mohnyin" is the Burmese translation of the Tai place name "Mong yang" (UKI: 504, Harvey, 1925, 97; Phayre, 1883, 82-83; Parker, 1893, 55-56). The Ming court under-

stood that there had been a succession struggle at Ava and that Tai forces had played a role in it, but they chose not to intervene and let events follow their own course:

Mang De-la [Mohnyin Mintaya], the great chieftain...of Ava-Burma was appointed as the superintendent of the Ava-Burma Pacification Superintendency. Earlier, the Ava-Burma Pacification Superintendent Xin-jia-si had been killed in feuding with Mu-bang [Hsenwi]. His sons and younger brothers fled and the Ava-Burma chieftains and elders all selected the great chieftain Mang De-la [Mintaya] to temporarily rule the region. The *yi* people were submissive and they loyally fulfilled their tribute duties. Thus, at this time, the Ministry of War requested that the regional commander and the three offices of Yun-nan carry out a detailed investigation of Mang De-la and that, if he had the trust of the *yi* people, that he be officially appointed. The Emperor said: 'If the man and the *yi* of the distant regions are allowed this as an expression of good-will, it will permit the troops to rest and bring the people peace. This is also the way to sway the *yi*. Appoint him immediately as pacification superintendent. There is no need for an investigation' (MSL 2 Oct 1427).

Despite ruling over Ava for thirteen years, Mohnyin Mintaya only achieved lasting control over the immediate area surrounding the capital, his control over much of Upper Burma remaining weak (UKII: 55-56). Pagan to the southwest was regained relatively easy after two expeditions. With only a loose grip on Ava's food supply, Mohnyin Mintaya spent most of his reign trying to reign in Ava's domains in the southeast including Pinle, Yamethin, Taungdwingyi, and Toungoo.

In 1430, the Ming attempted to reassert control over a Mong Yang that had fallen into Ava's sphere of control during the early 1400s:

The Meng-yang Pacification Superintendency was re-established and Dao Meng-shu, the son of Dao Meng-dan, the deceased pacification superintendent, was appointed as pacification superintendent, and required, together with the deputy Dao Yu-bin, to pacify the soldiers and people and to fulfil tribute obligations and pay taxes like before (MSL 15 Nov 1433; SLC 1037; Chen Yi Sein, 1970, 11-1).

In the early 1430s, reports of raids by Hsenwi on Mong Mao and Ava were made to the Ming court during tribute missions. Mu Sheng, intimately familiar with the intricacies of Tai politics was ordered to investigate the matter and deal with the problem:

At this time, Si Ren-fa and Mang De-la [Mohnyin Mintaya] had memorialized that Han Men-fa had invaded their land and carried off people and livestock. Imperial orders were also sent to the Qian-guo Duke and Regional Commander Mu Sheng and the three offices, saying: "Both Lu-chuan and Ava-Burma say that Mu-bang has invaded their land and carried off their people. You, Sheng, should send an official who, together with a senior official from each of the three offices, shall proceed together with Yun Xian to issue the instructions. If what has been said is found to be true, order that everything be returned, and that all look to their own affairs, guard their own territories and not attack the others. If they do not heed the orders, memorialize so that arrangements can be made (18 Jul 1430).

In 1433, attacks by Hsenwi were once again reported during the tribute mission. Attacks by Mong Lem on Mong Ting were also reported:

Si Ren-fa and Mang De-la, the pacification superintendent of Ava-Burma, also memorialized that Han Men-fa [Hsenwi] had used troops to invade their territory and commit deprivations. The Meng-lian Chief's Office also memorialized that Meng-ding Prefecture had attacked and occupied its territory (MSL 15 Nov 1433).

During this period, Mong Mao was not involved in any conflict with Ava or other locations to the south, instead attacking areas to the north and east. Hsenwi seems to have launched out and attacked in all directions.

Ava's attempts to consolidate its settlements to the southeast, from Kyaukse to Yamethin (very important for Ava's food supply), seems to have consumed much of its time and manpower. Ava also fought to prevent the kingdom of Pegu in Lower Burma from making inroads into Upper Burma at places along the frontier like Toungoo and Taungdwingyi. Stories in the chronicle depict local rulers of Taungdwingyi and Toungoo grudgingly coming to the capital to pledge their loyalty and rebelling almost immediately after returning to their domains (UKII:

57-59). A rebellious member of Ava's court, Min-nge-kyaw-htin took Pinle near Ava in 1427/28 with the help of the Tai chieftain of Onpaung. Ava retook Pinle, but the rebels quickly reoccupied the town (UKII: 61). Once again in 1428/29 Ava attempted to drive the rebels out of Pinle (UKII: 62). While making these initial attempts to assert authority over his realm, Mohnyin Mintaya managed to relax for a moment and build a new palace in 1427 (UKII: 60).

Ava and Pegu engaged in a protracted fight for control over Toungoo on their frontier. In 1427 Toungoo and Tharawaddy formed a marriage alliance with the king of Pegu in the south, Pegu attacked Prome but was repulsed (UKII: 67). Ava sent envoys to Pegu, but the Pegu king initially refused to meet with them. Eventually, the two kings met and decided on the boundaries to their kingdoms and Pegu relinquished its claims on Prome (UKII: 68-70). Even as the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns to the north in Yunnan were beginning, Pegu in Lower Burma deposed the ruler of Toungoo in 1437/38 and installed a new ruler in Toungoo. It took five years for Ava to respond with a punitive expedition and install their own ruler at Toungoo (UKII: 74).

During this period of instability in Upper Burma, Ava's domains in the southeast forged alliances with Tai chieftains to evade Ava's control. The southern Tai chieftains of Yawksawk and Naung Mun supported Yamethin and Taungdwingyi. Onpaung, a little further to the north, under Hsan Hpa who only died in 1438, supported Pinle. Ava tried to break these alliances by plying Tai states with gifts and trying to set up alliances themselves (UKII: 62; Harvey, 1925, 97-98).

U Kala only mentions the Tai presence in Upper Burma and does not explain how the Tais got there. Permanent relocation of Tai war veterans to Upper Burma after the Ava-Pegu War was perhaps one source of increased Tai presence, although Tai settlers from previous eras cannot be ruled out. Moreover, these war veterans augmented Upper Burma's population with military elites skilled in warfare. This explanation matches the evidence provided by the Burmese chronicle. Besides the collapse of Ava in 1426 and the defense of Ava's southeastern domains in 1438 mentioned above, Shan-Tai troops also aided Yamethin against Ava in 1440 (UKII: 74), and a Shan-Tai ruler named Tho-taing-bwa at Kyaung-pya fought against nearby Toungoo in 1492 (UKII: 152; Fernquest, 2005a, 304). The war added to a post-Pagan trend of Tai migration that was already underway:

After Pagan's collapse in the late thirteenth century until the pacification of the Shan hills by the First Toungoo Dynasty in the mid-sixteenth century, the valley's northern and eastern frontiers lay open to waves of Shan [Tai] migrants, who settled in Yamethin, Meiktila, Toungoo, Ava, and Taungdwingyi districts. Although these irruptions killed some local cultivators and dislocated agriculture, they probably produced a net increase in the population of the lowlands, especially since many displaced Burmans simply moved south to open new lands in the Upper Irrawaddy delta and the Sittang corridor (Lieberman, 1991, 4).

The use of Tai cavalry in the Ava-Pegu war may also have seen the migration of a substantial horse population of Shan ponies ("high stamina" horses "effective for traveling long distances) southwards from the Tai Frontier into Upper Burma, fueling the large-scale warfare of the sixteenth century under Tabinshweihti and Bayinnaung:

Perhaps frequent warfare against Ayudhya, or even in the Shan [Tai] hills themselves, encouraged lowland Burmese and Siamese rulers to import Shan ponies. Whether through trade, tribute, or capture, lowland Burmese rulers made certain acquire significant numbers of new Shan ponies before and during their sixteenth century campaigns (Charney, 2005, 172-173, 170, citing Clarence Smith, 2003, 2).

The influence of a single Ava prince named Min-nge Kyaw-htin on the disorder of this period shows that the human agency of court elites played an important role in perpetuating the state of endemic warfare. His rise to power was probably typical of the many other Ava court elites who asserted independence in settlements around Upper Burma during this period. Minyekyawswa's son Min-nge Kyaw-htin was nineteen years old when Mohnyin Mintaya became king in May of 1426. After being sent into exile at Thit-seint in 1426, he eventually left Thit-seint and established a stronghold at Yenantha. When the king of Ava Mohnyin Mintaya sent a military expedition to subjugate him, he fled to the Tai state of Onpaung and, together with Tai forces gathered there, attacked Ava's heartland of Upper Burma. He captured Pinle and established a fortified position there. Once again, Ava sent a military expedition to deal with him and retake Pinle in 1428, but failed (HMII, 65-67). Ava tried to persuade Onpaung "to withdraw support from Min-nge Kyaw-htin and to forge an alliance with Ava" (UK2006II: 63-65; Maung Aung Myoe, 2006), but Min-nge Kyaw-htin extended his power even further by taking Yamethin in 1443 (UK2006II: 77) and Toungoo in 1451 killing the ruler of Toungoo in the process (UK2006II: 81). The constant challenge that Min-

nge Kyaw-htin presented to Ava's control of Upper Burma power finally ended with his assassination in 1458 (UK2006II: 84) (Maung Aung Myoe, 2006)

The events after the fall of Ava in 1426, taken as a whole, clearly indicate that Ava's control of its southern domains was tenuous at best, much as Ming control of Yunnan was also quite tenuous during this period. For seventeen years from the end of the Ava-Pegu wars in 1425, even the territory immediately surrounding the capital itself had evaded Ava's grasp. A full-scale war was already raging in the north between the Tais and the Ming. Ava was about to be drawn into its orbit.

6. Burma as Ming proxy in a Tai manhunt: the Final Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (1442-1454)

The Ming led four disastrous military campaigns into the Tai-Yunnan frontier starting in 1438. The Ming perspective on these campaigns has been painstakingly reconstructed by Liew Foon Ming (1996). The Burmese chronicle, yet to be translated into English, provides an extra dimension missing from Ming sources. Despite the ongoing struggle of Ava to extend its power over Upper Burma, Ava extended its power quite far into the Tai Frontier to the north during this period. A Ming offer of a territorial reward in the Tai Frontier for Ava's military cooperation provided an impetus for Ava's military action.

In the First Luchuan-Pingmian campaign (c. 1436-1439), the Ming quickly defeated the Tais and pursued them deep into Tai territory. Ming troops were not accustomed to the semi-tropical environment and were quickly exhausted. In the remote rugged environment Ming supply lines were cut off. Reinforcements were requested but never sent. Alone in hostile territory, the Ming were ambushed, defeated, and withdrew. With this victory, the Tai leader Si Ren Fa became bolder and began waging offensive warfare once again, attacking settlements closer to the heart of Yunnan (LFM 175). The Tai response to the approaching Ming army found here resembles a common pattern on China's northern frontiers in which indigenous forces "simply move away until the Chinese had stretched their supply lines too far, then turn around and ambush them" (Perdue, 2005, 522).

When Minyekyawswa (r. 1440-1443), ascended Ava's throne, one his first acts was to mediate in a conflict between the Tai chieftainships of Kale and Mong Yang (UKII: 73). When the expedition arrived at Myedu, the northern boundary of Ava's territorial control, both chieftains submitted to Ava in fear that the other one would gain the upper hand by submitting first. Both domains were handed over to close members of the Burmese royal family to govern in accordance with the precedent set in during 1400-1410 (UKII: 73).

Ava managed to gain greater control over its southern frontier with Pegu in Lower Burma. Ava sent a punitive expedition to Toungoo, Taungdwingyi, Yamethin, and Pinle in 1440. They failed to take well-defended Pinle, but were able to take buffaloes, cows, and war captives. Yamethin also repulsed their attack, but they took Taungdwingyi, and finally Toungoo in 1442 after a pitched battle in which the ruler who had been installed by the Mons died in an elephant duel (UKII: 74). So, paradoxically, though failing to assert control over places near to the capital like Pinle and Yamethin, Ava was able to assert control over its frontier with Pegu in Lower Burma. This would provide Ava with confidence when they turned almost all of their attention northwards and joined the Ming side in the ongoing Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns.

Before the Second Campaign (1441-1442), Ming scholar officials attempted to stop the campaigns before more damage was done, but the campaigns had developed a momentum of their own. After eight months of stalemate, the Ming forces were ambushed. The attack was repulsed and a counter-attack on the main mountain stronghold of Si Ren-fa was launched. The stronghold was "located on a high cliff" on Mulong mountain near Hotha "with two sides facing the river ... strengthened by ... 10 miles of palisades, surrounded by a moat." The attack ended in a massive Tai defeat with fifty thousand dead. Si Ren-fa together with his family and followers fled to the northwest taking refuge in the Mong Yang area.

The Ming offered the Tai territory of Luchuan in Mong Mao as a reward and incentive for the capture of Si Ren-fa. The reward was offered to both Ava and Tai Hsenwi that had supported the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns with troops since 1438 (LFM 180-1). With the incentive of a reward, the Burmese began their search for Si Ren-fa (Burmese: Tho-ngan-bwa) in earnest. Ava discovered that Si Ren-fa had fled west across the Irrawaddy and established a power base at the Tai settlement of Mogaung near Mong Yang. These two Tai settlements are often confused, but the linguistics and historical geography behind the names are actually straightforward. The Burmese usually distinguished between the neighboring Tai chieftainships of Mong Yang, which they called Mohnyin, and Mong Kaung, which they called Mogaung (SLC 233). The Ming rarely made the distinction. It almost always referred to both chieftainships as Meng-yang and only rarely mentioned Meng-guang (Tai: Mong Kaung).

In 1442, the king of Ava sent his brother-in-laws, the Burmese governors of Mong Yang and Kale, to attack Mogaung. Si Ren-fa had prepared strong defensive fortifications, so Ava had to adopt a strategy of siege and waiting. While the siege dragged on, the king of Ava died at Ava during the month of January of 1442 (UKII: 75). With the king's death, the ministers at Ava faced a difficult decision in choosing a replacement. The king's son Thihathu, the natural choice, was in Prome. The ministers, however, favored the king's son-in-law Thihapatei, who had accompanied the expedition north to Mogaung. Thihapatei was recalled to Ava by ministers to assume the throne, but he declined the offer, declaring that he was neither a son nor a brother of the deceased king. He suggested they recall the king's son from Prome. According to the chronicle tradition, crocodiles following the royal boat from Prome provided an inauspicious omen prompting the king-to-be to double back to Prome and be crowned there as king Narapatei. Thihapatei, after refusing the throne, defeated Si Ren-fa at Mogaung the very day the new king ascended the throne.

By catching Si Ren-fa, Thihapatei had clearly hit the Ming jackpot, but claiming the Ming reward would not be easy. Thihapatei brought Si Ren-fa back to Ava with his family and animals. He also brought another Tai ruler, the ruler of Mong Sit (Mo Sit) named Htaw Maing Gyi. Thihapatei had his nephew Min U Ti present the captives to the new king Narapatei at Ava (UKII: 76). Narapatei requested the reward of territory from the Ming but the Ming delayed so Ava waited (LFM, 181-2).

Meanwhile, with Si Ren-fa gone, his son Si Ji-fa took over the leadership of Mong Mao and established a power base in the Mong Yang region to the west of the Irrawaddy (LFM 183-189; Daniels, 2003, 8). Kale was given to the king of Ava's son-in-law Minyekyawswa the Younger to govern (UKII: 78). The Tai ruler of Onpaung met the king of Ava at Wekkapaing at an intermediate safe point between their two domains and pledged allegiance to him in 1441/42. The crown prince marched south and Yamethin quickly submitted, but Pinle, with well-defended fortifications, forced Ava to lay siege to the town (UKII: 79).

The Third Luchuan-Pingmian Campaign (1443-1444)

Since the Ming had captured neither Si Ren-fa nor his son, they launched a third campaign (1443-1444). While Ava laid siege to Pinle they received word that Chinese forces were approaching so they returned to Ava and prepared defenses. The Chinese forces were reported to number three million compared to the eighty thousand troops sent to Pinle, an exaggeration, but an exaggeration that does indicate a grave threat. An even larger army said to have numbered 200,000 was mustered at Ava and sent north to defend the approach to Ava. The Ming encamped at Mong Mao sent an envoy south and demanded that Ava submit and send tribute gifts or they would attack. The Burmese chronicle claims Ava refused to send tribute and the Ming, rather than attacking, marched on to Bhamo and built a bridge across the Irrawaddy (UKII: 80). During the interlude of 1443/44, Ava attacked and occupied Yamethin, and built three pagoda-monasteries there: Payon, Theitsa, and Salin (UKII: 80).

In 1444, Ava marched north to meet Chinese forces. Some of the forces traveled by river meeting up with the land forces at two islands on the Irrawaddy near Tagaung named Tin-twei and Nga-yin-u. The Chinese sent an envoy to ask that Si Ren-fa be handed over to them, but Ava refused. Ming troops then descended on Kaung-ton and war broke out. The Burmese chronicle reports that one Chinese general by the name of Maung Taung Peing, the ruler of Yin-ti, was killed together with many Ming soldiers. The Ming faced a food supply problem feeding their numerous troops, so they retreated to Mong Wan [Burmese; Mo Wun]. The Onpaung ruler [Burmese: Thokhan-bwa] traveled to Kaung-ton and pledged his aid to the king of Ava. The king of Ava appointed the Tai rulers of Mogaung and Mong Nai [Burmese: Mone] to watch over Bhamo and returned to Ava.

The following year (1445), Ava forces were appointed for a march to Bhamo. They passed through Mong Sit on the way and since the pagoda named Shwe-baw-kyan-pago had fallen into disrepair there, they had to halt for a time and repair the pagoda. When they learned that the Ming were marching, they decided that the Ming had retreated temporarily because of a food shortage, but would not leave the Tai-Yunnan frontier until Si Ren-fa was turned over. On the third waxing moon of Natdaw [November 16, 1445], on a Tuesday, when the three planets were in alignment, Ava's forces returned from Bhamo by river and land to Ava, encamping outside the city. Ming forces followed them and surrounded them when they had pitched camp outside of Ava (UKII: 81).

The Ming threatened to attack if Ava did not hand Si Ren-fa over to them (UKII: 82). The king of Ava negotiated a deal and agreed to hand Si Ren-fa over if the Chinese helped him attack and subdue Yamethin first. The Ming agreed and together with a contingent of troops from Ava built a bridge over the Myit-nge River in Kyaukse and marched south. When they arrived at Laing-hte on the approach to Yamethin, the rebel ruler of Yamethin fled from the town to a place named King-ta. Ava troops occupied and garrisoned Yamethin (UKII: 83; LFM 193-196)

When the Ming returned to Ava to claim Si Ren-fa, he had already died from poison. The king of Ava sent the corpse to the Ming. According to the Burmese chronicle, the Ming disemboweled the corpse, inserted an iron rod in it, and dried it over a fire. When they were done, they left. The Burmese chronicle claims that the reason why the Ming wanted Si Ren-fa so urgently was that during the reign of Si Ren-fa's grandfather named Tho-chi-bwa [Si Lun-fa?] a war raged between the Tais and the Chinese for twelve years, but since neither side could prevail over the other, the Chinese retreated, and it was due to their lingering anger in a war that never really ended that they requested that Si Ren-fa be handed over. Liew Foon Ming provides a full overview of the many different versions of Si Ren-fa's ultimate fate (LFM: 193-196). Onpaung once again marched to an intermediate point on the approach to Ava in 1446 and presenting gifts, pledged allegiance to the king of Ava (UKII: 83).

Ming forces marched to Gong-zhang near Bhamo in March of 1448 and joined with forces from Ava. The combined forces relied on boats built by Ava to construct a bridge across the Irrawaddy [Jin-sha]. A date before the onset of the rainy season was set to attack Si Ji-fa's Tai forces, but preparations were not completed in time. Ming commanders on the scene blamed the failure on both Ava's incompetence and Ava's collusion with the enemy, two mutually exclusive factors, one would think. The heat of the approaching summer, malaria together with food supply and manpower shortages were more likely contributing factors (LFM 188):

... the Ava-Burma man [barbarians] had plotted together with the bandits and harboured deceit and guile in their hearts. They dawdled about and did not proceed forward, with the result that the Spring came on and the miasmatic vapours began. The river became swollen, the boats were insufficient to span it and thus we could not cross. Further, the grain route was cut and it would have been difficult to long remain there. Thus, the generals and the government troops were recalled and the *yi* troops [locally recruited troops] were allowed to return home to wait until the Autumn when another attack will be launched on the border (MSL 27 Mar 1448).

Si Ji-fa attempted to win back the goodwill of the Ming court and remove his fugitive status by sending a tribute mission with gifts to the Ming capital in 1443. Fearing reprisal he did not accompany the mission. The emperor sent back an angry reply, demanding that Si Ji-fa come himself and also to bring the "major and minor chieftains" of Mong Yang where he now resided. The emperor promised that the Mong Yang chieftains would be promoted and rewarded and that Si Ji-fa would "be pardoned and not executed." Despite these reassurances, Si Ji-fa remained apprehensive and refused to present himself to court (MSL 13 Mar 1448, 17 Mar 1448, 27 Mar 1448, LFM 182). Eventually, after the Ming withdrew from Mong Mao area, Si Ji-fa left Mong Yang and reoccupied Mong Mao reasserting control over all the surrounding small chieftainships that his father had once controlled (LFM 182). The Ming manhunt for Si Ren-fa's family, or as the Ming Annals refers to them the "remnant spawn of a bandit king" had failed.

The Fourth Luchuan-Pingmian Campaign (1448-1449)

The Ming response to the failure at Gong-zhang was to muster together troops for yet another campaign against the Tai elite (MSL 27 Mar 1448). Since the Ming had long ago officially made Mong Yang independent, the Ming court felt they could deal directly with the Tai chieftains of Mong Yang. The court sent "orders of instruction" to Dao Bian-man, the Mong Yang chief that the Ming had dealt with before, ordering him to help the Ming to capture Si Ji-fa or face punishment.

The order was accompanied with a list of reasons why Mong Yang's ruler Dao Bian-man should cooperate. First, Mong Yang was an office established by the Ming court. Second, Mong Yang had allowed Si Ji-fa, the son of an outlaw, to go free without capturing him. Third, Dao Bian-man had been guilty of undermining a previous ruler of Mong Yang, Dao Meng-bin, who had been supported by the Ming against attacks by Si Ren-fa. Fourth, he had not cooperated with local Ming officials in Yunnan in their efforts to capture Si Ji-fa (MSL 5 Apr 1448). The Ming indicated that they were well aware of the Tai guerilla style of warfare and considered it cowardly:

You thought that because of the mountains and rivers and the dangerous roads, the government troops could not easily reach you and believed that because of the weather, the miasmatic vapours and the heat, the government troops could not long remain there. When powerful you put up opposition, but when weak you fled (MSL 5 Apr 1448).

Precedents from China's historical past and the fictional "Tale of Three Kingdoms" [San Guo Yen Yi] were invoked to impress the Tais:

You certainly will not know that in ancient times Ma Yuan went and marked the distant frontier with a bronze pillar. He passed through difficulties and dangers without injury. Zhu-ge Liang crossed the Lu River in the fifth month and, despite the heat, came to no harm. Both were able to destroy the man and the *yi* and open up territory. Now, the great generals have the opportunity for a decisive victory. You know this from the previous Lu-chuan battles. You should repent your crimes and make an effort to change calamity to good fortune (MSL 5 Apr 1448).

The Ming court pledged that if Si Ji-fa personally submitted in advance of his capture, he would be sent back to govern the lands he had been assigned to and would be allowed to exercise his old rights of tribute-taxation ("living or eating off the land") (MSL 5 Apr 1448). If Si Ji-fa fled to another area, Mong Yang would be held personally responsible (MSL 5 Apr 1448). When the fourth campaign to Yunnan was finally set in motion in April of 1448, flight to Ava by Si Ji-fa where he would be "concealed" was mentioned as a distinct possibility by the Ming. If Si Ji-fa fled, the Ming expedition was ordered to take the ruler of Mong Yang, Dao Bian-man, prisoner (MSL 19 Apr 1448). The Ming court ordered Hsenwi, Ava, Nan Dian, Gan-yai, and Long-chuan, all formerly part of Mong Mao, to raise troops, prepare boats and store grain and await orders for deployment." Special care was taken to requisition adequate grain stores (MSL 19 Apr 1448, 5 May 1448, 19 Jun 1448).

Since the Ming believed that Si Ren-fa might flee south to Ava to evade Ming capture, the Ming enlisted Ava's deeper involvement in the campaign. Worried that the ten days it would take to build boats to cross the Irrawaddy river would provide an opportunity for taking flight and evade capture, the Ming commander Wang Ji requested that Chinese leather boats be sent from Nan-jing, but his request was refused (MSL 6 Jun 1448). Si Ji-fa managed to flee into the wilds before the Ming could cross the river, but Wang Ji followed in quick pursuit (MSL 11 Feb 1449).

The *Ming Shi-lu* describes the route they took. First, the expedition's forces marched from Tengchong garrison to Gan-yai and built boats. These boats were used to navigate the river to Nan-ya Mountain. From there, they traveled overland to a place named Sha-ba where they again built boats and traveled down the river "to the two fords at Da-ling and Ha-han" on the Irrawaddy river. They floated down the Irrawaddy until they encountered the palisades that Si Ji-fa had erected on the west bank of the river (MSL 12 Mar 1449). Over 100,000 troops from Hsenwi and Ava had already arrived and encamped on both sides of the river. Ava troops under the leadership of Tai-meng Zhe-gai (Chinese transliteration of Burmese name) made a bridge out of over two hundred boats. Ming forces crossed the river, climbed the bank, and attacked the Tai palisade. The Tai side suffered defeat. Casualties and captives ran in the hundreds. Si Ji-fa fled to higher ground.

Since the Ming food supply was running low, the Ming troops spent three days foraging for food, which resulted in the gathering of 400,000 *shih* of paddy grain, sufficient to feed troops and horses. From the river, the Ming marched into the highlands of Mong Mao to confront Si Ji-fa and his forces.

The bandit son had also built a large stockade on top of Mount Gui-ku, while on the two ridges there were another two stockades. Supporting the three stockades, were a further seven smaller stockades behind and in all, they extended for 100 li. Each stockade had two rows of palisades and there were great logs and stones fastened to the top of the palisades. We divided the troops and attacked in a pincer move. First we attacked the stockade to the left. The logs and stones sounded like thunder and the cannon projectiles and arrows fell like rain. Then suddenly, the Southern wind blew strongly and we hurriedly collected firewood and set it alight. The flames leapt to Heaven and the commanders and troops attacked with great vigour. The man [barbarian] bandits screamed and fled for their lives. In one moment, all the stockades were breached (MSL 12 Mar 1449).

The Ming expedition returned to the Ming capital after their victory. They had achieved a decisive Ming victory and dispersal of Tai manpower but Si Ji-fa and his sons evaded capture. The year 1449 was the year of the Tumu Debacle on the northern Ming frontier in which the imperial armies were destroyed and the Ming emperor himself was captured, a major turning point in the Ming dynasty (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 326). Ava was distracted momentarily from events in the Tai Frontier by events in Arakan. In 1449, war broke out in Arakan and when the ruler of Sandoway came over to the Burmese side he was given the taxes from Prome's villages. A garrison was installed at Sandoway under Taraphya.

After the return of the Ming forces to the capital, the Ming commanders Wang Ji and Gong Ju were accused of gross negligence and profiteering. The use of army porters to carry silks for trading and military officers acting as traders was among the charges leveled at them. War captives had been castrated and kept for their own use as servants rather than turned over to the Ming court for use as eunuchs as required by law. Horses were lost and soldiers made to carry an excessive amount of grain (six *dou*). A complete lack of discipline that led to “trampling and injury” without “any pity” being shown to those injured. Some soldiers even hanged themselves, so worn out and distraught had they become. Finally, it was claimed that the Ming had achieved no real decisive victory after all these campaigns, expensive in money as well as manpower. Ming forces had simply withdrawn before the real job of conquest was finished and had appointed Ava and Tai Hsenwi to assume their responsibilities (MSL 8 Jul 1449).

In 1450, the Mon king of Pegu was assassinated by one Nga Swe. Ministers at Pegu then made a request to Ava that Banya Kyan be allowed to rule at Pegu. Banya Kyan, a member of the Pegu royal family and a brother of the Mon queen Shin Saw Bu [Mon: Banya Thau], was apparently kept as a hostage at Ava. Ava sent Banya Kyan south with a large contingent of troops to install him on the throne of Ava (UKII: 84). With Ava’s work for the Ming in the north still unfinished, Ava faced military challenges in all directions.

The Burmese capture Si Ji-fa (1449-1454)

In the wake of the northern defeats, most of the Ming forces returned home and responsibility for finding Si Ji-fa was handed over to a Burmese commander from Ava. Ava was promised Mong Yang if they handed Si Ji-fa over to the Ming. In 1451, the Ming reported that Ava had captured both Si Ji-fa and his son Si Bu-fa, but there was still no clear resolution to the problem in sight. The difficult decision as to what the Ming should do remained:

The Ava-Burma Pacification Superintendent Bu-la-lang captured the bandit sons Si Ji-fa and Si Bu-fa, but did not immediately send them to the capital. He then returned Si Bu-fa to Meng-yang [Mong Yang] to manage and live off (lit: eat off) that area. Now I [a Ming official speaking] wish to order them to forward Si Ji-fa to the Court. However, I fear that the Ava-Burmese are greedy for profit and see him as a valuable commodity. Their demands will be endless. We should show that we are not anxious and should wait for them to bring him to the Court. Afterwards, promotions and rewards can be issued. They also declared that if Si Bu-fa again engages in rebellion, they will request troops to coordinate in eliminating him. We cannot really allow this, as I am afraid that it will give rise to border troubles (MSL 22 Sep 1451).

Si Bu-fa sent a tribute mission from Mong Yang to the Ming court in 1453. He requested that Mong Yang be handed over. This was not possible, the Ming court replied falsely, because Mong Yang had already been given to Ava. The Ming sent fine silks in instead (MSL 27 Jan 1453, 2 Apr 1453).

According to Burmese sources, in 1450, the Burmese ruler of Mong Yang Thihapatei died and the king of Ava's son Min U Ti entered into a state of rebellion against Ava together with the Tai rulers Si Ji-fa [Burmese: Tho Kyein Bwa] and Si Bu-fa [Burmese: Tho-pot-bwa]. The king of Ava sent troops under the crown prince to deal with the problem. The king of Ava accompanied a large body of forces along the river up to Hti Kyi to support the land forces. Min U Ti resisted the crown prince's forces from Panlat. The crown prince defeated them and captured Min U Ti as well as sons and wives of Si Ji-fa and Si Bu-fa. The two Tai leaders fled south to Hti Kyi to meet with the king of Ava, claiming that they had refused to support Min U Ti with troops when he marched to Mogaung. The king of Ava administered the two Tai leaders an oath of allegiance and had Min U Ti executed together with his accomplice Son Ngot. Mong Yang was handed over to the sons of Si Bu-fa to rule, but Ava kept the two Tai rulers Si Ji-fa and Si-Bu-fa as captives.

Ava waited for the reward of territory that had been promised before handing Si Ji-fa over to the Ming. Meanwhile, in the year 1451, the ruler of Toungoo was assassinated and the town entered a state of rebellion against Ava. The king of Ava sent the crown prince north to Kaung-ton on the Irrawaddy near Bhamo during 1451/52. When the expedition reached Katha, the family of Si Bu-fa came and paid homage. The crown prince of Ava handed over to the king of Ava the sons and wives of Si Bu-fa who had been taken hostage together with a gift of three hundred viss of silver. During the same year, the Mon king of Pegu Banya-kyan died and his son Mawdaw became king. Mawdaw ruled long enough to pledge his assistance to the king of Ava in a letter, but died within the year. His aunt, the devout and renowned Banya Thau (Burmese: Shin Saw Bu), became queen (UKII: 85).

Three years would pass before the Burmese handed Si Ji-fa and his family over to the Ming. An official named Hu Zhi finally made the handover of territory. Domains in Yin-jia are explicitly mentioned in the Ming An-

nals, but Mong Yang is not. In exchange, Ava handed over six people including Si Ji-fa and his family at a village on the Irrawaddy. (MSL 26 Apr 1454, MSL 20 May 1456). Si Ji-fa arrived at the Ming capital in a cage on August 30, 1454 and was executed on September 2, 1454 (MSL 30 Aug 1454, 2 Sep 1454). Two years later, in 1456, Si Ji-fa's son Si Bu-fa, probably having received news of what happened to his father, sent a humble tribute mission to the Ming capital with gifts and silver tax to clearly signal his submission (MSL 20 May 1456). In 1466, Si Ming-fa, a grandson Si Ren-fa, was sent from Yunnan to the Ming capital. There he was not sentenced to death, but neither was he allowed to return to Yunnan or reside at the capital. Instead "in accordance with the precedents governing surrendering *yi* [barbarians]" he was sent to live in remote place by the sea far away from his native place mountainous Yunnan with a meager monthly allowance (MSL 8 Jul 1466). It is worth noting that the local Yunnan history of Nanchao *Nan-chao Ye-che* claims that Mong Yang was handed over to Burmese Ava in 1452 (Sainson, 1904, 236).

After the end of the fourth Luchuan-Pingmian Campaign in 1454, regular Tai raids once again became a threat to the Burmese heartland. The Chinese allowed remnants of the defeated Tai ruling elite to remain in Mong Yang if they agreed never to cross the Irrawaddy river to the east. This pushed Mong Mao westwards, closer to Ava. These raids would eventually gain momentum and in 1524-27 there would be a fullscale invasion of Ava that brought the Burmese dynasty of rulers that had ruled Ava since 1364 to an end. For the Ming, a revenge motive was a logical way to explain these invasions. The relentless westward push of the Ming frontier, in search of the precious metals and luxury goods like amber that the region was well endowed with, is an obvious alternative explanation (SLC; Perdue, 2005, 41-42). The long Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns drained the Ming state of military and economic resources and encouraged more uprisings in the southwestern provinces of China (Wang Gungwu, 1998, 326). One important consequence of these unsuccessful wars was that the Ming henceforth favored diplomacy and shunned military action along the frontier (Fernquest, 2005b)

7. Conclusion

The initial question put forward at the beginning of this paper can now be revisited: Was Mong Mao a fully integrated state (c. 1340-1454) or was it only a loosely held together chieftainship with decentralized and diffuse power?

The limited scale and duration of shifting political centers in the Tai Frontier indicates that there was a level of political integration not yet that of a fully developed state. A network of chieftainships that joined together occasionally for a common purpose in tenuous and changing confederations offers a better model. The centers within the Tai frontier zone that asserted themselves politically either through warfare or through building ties with the Ming and Burmese varied from period to period. Sometimes there were two major centers asserting themselves in different ways as there was from 1382 to 1400 when Mong Yang attacked Ava and Mong Mao built strong ties with the Ming.

James Scott's assertion that Burma existed in a state of "anarchy" with "no state in any robust sense of the term" is largely born out for both Upper Burma as well as the Tai Frontier during this period. Warfare played a central role in perpetuating this anarchy. Ava's rule over Upper Burma was subject to continual Tai military attacks and intervention in the politics of Upper Burma. During long stretches of time, Ava existed as a unified state projecting its power beyond its core area of control only when it was fully mobilized for warfare as it was during the Ava-Pegu War (1383-1425) and once again during the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (1438-1454) (cf Tilly, 1992). Mingyiswasawke's long fifteen-year period of state consolidation at Ava (1368-1383) was a peaceful exception to the rule of anarchy and warfare. Yet another factor adding to political anarchy in the mountainous hinterland of the Tai Frontier could best be termed "geographical uncertainty in warfare." As Whitmore (2004) noted of Vietnamese campaigns into the Tai Frontier adjacent to Vietnamese territory: "The Tai campaign...played itself out in a vague strategic setting...the territory was only vaguely known and the goals left open." It was a "generally unknown exploration," in essence, an armed exploration into unknown territory (Whitmore, 2004, 134).

Who ultimately controlled Mong Yang?

One of the more perplexing problems is the question of Mong Yang [Mohnyin, Meng-yang, Mogaung], who governed it, Tais, Burmese or the Ming, and how it was governed before and after Mong Mao's ruling elite permanently relocated to Mong Yang during the Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns. Since Mong Yang plays a much more important role in Burmese-Tai relations, solving this problem also lies at the heart of integrating the separate Chinese (Dai) and Burmese (Shan) threads of Tai history, that still constitute quite separate domains of scholarly work.

Sun Laichen (2000) notes the ambiguous nature of political control over Mong Yang: “Burmese sources, including inscriptions and chronicles, suggest or even claim that Mohnyin [Mong Yang] had been under Ava's control up to the 1470s. But this control was at most intermittent and nominal, as Chinese sources show” (SLC 234).

Let us summarise what we know and can assume. The Tai ruling elite of Mong Yang permanently resided at Mong Yang, so they would have formed a first level of two-level indirect rule. A Ming or Burmese ruler appointed from outside would have been the second level of indirect rule, perhaps spending only a fraction of time at their appanage. Ava's Burmese elite were located fairly close to Mong Yang, at least a lot closer than even the Ming officials at Kunming. The Ming made only periodic assertions of control over Mong Yang, the effort in 1430 being a noticeable example. The Ming, however, were a potentially dangerous military threat, if they chose to assert themselves militarily. During the Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns, Ava appears to have taken their claim to ownership of Tai domains and their offer of a reward for the capture of Tai elites very seriously.

Ava first asserted control over Mong Yang in the early 1400s, putting an end to Mong Yang attacks on Ava from 1373 to 1393. In the 1410s, Mong Yang faded into the background and Hsenwi took center stage in a long-running conflict with Ava. Mong Mao under Si Ren-fa asserted control over Mong Yang in 1426 just as Mong Yang's Burmese ruler was becoming king of Ava. By the time the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns were in full swing in the early 1440s, members of the Ava court appear to have exerted great influence over Mong Yang, although in 1448 the Ming communicated with a Tai elite ruler of Mong Yang rather than a Burmese one (MSL 5 Apr 1448) and by the end of the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns in 1454, the Mong Mao ruling elite, having relocated to Mong Yang, seem to be firmly in control. What is one to make of all of these shifting power relations?

Mong Yang was likely subject to the sort of dual or overlapping hegemony or spheres of influence typically found in frontier areas. Since the Ming were ultimately the stronger part in this potential contention over resources, a clear title of ownership of a Tai appanage would have been advantageous to the Burmese. There were possibly two tiers of rule consisting of a Tai ruler who ruled directly over the domains and extracted tribute and taxes from them, and a second tier Burmese or Ming possessor of the appanage who received tribute and taxes from the Tai ruler, in essence a patron-client chain.

This could explain why the offer of Tai chieftainships for the capture of Si Ren-fa, and later the offer of Mong Yang for the capture of Si Ji-fa, was attractive to the court of Ava. Recognition by the Ming of Ava's claim to rule Mong Yang would have avoided contention over tribute and taxes and made them easier to extract. In many ways, Burmese administration circa 1400-1450 resembles the move from decentralized to centralized Indic administration proposed by Lieberman (2003, 35) in which "more closer patronage and family ties between Burmese courtiers and their Tai counterparts" were cultivated and the fact that "some of the most distant tributaries would continue to pay homage to China...as well as Burma" was accepted (Lieberman, 2003, 161)

Historical cycles in the Tai Frontier

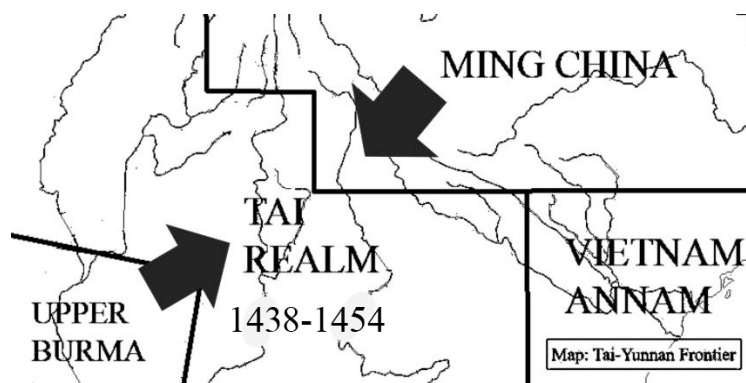
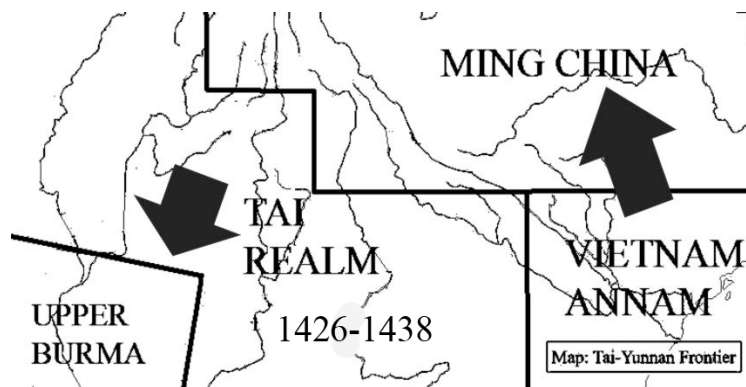
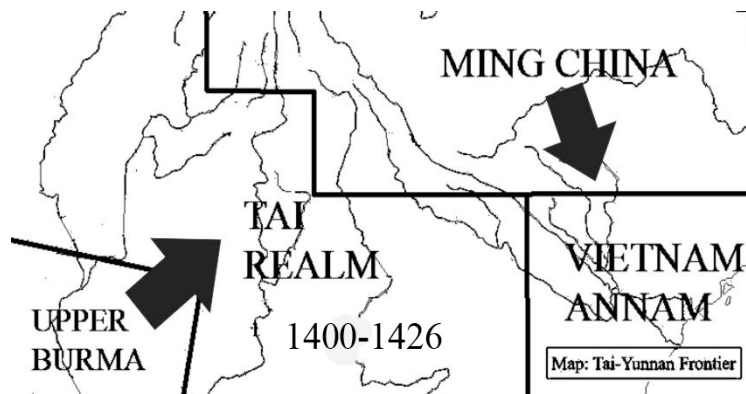
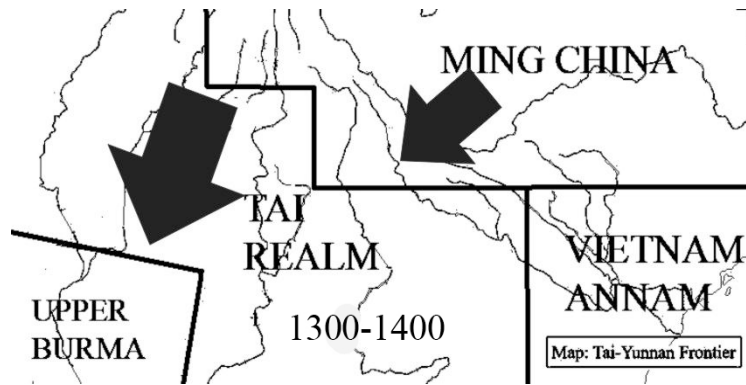
Despite the reign of “anarchy” in the Tai frontier zone, this anarchy had an overall shape that was cyclical. Victor Lieberman discovered a generalized cyclical pattern in later Burmese history in his *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760* (Lieberman, 1984). Prior generations of historians ignored this cyclicity. The historian of Burma Harvey's (1925) characterization of the Ava period as one of “Shan [Tai] Dominion” is clearly false. The Tais played an important role in the history of this period and were involved in periodic contests with Ava over its domains as well as their own domains. Instead of a grand Tai “Southern Advance” during this period, there was instead a periodic or cyclical movement that was often driven by external factors such as the wars being waged by the Ming and Ava in other theaters or on the disposition of the current Ming emperor and court.

The pattern of Ming-Tai-Burmese warfare over the 150-year period 1300-1450 is summarized below (Table 2) and Maps 1-4.

Table 3: Direction of military action

Period	Movement
1300-1401	Tai attacks Burma, Ming attacks Tai
1401-1426	Burma attacks Tai, Ming attacks Vietnam
1426-1438	Tai attacks Burma, Tai attacks Tai, Ming retreats from Vietnam
1438-1454	Burma attacks Tai, Ming attacks Tai

Maps 1-4: Tai Realm – Tai Frontier



The Tai-Burmese relationship was defined by a continual use of military means to assert power. Military action played less of a role in the Ming-Tai relationship, with the Ming asserting power over the Tai Frontier mostly through diplomacy and administrative change, employing only a few, but decisive, military campaigns for limited periods of time. The power of Mong Mao followed the periodic ebb and flow of the personal power of individual rulers. The column labeled "cycle" in the table of Mong Mao Rulers records a rough estimation of the cyclical increase and decrease of Mong Mao's power with "+" and "-" marks (See Table 2 further above).

The hidden transcript of the Tai Mong Mao chronicle provides, in a rough form, the cyclical manpower-demographic dynamics driving Si Ren-fa's expansionary warfare leading up to the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (c. 1426-1438). It shows how expansionary warfare could quickly gather momentum and just as quickly lose it:

... he was *reinforced by the armies of all the chiefs he had subdued so far*, and decided with his enormous host, to attempt the conquest of Mithila [Yunnan]. He started accordingly from Tai-lai, but was met by a Chinese force under the walls of the capital (Mung-kyei) [Kunming] and was defeated; he then fell back first on Tai-lai, afterwards on Wan-chjang (Yung-chang), and eventually retired into Mau [Mong Mao] territory, *followed by the inhabitants of all the places he had subdued*, who preferred to cast in their lot with his, rather than endure the vengeance of the Chinese. *On arriving near his capital, he found the inhabitants panic stricken and flying to Ayudia and in many other directions; his army broke up and joined in the flight*, whilst he himself, accompanied by his brother Chau Si-pha [Si Ji-fa]...sought an asylum at Ava (Elias, 1876, 21-22, my italics).

Long-run demographic forces behind warfare in the Tai Frontier: Further research

Two population flows warrant further investigation: (1) Tai population flows out of the Tai Frontier into Upper Burma during and after the Ava-Pegu War, and (2) Ming Chinese flows out of Vietnam and back into Yunnan. The work of James Lee on the demography of Yunnan indicates the rough magnitude of migratory flows into Yunnan:

Large numbers of Han people began arriving in the crescent [Tai Frontier] during the Ming period. It is impossible to determine how many Han came to the crescent at this time, but James Lee has documented three large immigration waves between 1391 and the 1580s. Using these figures, we can estimate that well over 140,000 Han migrants, mostly soldiers and their dependents, settled in the Tengyue-Yongchang area during the Ming period (Giersch, 2001, 73-74, citing Lee 1982, 285-90).

Inter-regional Ming military movements and the establishment of garrisons may have had more far-reaching demographic effects:

... state policies which encouraged movement of Chinese people into newly-conquered areas included the establishment of state farms ... and military farms ... One of the *limiting elements for further expansion by the Ming state was the availability of grain to feed initially troops and later officials and settlers*. Military farms and state farms were thus established to provide this grain. In 1426, during the latter years of the Ming occupation of Đại Việt, at least 8,000 'native troops' ...from nine guards in Jiao-zhi were being employed on military farms (Wade, 2004, 29, my italics).

These garrisons (Chinese: *wei-suo*) were established all over China including Yunnan. The Ming established military farms (Chinese: *tun-tian*) to support garrisons. The soldiers manning a garrison were divided into farming units and guard units. The farming units produced a food supply to support the guard units (Liew Foon Ming, 1984, 1998, 2006). The soldiers who were mustered under the Yongle emperor to fight in and occupy northern Vietnam (Chinese: Jiaozhi Province) were mustered from garrisons all over China. The Ming often had problems providing enough food for all their troops in Vietnam (Wade, 2004, 8) indicating that contention over food supply often existed in areas newly under Ming control such as the Tai Frontier.

The causal relationships between population pressures and warfare are far from simple environmental circumscription theory that posits a direct causal connection between population pressure and warfare was once widely accepted (Carniero 1970, 1978; Lewellen, 1992, 54-55; Johnson and Earle, 2000, 258-259). Paul Wheatley employed it in *Nagara and Commandery* (1983, 22), his classic work on pre-modern Southeast Asian urban history. Recent research has cast doubt on a general relationship between population pressure and warfare, but population pressure can be a factor behind leading to increased intra-regional warfare (Turchin, 2006, 1-2). Models that simplify the problem such as Turchin and Goldstone's 'Demographic-Structural' model can be adapted to describe the effect of changing population on politics and warfare in the Tai frontier zone (Turchin, 2003, 118-149; Goldstone, 1991).

The general idea of how long-run changes at Ferguson's infrastructural level eventually could cause change at Braudel's (1966) history of events level, runs roughly like this. Human agency, driven by ideas at Ferguson's su-

perstructure level tip the structural or infrastructural balance (or trigger an inflexion point, in the mathematics of non-linear dynamics, see Beyerchen, 1992) and release a pressure that has built up at the infrastructure level, for instance population pressure. Let us say there are effectively two populations in a region, elites and commoners. Commoners consume a food supply of rice. Elites tax and consume a portion of the commoner food supply. A sudden exogenous increase in the region's population has two possible effects that lead to reduced taxes. A sudden movement of the Ming military back to Yunnan places stress on the food supply, if the soldiers are not immediately self-supporting through, for instance, the establishment of military farms. Second, with an increase in Ming officials there was likely increased contention for the taxes (economic rents) that could be extracted by elites from local commoners, leading to higher levels of intra-regional warfare, banditry, and feuding. Following Di Cosmo's model of state formation for the northern Chinese frontier (Di Cosmo, 1999, 10-18, 26-27; Fernquest, 2005b, 122-4), the increased stress on the food supply could lead to a crisis that in turn leads to military mobilization in Tai society, followed by centralization, unification, and resource extraction, first in the form of raids on Tai chieftainships neighboring the resurgent Mong Mao, later in the form of settlement and tribute-taxation. Tilly (1985) sketches a similar model of state formation.

Another force driving Ming migration and political control was the *kai-zhong* system of rice procurement. This system used the Chinese state monopoly on salt to procure rice for Ming military forces. In this system, the state sold "state-monopoly salt to merchants for grain which the merchants were required to transport to areas where border troops were stationed" (Wade, 2004, 29-30). Exactly what impact, if any, the system had on the Tai frontier food supply during our period is obscured by the system's complexity:

The system was instituted in Yun-nan during the Hong-wu reign (1368-98) in order to feed the Ming forces sent to occupy the region. In the 1420s, with the Ming occupation of Vietnam, *the merchants preferred to sell their grain to the forces in Vietnam, rather than continue to supply Yun-nan*. In the 1430s, the system was strongly revived in Da-li and Jin-chi in Yun-nan to supply the forces to be used against Si Ren-fa of Lu-chuan. It was still being used in 1445 to feed the persons building the walled city at Teng-chong, the new Chinese outpost in Yun-nan (Wade, 2004, 29-30, my italics).

Demographic models have the potential to reveal repeated historical patterns. Tai expansionary warfare (c. 1426-1438) may have repeated the earlier pattern of Tai raiding against Burma (c. 1340-1364), raiding that played an important role in state collapse and regime change in Upper Burma (Bennett, 1971, 27). In the process of moving from internal feuding-banditry to external expansionary warfare (Turchin and Korotayev, 2006), Tai chieftainships likely moved away from acting independently and drew into temporary cooperative confederations and alliances for strength and solidarity (Di Cosmo, 1999; Turchin, 2003; Andreski, 1968), however these confederations were fragile and held together for only short periods of time. They were apparently also accompanied by settlement into the regions the Tais attacked. Contemporaneous emergent Mon, Cambodian, and Ayutthayan states seem to have exhibited similar patterns of political activity at roughly the same time (Chutintaranond, 1990; Baker, 2003; Fernquest, 2006), a promising area for future research.

Clearly, a lot of research remains to be done on the demographics side in the study of the Tai Frontier. Fundamental changes in social structure brought about by contact along frontiers also remains largely unstudied. As anthropologists such as Leach (1954, 1960) have shown, frontiers are also places where politically dominant societies can transform the social structures of politically subordinate societies, a process that can lead to a higher degree of political integration as it did in the Kachin movement from an egalitarian tribal to a more hierarchical Tai-like social organization. Leach's analysis focused on the effect of the dominant Tai on the hill-dwelling Kachin. Similarly, Grabowsky (2004, 41-44) critically reviews the possible Chinese or Mongol origins of the northern Tai Nai Sip social structure. How long it takes for these social structure changes to occur is a critical question. The rigid hierarchy of the Tai political structure that Ming envoys found at Mong Mao in 1396, and later describe in the *Bai-yi Zhuan*, may have been the result of Chinese influences, much as Kachin social structure was influenced by the proximity of lowland Tai social structure. Mong Mao shared the same basic Nai Sip ("master of ten") or "Hua Sip" social structure with social groupings of: 10/50/100/1000/10,000/100,000 to enable census, taxation, and labor mobilization for both military and corvée labor uses. This social structure was likely borrowed from the Chinese and may date as far back as the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) (Grabowsky, 2004, 41-43; Wade, 1996, app. 2, 2). Mong Mao's mail courier system (Wade, 1996, 10) that tied Mong Mao society together across a mountainous landscape also appears to have been influenced by similar Chinese systems.

A brief summary of the history

A brief summary of the broad historical patterns during our period is in order. During the first period (c. 1340-1401), Mong Mao was a unified coalition of states waging expansionary warfare against Ava. In the second period (c. 1401-1426) the Burmese split the Tai coalition and governed each of the Tai chieftainships separately. In the third period (c. 1426-1438) individual Tai chieftainships in the south joined with local rulers in Upper Burma and aided them in their resistance against the Burmese center at Ava. To the north, Mong Mao united Tai chieftainships and engaged in expansionary warfare against the Ming. Finally, in the fourth period of the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (c. 1438-1454) the Ming defeated a united Mong Mao in decisive battles. With the help of Burmese, Ava tracked down the remnants of Mong Mao's ruling elite. The center of Mong Mao's power was pushed westwards to Mong Yang closer to the Burmese heartland. Overall, there was no lasting territorial consolidation in either the Tai Frontier or Upper Burma during this period and the degree of unity and independence varied greatly over time. Tai unity largely depended on mobilization for warfare.

Starting in 1340, Mong Mao attacks against Ava under Si Ke-fa brought a period of crisis and regime change to post-Pagan Upper Burma. After Si Ke-fa's death, power seems to have passed to Mong Yang for an interval as evidenced by the frequent successions and disorder that reigned at the Mong Mao court and Mong Yang's attacks against Ava in the 1370s and 1390s. From 1382, Si Lun-fa ruled over the Tai Frontier under the aegis of the Ming. The Ming are said to have joined Pingmian to the Luchuan that Si Lun-fa ruled over. There is little evidence, such as Mong Yang's attacks against Ava during the period, to indicate the furthest extent to which the Mong Mao of Si Lun-fa projected its power or whether Mong Yang was acting in coordination with Mong Mao.

In 1388, the Ming overcame challenges to their power in the Tai frontier zone. Renewed Tai attacks against Upper Burma in 1393 were ended by Ming envoys in 1396. Buddhist monks and renegade Chinese soldiers added to the parade of outsiders welcomed to Mong Mao by Si Lun-fa during the 1390s. Threatened Tai elite insiders reacted by expelling Si Lun-fa. The rebels at Mong Mao were, in turn, rebelled against. The Ming reinstated Si Lun-fa militarily by the Ming. Nonetheless, he died in the continuing chaos, succeeded by his son Si Xing-fa.

The succession crisis at Ava in 1401 brought with it a military reversal. The Tai raids that had delivered the final coup-de-grace to post-Pagan Upper Burma were reversed and Ava began to assert control over the Tai north. Ava extracted man and animal resources from the Tai Frontier for Ava's war against Pegu in Lower Burma. Ming diplomacy that had once supported the Burmese against Tai intrusions, now supported Tais against Burmese intrusions.

Political discord and fragmentation accompanied the end of the Ava-Pegu and Ming-Vietnam wars. To the south, Tai forces attacked Ava, killed the king, and sparked a succession struggle that passed power to the former Burmese governor of Mong Yang. To maintain his power he had to wage continual warfare against settlements in the southeastern part of Upper Burma such as Yamethin, Pinle, Toungoo, and Taungdwingyi. Tai chieftains, who apparently remained in Upper Burma after their service in the Ava-Pegu war, supported these settlements. To the north, Mong Mao resurged and engaged in expansionary warfare driving into the Ming heartland of Yunnan. This led to the Ming launching the Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns that would last more than a decade (c. 1438-1454). They consumed massive amounts of Ming manpower and threatened Ming prestige. In the aftermath, the Ming favored coercion by traditional Chinese diplomacy and administration over military means.

Table 4: Tai chieftainships occupied by Mong Mao (1426-42)

Year	Chieftainship
1426	Mong Yang
1428	Nandian, Tengchong, Yongchang
1436	Mengding
1437	Nandian (annexed 278 villages)
1439-42	Menglian

(Source: Daniels, 2006, 31-32)

As the Ming became more deeply involved in the disastrous Luchuan-Pingmian campaigns against the Tais of the 1440s, the Burmese at Ava were drawn into this conflict when the Ming offered rewards for the capture of Tai leaders. Although the Ming won decisive pitched battles against Tai chieftains, the mountainous terrain of the Tai fron-

tier zone made it possible for small remnants of the Tai elite to continue their existence in hopes of fighting again in the future. Under Ming pressure, the political and military leadership of Mong Mao moved westward to Mong Yang. At Mong Yang Tai power was lined up along the Irrawaddy river with the Burmese capital of Ava in Upper Burma and posed much more of a threat to the Burmese heartland.

The semi-tropical climate made it difficult for Ming forces to survive for long periods in the Tai Frontier. The difficulties that the Ming encountered led them to offer territorial rewards to both Ava and Hsenwi for the capture of Tai leaders that evaded capture. Eventually, the Burmese captured the remnant Tai leaders but delayed handing them over until the Ming fulfilled their part of the bargain and gave Ava the Tai territory they had promised. Eventually, under pressure, the Tai leaders were handed over to the Ming with only a partial fulfillment of the promise.

Neither Mong Mao nor Mong Yang was ever turned over to the Burmese as the Ming had promised. This led to further contention over territory in the Tai Frontier in the 1490s. In 1524 there was a full-scale Tai invasion of the Burmese capital of Ava in Upper Burma that instituted a period of Tai indirect rule that lasted from 1527 to 1557. A resurgent Burmese kingdom won back Upper Burma from the Tais in 1555 and took the Tai heartland of Mong Mao in 1557 (Fernquest, 2005b, 2005c). This was the beginning of a long series of campaigns into the Tai Frontier that controlled for a time Lanna, Lan Chang, and Ayutthaya. Mong Mao never regained its independence after this final Burmese assertion of power.

Epilogue: Bibliographical notes on Tai history

A short literature review for Tai History is in order to lay a foundation for future history writing. Tai ethnic settlements (Shan, Ahom, Tai Lu, Lanna, Siam, Tai Daeng, Tai Dam, Lao) have long extended across the hinterlands of northern mainland Southeast Asia (See map 5 and map 6).

Map 5: Tai Realm – Tai Frontier



Map 6: Tai Realm – Tai Frontier

Map 2
Tai Frontier

Lieberman (2003) proposed the notion of a Shan realm between China and Upper Burma (123-5). Whereas the Shan realm is restricted to the mostly Burmese western mainland Southeast Asia, Tai ethnic groups extended across the full length of northern mainland Southeast Asia into Vietnam (Si Song Chu Tai) and down into central mainland Southeast Asia into Lanna and Ayutthaya. A notion of a “Tai realm” extends the notion of a Shan realm to this larger region.

Each Tai ethnic group in the Tai realm has a history recorded in local chronicles, oral traditions, and in the historical works of neighboring China and Burma. Linguists describe and compare the grand sweep of Tai linguistic diversity in great analytical depth (Baker, 2002). Historians, on the other hand, have yet to plumb the depths of this diversity. Part of the problem is that Tai history sits astride both Chinese and Southeast Asian history.

Historians from the time of Scott (1900, v. 1, 199-200) and Luce (1957, 1958, 1959) have conceived of an integrated Tai history. The complex web of historical place names and events, recorded in the chronicles of the disparate Tai, Ming, and Burmese historical traditions, have made the collation of historical sources and the reconstruction of an integrated history a formidable task. The calendrical systems, rendition of personal and place names, the extent to which obviously fictional elaborations have crept into the historical narrative, and the very purpose for which the history was composed in the first place, all vary between the Tai, Ming, and Burmese traditions of historical writing. The extensive Tai historical chronicle tradition remains largely unexplored, despite being an important medium “for the creation and transmission of historical memories,” an additional independent source, and a counterbalance to the often “excessive subjectivity” of Ming sources (Daniels, 2006, 21). Ultimately, the three perspectives of the Tai, Ming, and Burmese historical traditions must be reconciled to produce a composite picture of what actually happened during this critical period in Southeast Asian and Chinese history.

Historical scholarship that treats the Tai realm in an integrated manner has developed slowly over the years. Over one hundred years ago, Scott and Hardiman’s *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States* (1900) and Elias’s *History of the Shans* (1876) provided a synthetic view of Tai history. Scott’s *Gazetteer* contains translations of extracts from the extensive collection of Tai manuscripts that he collected during the British colonial period that are now located at Cambridge University (Marrison, 1972). Terwiel’s (1981) magisterial comparative survey of Tai ritual is perhaps the most wide-ranging comparative work to date. Recently, new contributions range from accurate, complete, and well-indexed translations of the *Ming Shi-lu* and the *Bai-yi Zhuan* by Geoffrey Wade (1996, 2004), David Wyatt’s integrative general history of Thailand (1984) and annotated chronicle translations (1994, 1995), in a similar manner Jiang Yingliang’s general history of the Tai in Yunnan (1983) and annotated translation of the *Bai-yi Zhuan* (1980), the detailed critical Ming histories of Liew Foon Ming (1984, 1996, 1998, 2003, 2004) and Christian

Daniels (2001, 2003, 2006, no date), the detailed reconstruction of local histories from sparse sources of Volker Grabowsky (1999b; 2004, 2005) as well as the a model for editing, annotating, translating, and providing the original script as well as Thai transliteration versions of local chronicles (1999a), the linguistic studies of Hartmann (1998) and Baker (2002), the extensive collecting, editing, translating, and publishing of Tai Kheun manuscripts by Anatole-Roger Peltier at the University of Chiang Mai, the Thai language annotated translations of Tai historical chronicles by Sompong Witthayasakphan (2001a, 2001b) and his extrapolation of Tai political organization from them (2001c), the studies of the Tai Ahom by the Gogoi (1956, 1968, 1991), the study of trade in the Tai Frontier of Prasertkul (1989), Whitmore's recent focus on the history of the Tai-Vietnam Frontier (2000, 2004), the historical papers of Kida Mikio (1974, 1980, 1981, 1985) on the Tais of Yunnan during the Ming and Yuan dynasties, and the studies of Cam Trong (1995, 1998) on the Tais of Vietnam. More recently, Sun Laichen (2000), Giersch (2001), Sai Kam Mong (2005), Pamaree Surakiat (2005, 2006), Fernquest (2005b), and Aye Chan (2006) also address Tai history in a more integrated fashion. See Witthayasakphan (2002) for a review of Thai scholarship in Tai studies and Keyes (2002) for a review of anthropological work on ethnicity in frontier regions.

The most urgent priority and greatest bottleneck to a better understanding of Tai and Burmese history is the compilation, editing, and translation of primary sources in languages of relevance to the Tai Frontier: various Tai dialects, Classical Chinese, and Burmese. This constitutes a whole research program unto itself, one which is only just beginning.

Appendix A: Lists of Rulers

Ming Dynasty Emperors

Hongwu 1368-1398

Jianwen 1398-1402

Yongle 1402-1424

Hongxi 1424-1425

Xuande 1425-1435

Zhengtong 1435-1449

Jingtai 1449-1457

Ava Kings/Chieftains

Thadominpya (1364-1368)

Nga Nu (1368)

Minkyiswasawke (1368-1401)

Tarabya (1401)

Nga Nauk Hsan (1401)

Minhkaung (1401-1422)

Thihathu (1422-1426)

Min-hla-nge (1426)

Kalekyetaungnyo (1426)

Mohnyinthado, Mohnyin Mintaya (1427-1440)

Minyeyawswa (1440-1443)

Narapati (1443-1469)

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RESEARCH NOTES

Ro(d)gers: a Brief Addendum

Gerry Abbott

In my article concerning Ro(d)gers (Abbott, 2005), I inadvertently omitted a certain amount of information. As I have been contacted by a descendant who tells me that there is also a Rodgers in Australia who can trace his ancestry back to that renegade Englishman, the following additional information will no doubt be welcomed by these two people, and I hope will be of interest to others.

Readers will remember that Ro(d)gers claimed to have arrived in India aboard the HCS *Worcester*, which anchored in the Hooghly in 1782, probably in the August of that year. Bulley (1992) supplies some evidence of his activities between that landfall and his appearance in Amarapura fifteen years later.

Less than four years after arriving in India, Ro(d)gers turns up in Sumatra, where he first appears on 29 June, 1786. John Adolphus Pope, a young mariner at that time, was aboard the *Princess Royal* – a ‘country ship’ plying the shores of Southeast Asia – and noting his experiences in a series of letters. He recorded what happened that day while the ship was anchored at Gingham (modern Bireun, near the northern tip of Sumatra) and he was ashore:

I got on board about Noon and found while I was on shore that a Ketch under Pegu colours had arrived and that she was commanded by a Mr. Rogers, the man that had been our Chief Mate before Mr. J. came. (...) The Captain and he not being on good terms, I suppose he will not trouble us much. I have heard Captain F. say that he was a man of some talents but very unfit to be an officer. I don't exactly know what he meant by this (Bulley: 69).

Unfortunately Pope does not say how long Rogers had been chief mate of the *Princess Royal*. Almost two years passed, and then the ship docked at Rangoon. Early in May 1788, when young Pope went ashore to deliver some cargo, Rogers reappeared:

I meet every day a number of French. There are near 50 settled here and some English, amongst them our Mr. Rogers. (...) This town seems to be a resort for people labouring under bad characters and for rogues of every description. The whole part of its European inhabitants are people of this description (Ibid: 116-117).

Rogers soon showed one sign of bad character by dragging the eighteen-year-old Pope through the town's red-light district:

The Quarter appropriated for Courtezans called Jackaley is in the suburb to the west of the town. They are regularly licensed and the Master of so many (for they are slaves of various nations) is answerable for their good behaviour. You know I became acquainted with this by being forced to go through it on an excursion I made the other day with Mr. Rogers. They were in general very handsome ... I was gallantly offered to be introduced which I very ungraciously declined (Ibid: 119).

Pope was delighted, however, when Rogers took him to view the superb Shwe Dagon Pagoda. Thereafter Rogers does not figure in Pope's letters, and almost a decade passes before the talented but tainted renegade reappears, this time in the Burmese capital, Amarapura. The second of a series of British envoys, the self-important Captain Hiram Cox, arrived there in 1797. Although he makes no mention of Rogers in his official journal, Cox says in his report to Calcutta:

To one man I have particular obligations (...) a Mr Rodgers, who has been eleven or twelve years in the country, and should I effect an establishment here I shall beg leave to recommend him as Burmha Translator and Head Interpreter to the Residency. Such an appointment will be absolutely necessary (Cox, 1812).

It is at this point that I can return the reader to my earlier article, the fifteen-year gap having been at least partly filled in. All that remains to be said is that, given Captain F's description of Ro(d)gers as 'a man of some talents but very unfit to be an officer', there can be no doubt that the Rogers recorded by Pope and the Ro(d)gers described by later figures such as Symes and Gouger are one and the same.

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REVIEWS

Yang Li (Jackie Yang). *The House of Yang, Guardians of an Unknown Frontier*. Sydney: Bookpress. 1997. xvi, 149 pp. Introduction, preface, maps, illustrations, appendices, index. Hardback.

The Mandarin-speaking Chinese peoples of Burma, whether Hui or Han, have been little studied, which is a cause for welcoming this book on the Han state of Kokang, bordering on Yunnan. It is written with passion, and with much intimate inside knowledge, and the maps, photographs and family tree are illuminating. However, the author is no professional historian. Although the book is based on British archives and oral sources, it is very lightly annotated, so that it is often unclear where information comes from. The chronology is jumbled, and the approach is personal, anecdotal and partisan. This is the story of a dynasty, rather than that of a state or people, and the author presents a somewhat questionable view of the benevolence of her family as rulers. Jackie Yang favours British colonialism for its indirect rule, and dislikes Burman nationalism for snuffing out regional autonomy and hereditary dynasties. For all these weaknesses, however, there is much here that can contribute to a better understanding of the fragmented history of northern Burma.

The House of Yang originated when a Ming loyalist, a tea trader by profession, fled westwards from the Qing advance in the mid-seventeenth century. He became a minor warlord in the marches of Yunnan, and kept the turbulent non-Chinese minorities under control. His descendants came to rule over a population that was mainly Han, and their little court was culturally oriented towards China. By the late eighteenth century, the Yang family had extracted recognition from the authorities in Yunnan, while simultaneously paying tribute to the Shan ruler of Hsenwi. After the British had forced China to accept the inclusion of Kokang in Burma in 1897, the House of Yang attempted to shake off the suzerainty of Hsenwi. Under the Pax Britannica, Kokang prospered by replacing tea with opium, gaining an exemption from the 1923 British prohibition on cultivating this crop, and hiring mules to the Indian army. With the arrival of the Japanese in 1942, the House of Yang threw in its lot with the Guomindang authorities in Yunnan, while staving off Chinese plans to annex the principality. This 'loyalty' was rewarded after the war, when Britain at last made Kokang a 'Shan State' in its own right in 1947. However, independent Burma 'betrayed' the spirit of the Panglong Agreement of 1946. After a brief Indian summer, the regime born of the 1962 coup dismantled the Shan States. Armed struggle in Kokang, from 1963 to 1968, was financed by smuggling opium to Thailand, and much of the population left for Thailand and Lashio. The Communist Party gained a precarious ascendancy in Kokang into the 1980s, and when the junta finally agreed to a measure of autonomy in 1990, the House of Yang was no more.

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Monique Skidmore. *Karaoke Fascism: Burma and the Politics of Fear*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2004.

In *Karaoke Fascism: Burma and the Politics of Fear*, Monique Skidmore seeks to understand how Burmese people have survived under authoritarian rule and managed the fear that the military regime engenders. In this, she undertakes an anthropological study of the creation of affect in the politics of everyday life. She argues that the regime's attempts to create a totalitarian military utopia have caused the Burmese people to fragment and silence themselves emotionally, but that they have been successful in exploiting the fissures in this campaign of fear and finding, if only symbolically, means of escape.

Skidmore takes as her premise that fear has become "the central affective element of urban life in contemporary Burma" (x) and the first few chapters are dedicated to understanding the means of production of this fear. She uses Michael Tausig's work on terror as theoretical model for this section, however Skidmore finds traditional anthropological methods inadequate to study affect in contemporary Burma. Given both the potential danger to informants of speaking with a foreigner about politics and the fear that discussing their vulnerabilities produced, Skidmore carefully limited her interviews to situations in which her informants felt safe, which were often restricted to brief reflections whispered in secret. In order to supplement this data, she proposes to read Burmese silences about fear and to intuit Burmese experiences of fear through her own emotional experiences of the same and similar situations. The first four chapters thus give us a picture of urban Burma during the year of her fieldwork-1996-the year of the extraordinary hit-and-run demonstrations and military repression. In this presentation we get an image of the paranoia, self-censorship and feelings of vulnerability the experiences of this year produce in the anthropologist. Through her informants' and her own experiences, she presents a picture of Burmese affect as characterized by a lack of trust, an uncertainty that means one cannot plan for the future and a vulnerability which collectively, she argues, have lead Burmese people to block external expression of emotion and to deny thinking about the fear that she understands to characterize Burmese life.

In chapter four, Skidmore moves from the catalog of the means of production of fear to an argument that the current regime is an aspiring, but yet unrealized fascist state. Working from late 20th century Marxist analysis of Fascism in Europe, she argues that the regime enacts a totalitarian strategy of social control which, relying on terror, seeks to subjugate all aspects of life to the goals of the state, repressing thought, criticism and creativity completely.⁷⁸ While the Burmese state has not realized this type of military utopia, she argues that the concern that it might become reality is forefront in the fear she studies. It remains only incipient fascism because the Burmese people have become adept at exploiting the fissures in the totalitarian project. The concept of karaoke fascism, from which the title is derived, is not simply that of the Burmese state imperfectly reproducing a European political form, but of Burmese people resisting the totalizing aspects of the regime's project by emptying themselves out emotionally while mouthing the words to the military's version of society.

Starting with chapter five, Skidmore leaves the specific description of affect and moves to a broader description of the cultural and symbolic modes of repression. Here Skidmore engages Walter Benjamin's insights into the nature of fascism and capitalist modernity to investigate the urban façade of wealth and consumption that has emerged in the past decade. She points out not simply the ways in which the new construction has been financed through drug trafficking but the hidden costs of this endeavor through her fieldwork with heroin addicts.

In chapter six, Skidmore engages Benjamin's argument that modernity has transformed the citizen into a consumer of empty dreams and spectacles and equally turned the body itself into a commodity for consumption. Skidmore uses this insight to investigate the phenomena of mass rallies and the regime's use the bodies of large groups of the population to demonstrate both their role in the promotion of the people's goals and the populations acceptance of their projects. Yet, as Skidmore argues both for mass rallies and in her studies of prostituted women in the new peri-urban towns, Burmese people find multiple routes of escape. They employ the various cultural and symbolic means at their disposal to send their souls and emotional selves away during the most acute moments of repression, ultimately defeating the totalitarian project. Here Skidmore provides a very detailed description of life in the town she calls New Fields to describe the various means, particularly religious and magical that Burmese people use to exploit the fissures and interstices in the military's project and ensure that its totalitarian ideals are never fully realized. The use of absurdity, magic, astrology, mediation, alchemy and games of chance of-

⁷⁸ In this section, Skidmore relies heavily on an article by Peter Sinclair on the capitalist nature of Fascism. The citation is one of a few from this section that are missing from the bibliography. It is: Peter Sinclair, "Fascism and Crisis in Capitalist Society," *New German Critique* 9 (Autumn 1976) 87-112.

fer a means of imagining alternative realities and possibilities and it is in the description of this Burmese subaltern religious world that the book really shines. Ultimately Skidmore is worried that these strategies may have fragmented Burmese people emotionally beyond possible future integration, but she demonstrates the ways in which they have successfully thwarted the totalizing aspects of the state.

Given the political nature of anthropology of contemporary Burma, emphasis in this book as in other recent studies regrettably falls on the extraordinary as opposed to the ordinary aspects of Burmese life. I found, however, the book was at its most insightful when it was focused on more mundane aspects. An example of this comes in the contrast between the first few lines of chapter one, which present stark and shocking images of a prostituted woman, a heroin addict and an impoverished mother and the thick descriptions of these groups presented in later chapters. The shock-value of the first lines leaves the reader skeptical of the argument they seek to present, whereas, the careful depiction of these groups in the later chapters is highly effective in communicating the everyday and structural violences of the current situation. When the emphasis or tone falls on the more exceptional the book is weaker. The period of Skidmore's fieldwork was an extraordinary moment in the history of the past eighteen years and this may be the reason that the scenes and emotions she describes take on a tone not recognizable to other scholars and residents of urban Burma. Likewise, it is the extraordinary nature of the experience for her that limits the method she proposes. Skidmore's method participates in a history of anthropology that intentionally places the anthropologist in the ethnography, however, in this case, the project doesn't account for the fact that what for her are exceptional experiences of fear and paranoia are realities that Burmese people have lived with for over a decade. In the same vein, I feel that her emphasis on the Burmese state as an incipient fascist state is less useful than the broader insights into the betrayals and totalizing trajectories of capitalist modernity for which the theorists she uses are better known.

The book however offers a wealth of insight when its emphasis is on the ordinary. Skidmore is unique among foreign anthropologists in gaining extended access to groups of the peri-urban poor, especially heroin addicts and prostituted women. Her insights into the nature of prostitution and the ways in which Burmese women survive the structural and mundane violence of poverty and prostitution are valuable contributions for those thinking about the position of women in Burmese society. Likewise her analysis of the use of religion, the occult and gambling contributes to the current work in the post-colonial studies that seeks to understand the ways in which people re-deploy symbols to try to shape their realities outside of hegemonic forces. Most important is her contribution to Burma studies in the engagement of contemporary critical theory, here Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School of criticism, to understand the cultural and symbolic politics of the current situation. She provides an analysis that moves beyond a simple analysis of state-focused politics and economics to a broader level of cultural critique. It is in these, its best aspects, that we can hope the book represents the future of anthropological scholarship on Burma.

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Emma Larkin. *Secret Histories: Finding George Orwell in a Burmese Teashop*. London: John Murray. 2004.

Emma Larkin's *Secret Histories: Finding George Orwell in a Burmese Teashop* begins with her discovery that Orwell has the reputation in Burma of being a "prophet" due to his three most famous books: *Burmese Days*, *Animal Farm*, and *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*. According to Larkin, "It is a particularly uncanny twist of fate that these three novels effectively tell the story of Burma's recent history" (p. 2). Larkin explains that the oppression of the entire population in Burma was "completely hidden from view" by information control carefully yet invisibly planted in every corner of Burma and cemented by the "vast network of Military Intelligence spies and their informers" and the "threat of torture and imprisonment." Larkin admits that the fear that ordinary Burmese face everyday was beyond imagination for an outsider and fits well with the psychological, social, and political landscape of Orwell's novels, which "explore the idea of individuals being trapped within their environment, controlled by their family, the society around them or an all-powerful government" (p. 4). Larkin's fascination with Orwell was further strengthened when she found that Orwell in his final days was trying to write another novel about Burma under the title of "A Smoking Room Story." Generally, Larkin's familiarity with Orwell's writings is impressive, bringing into the discussion other writings by Orwell including *The Road to Wigan Pier*, *Homage to Catalonia*, *The Clergyman's Daughter*, *Shooting an Elephant*, and *A Hanging*.

Although many researchers of Orwell underestimate the significance of his experience in Burma, Larkin suggests that Orwell's years in Burma provided a strong foundation for the perspectives that fueled his writing. Larkin thus embarked on a trip to Burma to "experience Burma as Orwell knew it" which she believed possible because "almost half a century of military dictatorship has given it the air of a country frozen in time" (p. 4). Larkin discovered, however, a much more bitter reality in contemporary Burma, "a real-life Nineteen Eighty-Four where Orwell's nightmare visions are being played out with a grueling certainty" (p. 4).

Larkin's story is based on her own interviews with students, former prisoners, publishers, intellectuals, refugees, and members of the Anglo-Burmese minority, as well as those who approached her, on their own initiative, with their own accounts. Larkin is fluent in Burmese and this is a real strength of the book, for she is fully able to grasp the reality and essence of life in Burma vividly through stories told by her interviewees. Larkin then weaves each of their stories into Orwell's world in which the life under a totalitarian regime where people (as well as animals) were constantly under Big Brother's surveillance and those who opposed the government faced severe torture. Chapters are divided according to the cities (Mandalay, the Delta region, Rangoon, Moulmein, and Katha) where Orwell spent his life in colonial Burma as one of the officers of the Imperial Police Force in the 1920s. In order to understand Orwell's life in Burma and how his experience influenced his writing, Larkin attempted to find locals who knew Orwell or his family and the houses where he resided or the buildings where he might have visited during his residence. In doing so, a parallel theme emerges in the story of Burma today as told by the people she interviewed.

In Chapter One, Larkin visited the last royal capital of Burma, Mandalay, where Orwell began his colonial career studying at the police training school. Larkin visited the colonial hill station of Maymyo (today, Pyin-Oo-Lwin), northeast of Mandalay, which Orwell had described as a nostalgic place reminding him of his English homeland. In both places, Larkin tells us that remnants of Orwell's Burma still linger. The building that housed the police training school, for example, is still being used to the present. Larkin locates the remains of Orwell's days in the building's haunted room in which a young, lonely British officer committed suicide, in the old colonial hotel built in "impressive mock-Tudor-style" in Maymyo, in the hotel restaurant's menu, and the dusty bar where British officers once drank the day (and night) away. But these are mere glimpses of another time. All that remains, Larkin finds, are derelict buildings, abandoned rooms, and many ghosts. This corresponds to the present condition of her interviewees, especially their dismal living conditions, the government having forgotten to take care of them.

In Chapter Two, Larkin visited the Delta region, a mud land and a mosquito heaven where no British colonial officers had wanted to dwell for very long. It was so miserable that one Burmese author whom Larkin talked with even believes that Orwell's experience in Delta was the catalyst for his transformation into an author ruled by pessimism. While in the Delta region, Orwell was posted at Myaungmya and Twante. From her research at the India Office Records (British Library), Larkin discovered that the time during which Orwell was stationed here was one of the most unsettling times for the British in Burma. Violence and crime, always attributed, correctly or incorrectly, to the "dacoits" was at its peak, making Burma "the most violent corner of the Indian Empire." According to Larkin, Orwell's superiors at both stations were famous "crime-busters" who were also skilled in shooting. Larkin suggests that this harsh colonial reality, witnessed first hand by Orwell, raised his doubts about the beneficial aspects of the imperial system.

Today, Orwell might have been just as wary of government rule in the Delta region. Larkin tells us that Burma's Big Brother is fully at work here, even in remote Myaungmya. Her arrival was reported immediately to the Military Intelligence (MI) and they swiftly appeared to investigate her purpose for visiting this town. Although Burma's Military Intelligence's method is not high-tech, Larkin assures the reader that "it is just as efficient." Larkin continually asked her friends how to distinguish MI agents or their informants from other people and the answers she collected reveal that everyone has their own method for doing so, ranging "from the ludicrous to the arcane." What becomes clear is that the peoples' preoccupation with the ubiquity of this secret network, and the belief that they are watched constantly in their daily lives, runs so deep that they are trapped in a state of paranoia. As one of her Burmese friends remarked, "it doesn't make any difference whether they have informers or not. It is enough that we believed that their informers are everywhere. After that, we start to do their work for them" (p. 63).

In Chapter Three, Larkin focuses on her experiences in Rangoon in the midst of the removal of the FEC (Foreign Exchange Certificate) from the market. Larkin's discussions with a Burmese friend reveals how the information-deprived people in Burma, at the time of special economic or political changes, have learned how to live safely by analyzing every available source of information, especially reading between the lines. Larkin's friend, Ko Ye, for example, explained to her that the Burmese were "experts at looking for what's not there" and they pay attention to what is missing because that absence is the key to tell the truth" (p.132). Ko Ye gave an example of the time of Burma's banking crisis when articles on the banking system suddenly disappeared from the leading economic magazines. That was an indicator that something big must be happening in the banking system. Further, Ko Ye informed Larkin that the Burmese do not miss any small change happening around them in their everyday life, because these slight changes are also great indicators and telltale signs of concealed events. Ko Ye's explanation of how to survive includes some measure of pride, since he discusses such a strategy in terms of a match of wit between the government and the people. Nevertheless, Larkin explains that she felt she was becoming immediately paranoid after adopting this 'Burmese' way of life, suggesting to the reader how mentally demanding it is to survive in a society where one has to watch everything constantly.

Chapter Four focuses on Moulmein, where Orwell's mother grew up and where he served in 1926 as the chief of the police headquarters. Larkin attempts to understand how Orwell's views, as a representative of the colonial empire, on racism began to tremble from time to time as Flory does in Orwell's *Burmese Days*. Larkin was interested in Orwell's ambivalence to racism, as he believed it to be a quintessential element of colonial society, yet was deeply appalled with colonial rhetoric that sustained it. Larkin's research on Orwell's life in Moulmein led her to an interesting fact that Orwell might have had an Anglo-Burmese cousin whom he never mentioned in his writings, which would complicate attempts to interpret Orwell's views on racism. Larkin further analyzed Orwell's ambivalence as revealed in his "love and hate relationship" with Kipling as well as in Orwell's essay, *Shooting an Elephant*. In *Shooting an Elephant*, Larkin explains, "Orwell writes how he was trapped between his own resentment toward the Empire and the Burmese peoples' resentment towards him" (p.177). Larkin continues this examination up to the final chapter: Katha, where Orwell was stationed and which Orwell used as a model for the setting of *Burmese Days*. Larkin concludes that Orwell had become a strong Empire hater by the time he served at Katha as he carried guilt for being a part of "the great despotic machine of empire" (p. 219). It was from this point that that Orwell's essence as a writer was born and it is this 'new' Orwell to whom contemporary Burmese relate. At the same time, Larkin does not let us forget that racism which existed in Orwell's time never disappeared but continued to take new forms, that is, the current regime's discrimination against non-Burman ethnic minorities.

Burma Studies, always representing a strange milieu of views, tends to move back and forth between engagement and disengagement with political activism and issues. Academics appear much more silent today on the negative aspects of the regime and the Burmese situation than several years ago, while expressions of sympathy or apology for the regime and its policies seem to be increasing. Critics, perhaps a silent majority, might be more cautious today because of disagreement on how to resolve Burma's current situation, admission of the futility of evoking change, fear of jeopardizing the safety of friends in Burma, or various professional risks. Whatever the reasons, this reviewer finds Larkin's attempts to remind us of the precarious life of Burma's population courageous.

One cannot help but feel sympathy for the Burmese in the face of the book's many stories of hardship and desperation. These stories may not contribute new information about the general living conditions of the Burmese population. Reports and other information made available by Amnesty International and the WHO, as well as numerous other international organizations (not to mention the Western press) have made this situation abundantly, even numbingly clear. Judging the book on these terms would be a superficial reading. The real value of this book does not lie in providing familiar stories but in putting them into a new context. Seemingly endless accounts of hardship told by the people whom Larkin interviewed help the reader to understand how the essence of Animal

Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four was so evident in Burma, not just in Orwell's time, but also in the present. As Larkin argues, this is the reason why the Burmese consider Orwell as a prophet of the emergence of Burma as it is today and as their storyteller and this is why stories of peoples' lives in contemporary Burma dwell on Orwell's writings and overlap with Orwell's protagonists. This is a fine book, recommended for both the general readership and academics interested in a people whose daily lives leave much to be desired.

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Russ Christensen & Sann Kyaw. 2006. *The Pa-O: Rebels and Refugees*. Chiangmai: Silkworm Books. ISBN: 978-974-9575-93-2. US\$ 22.50.

Given the paucity of published material on the ethnic group who are labelled Taungthu by the Burmans but call themselves Pa-O, this book is to be warmly welcomed. In fact it is, barring theses or dissertations, the first book on the Pa-O to be published in English. The Pa-O, a name cognate with Pwo, are generally considered to be a sub-group of the Karen. Although this book is a little slender (81 pages excluding notes and bibliography) it contains a great deal of information about the Pa-O, most of it right up-to-date and much of it gathered first-hand along the Thai-Burma border. The fieldwork was carried out over a four-year period by Christensen, a former US officer plainly committed to the Pa-O cause, with the invaluable help of Sann Kyaw, himself an ethnic Pa-O who has served with the Pa-O National Organisation as a signals officer.

The book begins with a glance at the tale of Weikja and Naga, the legendary ancestors of the Pa-O, a couple who emerge from two eggs. This story is very reminiscent of the folk-tale 'Master Born-of Egg' (see Gerry Abbott & Khin Thant Han, 2000: 198), a fact which may indicate a close kinship with the Mon. The book then moves on to a brief survey of references to the Pa-O in Burma's history, by the end of which we have reached page 14. The rest of the book deals with events from 1947 onwards, including the Pa-O rebellion. Here we come across the all-too-familiar fracturing into rival groupings: on page 29 alone, for instance, we see SSNLO, CPB, SSNLF, SURA, KMT and KNPP.

But the focus remains on the Pa-O, and sharpens in the succeeding chapters. We are taken through the tribulations and sufferings of one community, mainly at the hands of the Burmese army but also because of Thai government policy, as it is forced to relocate ten times in eighteen years. As a result of such hostility and upheaval, the Pa-O identity on the Thai side of the border is being eroded, while the communities still on Burmese soil are being hounded by the so-called People's Army.

The focus finally falls upon some individual survivors, who tell of their experiences in a chapter headed 'Six Pa-O voices.' Here are a few extracts:

My aunt said because I am Pa-O I should learn Pa-O...(12-year-old girl)

In 1996 my sister and three children died. My mother stayed with my brother. He was conscripted as a porter, got malaria, and in 1997 he died. In January 1998 my father died ... (23-year-old man)

We had no food. We cut down young banana trees and ate the hearts. (...) We had no meat for a month until I shot a large monkey. (30-year-old former soldier.)

My children, a daughter and two sons, were killed by government soldiers while they worked in the fields... (80-year-old Karen refugee)

I had twelve sons; nine have died. One was a Red Pa-O soldier and was killed in southern Shan State. I don't know whom they were fighting. (90-year-old woman)

The book ends with chapter-by-chapter notes, a useful bibliography and an index.

I felt that there was an occasional slight discontinuity, which may have resulted from welding together various articles on the Pa-O. Having outlined the origin-legend on page 1, for instance, the authors provide seven pages of historical information before telling us that "The legend focuses upon the Pa-O's migration" (p. 8). The gap led me to wonder whether this was indeed a reference to the Weikja/Naga tale or to some other legend. But this is a trivial matter. The authors and Silkworm Press are to be congratulated for updating our knowledge of a little-studied ethnic minority group and for highlighting yet again the inhumanity of the Burmese junta.

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