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Ming China and Southeast Asia in the 15th Century: A Reappraisal

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Introduction

In early 14th-century China, the Yuan regime experienced a decline in both political power and military strength. This situation provided an opportunity and incentive for bids for power or simply self-protection by other political players. The highly-militarised state of Chinese society in this age determined that warfare between Yuan loyalists, local self-defence leaders, smugglers, and sectarian rebels marked much of the succeeding decades. By the 1350s, rival rebellions had resulted in the "China" which the Yuan rulers had controlled being divided into diverse polities which warred against each other. A rebel leader known as Zhu Yuan-zhang was eventually able to secure control over increasingly large areas and establish a new Chinese state, which he named Great Ming (大明). With the establishment of his capital at Nan-jing in 1368, Zhu began a dynasty whose power was to extend until 1644.[1] Even after the establishment of the capital, however, the Ming forces still needed to engage in huge battles against competitors. One such battle which involved Ming forces fighting against the Yuan loyalist Kökö Temür in 1370 saw 85,000 of the latter's troops and 15,000 of his cavalry horses being captured. However, by that time, the Ming forces had already captured the Yuan capital of Dadu, renaming it Bei-ping, or Northern Peace, and the consolidation of the new state was well in train.

Ming concerns with the Mongols whom they drove from China was to influence much of both domestic and foreign policy over the following centuries, and was also to result in much dithering by the Ming founder over the final location of his capital.[2] After establishing his capital at Nan-jing, naming his heir and his empress, creating six ministries and appointing his major administrative officials, he issued a new Ming law code, all of which provided the foundations for the new dynasty. During the 1370s, Zhu Yuan-zhang expanded the structure of the Ming government and, partly due to a growing paranoia, established an increasingly large contingent of palace eunuchs to act as his trusted advisers and counter-balances to the civil administration. This administrative apparatus which he created was to remain essentially in place for the remainder of the dynasty. It was this imperial and administrative structure which was to initiate and implement both the domestic and foreign policies of the Ming for the next 280 years.

[1] For more detailed accounts of the demise of the Yuan dynasty and the founding of the Ming, see F.W. Mote, *Imperial China 900-1800*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 517-583; and also F.W. Mote, "The Rise of the Ming Dynasty 1330-1367" in *Cambridge History of China,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Vol. 7, pp 11-15.

[2] Zhu Yuan-zhang had inspected Kai-feng, the former Song capital, and his birthplace of Feng-yang (Hao-zhou), as well as the Han and Tang capitals of Xi-an, as his potential capitals. He did, however, subsequently decide to remain at Ying-tian (the modern Nan-jing), possibly because of its distance from the Mongol heartlands.

Ming Foreign Policies and Southeast Asia

As reflected in both official and non-official Chinese texts, the Ming rulers saw themselves, or at least depicted themselves, as being divinely sanctioned by Heaven to rule China and those beyond, extending to "all under Heaven". This required that they "enfeoff" rulers of surrounding polities, who were then expected to submit regular "tribute" to the Great Ming. It was this understanding that was to provide the rhetorical and ritual bases of much of the Ming's relations with polities beyond its immediate administrative control.[3]

That not all rulers of Southeast Asian polities agreed with this perception of their position vis-à-vis China is obvious, even from the Chinese texts. In the middle of the 15th century, for example, Krung Phra Nakhon Sri Ayudhya, the ruler of Ayudhya refused to accord with the Ming envoy's demands to bow to the north in respect to the Ming emperor and the Chinese envoy to Ayudhya was "secluded" and subsequently died.[4] However, despite such instances, achieving recognition from the Ming court appears to have been important for some rulers and did play an obvious role in the polities and economies of Southeast Asia during this period. The Ming acted as a counterbalance to other hegemons such as Majapahit, and provided polities with both access to a "tribute"-trade relationship with China, and an alternative security system. Participation in this system is overtly accepted in the Vietnamese annals, where it is noted, for example, that the Đại Việt ruler "sought enfeoffment" （求封）from the Ming in 1457.[5]

Ming relations with Southeast Asia have already been subject to some scholarly attention,[6] and on the basis of these works, there are a few generalities

[3] For some broad-ranging studies of imperial China's foreign relations, see the essays within J.K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, Cambridge, Massachussetts, 1968; Morris Rossabi (ed.) China *Among Equals: the Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors 10th-14th Centuries*; and Mark Mancall (ed.), *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy* (Transformation of Modern China series.) NewYork, Free Press, 1984.

[4] *Ming Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 229.4a and *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 2.19a.

[5] Chen Ching-ho, 陳荊和 （編校）校合本 <大越史記全書> (3 本), (*Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*), Tokyo, 1985-86. See pp. 635 and 641.

[6] The works of Wang Gungwu, J.V.G. Mills, Oliver Wolters, Roderich Ptak and Sun Laichen are notable in this area, and include: Wang Gungwu's "The Opening of relations between China and Malacca" in J.S. Bastin and R. Roolvink (eds.) *Malayan and Indonesian Studies: Essays Presented to Sir Richard Winstedt*, London, pp 87-104; "Early Ming relations with Southeast Asia: A Background Essay, in Fairbank, *The Chinese World* Order, "The First Three Rulers of Malacca" in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Malaysian Branch*, Vol. 41 (1968), pp. 11-22; and "China and Southeast Asia 1402-24" in J. Chen and N. Tarling (ed.) *Social History of China and Southeast Asia*, Cambridge 1970, pp. 375-402: J.V.G. Mills' *Ma Huan,Ying-yai Shen-lan, "The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores" [1433]*, Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, Extra Series No. XLII, 1970; and "Chinese Navigators in Insulinde about A.D. 1500" in *Archipel* 18 (1979), pp. 69-93; Oliver Wolters' *The Fall or Srivijaya in Malay History*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1970; Roderich Ptak's essays collected in *China and the Asian Seas: Trade, Travel, and Visions of the Other (1400-1750),* Ashgate, (Collected Studies, 638), 1998 and *China's Seaborne Trade With South and Southeast Asia 1200-1750*, Ashgate (Collected Studies, 640), 1999; and *Fei Hsin, Hsing-ch'a sheng-lan: The overall Survey of the Star Raft*, translated by J.V.G. Mills*;* revised, annotated and edited by Roderich Ptak, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 1996: and Sun Laichen's "Chinese Military Technology and Dai Viet: c. 1390-1497" in Nhung Tuyết Trần & Anthony Reid (eds.), *Viet Nam: Borderless Histories* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press); "Military Technology Transfers from Ming China and the Emergence of Northern Mainland Southeast Asia (c. 1390–1527)" in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Volume 34: 3 (October 2003), ", and "*Chinese Military Technology and Dai Viet: c. 1390-1497*,

which can be dealt with first. It needs to be stated at the outset that there was frequent exchange of envoys between Ming China and the polities of Southeast Asia. One of the first acts of the Ming rulers on coming to power was to send officials to other polities to announce the new reign. Ming envoys were also sent to these polities for a range of other functions including "enfeoffments", or to offer sacrifices on the deaths of rulers. These envoys were usually supervising secretaries (給事中) from the various Offices of Scrutiny (六科). A few examples will suffice to show (at least the stated) functions of some of these missions.

1. Offering sacrifices for deceased ruler of Champa 1452.[7]
2. Offering sacrifices for deceased ruler of Siam and enfeoffing son in 1453.[8]
3. Enfeoffing ruler of Malacca in 1459.[9]
4. Enfeoffing ruler of Annam in 1460.[10]
5. Enfeoffing ruler of Champa in 1478.[11]

Another major element of Ming-Southeast Asian interactions was the "tribute" missions from the Southeast Asian polities, which are widely recognised as having had a strong trade element. These have been the subject of a range of articles and an excellent index exists which can be used to track the incoming missions to the Ming of at least the Islamic polities of Southeast Asia for much of the 15th centuries.[12] The lack of attention given to these missions in this paper is a function of the amount of research already conducted on them rather than an indicator of their relative importance.

Even if one is sceptical of the degree to which Chinese texts reflect what was happening in Southeast Asia in the 15th century, or even if one considers that the "enfeoffments" and "tribute relations" of which the Ming texts wrote were no more than exchanges of diplomatic niceties between polities, we can still say, with much certainty, that the Ming was heavily involved in Southeast Asia throughout the century.

In examining the effects that the Ming had on what we now know as Southeast Asia in the 15th century, it is perhaps first necessary to look at what policies were pursued in respect of the region by the successive Ming rulers. A chronological study of these policies constitutes the first part of this paper, and it is followed by an attempt to synthesise the individual policies and activities into a more coherent account of how the Ming state and its agents affected Southeast Asia through that century.

Asia Research Institute Online Working Paper No. 11 (Sept 2003),
http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps03_011.pdf

[7] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 218.1a.
[8] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 225.11a-b.
[9] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 306.5a-b.
[10] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 306.5a-b.
[11] *Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 181.2a-b.
[12] Watanabe Hiroshi, "An Index of Embassies and Tribute Missions from Islamic Countries to Ming China (1368-1466) as recorded in the Ming Shih-lu, Classified According to Geographic Area" in *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, No. 33 (1975), pp. 285-347.

Southeast Asia-related Policies of Ming Tai-zu / the Hong-wu Reign (1368-98)

Early in his reign, Zhu Yuan-zhang, the first Ming emperor, provided instructions as injunctions to later generations. These dictums included advice to the Chief Military Commission as to which countries posed a threat to the Ming polity and those which did not. He stated that those to the north were dangerous, while those to the south did not constitute a threat, and were not to be subject to unwarranted attack.[13] Yet, either despite this, or as a result of it, it was the polities to the south of the Ming which were to suffer the greatest effects of Ming expansion over the following century.

Invasions of Yun-nan Polities

In 1369, not long after Zhu Yuan-zhang founded his new dynasty, he sent proclamations for the instruction of "the countries of Yun-nan and Japan." (雲南日本等國).[14] This early recognition of Yun-nan as a "country" which lay beyond the Ming was to change very soon thereafter. By 1380, Yun-nan was considered to have been China's territory since the Han dynasty,[15] and 250,000 troops were deployed in an attack on the polity, taking Da-li, Li-jiang and Jin-chi in 1382. Thereby, the Ming founder took control of the major urban centres of the north-western part of what is today Yun-nan, including several Tai areas.

By 1387, Ming Tai-zu had extended the aspirations of his enterprise and, in preparation for an attack on the Bai-yi (Möng Mao) polity to the south of his earlier conquests, a military officer was sent to Si-chuan to buy 10,000 ploughing cattle. These were to be used to plough the fields necessary to feed the troops on the likely long-term expedition. Under the commander Mu Ying, the Ming forces attacked the Bai-yi with firearms, taking a claimed 30,000 heads.[16] Si Lun-fa, the ruler of the polity, was subsequently dunned for all the costs of the military expedition against him, as a *quid pro quo* for recognising him as ruler of the Bai-yi![17] When Dao Gan-meng rebelled against Si Lun-fa in 1397, the Chinese state gave sanctuary to the fleeing ruler, sent troops against Dao Gan-meng and restored Si Lun-fa, extracting vast tracts of land from him for the assistance rendered to him.[18] The Ming state also broke down his former territory into the polities of Lu-chuan, Meng-yang, Mu-bang, Meng-ding, Lu-jiang, Gan-yai, Da-hou and Wan Dian, all under separate rulers.[19] This was the beginning of a policy of divide-and-rule which was to be pursued throughout the Ming, and which had such profound effects on the upland Tai polities.

The "Native Offices" of Yun-nan

The new polities which were "created" (or recognised) in Yun-nan under the first Ming ruler were known to the Ming as "native offices" (tu-si –土司), as they were, initially, usually left under the control of the hereditary rulers. It was through these rulers that the Ming exerted control and engaged in economic expropriation involving tribute demands and other levies. Che-li (Chiang Hung), a Tai polity which

[13] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 68.4a-b.
[14] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 39.1b. Another reference to Yun-nan as a country can be found at *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 53.9a-b.
[15] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 138.5a-b.
[16] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 189.14b-16a.
[17] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 198.2a-b.
[18] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 255.2a-b and 255.8a-b.
[19] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 15.2a and 16.3a.

was antecedent of Sipsong Panna, was recognised as a "native office" in 1384 with the original ruler as the "native official". In 1385, the Ming established the Yin-yuan-luo-bi dian Chief's Office in Yuan-jiang prefecture, Yun-nan (near the Red River). This Tai polity had a "circulating official" Chief and a native-official deputy chief. The circulating official was a part of the formal Ming bureaucracy while the deputy chief was undoubtedly part of the hereditary leadership family.[20] Here, then, we see the beginnings of the process by which formerly Southeast Asian polities were gradually absorbed into the Chinese state.

Economic Exploitation of Yun-nan

In the process by which they were gradually absorbed by the Ming, these polities were subjected to a wide range of tribute demands, labour levies and other claims, including troop provision. As an example, in the case of the Tai Mao polity of Lu-chuan/Ping-mian, the Ming court demanded 15,000 horses, 500 elephants and 30,000 cattle from the ruler Si Lun-fa in 1397.[21] Subsequently, large silver demands (silver in lieu of labour) were levied on Lu-chuan. The annual amount of 6,900 *liang*[22] of silver was initially set and then it was almost tripled to 18,000 *liang.* When it was realised that this was impossible to meet, the levy was reduced to the original amount.[23] Diverse other levies were applied to the other polities and enforced through the use or threat of military force.

Tribute/Trade

The Hong-wu reign was marked by frequent sending of Chinese envoys to foreign polities and the court's reception of envoys from the maritime polities of Annam, Champa, Cambodia, Siam, Cochin, San Fo-qi, Java, Japan, Ryukyu, Brunei, and Korea. They were apparently drawn to China by the trade concessions available to tribute envoys and the rewards given to the rulers who submitted the "tribute."[24] However, the trade-diplomacy machine was also apparently utilised by some within the Ming administrative structure to exercise influence and control. It was the failure to report the arrival of an envoy from Champa that led to Hu Wei-Yong (胡惟庸), the Ming prime minister from 1377 to 1380, being subject to intense investigation and subsequently executed on charges of treason.[25] The possible involvement of Hu Wei-Yong in a wider range of unofficial links with the polities of Southeast Asia has already been discussed by Wolters,[26] and need not be reiterated here. Suffice it to say

[20] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 172.5b.
[21] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 190.3b.
[22] A Chinese unit of weight, often referred to as a "Chinese ounce". During the Ming, it averaged 37 grams.
[23] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 17.6a.
[24] In 1384, it was stated that the accompanying goods brought by tribute envoys were not to be taxed. See *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 158.5b.
[25] The failure to advise the Emperor of the arrival of the Cham envoys in 1379 was apparently the act which sparked investigations of Hu Wei-yong and colleagues. This led to his jailing and eventual death, together with a further reportedly 15,000 other individuals. For further details, see Chan Hok-lam's account of Hu Wei-yong in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang's *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1976, pp. 638-641. See also Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China –Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 Part* 1, pp. 155, 162-64.
[26] O.W. Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History*, Oxford, OUP, 1970, pp. 68-70.

that members of the Ming bureaucracy were likely already heavily involved in Southeast Asian maritime politics by the 1390s.

Maritime Prohibitions

In the early 1370s, the coastal people in China were forbidden to cross the oceans other than on official missions.[27] Fu-jian military officials who had privately sent people across the seas to engage in trade were punished not long thereafter.[28] The prohibition was restated in 1381[29] and 1384[30] and an imperial command "strictly prohibiting people from having contact with foreign *fan*" [31] was promulgated in 1390.[32] The frequency of these prohibitions suggests that they were not very effective, and the reason given for the imperial command was that "at this time in Guang-dong/Guang-xi, Zhe-jiang and Fu-jian, there were foolish people who did not know of this [the prohibitions] and frequently engaged in private trade with foreign *fan*." In 1394, it was recorded that previously there had been restrictions imposed on foreign traders coming to China and only Ryukyu, Cambodia and Siam were allowed to come and offer tribute. At this time, ordinary people in China were prohibited from using any *fan* goods and *fan* aromatics.[33] The prohibition on going abroad to trade privately was reiterated in 1397.[34] Whether these prohibitions actually affected maritime trade between southern China and Southeast Asia is something which is not immediately apparent from the Ming texts, and perhaps through further archaeological research it will be possible to piece together the ebbs and flows in maritime trade between China and Southeast Asia during this period.

Southeast Asia-related Policies of Ming Cheng-zu / The Yong-le Reign (1403-1424)

Knowledge of the reign of Ming Tai-zu's successor, the Jian-wen emperor (1399-1402), has been almost entirely lost to us as a result of the civil war and coup d'etat launched by his uncle Zhu Di. In the aftermath, Zhu Di tried to eliminate all evidence of his nephew's reign from the historical record. As such, the links between Ming China and Southeast Asia in this crucial period must remain in the realm of conjecture.

The period of Yong-le, as Zhu Di was to name his reign, is however, very well-documented and it is this period in which many of the most dramatic Ming interactions with Southeast Asia occurred.

Like his father, after coming to power, Zhu Di ordered the Ministry of Rites to send "instructions" to foreign polities requiring them to bring tribute to court.[35] In the same year, he also established Maritime Trade Supervisorates in the provinces of Zhe-jiang, Fu-jian and Guang-dong, in order to control the sea trade with all foreign

[27] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 70.3b.
[28] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 70.7a-b.
[29] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 139.7a.
[30] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 159.4b.
[31] A generic term for foreigners, often used to refer to those who came from the maritime realm.
[32] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 205.4a.
[33] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 231.2a-b.
[34] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 252.2b
[35] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 12B.7a.

polities.[36] In 1405, it was ordered that hostels be established under each of the above-noted provinces to look after the foreign envoys who would come from abroad.[37] It was already apparent at this early stage of the reign that the Yong-le Emperor was planning to have much to do with maritime Asia.

At the same time, the new emperor was also anxious to advertise the cultural superiorities of the Ming to the rest of the known world and to this end, he distributed 10,000 copies of *Biographies of Exemplary Women*（烈女傳） to various non-Chinese polities for their moral instruction.[38] Whether any motifs from this Chinese text have appeared in Southeast Asian literature has not yet, it appears, been studied. Court calendars were also distributed to Southeast Asian polities by the Ministry of Rites.[39] A number of major military expeditions into Southeast Asia were to also mark the Yong-le reign.

The invasion of Đại Việt

In 1406, in an effort to increase Ming influence and power in Đại Việt, the polity which was known to the Ming as An-nan (安南), the Yong-le emperor attempted to send a puppet ruler named Chen Tian-ping (Trần Thiên Bình) into that polity.[40] Trần Thiên Bình was killed as he proceeded into the country.

This killing by the Vietnamese aspirant became the immediate pretext for Yong-le to launch an invasion of the polity,[41] but this move had obviously been planned well before the event. In that same year of 1406, two huge Chinese armies were sent along two routes, via Yun-nan and Guang-xi, into Đại Việt. The subsequent campaigns and military actions have already been dealt with in some detail in several works, including John Whitmore's *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming (1371-1421)*. Chinese forces claimed seven million of the Vietnamese killed in this initial campaign to take the polity.[42] In 1407, Jiao-zhi[43] became Ming China's 14th province, and remained so until 1428, when the Ming were forced by the Vietnamese to withdraw. However, this 21-year period was one of almost incessant fighting.

As soon as the Ming forces had taken control of the polity, the changes began. In the first year, 7,600 tradesman and artisans (including gun founders) captured in Đại Việt were sent to the Ming capital at today's Nan-jing.[44] This stripping of some of the most skilled members of the society would undoubtedly have had extensive social effects on Vietnamese society. Subsequently, more Chinese and non-Chinese troops were brought into the region to maintain some semblance of control, and a wide range of new organs of civil administration were established, By 1408, Jiao-zhi had 41 subprefectures, and 208 counties,[45] all being administered in a Chinese mode, but many staffed by Vietnamese. In a claimed effort to further inculcate Chinese ways,

[36] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 22.3a-b.
[37] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 46.1a.
[38] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 34.3a.
[39] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 185.1a.
[40] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 52.6a-7a.
[41] But in the same year, we have the Emperor claiming: "Annam is secluded in a cranny in the ocean. Since ancient times, it has been an administrative division (郡縣) of China." (*Tai-zong shi-lu,* juan 58.1a).
[42] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 68.3b-7a.
[43] The occupied Đại Việt.
[44] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.6a.
[45] *Tai-zong shi-lu,* juan 80.3b-4a.

Confucian schools were established and Chinese persons were appointed to teach in them.[46] Regardless of how much political hegemony was subsequently thrown off in the late 1420s, when the Ming were driven out, the administrative legacy of the Chinese occupation must have had a major and wide-ranging impact on the societies of the polity.

The year 1407 also saw a new Maritime Trade Supervisorate (市舶提舉司) being established at Yun-tun City in Jiao-zhi, while two further such offices were established at Xin-ping (新平) and Shun-hua (順化) in 1408. Thus, within two years, three maritime trade supervisorates had been created in this new province, the same number as existed in the rest of China. This was a clear indication of the desire of the Ming to control maritime trade to the south and exploit the economic advantage of such control.[47] Other economic exploitation of the new province involved grain taxes, annual levies of lacquer, sapan wood, kingfisher feathers, fans and aromatics, and the imposition of monopolies on trade in gold, silver, salt, iron and fish. In addition, eunuchs were sent to Jiao-zhi with the task of treasure-collecting for the Emperor, but an equal amount of treasure collection appears to have been done for themselves. The rapaciousness of the eunuchs, at least as depicted in Ming accounts, was such that even the emperors intervened on some appointments. The Hong-xi Emperor objected to the re-sending of the eunuch Ma Qi to Jiao-zhi, when he attempted to have himself reappointed to control the gold, silver, aromatics and pearls of the region in 1424.[48]

By 1414, the Ming were sufficiently well entrenched in the north of Đại Việt to allow a push further south, establishing four further subprefectures in a region south of Jiao-zhi which had formerly been administered by Champa.[49] The role which the Chinese occupation of Đại Việt and beyond during this period played in the later southward expansion of the Vietnamese state and eventual destruction of the Cham polity should not be ignored.

But the levies and demands made on the new province by the Ming meant that even its capacity to feed itself suffered. While thousands of "native troops" from nine guards in Jiao-zhi were also being employed on military farms in 1426, it was still insufficient to feed the people and the forces, and on numerous occasions in the 1420s, it was necessary to arrange transport of grain from Guang-dong and Guang-xi into Jiao-zhi.[50] Such deficiencies would have had profound effects on social structure and social stability in the region, compounded by the intermittent warfare and the attempted imposition of Chinese norms. The range of colonial policies which the Ming pursued[51] undoubtedly had wide-ranging effects both on the society at the time as well as the future development of the Vietnamese state.

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[46] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 3.12b-13a.
[47] The importance of Vietnamese maritime trade in this period is underlined in Momoki Shiro, " Đại Việt and the South China Sea Trade: From the 10th to the 15th Century," in *Crossroads*, Vol 12, No. 1 (1998).
[48] *Ren-zong shi-lu*, juan 4A.5b-6a.
[49] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 149.4b-5a.
[50] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 250.6b and *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 24.8a.
[51] For further discussion on the colonial nature of the Chinese invasion and occupation of Đại Việt in the 15th century, see Geoff Wade, "Ming Colonial Armies in 15th-Century Southeast Asia" in Karl A. Hack and Tobias Rettig, *The Armed Leviathan: Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia*, London, RoutledgeCurzon. 2004.

Invasion of Yun-nan polities under Yong-le

Prior to Yong-le's invasion of the Vietnamese polity in 1406, he engaged himself in further expansion into the polities of Yun-nan. By 1403, the Ming had established new military guards on the distant border, with two Independent Battalions being established at Teng-chong and Yong-chang directly under the Yun-nan Regional Military Commission.[52] These were to be the bases from which the subsequent further occupation and control of the Tai regions was to be pursued. In the same year, new Chief's Offices (長官司) were established in Yun-nan, at Zhe-le Dian, Da-hou, Gan-yai, Wan Dian and Lu-jiang,[53] and in 1406 a further four Chief's Offices were established under Ning-yuan Guard in what is today Sip Song Chau Tai in Vietnam.[54] The two major Tai polities of Mu-bang (Hsenwi) and Meng-yang in areas which are today northern Burma, were "recognised" as Military and Civilian Pacification Superintendencies by the Ming in 1404.[55] When the various Tai polities did not accord with what the new Ming emperor required, military actions were launched against them. In 1405, for example, the senior Chinese representative in Yun-nan, Mu Sheng, launched an attack on Ba-bai (Lanna).[56]

After some sort of recognition or acceptance of the superior position of the Ming court, Chinese clerks or registry managers were appointed to the "native offices" to "assist" the traditional ruler, and ensure that Ming interests were served. Chinese clerks were appointed to carry out Chinese language duties in various native offices of Yunnan in 1404,[57] while similar circulating-official clerk positions (to be filled by Chinese) were established in seven Chief's Offices in Yun-nan in 1406.[58]

The "native office" polities were then subject to demands in terms of gold/silver in lieu of labour (差發銀/金), administered by the Ministry of Revenue, [59] and also required to provide troops to assist in further Ming campaigns. Mu-bang, for example, was required to send its troops against Ba-bai (Lanna) in 1406.[60] This pattern of exploitation continued through the reign.

The Voyages by Zheng He and other Eunuchs

The despatch of various eunuch-led maritime missions to the "Western Ocean" (maritime Southeast Asia west of Borneo and the Indian Ocean), as well as other lesser-known missions to the Eastern Ocean (today's Philippines, Borneo and Eastern Indonesia) was the third of the three prongs of southern expansion pursued by the Yong-le Emperor . The most widely-known of these envoys was Zheng He, otherwise known as "San-bao", or "Three Treasures", and it is around this eunuch that many of the legends relating to the voyages are centred. Others eunuch commanders included Wang Gui-tong and Hou Xian. Eunuch envoys such as Zhang Qian were responsible for voyages to the polities in the Eastern Ocean – Bo-ni, Pangasinan, Sulu and Luzon -- and for bringing their envoys and rulers to China.

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[52] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 23.4b.
[53] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 16.3a
[54] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 53.2b.
[55] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 32.1a.
[56] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 49.1a-b.
[57] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 35.2b.
[58] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 55.1b.
[59] See, for example, *Tai-zong shi-lu*, 17.6a.
[60] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 57.2a-b.

The eunuch-led missions were, like Yong-le's expansions into Yun-nan and occupation of Đại Việt, intended to create legitimacy for the usurping emperor, display the might of the Ming, bring known polities to demonstrated submission to the Ming and collect treasures for the Court.[61] To achieve these aims, the maritime forces needed to be both huge and powerful. Ship-building began almost as soon as the Yong-le emperor assumed power. In 1405, just after Zheng He departed on his first expedition, Zhe-jiang and other regional military commissions were ordered to build 1,180 ocean-going ships.[62] By 1408, the task was assigned to a central ministry and the Ministry of Works was ordered to build 48 "treasure-ships" (寶船).[63]

The size and number of ships which accompanied the eunuch commanders on the voyages to Southeast Asia and beyond has long been an issue of debate. However, it seems likely that some of the ships were more than 250 feet long.[64] Mills suggests that "it seems reasonable to conclude that Cheng Ho's [Zheng He's] largest ships were probably about three hundred feet long and about one hundred and fifty feet broad, and displaced about three thousand one hundred tons.[65] The ships were capable of carrying cavalry and some served as water tankers. Fleets ranged from 50 to more than 100 ships and remained away for up to two years. A sixteenth-century Chinese account suggests that 27,500 persons accompanied the largest missions to the Western Ocean.[66] The point here is not to dwell on the technical aspects of the fleets, but simply to note that they were huge armadas, larger than any others fleets which existed in the world at that time. These fleets died only slowly. An "Imperial force for Voyages to Fan lands" （下番官軍）still existed and was being used for voyages at least to Champa as late as 1453.[67]

To enable these great fleets to sail through the Indian Ocean to Africa, it was necessary to create staging posts and garrisons in what is today Southeast Asia. These were established at the port city of Malacca and at the northern end of the Straits of Malacca next to Samudera. The Straits of Malacca were probably more vital in the 15th century, when international linkages were entirely dependent on shipping, than they are today, and controlling this waterway was an essential first step in controlling the region. It was also thus that the Ming assisted the growth of the new polity of Malacca, so that its own base could be protected. The links between Malacca and the Ming thereby remained intimate for much of the 15th century. The degree to which the development of the port city of Malacca, and the northern Sumatran port-polity of Samudera was a product of Ming policies in Southeast Asia in the early 15th century, needs to be further investigated.

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[61] The eunuchs sent to Jiao-zhi (the occupied Đại Việt) and to Yun-nan by the Ming emperors were also engaged in collection of precious stones, gold and pearls. A later reference from 1459 suggests that the obtaining of gold was a major task of the eunuch-led voyages. See *Ying-zong shi-lu,* juan 307.3b.

[62] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 43.3b.

[63] *Ming Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 279.1a.

[64] The claims that some of Zheng He's ships were 450 feet in length have generally been regarded as nautically impossible. For some literature relating to the debate over the size of Zheng He's ships, see Robert Finlay, The Treasure Ships of Zheng He: Chinese Maritime Imperialism in the Age of Discovery, in *Terrae Incognitae,* 23 (1991) pp. 1-12, p. 3, note 11.

[65] J.V.G. Mills, *Ma Huan: Ying-yai Sheng-lan, 'The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores' [1433],* Cambridge, Published for Hakluyt Society by Cambridge University Press, 1970. See p. 31.

[66] Mills, *Ma Huan*, p. 15.

[67] *Ying-zong shi-lu,* juan 231.15a.

The military aspect of these voyages needs underlining, in part because of the stress placed on these missions in current PRC scholarship as "voyages of friendship". A large proportion of the members of the missions were military personnel, and in a *Ming shi-lu* reference of 1427, there is reference to "10,000 crack troops who had formerly been sent to the Western Ocean",[68] suggesting that a large proportion of the members of these fleets were highly-trained military men. It is obvious that such a force would have played a major threatening role, useful in encouraging recalcitrant foreign rulers to travel to the Ming court. However, there were other times when more than military threat was required and the history of the Zheng He voyages is replete with violence as the eunuch commanders tried to implement the Ming emperor's demands. Major military actions included:

Attack on the Old Port Pacification Superintendency (1407)

By the early 15th century, Old Port (or 舊港) near Palembang in Sumatra, had apparently long been home to a large number of Chinese persons. After it came to Ming notice in 1405, the local leader Liang Dao-ming travelled to China. In 1407, Zheng He returned from his first major mission abroad, bringing with him a "pirate" Chen Zu-yi captured at Old Port, for reportedly having "feigned surrender but secretly plotted to attack the Imperial army."[69] The Ming fleet reported 5,000 persons killed, with 10 ships burnt and 7 captured in the battle. Later in the same year, the Ming recognised the polity of Old Port. However, because of the large numbers of Chinese, both ex-military personnel and civilians, from Guang-dong and Fu-jian who lived there, it was deemed not to be a country. Rather, it was recognised as a "pacification superintendency" (宣慰使司), a term which was commonly used to refer to polities ruled by non-Chinese on the Chinese borders. The person appointed as the Superintendent, Shi Jin-qing, was more than likely someone appointed by Zheng He as the local ruler to represent the Ming state.[70] During the Yong-le reign, Malacca sought the territory of Old Port,[71] possibly because of the Malaccan ruler's origins in Sumatra, or else because it was deemed a threat. Either way, the fact that the request was made to the Ming suggests something of Ming control over the polity. Contemporary Chinese references to this polity end in 1430, implying that its fortunes were tied to the continuance of the Ming presence in Southeast Asia, which further suggests that the rulers were indeed agents of the Ming state.

Violence in Java (1407)

In 1407, Zheng He's troops went ashore in Java, on which was situated the polity of Majapahit, one of the Ming's major competitors for regional hegemony in maritime Southeast Asia. In an ensuing battle, some 170 of the Ming forces were killed. The Chinese records suggests that the Chinese troops "went ashore to trade", "where the Eastern king had ruled", which suggests Chinese involvement, intentional or otherwise, in a Javanese civil war. In response, the Ming dunned the Western king of Java (presumably the ruler of Majapahit) for compensation. "Immediately pay 60,000 *liang*[72] of gold in compensation for their lives and to atone for your

[68] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 26.2a.
[69] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.1a.
[70] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.5a.
[71] *Tai-zong shi-lu,* juan 143.1b.
[72] A Chinese unit of weight, often referred to as a "Chinese ounce". During the Ming, it averaged 37 grams.

crime…..Fail to comply and there will be no option but to despatch an army to punish your crime. What happened in Annam can serve as an example."[73] The threatening reference is to the Ming invasion of Annam noted above. The methods of the later European colonial armies in Asia, demanding compensation following their own military adventures, might be seen as useful comparative examples of such imperial opportunism.

Threats to Burma (1409)

In the early years of his reign, while vying with Ava-Burma for influence in Yun-nan, Yong-le was particularly concerned about the polity of Mu-bang (Hsenwi). When the Mu-bang envoy came to the Ming court in 1409, reportedly complaining about Na-luo-ta,[74] the Ava-Burma ruler, the response by Yong-le included the following: "Na-luo-ta, with his petty piece of land, is double-hearted and is acting wrongly. I have long known of this. The reason that 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 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."[75] This reference to a maritime force was to the Western Ocean ships of the eunuch commander, Zheng He, who together with Wang Jing-hong and Hou Xian, had been commanded to proceed on another mission to the Western Ocean. This threat by the Ming emperor underlines the militaristic and intimidating nature of the maritime voyages.

Attack on Sri Lanka (1411)

Perhaps the event most telling as to the nature of the eunuch-led maritime voyages was the military invasion of Sri Lanka, the capture of a ruler and his carrying back to the Ming court in modern Nan-jing in 1411. This occurred during the return voyage of a mission led by Zheng He which had taken the Ming forces to the west coast of the Indian subcontinent, including Quilon, Cochin and Calicut. According to the Ming texts, on the outward voyage, the Sri Lankan ruler Ya-lie-ku-nai-er (Alagakkonara)[76] had been "insulting and disrespectful," which meant obviously that he did not recognise the pre-eminence of the Ming and its envoys. He was also depicted as a local tyrant who "enticed" Zheng He back to the island, so that he could rob them. This, according to the official Ming history, is what gave rise to the hostilities by which Zheng He invaded the royal city, captured the king, destroyed his military and carried the king and his family members back to the court.[77] As was the case in similar scenarios in Yun-nan, the Ming appointed a puppet ruler to replace the abductee, presumably tasked with acting in ways beneficial to the Ming.[78] The Chinese troops who returned from the expedition to Sri Lanka were rewarded in the

[73] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.6a-b.
[74] The phonetics suggest Nawrahta, but this name does not accord with existing lists of Burman rulers.
[75] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 94.5b.
[76] Possibly Vira Alakesvara (Alagakkonara) , the chief minister under Bhuvanekabahu V (ruled 1372-1408),. See Chandra Richard de Silva, *Sri Lanka: A History*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1987. pp. 94-95.
[77] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 116.2a-b.
[78] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 130.1b-2a.

same manner and at similar levels to those forces which invaded Đại Việt in 1406, suggesting similar aims of the forces.[79]

Attack and Capture of Su-gan-la of Samudera (1415)

A further example of the aims and methods of the maritime missions is seen in 1415, when Su-gan-la, the reported "leader of the Samuderan bandits" was taken to China from Sumatra by Zheng He. According to the *Ming shi-lu*, Su-gan-la (Iskander?) was plotting to kill the local ruler Zainuli Abidin and seize the throne, and was angered that the Chinese envoys did not recognise him as ruler and confer presents upon him. He thus led his forces against those of the Ming, but was defeated and fled to Lambri. He was there captured together with his wife and children, and shipped to China for punishment.[80] While the events which did occur in 1414 and 1415 remain obscure,[81] it is certain that Zheng He and his forces inserted themselves in a civil war in northern Sumatra, supported the side which was not hostile to the Ming and engaged in warfare against the other. Again, we see an instance of the maritime expedition acting mainly as a military force in an attempt to impose a *pax Ming* on what we now know as Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The examples above suggest that the maritime forces sent abroad in the first third of the 15th century were intended to achieve the recognition of Ming pre-eminence among all the polities of the known maritime world. Those who would not recognise this supremacy of the Ming were subjected to military force. This is not to say that all polities needed military coercion. The economic benefits flowing from "tribute missions" suggests that some would likely have gladly sent tribute and personally travelled to the Ming court.

However, the number of Southeast Asian rulers travelling to China with the Zheng He missions suggests that coercion must have been an important element. There are very few other examples of rulers visiting other polities within Southeast Asia in this period, suggesting that some great pressure must have been imposed on them to encourage them to journey to the Ming court, and thereby demonstrate their subordinate status before the Chinese emperor.

Southeast Asia-related Policies of Ming Xuan-zong / the Xuan-de Reign (1426-1435)

The reign of the Emperor Xuan-zong was marked by the decision to maintain the Ming capital in Bei-jing,[82] rather than return it to Nan-jing, possibly prompted by a fairly quiet northern border. The movement of the Ming capital north did, it is proposed, move the interest and attention of the Ming state further away from the maritime realm of Southeast Asia. Charles Hucker opined that the emperor Xuan-zong had "no ambitions for expansionist adventures or dramatic new enterprises. Rather, he was inclined toward tightening up the governmental mechanism and

[79] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 118.4a.
[80] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 168.1a-b.
[81] For a likely romantic account of the origins of Su-kan-la, see the account of Samudera in *Ying-yai sheng*-lan. This has been translated in J.V.G. Mills' *Ma Huan, Ying-yai Shen-lan,* pp. 116-17.
[82] Formally designated as the capital by the Yong-le emperor in 1420.

perhaps above all alleviating distress among the people."[83] He attempted to regularise fiscal administration, and yet he revived the eunuch-led maritime voyages, which had been ended by his predecessor the Ren-zong emperor,[84] and which perhaps suggests that these missions were intended as seekers of further revenue sources.

Đại Việt

To the south, the major problem remained that of Jiao-zhi, the occupied Đại Việt, inherited from his predecessors. It was this emperor Xuan-zong who decided to end the Ming involvement in Vietnam, when it became clear that the Ming could neither sustain the military expenditure, nor suppress the militant opposition they faced. With this decision by the Ming state, the Vietnamese general Lê Lọ'i sent his representatives to the court in 1427 to negotiate a new relationship between the Vietnamese and the Ming.[85] In the protracted negotiations which ensued over the following years, the Vietnamese denied that they had detained any Chinese persons or their weapons, claiming that all the Chinese officials and troops had been sent back.[86] The term Annam was revived as a formal Chinese name for the polity, but it was to be some years, before the Ming recognised the "country" status of Đại Việt.

Eunuch-led Voyages Revived

During this reign, the eunuch-led maritime voyages were revived, with Zheng He leading a voyage to the East Coast of Africa in 1431-33.[87] For a fairly detailed description of this mission, including itinerary and dates at which foreign ports were reached, see the extract from Zhu Yun-ming's *Qian-wen-ji*, translated by Mills.[88]

Yun-nan Policies

In Yun-nan, Chinese administrative control was extended during this reign, with police offices being established at the major passes in Teng-chong and Wei-yuan in 1433.[89] A former military administration—the Yong-chang battalion—was changed into Lu-jiang Subprefecture, a civil office under the Yun-nan Provincial Administration Commission, as Chinese control was consolidated. In the same year, the Ming "established" the Dong-tang Chief's Office, within Burmese territory, as an attempt to split the territory and power of the Ava-Burma polity.[90] Other "native offices" were also "established" (i.e recognised by the Ming), including the Niu-wu Chief's Office in Ha-ni/Akha territory.[91] Likewise, postal relay stations were established to aid in the Ming court's communications with its military and civilian administrations in the area.[92]

As was required of the rulers of the maritime polities in Southeast Asia by the gunboats of the Zheng He missions, so was the sending embassies of submission to the Ming court required of the polities which comprised the greater Yun-nan. These

[83] Charles O. Hucker. "Entry on Chu Chan-chi" in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang's *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1976, pp. 279-89.
[84] Reigned 1424-25.
[85] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 32.9b-10b.
[86] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 64.4a-5b.
[87] The orders by which he was sent are contained in *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 67.3b-4a.
[88] Mills, *Ma Huan,Ying-yai Shen-lan*, pp 14-19.
[89] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.2a-b, 106.5a and 106.7b.
[90] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.7a-b.
[91] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.7b
[92] Xuan-zong shi-lu, juan 106.8a.

missions to the Ming capital were likewise coordinated by eunuch officials sent to these polities. In 1433, the eunuch Yun Xian brought to the Court envoys from the Yun-nan polities of Mu-bang, Lu-chuan/Ping-mian, Ava-Burma, Meng-ding, Jing-dong and Wu-sa, Wei-yuan, Guang-yi, Zhen-kang, Wan Dian, Nan Dian Da-hou and Teng-chong, as well as Lu-jiang, Gan-yai, Cha-shan, Wa Dian, and Meng-lian.[93] These polities constituted the majority of the Tai and Burman polities north of Ayudhya and west of Laos.

Southeast Asia-related Policies of Ming Ying-zong and Ming Dai-zong/ the Zheng-tong, Jing-tai and Tian-shun Reigns (1436-1464)

The three reigns noted above are conflated in the *Ming shi-lu* record under the temple name Ying-zong, given that the two reigns of the emperor Ying-zong were punctuated by the reign of Ming Dai-zong, as a result of the former being temporarily captured by the Mongols in a campaign in 1449.[94] That event underlines how important the northern border was in the thinking of the Ming in this period, but that did not prevent the state from engaging in activities which were to have profound effects on mainland Southeast Asia. It was the Yun-nan border which was to see the most intense Ming-Southeast Asian interaction during these 28 years.

Military Attacks on "Yun-nan" polities

The three major attacks against the Tai Mao polity known to the Chinese as Lu-chuan,[95] extending from 1438 to 1445 have been essentially neglected in the studies of Southeast Asian history. However, they were some of the most important events in the history of 15th-century Southeast Asia, resulting in the fragmentation of one of its largest polities.

The Tai Mao political leader Si Ren-fa had, during the 1430s, made attempts to recover territory formerly subject to his father Si Lun-fa, but which had been atomised by earlier Ming policies. He had gained control over Gan-yai, Nan Dian, Teng-chong, Lu-jiang and Jin-chi by 1438, when the Court sent generals to assist the local commander Mu Sheng against him.[96] While the Chinese forces claimed initial success, a further 50,000 troops from all over southern China were mobilised in 1439 for the first major Lu-chuan expedition.[97] By 1440, it was being claimed that 120,000 troops would be needed if victory was to be achieved against Si Ren-fa,[98] suggesting something of the power of the Möng Mao polity at that time. In 1441, the Ming court ordered another expedition, led by the generals Jiang Gui and Wang Ji.[99] Wang Ji was to claim the taking of 50,000 heads at Shang Jiang on the Salween River within the first year, and claimed that his forces had taken and destroyed Lu-chuan in 1442, but

[93] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.8b.
[94] For details of the campaign and the capture of the emperor, see Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China –Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 Part* 1, pp. 319-325.
[95] Located in what is today western Yun-nan and northern Burma.
[96] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 44.7b.
[97] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 51.7a-b.
[98] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 73.11b-12a.
[99] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 75.6a

that Si Ren-fa had escaped.[100] In August 1442, a further expedition was launched against Lu-chuan,[101] and both Wang Ji and Jiang Gui were recalled to lead it. The year 1444 saw the destruction of Lu-chuan, the power base of Si Ren-fa, the killing of Si Ren-fa, and the establishment by the Ming of Long-chuan Pacification Commission (apparently the first use of the term pacification commission 宣撫司 in Chinese history) to partially replace Lu-chuan. A former Lu-chuan chieftain Gong Xiang, who had gone over to the Ming was then appointed as pacification Commissioner.[102] Further details of these military expeditions are provided by Liew.[103]

A further major Ming military expedition which was to greatly affect the upland Southeast Asian polities was that launched in 1448 to capture Si Ji-fa, a son of Si Ren-fa. At a date equivalent to April/May 1448, Imperial instructions were issued to Wang Ji requiring him to capture Si Ji-fa and the chieftains of Meng-yang.[104] The surrounding polities of Ava-Burma, Mu-bang, Nan Dian, Gan-yai and Long-chuan were also required to provide troops for deployment against Si Ji-fa.[105] The imperial orders sent to Wang Ji presaged the disruption which such an expedition would have wrought in the region. "He [Si Ji-fa] may flee into Ava-Burma's territory and be concealed by the people there. If so, capture persons as the situation demands, so that the *yi* people will know fear and the Great Army will not have been sent in vain."[106] While Wang Ji reported success in his attack on Si Ji-fa's stockade,[107] later accounts tell of how Wang Ji had sought personal advantages from the "native officials" and how in fact he had been defeated by Si Ji-fa.[108]

Again in 1454, Chinese forces were despatched, this time against Si Ken-fa and others in Meng-yang, who had established their own regime in competition with the Ming appointee.[109]

Economic exploitation in Yun-nan

Increased control over non-Chinese polities in the Yun-nan region gave the Ming greater opportunity to impose economic demands, both to boost state revenue and to pay for the huge expense of mounting the military expeditions noted above. This obviously had deep-going effects on the societies controlled by the persons recognised by the Ming. In 1447, even the Yun-nan administrative commissioner Li Guan was concerned about the effects of the exploitative policies which the Ming imposed either directly or indirectly, noted that "native officials have been appointed without adequate investigation and they have been pressed for payment of gold and silver in lieu of labour. The *yi* people have been stirred up and this has resulted in them cherishing anger and feuding with and killing each other….It is requested that

[100] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 86.6a-7b and 88.8a-9b.
[101] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 94.7b.
[102] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 127.1b.
[103] Liew Foon Ming: "The Luchuan-Pingmian Campaigns (1436-1449) in the Light of Official Chinese Historiography", in *Oriens Extremus* (1996:2).
[104] The polity known in Shan as Möng Yang or Möng Kawng and in Burmese as Mo-hnyin or Mogaung..
[105] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 164.5a-6a.
[106] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 164.5a-6a.
[107] *Ying-zong shi-lu,* juan 175.8b.
[108] *Ying-zong shi-lu,* juan 179.7b-8a.
[109] *Ying-zong shi-lu,* juan 241.4b-5a.

all previously agreed payments of gold and silver be cancelled and that they only be required to bring local products to the court at fixed intervals."[110]

We read also, in 1449, of how Ming officials and military personnel based at Jin-chi in Yun-nan were lending money to non-Chinese persons, drawing them into the money economy and then taking field produce and children in payment for the debts.[111] Further direct exploitation of the people of the region is seen in a reference of 1458, which noted that land surrounding Teng-chong, the major Chinese outpost in the region, was forcibly appropriated by Chinese officials, and the people were divided into farming families subject to tax levies. This resulted in many people fleeing from the region.[112] We can see here aspects of the colonial processes by which formerly non-Chinese polities were turned into Chinese regions.

Achieving a balance between economically exploiting the newly-conquered or incorporated areas in Yun-nan and trying to maintain social stability and thereby control in those areas was something the Ming and its agents constantly debated over. Despite claims that social stability was at risk in Yun-nan in the 1440s due to the levies, the Ministry of Revenue refused to reduce any of the gold and silver payments required, claiming that "they are an old system dating from the Hong-wu reign, and it is difficult to abolish them."[113] The degree to which theses newly-incorporated polities were seen as revenue sources is underlined by events in the 1460s when lack of gold in the central treasuries resulted in Yun-nan silver levies being converted into gold demands. Only after a Yun-nan official advised that there was no gold to be had in Yun-nan was this policy reversed.[114]

The gold, silver and horse demands which the Ming state imposed on the Tai polities of Yun-nan and beyond not only depleted the polities, but also left them open to imposition of other demands by the Ming. In the 1440s for example, Mu-bang (Hsenwi, Theinni) deployed its forces to assist the Chinese forces arrayed against Si Ren-fa in exchange for the cancelling of an outstanding debt to the Chinese state (which had been unilaterally imposed by the Ming) of 14,000 *liang* of silver. In 1448, the gold, silver, rice, paper money, cowries and horses owed in lieu of labour by eight prefectures in Yun-nan, plus Jin-chi, Teng-chong, Gan-yai, Nan Dian, Long-chuan, Che-li, Meng-yang, Mu-bang, Meng-ding, Meng-gen, Wei-yuan, Wan Dian, Zhen-kang and Da-Hou, being mainly Tai polities stretching right across Indochina, were all cancelled in reward for their military assistance in destroying the power of the Möng Mao polity of Lu-chuan.[115]

Southeast Asia-related Policies of Ming Xian-zong/ the Cheng-hua reign (1465-1487)

The Cheng-hua reign saw the Ming state heavily involved in military activities on various borders. In the north, the Great Wall was extended for 600 miles in Shaan-xi to defend against the Mongols, while there were major military expeditions into Jurchen territory between 1465 and 1479. To the south, there were massive military

[110] *Ying-zong shi-lu,* juan 156.1a.
[111] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 150.3a.
[112] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 298.5a.
[113] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 156.1a.
[114] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 335.1b.
[115] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 189.3b.

expeditions between 1465 and 1472 against Yao polities in what are today Guang-dong and Guang-xi, and these saw some of the bloodiest battles of the century.[116] These expeditions broke the back of many of these traditional polities in a similar way to which the expeditions against Yun-nan in the 1440s destroyed polities and societies there.

Yun-nan Policies

During this reign, in the Yun-nan region there were attempts to assimilate the political leaders of the non-Chinese peoples into the orthopraxy which some say defines Chineseness, by sending the heirs of the "native offices" to study at Confucian schools. The Xian-zong emperor spoke of this in 1481, instructing the Yun-nan grand coordinator as follows: "You are to instruct all of the native officials to send their due heirs to study, as the grand coordinator and ministry suggested. In this way, the habit of the *man* and the *mo*[117] of struggling for succession will gradually die out and the civilising influences of Chinese propriety and righteousness will reach to the distance."[118]

The economic exploitation of the polities of the Yun-nan region, and in fact all regions to the south of the Ming during this reign is apparent from a memorial submitted to the emperor in 1476 by Shang Lu, the Minister of Personnel. He noted that "In recent years, Guang-dong, Yun-nan and other places have offered in tribute wonderful and rare plants, exotic birds and strange animals, pearls, precious stones and utensils of gold and silver. These goods do not come from the persons who offer them, but are invariably taken from the people. If they cannot be taken from the people, they are obtained from native offices and the *yi* people. To offer one item in tribute involves trouble ten times its value." Shang Lu went on to note that Yun-nan was particularly close to Annam,[119] and that the polities were particularly prone to rebellion, implying the possibility of Annam being able to gain the allegiance of polities in the region as a result of the exploitation visited upon them by the existing Ming systems.[120]

Đại Việt

Đại Việt was a polity of particular concern to the Ming during the Cheng-hua reign. A memorial submitted to the court in 1481 by the Minister of War Chen Yue outlined the key concerns: "The country of Annam is secluded in the South-west, 10,000 *li* away, and it borders Yun-nan and Guang-xi/Guang-dong. During the Yong-le reign (1403-24), the Imperial army subdued it and its land was divided into subprefectures and countries. Subsequently, the defence officials lost control, and it again sank into its former ways. Now it has again turned to evil, and through force, it has to the East swallowed up Champa and to the west annexed Laos It has brought destruction to Ba-bai, sent false Imperial orders to the Che-li Pacification Superintendency (Chiang Hung) and killed envoys from Melaka. We cannot but concern ourselves with this. A few years ago, some border people returned from

[116] See Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China –Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty 1368-1644 Part* 1, pp. 377-384 for details of some of the Ming wars against peoples to the south.
[117] *man* (蠻) and *mo* (貊) were generic, disparaging terms of reference for non-Chinese people.
[118] *Xian-zong shi-lu,* juan 212.6a-b.
[119] Đại Việt.
[120] *Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 155.7b-9b.

Annam and claimed that those in that country intended to attack Yun-nan, and they only desisted after being reproved by the king's mother….The envoys from Champa have also said that Annam has prepared 3,000 warships and intends to attack Hai-nan. We must make preparations for this."[121]

In the same year, three senior ministers urged that the Cham ruler, living in exile, be given support against Đại Việt, and that the latter be required to leave the Cham territory which it had occupied.[122] The aim was obviously to give Đại Việt concerns on its southern border, to reduce the threat it could pose to China. The Xian-zong emperor was, however, not enthused about getting the Ming involved in another war to the south, and issued nothing but a letter of warning addressed to the Vietnamese ruler.

Further concerns about Đại Việt were apparent from a memorial submitted by the Ministry of Revenue in 1482, urging prohibition against the smuggling of copper from Yun-nan into Annam, which "assist Jiao-zhi in the manufacture of its weapons."[123] These weapons were presumably firearms. Sun Laichen has written extensively on the importance of firearms for the Vietnamese state in its expansion southwards, westwards and northwards during the 15th century, with this technology, he suggests, having been provided through the Ming occupation of the polity in the early part of the century.[124]

Private Maritime Trade with Southeast Asia

In a *Ming shi-lu* account dated to the equivalent of 4 January 1485, we read "As 37 large ships which had been in communication with the *fan* had anchored in the jurisdiction of Chao-zhou Prefecture in Guang-dong, the Assistant Commissioner responsible for defence against Japanese pirates Yao Ying, the Maritime Route Inspector and Surveillance Vice Commissioner Zhao Hong and the general maritime circuit Assistant Commissioner Weng Yan led the troops in pursuit of those on these ships and took 85 heads."[125]

The fact that a private fleet of 37 large ships was trading out of Chao-zhou, almost certainly to Southeast Asia, suggests that at least in this period of the 15th century, and despite official prohibitions, private Chinese maritime trade with the region was still buoyant, even if the consequences of capture were sometimes quite drastic for those so involved.

Southeast Asia-related Policies of Ming Xiao-zong/ the Hong-zhi reign (1488-1505)

The Hong-zhi reign, noted for the growth of the eunuch bureaucracy, also saw the Ming engaged in renewed military activities to the south in Gui-zhou and Hai-nan and to the west in and around Turkestan. However, the Ming was still somewhat involved with Southeast Asia.

[121] *Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 219.5a-b.
[122] *Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 219.6a-7b.
[123] *Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 220.2a-3a.
[124] See, for example, Sun Laichen "Chinese Military Technology and Dai Viet: c. 1390-1497" In Nhung Tuyết Trần & Anthony Reid, eds., *Viet Nam: Borderless Histories,* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.
[125] *Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 259.5b

Yun-nan Policies

The attempts by the Chinese state to bring the Tai polities of Yun-nan more firmly under the Ming yoke continued in the last decades of the 15th century. In the 1490s, we see Chinese forces being despatched, together with Meng-yang forces, against Si Die of Meng-mi.[126] Then again, in the early 1500s, ministers were urging a military expedition against Si Lu of Meng-yang.[127]

To assist in maintenance of order and in revenue procurement, in 1489, the Ministry or Revenue urged conferral of surnames on *man* and *yi* of Yun-nan. The proposal was approved by the emperor, and it is supposed that some sort of Chinese surname allocation programme did go ahead in this period.

Maritime Trade with Southeast Asia

In 1493, Min Gui, the supreme commander of Guang-dong/Guang-xi memorialised to the court in Bei-jing, noting: "in the coastal areas of Guang-dong, many people are privately dealing with those who come on the *fan* ships. The ships come in an unbroken stream and, without waiting for the examination of their tally slips, [those on the] *fan* ships start selling their merchandise. The government forces responsible for guarding against the Japanese pirates have made reports about the growing power and disorderliness of the traders…" The Ministry of Rites in the Chinese capital responded, claiming: "According to Gui's memorial, the problem lies with the great number of *fan* ships and the hardship brought to the offices. According to this ministry, since the first year of the Hong-zhi reign (1488/89), the only *fan* ships which have brought tribute missions through Guang-dong have been one from Champa and one from Siam. Because the prohibition against the private ships (私船) has been relaxed, they have proliferated, while because the prohibition against *fan* ships has been strictly enforced, they have not been coming…."[128]

We thus see, in the late 15th century, a movement away from the formal, regulated tribute trade system toward one which, while perhaps not formally "allowing" private shipping, at least tolerated it. The trade with Southeast Asia engaged in by those of the southern provinces seems to have been increasingly ignored by the administration in Bei-jing.

Southeast Asia-related Policies of Ming Wu-zong/ the Zheng-de Reign (1506-1521)

The Zheng-de reign was marked by the dominance of a eunuch named Liu Jin, who managed to achieve the resignation of most of the grand secretaries in 1506. By 1507 he had gained control of imperial administration in the capital and in the provinces. Liu was also in charge of revenue-raining programmes and these were increasingly important as imperial expenditure soared on construction of new palaces and other facilities. Harsh levies were instituted throughout the country, including the newly-incorporated Yun-nan polities. Concerns in the foreign affairs realm were essentially those related to the north and west, although it was also during this reign that the Portuguese first arrived in southern China.

[126] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 148.6b-9a.
[127] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 167.4b-5b.
[128] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 73.3a-b.

Yun-nan

As Ming administration extended further into the "native offices" of Yun-nan during the early 16th century, a revenue raising system was instituted among the "native officials" in 1507. This involved the sake of official headwear and belts for silver.[129] These funds then used to pay for military rations and further extension of Chinese administration into these areas. Thereby the Ming state managed to have the local rulers fund their own demise.

General relations with Southeast Asian Polities

By the end of the 15th century and the early 16th century, it was apparent that the Ming court and its central administrators were losing interest in the area we know today as Southeast Asia. A few examples of this will suffice. In 1515, when requested to provide an envoy back from the Ming capital to Annam for the son of the Duan-qing prince (端慶王), the Ministry of War opined "We should not do things for the distant *yi* if it means annoyance for China".[130] This contrasts markedly with the rhetoric at the beginning of the century, when the Ming rulers had greater *pax Ming* aspirations. Likewise, when the Portuguese invaded Malacca and the Malaccan ruler and supporters fled, there was little interest on the part of the Ming officials or emperor to involve themselves in the violence occurring well to the south of the country.[131]

There was an associated decline in the importance of the Translator's Institute (四夷館), an agency heavily involved in Ming relations with foreign polities. In the mid-1460s, the Institute had 154 translation officials and students,[132] but by 1490, it was noted that: "Recently, all of the departments have lacked officials. There are no instructors to provide training and no young men to engage in study."[133] This suggests the degree of neglect, to where even the basic infrastructure for external relations was being allowed to run down.

Maritime Trade

As has been noted above, by the end of the 15th century, there was increasing evidence of private maritime traders operating out of Southern China into the area we now know as maritime Southeast Asia. We read in 1501, for example, of people from Jiang-xi Province who had sailed to Java to trade.[134] That the tribute system was also beginning to see difficulties is suggested by a memorial of 1530 criticising both the decline in the formal tribute system and proposals to further open trade to the Portuguese. It advocated the firm policing of the tribute system and prohibition of private trading ships.[135]

[129] *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 25.1a.
[130] *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 124.3a.
[131] *Shi-zong shi-lu,* juan 4.27b.
[132] *Xian-zong shi-lu*, juan 39.10a-b.
[133] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 35.4a-5a.
[134] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 172.3a-b.
[135] *Shi-zong shi-lu*, juan 118.2b-3a.

Overview of Ming Policies Affecting Southeast Asia

We can condense the range of policies noted above as having been pursued in respect of Southeast Asia by the successive Ming emperors to a number of themes.

Political Expansion by the Ming

In 1534, a Chinese Vice Minister Xu Wen noted in a memorial that: "Guang-dong/Guang-xi and Yun-nan/Gui-zhou were the areas beyond the frontiers in ancient times"[136] How these areas had become part of China was not further addressed, as all Xu Wen wanted to explain was why a large number of non-Chinese people lived in these regions.

The Ming dynasty provides a useful era through which to examine the processes by which a Chinese state absorbed areas previously beyond its administrative control. The 15th and 16th centuries were periods of great expansion by the Ming state and provide diverse sources on the various processes by which that expansion occurred. The invasion and occupation of Đại Việt, for example, has been detailed above, and its obvious aim in expanding the scope of the Ming empire needs little further comment here.

However, the Yun-nan experiences provide different examples of expansion. As exampled elsewhere in this paper, when polities were brought to submission by the Ming through military expeditions, or threats thereof, and turned into "native offices" (土司), it often happened that "registry managers" (經歷都事), "registry clerks" (經歷知事) or "clerks" (吏目) from the Chinese bureaucracy were appointed by the Ming to "assist" the traditional rulers in their administration. In 1404, registry manager and registry clerk positions were created for the mainly Tai polities of Mu-bang, Meng-yang, Lu-chuan/Ping-mian, Laos, Ava-Burma, Ba-bai/Da-dian, Meng-ding and Wei-yuan.[137] Over time, some of these polities underwent a process known in Chinese as "gai-tu gui-liu" (改土歸流), by which the Ming (and later the Qing dynasty), on various pretexts, replaced the hereditary family rulers with officials from the Ming bureaucracy, thereby changing a formerly autonomous or semi-autonomous polity into a part of the Chinese empire.

The first half of the 15th century saw quite an expansion of the Chinese administration in "Yun-nan",[138] spurred in some way by the efforts of the Möng Mao ruler Si Ren-fa to recover his polity's territory which had been previously taken by the Ming. The Ming, responding to what it saw as a new Nan-zhao (南詔), made great efforts to expand its own influence in the region, appointing "chiefs" as "pacification commissioners", while local commanders were given titles as police officers, either in anticipation of or reward for achievements against Si Ren-fa and his forces.[139]

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[136] *Shi-zong shi-lu*, juan 169.1a-2b.

[137] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 35.2b. Interesting comparisons could be drawn with the residents and advisers whom the British appointed in India and the Malay states some four and a half centuries later.

[138] The term Yun-nan seems to have had a broad meaning during the Ming, including any polity to the south of the region controlled by the authorities in Kun-ming. In this sense, it was used much like the term "the West" was used in the European expansion across the North American continent.

[139] See, for example *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 57.5b, where in August 1439, 8,364 persons were rewarded or appointed to posts for their achievements in the campaign against Si Ren-fa at Lu-jiang. In addition to promotions for Chinese people involved, the non-Chinese Chiefs of Chief's Offices were promoted to Pacification Officers, while Local Commanders were promoted to Police Officers.

Efforts by the Ming to expand its control in the *dong*[140] (洞/峒) areas which straddled the region north of Vietnamese control and south of the Ming-administered areas continued throughout the Ming. By the first half of the 15th century, the *dong* rulers had been recognised by the Ming and poll taxes had been instituted. The efforts to incorporate them into the Chinese state continue today.

The policies pursued by the Ming in Đại Việt and some areas of Yun-nan over the 15th century suggest that the process by which the Ming state expanded into new areas can be summarized as follows: 1) Validation of a military action was sought out or created; 2) A military expedition was launched; 3) Assistance of some local leaders was gained; 4) Intimidation by slaughter was conducted;[141] 5) The existing leaders were killed or removed elsewise; 6) Orders were issued locally noting the moral rectitude of the military action and noting that it was conducted to free the people from their evil rulers or other predicament; 7) Chinese bureaucrats were appointed as either registry managers or more broadly in the larger polities; 8) Military guards and civil administrative offices were established; 9) Grain and labour levies were instituted, and monopolies over salt, gold and silver were instituted, or else it was demanded that such be provided to the state in lieu of labour; 10) Useful human resources were stripped;[142] 11) Further opportunities for territorial gain were sought out. Some of the specific ways in which this affected the Southeast Asian polities during the 15th century are detailed below.

"Employing Yi to Attack Yi" (以夷攻夷)

In reference to a proposed Chinese military advance into Ava-Burma in the 1440s, the Chinese administration noted that the Imperial army could not penetrate deeply into Burma due to environmental conditions and the difficulty of maintaining supply routes.[143] It was in response to such restrictions that, like imperial powers through history, the Ming made wide use of the military forces of non-Chinese polities over which it exercised control or influence. In their efforts to incorporate the polities of Yun-nan, it was more convenient (but not always more successful) to use local forces rather than mobilise and move forces from Chinese areas.

The history of Yun-nan in the late 14th and throughout the 15th century is replete with examples of such. In 1389, Si Lun-fa of the Bai-yi (Möng Mao polity) was ordered by the Ming to pursue and capture "rebels" in Yun-nan.[144] Two years later, the Hong-wu emperor employed the troops of Ba-bai (Lanna) to attack the Bai-yi.[145] When the Ming intended to attack Ava-Burma in 1409, Mu-bang was ordered to prepare its troops for an overland attack, while the Ming forces were to attack from

[140] The term *dong* appears to be a Tai (Zhuang or Dong) term meaning the catchment area of a watercourse. It was widely used throughout areas which are today part of southern China as a territorial/administrative designation. Within the last century, the term was still being used in the New Territories of Hong Kong. See James Hayes, "The Pattern of Life in the New Territories in 1898", *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series, Vol. 2 (1962), pp. 75-102.
[141] In their victory memorial to the throne, the Ming commanders who had captured Đại Việt claimed that 7 million of the Vietnamese forces had been killed. See *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 68.3b-7a. Even allowing for the rhetoric, other reports of the Ming invasion suggest huge mortality on both sides.
[142] In 1407, 7,700 tradesmen and artisans, including gun-founders, were forcibly transported from Annam to the Ming capital at modern Nan-jing. (*Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 71.6a).
[143] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 103.2a.
[144] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 198.2a-b.
[145] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 210.3a.

the sea.[146] Mu-bang (Hsenwi) was a frequent pawn in the Ming-Burma machinations, as it lay between the two and was subject to demands by both polities.

In the expedition against Lu-chuan in the 1430s, imperial orders were sent to the generals noting: "Using *yi* to attack *yi* was a fine method used by the ancients. You are to employ it." It was thus that, in 1438, the Ming accepted "offers" by Mu-bang and Da-hou to deploy 100,000 of their troops against Lu-chuan.[147] Subsequently, in 1440, the polities of Mu-bang, Ava-Burma, Che-li, Ba-bai/Da-dian, Wei-yuan and Shi Dian were ordered to combine their forces and lead them against Si Ren-fa of Lu-chuan,[148] while the polities of Wei-yuan and Shun-ning were also offered rewards for military assistance provided.[149]

Again in 1447, when Su Ji-fa had grown in power in Meng-yang, the Ming ordered Ava-Burma and Mu-bang to provide troops for an attack on Meng-yang.[150] Subsequent reports indicated that 100,000 Mu-bang and Ava-Burma troops were involved in razing Si Ji-fa's stockades on Mt Gui-ku to the west of the Irrawaddy. The use of "native troops" by the Ming continued unabated into the 16th century and beyond.

Divide and Rule

"When there is contention between the *yi* and the *di*,[151] it benefits China". So wrote Chen Yong-bin, the grand coordinator of Yun-nan in the first decade of the 17th century. But this perception has been part of China political thought for millennia, and it certainly conditioned the policies of the Ming state in the 15th century.

The aim of "divide-and rule" was achieved in various ways. The major method was to break down major polities into smaller units, thereby making them rivals of each other and less of a threat to the Chinese state. This is what occurred in the late 14th century, when after assisting Si Lun-fa to recover control over his polity of Lu-chuan/Ping-mian (Möng Mao), the Ming rulers divided its territory into Lu-chuan, Meng-yang, Mu-bang, Meng-ding, Lu-jiang, Gan-yai, Da-hou and Wan Dian, all under separate rulers.[152] The validation was: "The states surrounding Lu-chuan have, since ancient times until now all had their own rulers. They have never been united."[153] The concerns of the Chinese bureaucracy are also seen in a memorial submitted by the official Liu Qiu in 1443, during planning for an expedition against Lu-chuan. He noted that after an expedition against Lu-chuan, "Ava-Burma will push for rewards for its achievements and will seek the division of Lu-chuan's land between itself and Mu-bang. If they are not given it, they will harbour resentment, while if they are given it, these *yi* areas will grow by half in terms of territory and population. Their power will grow and later it will not be possible to control them. While eliminating one Lu-chuan, we will be creating two further Lu-chuans."[154]

Further examples are numerous. An attempt by the Ming to divide the power of major entities to the south was seen in 1404 with efforts to divide Ba-bai/Da-dian

[146] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 94.5a-b.
[147] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 46.9b.
[148] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 76.4b.
[149] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 81.5b-6a.
[150] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 152.2b-3a.
[151] Both *yi* (夷) and *di* (狄) are disparaging generic terms for non-Chinese peoples.
[152] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 15.2a and 16.3a.
[153] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 244.2b-4a.
[154] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 105.2b-3a.

(Lanna) into Ba-bai/Da-dian (likely Chiang Mai) and Ba-bai/Zhen-nai (Chiang Rai).[155] This was eventually unsuccessful, despite a Chinese-sponsored attack on Lanna.[156] In 1406, the Meng-lian Chief's Office was established as a means of reducing the power of the Tai polity of Meng-ding.[157] In 1409, Zhen-kang Subprefecture was created to reduce the territory of Wan Dian,[158] while a similar attempt by the Ming state to split the Tai polity of Che-li (the later Sipsong Panna, centred on Chiang Hung) into Che-li and Che-li/Jing-an in 1421, so as to reduce its power and allow the appointment of a Chinese registrar and military commissioner in the latter, was successful, but only for a decade.[159] In 1406, the Meng-lian Chief's Office was established as a means of reducing the power of the Tai polity of Meng-ding.[160] The establishment, by the Ming, of the Meng-mian Chief's Office in Jing-dong (Kengtung), in today's Shan States, also resulted in a weakening of the latter's power.

As an extension of the divide-and-rule policy, the Ming often supported alternate rulers to those in power. Gong Xiang of the Tai polity of Lu-chuan was supported in the 1440s as a way of breaking down the power of Si Ren-fa, and was then given a ruling position in the newly-created polity of Long-chuan. Later in the century, Zhao Sai, the younger brother of Si Ji-fa (the son of Si Ren-fa), ruler of the polity of Meng-yang, was employed in the Ming's Embroidered-Uniform Guard, in the hope that he could eventually be used against his brother.[161]

More extreme examples were seen in the maritime realm, particularly in the cases of Old Port/Palembang and Sri Lanka, where the rulers were removed and replaced. These have been detailed above under the section relating to the Yong-le reign.

The Ming efforts to fragment the power of the Tai polities in wider "Yun-nan," which were always supported by the implicit or explicit threat of the use of military force, continued through the dynasty. Promises were also used, but rarely fulfilled. When, after the military defeat of Lu-chuan in the 1440s, Mu-bang (Hsenwi) sought that part of Lu-chuan territory which it had been promised by the Ming prior to the battle, the Ming administration fearing that this would increase the power of Mu-bang, advised that persons in the areas of Meng-sa, Ming-ying and Meng-meng within this territory had already sought the establishment of their own offices and thus no land could be assigned to it.[162] Again, in the 1490s, with the defeat of Si Lu and the capture of the territory of Man-mo (Bhamo), the Ming "established" the new office of Man-mo, rather than give it to either of the claimants (Meng-mi or Mu-bang), which had been instrumental in its capture.[163]

Maritime Policies and Tribute/Trade

In order to try to ensure a state monopoly over maritime trade, the Ming rulers issued repeated prohibitions against private maritime trade. The various prohibitions

[155] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 31.5a-b.
[156] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 49.1a-b.
[157] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 53.3a.
[158] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 94.3b-4a.
[159] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 233.4b and 235.1b-2a.
[160] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 53.3a.
[161] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 154.7a.
[162] *Yong-zong shi-lu*, juan 150.7a-8a.
[163] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 195.3a-4a.

issued during the late 14th century are detailed under the Hong-wu reign above. The frequency of the issue of such notices implies that they were, if not ignored, at least looked on lightly, by the populace. The effects which the eunuch-led missions in the first third of the 15th century had on private trade has never been truly assessed, but that they stimulated later private maritime links with Southeast Asia is unquestioned. In 1435, along with the ending of the eunuch-led voyages, efforts were again (or still) being made to prevent non-state agents from travelling overseas. In that year, at the beginning of the Zheng-tong reign, the Ministry of Revenue urged that seaports be guarded to ensure that coastal people did not engage in overseas activities.[164]

Whether these prohibitions actually affected maritime trade between southern China and Southeast Asia is something which is not immediately apparent from the Ming texts, and it is perhaps only through further archaeological research that it will be possible to piece together, through material evidence, the ebbs and flows in maritime trade between China and Southeast Asia during this century.

There is little effort in the Chinese official record to hide the essentially mercantile nature of the tribute/trade system in this period. Three maritime trade supervisorates were established to handle trading goods -- both state goods and those belonging to envoys. Some of the trade exchanges are detailed in the Ming texts. In 1425, for instance, Arya Huang Fu-xin, an overseas Chinese envoy from Java,[165] was provided with 159,050 *ding* of paper money in "reward". Given the huge size of the reward, it is likely that this was payment for trade goods.[166] Private trade by the tribute envoys was also condoned. It was specifically recorded in 1427 that a Javanese envoy named Arya Xu-li-man[167] and others had offered tribute on their own behalf and were rewarded in compensation for its value.[168] In a particularly telling incident in 1447, an envoy from Siam haggled with the Ming officials over the price of the "bowl-stone" (perhaps nephrite) he had brought to China. He requested that he be compensated at 250 *guan* of paper money per *jin*, but was only given 50 *guan* and told not to bring any more.[169]

But the benefits of the tribute/trade system were obviously great to those travelling to China, or so it is suggested by the number of occasions on which the Ming issued orders requiring the tribute envoys to only come at the stipulated frequency.[170] In 1443, Guang-dong officials complained that envoys from Java arrived too frequently and made excessive demands on the local officials.[171] By 1453, the large Javanese missions had been so demanding that orders were issued requiring

[164] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 7.8a.
[165] It was common for "Chinese" persons who resided in the polities of Southeast Asia to be involved in the tribute/trade system which linked those polities with the Ming. Their language abilities, cultural sensitivities and, likely, business links, ensured that they were more efficient than those without this acumen. It is thus probable that the Ming tribute/trade system helped promote the emergence or the strengthening of Chinese trade networks throughout the archipelago. See also Chan Hok-lam, "The 'Chinese Barbarian Officials' in the Foreign tribute Missions to China During the Ming Dynasty", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 88 (1968) pp. 411-418.
[166] *Ren-zong shi-lu*, juan 10.1a. There seems to be no record of Chinese paper money circulating in Southeast Asia, and it is likely that such rewards were converted into other trade goods before the tribute envoys left China.
[167] Probably Arya Suleiman.
[168] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 33.5a.
[169] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 157.8a-b.
[170] Generally once every three years.
[171] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 106.8a-b.

them to send only a chief envoy, deputy envoy and a few attendants to the Court. [172] But, this was not something which only the Javanese saw as beneficial. In 1478, for example, the envoys of Annam were prohibited from bringing large quantities of private trade goods to China.[173] By 1501, new regulations allowed foreign tribute envoys to trade for only five days with merchants from two counties near Beijing, who reportedly had no idea what the Southeast Asians wanted. Following official representations, this decision was reversed.[174] That the arrangement was instituted in the first place suggests that the tribute/ trade system was not seen as a particularly important economic aspect for the Ming rulers by the early 16th century.

By 1510, the tribute and trade systems had apparently diverged somewhat from each other, for in addition to regular tribute missions, a new category of "ocean-going" merchant (ships) (泛海商客) appeared in reports from the coastal provinces.[175] As a corollary of this development, proportional taxes (抽 分) were levied on these trading ships. A new maritime situation thus emerged, particularly in terms of Chinese merchants and others travelling abroad. By 1514, a report from Guang-dong was noting:

> Recently, the administration has been permitted to levy proportional taxes [on ships and cargoes] and there has been open trade. This has resulted in thousands of evil persons building huge ships, privately purchasing arms, engaging in evil activities upon the sea, illicitly linking up with the various *yi* and bringing great harm to the area.[176]

This situation of open trade was in marked contrast to the maritime prohibitions[177] which had barred such trade for most of the 15th century, and this change would obviously have given new impetus to private trade between Southeast Asia and the ports of southern China. However, the social problems it brought to the coastal areas resulted in the local officials submitting repeated memorials against such trade, and urging that trade be limited to tribute missions.[178] This resulted in the issuing in 1524 of new regulations curbing private trade by Chinese with "the *fan* and the *yi*",[179] and the closing down of the Chinese maritime trade supervisorates, while in 1530, the dismantling of large ocean-going ships was ordered.[180]

It was also in this "window" between the end of the 15th century and 1524 that the Portuguese first arrived in southern China, having previously invaded and

[172] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 234.3b.
[173] *Xian-zong shi-lu,* juan 176.5a-b.
[174] *Xiao-zong shi-lu,* juan 170.5b-6a.
[175] *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 65.8b-9a.
[176] *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 113.2a.
[177] Noted above and also detailed in Bodo Wiethoff, *Die chinesische Seeverbotspolitik und der private Űberseehandel von 1368 bis 1567*, Wiesbaden, 1963, and Chang Tseng-hsin, *Maritime Activities on the South-east Coast of China in the Latter Part of the Ming Dynasty 明季東南中國的海上活動,* Vol. 1, Taipei , 1988. See pp. 3-16
[178] See, for example, *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 113.2a of 1514; *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 123.4b of 1515; *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 149.9a-b of 1517; and *Shi-zong shi-lu*, juan 2.14b of 1521.
[179] *Shi-zong shi-lu*, juan 38.4b-5a.
[180] *Shi-zong shi-lu*, juan 108.7a.

occupied Malacca. This arrival was momentous in terms of the eventual links which Chinese commerce was to develop thorough it.[181]

This booming of private trade in the early 16th century also suggests that the shift which Hamashita[182] sees occurring under the Qing, whereby, as a result of opposition to its tribute/trade policies, the Chinese state was "compelled to shift from the role of monopolistic trade-merchant to that of tax collector" was already taking place at the end of the 15th century and at the beginning of the 16th century.

Economic Exploitation

As has been suggested in the chronological studies above, the economic and other demands imposed on the border polities and colonies by the Ming were adjusted apparently to ensure that enough of the accumulation of the area was drawn off so as to inhibit the rise of too powerful a local regime, but not so great an amount as to induce rebellion among the people of that polity. The "newly-attached" polities were seen as providers of gold, silver and other valuables, of pearls, of precious stones, of horses and of labour, military and otherwise.

Apart from this systemic state exploitation in terms of silver levies, troop demands and so forth, the Yun-nan polities, like the maritime countries and Đại Việt, had to deal with appropriations by court-appointed eunuchs. On occasions, their excesses even upset the central administration. In 1429, for example, two eunuchs Yun Xian (雲僊) and Xu Liang (徐 亮) were recalled from Yun-nan, where they had been sent as envoys because "these persons were constantly disposed to envious hatred and they both induced the local officials to engage in feuding and killing, and had them hinder and obstruct the other envoy."[183] In the late 1420s, the eunuch Ma Qi (馬騏) was accused of having maltreated the people in Jiao-zhi, thereby inducing rebellion and aiding the rise of Lê Lợ'i.[184] The withdrawal of the "gold and silver payment expediting eunuchs" (催辦金銀内官) from Mu-bang (Hsenwi) in the mid-1430s[185] (at the same time as the eunuch-led voyages were being closed down) seems to indicate that up until that time the administration had centrally-appointed officials governing the collection of silver and gold in the border colonies. The pull-back was, however, only temporary. The phenomena of intense exploitation by eunuch agents of the state appears to have continued through the century, with the regional inspector of Yun-nan submitting a memorial in 1499 accusing Ji Qing (吉慶), the eunuch grand defender of Jin-chi, of instituting excessive levies, causing *yi* people to flee, maintaining a private army, selling off trained troops and generally acting in avaricious and improper ways.[186] Again in the early 16th century, Sun An (孫安), the eunuch director of Jin-chi/Teng-chong, the major distant Chinese outpost in Yun-nan, was ordered to "collect strange and wonderful objects, gold, silver, pearls and other

[181] For further details, see Chang Tseng-hsin's work on the period *Maritime Activities on the South-east Coast of China*, and Jin Guoping's various articles in his *Zhong-Pu guan-xi shi-di kao-zheng (中葡關係史地考證*, Macau, Macau Foundation, 2000.
[182] Hamashita Takeshi, "The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia", *Memoirs of the Research department of the Toyo Bunko*, No. 46 (1988), pp. 7-23. See page 23.
[183] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 52.9b.
[184] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 57.7b-8a.
[185] *Ying-zong shi-lu,* juan 2.12a.
[186] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 153.10b-11b.

things." [187] The accounts of extra-systemic economic exploitation by eunuchs continued into the 16th century.

Despite the regional variations, it is possible to observe a clear Ming policy of economic exploitation of frontier polities involving a progressive intensification of demands. After initial contacts through war or threats, the Ming state required large indemnities or other payments. This was subsequently systematised, following Chinese appointment or recognition of the local ruler, into a regular payment of gold or silver "in lieu of labour" (差發金/銀). At the same time, people of the region were drawn into the Chinese economy. When this process had proceeded sufficiently, poll or household taxes and commercial taxes were levied. The aim of this process was to reduce the economic independence of the local ruler of the polity and provide the economic means by which the Chinese state could meet the costs of increasing its own administration in these areas. Thereby, the formerly independent polity became a part of the Chinese state. During the 15th century, we see the Ming pursuing these policies among the polities it defeated or brought to submission by threats in Yun-nan and those temporarily gained in Đại Việt.

Policies Inducing Human Movement

As in some other colonial enterprises, the extension of Chinese administration into Yun-nan and into Vietnam was accompanied by the inflow of Chinese persons into areas previously not occupied by the Chinese. Sometimes the movement was involuntary, such as in 1439, when Chinese criminals who were unable to redeem their sentences through rice payment, were moved into areas of Yun-nan.[188]

Other state policies which encouraged movement of Chinese people into newly-conquered areas included the establishment of state farms (屯田) and military farms (軍田). 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" (土軍) from nine guards in Jiao-zhi were being employed on military farms.[189] While the opening of such farms in Yun-nan was in evidence throughout the dynasty, the 1490s saw a marked upsurge under the new military commander.[190] Even at the end of the 16th century, the Ming were planning further southward movement, with it being noted that "when the six *zhao* (referring to the six pacification superintendencies) are brought to peace, Ba-xiong Pass will be breached and thousands of *li* of land will be opened up with 10,000 *mu* of state farms.[191]

Associated with the extension of the range of Chinese administration and of areas settled by Chinese people was another practice, the so-called the *kai-zhong (*開中) system.[192] This system involved selling state-monopoly salt to merchants for grain which the merchants were required to transport to areas where border troops were

[187] *Wu-zong shi-lu*, juan 33.3b.
[188] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 64.5b-6a).
[189] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 17.11b-12a
[190] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 48.2a.
[191] *Shen-zong shi-lu*, juan 338.4b-5a.
[192] One of the most detailed studies of the *kai-zhong* system during the Ming dynasty is Lee Lung-wah's "The Kai-zhong System During the Ming Dynasty" (李龍華 《明代的開中法》, *香港中文大學中國文化研究所學報*, 第四卷第二期, 371-493 頁.

stationed. 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.[193] 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.[194] A proposed expedition against Si Die of the Tai polity of Meng-mi (Möngmit) in 1493 again induced the reintroduction of the system in the same area.[195]

The system played a major role in extending the Chinese administration, firstly by feeding troops who were engaged in military activities aimed at expanding the Ming state, and secondly by the fact that many merchants, rather than transporting the grain over vast distances, set up their own farms with their imported farm labourers in the border areas to grow locally the grain which they would sell for state salt. It also promoted Chinese settlement of these areas, as when the *kai-zhong* system was no longer in force, the farms and the labourers would usually remain, and subsequently these areas settled by Chinese persons would come under the control of the Chinese administration.[196]

The growth in the number of Chinese people residing in maritime Southeast Asia during the 15th century was a result of both state and non-state factors. We read of members of a Chinese mission fleeing while in Cambodia in 1404,[197] and there is no reason to assume that among the tens of thousands of soldiers and sailors who accompanied the eunuch-led missions to Southeast Asia, there were not those who fled, were shipwrecked or who just remained at the ports where the ships called. However, as suggested above, there was also much Chinese private trade with maritime Southeast Asia through the 15th century as well as reports of large Chinese communities at Palembang in Sumatra, at Tuban and Gerisik in Java, and in Malacca and Ayudhya, some of which communities likely derived from such trade either in the 15th century or earlier.[198]

Overall Effects of Ming Policies Relating to 15th-Century Southeast Asia

To conclude this paper, a few short comments are perhaps necessary on the specific areas where Ming policies affected 15th-century Southeast Asia. These are, rather than anything like analyses of the effects of the Ming on the region, simply notes on where further research in this sphere might be concentrated.

[193] *Xuan-zong shi-lu*, juan 7.9a-b.
[194] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 131.8b-9a.
[195] *Xiao-zong shi-lu*, juan 80.1a-b.
[196] For a far more detailed and systematic study of the migration of Chinese people into previously non-Chinese areas of this region, see James Z. Lee's *The Political Economy of a Frontier: Southwest China, 1250-1850,* Harvard University Asia Center (forthcoming), and particularly Chapter 4 –Immigration.
[197] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 34.1a-b.
[198] See, for example, Chang Pin-tsun, "The First Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia" in Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund, *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade*, c. 1400-1750, pp. 13-27.

Changes in Southeast Asian Political Topography– Yun-nan

As detailed in the sections above, the Ming push into the Tai polities of "Yun-nan", and the divide-and-rule policies pursued throughout the 15th century, obviously played a major role in the atomisation of Tai power. The breaking down of the Möng Mao polity in the late 14th century and again in the middle of the 15th century interrupted the rise of a polity which may have played a role similar to Sukhothai or Lan-Xang for the upland Tai polities.[199] The beginnings of the transformations of a large number of Southeast Asian[200] upland polities into Chinese administrative units was one of the major characteristics marking the history of Southeast Asia in the 15th century. This gradual reduction and dismantling of huge Tai polities such as the Möng Mao polity undoubtedly greatly changed the course of mainland Southeast Asian history. The "what-ifs" of history are infinite, but the destruction of one of the great Tai polities and the absorption of the territory and people into the Chinese state certainly wrought a new political and social structure in Indochina south of the Yangtze.

Changes in Southeast Asian Political Topography – Vietnam and Champa

The Ming invasion and occupation of Đại Việt had profound effects on Mainland Southeast Asia. By expanding the borders of their new province of Jiao-zhi, particularly to the south, during their quarter century of control, the Ming left the Đại Việt which resurged in the late 1420s with a larger polity than it comprised formerly. The new technologies, new administrative measures and other factors introduced by the Ming invasion also contributed to the capacity of Lê Vietnam to expand its border over the following century, allowing it to destroy the Cham polity and incorporate both Cham and Lao territories.

Changes in Southeast Asian Political Topography – Malacca and Samudera

The control which the Ming exercised over the Straits of Malacca through their bases at either end of the Straits during the first third of the 15th century also had great effects on the political topography of the region. The support provided by the Ming to Malacca, underlined by the repeated visits to China by the Malaccan rulers, was almost certainly a *quid pro quo* for allowing the Ming to establish their base there. There seems to be general agreement among scholars that the rapid rise of Malacca in the 15th century was in part due to its close links with the Ming.

The Ming relationship with Samudra is much less clear from the sources, but the facts that the Ming had a major base on an island just off the Samudran coast, that the Samudran envoys often came to the court with those of Malacca and that the Ming forces appear to have fought a war to support Zainuli Abidin, the Samudran ruler, suggest that Ming support was also very important for the maintenance of that polity at least during the first third of the 15th century.

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[199] The reasons for the alleged dearth of a large-scale Tai empire have been addressed by Nick Tapp in his, 'A new stage in Tai regional studies: The challenge of local histories' in Andrew Turton (ed.), *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai states*, Richmond Surrey, Curzon Press, 2000, pp. 351-59; and by Craig Reynolds in "Review article: Tai-land and its others" in *South East Asia Research*, No. 11 (March, 2003) pp. 114-15.

[200] For mainland Southeast Asia, the generic definition being applied here is "that which is not China", in the diverse ways in which this can be construed.

Changes in Southeast Asian Political Topography – Decline of Majapahit's Influence

The emergence of the Ming as a major political player in the maritime Southeast Asian world at the beginning of the 15th century appears to have had great effects on the capacity of Majapahit to continue its command of its far-flung empire.[201] Compounded by the division of Java and the civil war which marked the beginning of the 15th century on the island,[202] the Ming presence undoubtedly affected Javanese influence in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, Brunei and what is today the southern Philippines.

Changes in Southeast Asian Economic Topography – New Economic Networks

The policies pursued by the Ming state which affected Southeast Asia economically either directly or indirectly during the 15th century can be divided into a number of spheres:

The Ming maintained a booming nominally "imperial monopoly trade"[203] relationship during the 15th century with the major Southeast Asian polities/economies of Annam, Cambodia, Champa, Java, Malacca, Palembang, Samudera and Siam,[204] as well as with a host of smaller polities/economies. In addition, the eunuch-led voyages during the first third of the century (as well as the non-state players who were obviously continuing to trade from China to Southeast Asia, and vice-versa through much of the 15th century), meant that the Southeast Asian, Indian and Middle Eastern goods required by China must have been procured in larger quantities during this century. In 1390, for example, 171,000 *jin* (more than 100 tonnes)[205] of aromatics were delivered to the Chinese capital by the envoy from Siam.[206] The effects which the monopoly trading demands of the Southeast Asian rulers had on domestic procurement patterns, collection areas and economic systems is something which might also be further examined. The obtaining of Chinese porcelain, silks and coinage by the Southeast Asian rulers through this trade would also likely aided their capacity to maintain local economic networks beneficial to themselves.

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[201] C.C. Berg has, however, questioned whether the listing of Nusantaran dependencies of Majapahit noted in the *Nagrakertagama* had any historical basis at all. See D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, London, Macmillan, 1970, Third edition, pp. 86-87.

[202] See Slametmuljana, *A Story of Majapahit*, Singapore University Press 1976, p. 192. Further details are available in the Pararaton. See I Gusti Putu Phalgunadi, *The Pararaton: A Study of the Southeast Asia Chronicle*, New Delhi, Sundeep Prakashan, 1996, pp. 131-133.

[203] Often obscured under the "tribute system" rubric.

[204] For details of missions to China from these polities in the period we are examining, see Chang Pin-tsun, "The First Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia" in Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund, *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade*, c. 1400-1750. (reprinted in Felipe Fernández-Armesto's *The Global Opportunity,* Volume 1 of *An Expanding World* series, Variorum 1995). A listing of such missions can be seen on p. 28. A listing of the missions to and from China by these polities during the first quarter of the century can be found in Wang Gungwu's "China and Southeast Asia 1402-24" in his *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia*, Sydney, ASAA in conjunction with Allen and Unwin, 1992, pp. 119 and 123.

[205] For details of the shipment of aromatics throughout the region, but mainly in later periods, see the chapters on cloves and pepper in David Bulbeck, Anthony Reid, Lay Cheng Tan and Yiqi Wu (compilers), *Southeast Asian Exports since the 14th Century: Cloves, Pepper, Coffee and Sugar*, Singapore ISEAS, 1998.

[206] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 201.1b.

Changes in Southeast Asian Economic Topography – Rise of New Trade Ports

The apparent increased in maritime trade during the century also appears to have induced the rise of new ports. Malacca, as a major entrépot polity has already been mentioned above. Reid[207] has also written on the rise of new port-polities as a result of a "trade take-off around 1400" and growth in trade during the beginnings of his "Age of Commerce", and the increased urbanisation which subsequently occurred in these port cities. The rise of the northern Javanese ports is a particularly noticeable aspect of this trend.[208] The decline of Majapahit was obviously a factor in this, but the Chinese voyagers seem also to have played a part in the emergence of Demak, Japara, Gresik and Cirebon. These new polities and the shipping routes which connected them also produced new regional trading networks among both the Chinese[209] and the Southeast Asians. It might be said that the 15th century produced the first East Asian[210] trading system.

Changes in Southeast Asian Economic Topography – New Medium of Exchange?

Copper cash rewards/payments were provided to some of the Southeast Asian envoys/merchants who travelled to the Ming court. It appears that the eunuch-led missions to the region also carried such rewards. Reid makes a strong claim that "Chinese copper cash, and local coins modelled on them, were the basic lubricant for the increasing commercialization of the region after 1400."[211] This is supported by research which indicates that from about 1300, inscriptions in Java cease to mention Javanese weights and measures and refer only to *picis*, the Javanese word for cash. This supports a thesis that it was late Song commercial operators or those who accompanied the Yuan invasions which introduced the coins to Java. Other uses of Chinese copper coins, or those modelled on the Chinese, are seen in the Philippines and Vietnam, the latter most certainly deriving from the Chinese model. Reid also cites early European travellers who noted that Chinese coins were the basic coinage in use in Brunei, Sumbawa, and Maluku by the early 16th century.[212] The interactions during the 15th century appear to have consolidated the connections between the Southeast Asian and Chinese economies.

Changes in Southeast Asian Technological Topography – Ship-building

The technological influence of the Ming Chinese on 15th-century Southeast Asia has been cited in at least three major areas. The first was ship-building. Southeast Asia and Chinese ship-building traditions have been detailed by Manguin[213]

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[207] Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680. Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis*, New Haven, Yale University Press. See pp. 10-15 and "The City and Its Commerce" pp. 62-131.

[208] For the background to which, see Anthony Reid, "The Rise and Fall of Sino-Javanese Shipping", in his *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia*, ISEAS, 2000, pp. 56-84. See particularly "Chinese and the Rise of *Pasisir* Muslim States" pp. 66-69.

[209] For the growth of the Hokkien network, see various works by James Chin Kong, particularly his doctoral thesis, "Merchants and other sojourners : the Hokkiens overseas, 1570-1760", University of Hong Kong, 1998.

[210] Used in its current broad sense, which includes both Southeast Asia and North Asia.

[211] Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, Volume Two, p. 95.

[212] Ibid. pp. 96-97.

[213] See, for example, Pierre-Yves Manguin, *The Southeast Asian Ship: An Historical Approach*, JSEAS, XI:2 (1980) pp. 266-276; and his "The Vanishing *Jong*: Insular Southeast Asian Fleets in Trade and

and Needham[214] respectively, while Manguin has also looked at the cross-influences between the Southeast Asian and Chinese shipbuilding traditions, and posits a hybrid South China Sea junk.[215] Reid has examined the role of hybrid ship-building in the broader scope of Sino-Javanese shipping.[216] It seems however, given the present state of research and evidence, that the degree to which Chinese maritime technology, including shipbuilding, affected Southeast Asian traditions in the 15th century can only be assessed through further discoveries of excavation of shipwrecks of the period.

Changes in Southeast Asian Technological Topography – Firearms

One of the most original recent theses of Chinese influence on Southeast Asia during the 15th century is that of Sun Laichen, who has suggested that the Ming greatly affected Southeast Asian history through its introduction of firearms.[217] He concludes that "the founding of the Ming dynasty in 1368 started the 'military revolution' not only in Chinese but also world history in the early modern period." These weapons were certainly used in the Ming wars against the Vietnamese and the Tai polities in the 15th century and were particularly effective against the elephants which the Tai relied upon. Sun sees a significant transfer of Chinese military technology (and specifically firearms) to the Vietnamese in the early Ming, particularly through the Ming occupation of the Viet polity. Subsequently, he suggests, the Vietnamese used this new technology to mount major military expeditions in the 1470s, into Champa, and then across through the Tai heartlands as far as the Irrawaddy. This sphere promises great potential for further research on the effects of Chinese technology on Southeast Asia in the 15th century.

Changes in Southeast Asian Technological Topography – Ceramics Manufacture

Chinese ceramics have been major trade products into Southeast Asia for well over a millennium. The obvious appeal of Chinese ceramics to the rulers and markets of Southeast Asia both before and during the early Ming, obviously gave rise to imitators within the region. The Si Satchanalai and Sukothai celadons of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries appear to have benefited from Chinese ceramic technologies, as did the Vietnamese wares of the 14th and 15th centuries.[218] There exists vast potential for further research on the specific innovations which did take

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War (Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries)", in Anthony Reid (ed.) *Southeast Asia in the early Modern Era: Trade, Power and Belief*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, pp. 197-213.

[214] Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, *Vol. 4 , No. 3 -- Civil Engineering and Nautics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

[215] P.-Y. Manguin, "Relationships and Cross-influences between Southeast Asian and Chinese Shipbuilding Traditions", *SPAFA Final Report on Maritime Shipping and Trade Networks in Southeast Asia*, 1984.

[216] Reid, "The Rise and Fall of Sino-Javanese Shipping".

[217] See Sun Laichen "Chinese Military Technology and Dai Viet: c. 1390-1497." In Nhung Tuyết Trần & Anthony Reid, eds., *Viet Nam: Borderless Histories,* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

[218] See Roxanna M. Brown, *The ceramics of South-East Asia, their dating and identification*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1977; John Guy, *Ceramic traditions of South-East Asia*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1989; and Dick Richards, *South-East Asian ceramics: Thai, Vietnamese, and Khmer, from the Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1995. For an excellently illustrated collection of the Chinese blue and white wares and their Vietnamese equivalents, see Larry Gotuaco, Rita C. Tan and Allison I. Diem, *Chinese and Vietnamese Blue and White* W*ares Found in the Philippines*, Manila, Bookmark Inc. 1997.

place in the Southeast Asian ceramic traditions, their origins and period of introduction, and whether there was any influx of Chinese potters into Southeast Asia.

Changes in Southeast Asian Cultural Topography – Vietnam

Many parts of Southeast Asia were culturally very different at the end of the 15th century from what they were at the beginning of that period, and in the changes which did take place over that century, Ming China appears to have been a major influence. During the Ming occupation of Đại Việt in the first quarter of the century, for example, the Ming introduced a wide range of practices which would have changed society in diverse ways. John Whitmore has already discussed some of these.[219] The establishment of Confucian schools, as well as geomancy schools and medical schools in the Ming colony, would certainly have had some impact on the population. However, it was the overall Ming administrative structure and procedures which existed for these 20 years, along with the presence of a huge number of Chinese persons which would have had most effect in changing society. Whether all of the Ming policies, such as that proposed during the occupation that Vietnamese should adopt Chinese mourning customs,[220] actually had long-lasting effect on the society is an issue which needs to be subject to much further study.

Likewise, the destruction of the carriers of Vietnamese culture which occurred under the Ming administration, such as the burning of Vietnamese books,[221] needs to be further examined, as do the consequences of the removal of many of the skilled artisans and other personnel from Đại Việt into China,[222] which undoubtedly had major repercussions on Vietnamese society.

The new bureaucratic and other government systems which were introduced into Đại Việt following the withdrawal of the Ming can also be said to have been, in some ways, products of the Ming, if only by the fact that the invasion and subsequent destruction forced the Vietnamese to create new systems post-Ming withdrawal.[223]

Changes in Southeast Asian Cultural Topography –Yun-nan

In the same way that the influx of Chinese administration and Chinese persons changed the cultural milieu of Đại Việt in the early 15th century, so they must have greatly affected the peoples of the Yun-nan polities who, either suddenly or gradually, were subject to the cultural norms of Chinese societies and polities. Non-Chinese persons in Yun-nan were assigned Chinese surnames by the Tai-zu emperor in 1383,[224] and this was part of a long process of acculturation during the Ming by which Sinicisation of the indigenous populations proceeded, in both active and passive modes.

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[219] See John Whitmore's *Vietnam, Hồ Quý Ly, and the Ming (1371-1421)*.
[220] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 214.1b.
[221] For which see Alexander Ong's contribution to this volume.
[222] In 1407, 7,700 tradesmen and artisans, including gun-founders, were sent from Annam to the Ming capital at modern Nan-jing. (Tai-zong shi-lu, juan 71.6a). Zhang Xiu-min also details the architects and other prominent persons who were taken off to China by the Ming and subsequently served the Chinese state. See 張秀民著<中越關係史論文集>, 臺北, 文史哲出版社, 1992, particularly pp. 45-74, 75-114 and 199-134.
[223] For details of the processes of administrative, economic and artistic restoration following the end of the Ming occupation of Vietnam, see Lê Thành Khôi, *Histoire du Viêt Nam des origines à 1858*, Paris Sudestasie, 1992. pp. 219-224. See also John Whitmore's contribution to this volume.
[224] *Tai-zu shi-lu*, juan 152.4a.

There was constant pressure on newly-colonised peoples in Yun-nan to accord with certain Chinese cultural practices. As in Vietnam, these were instilled through the establishment of Confucian schools, mainly for the indigenous elite. A school was established at Jing-dong Guard in 1446,[225] and by 1510, Confucian schools had also been established in the Yun-nan outposts of Jin-chi and Teng-chong. A proposal in 1481 that the heirs to "native-official" posts in Yun-nan be sent to Confucian schools in nearby prefectures so that their own cultures could be replaced by Chinese values, while emerging more from frontier security considerations than any "desire to civilize", still undoubtedly had effects, especially in terms of Chinese literacy among the peoples of Yun-nan. There is little research on how the processes of Sinicization proceeded among the peoples of the Yun-nan polities and this is also an area where much research remains to be done.

Changes in Southeast Asian Cultural Topography – Maritime Southeast Asia

To what degree did the Chinese maritime traders, the Ming envoys and the people who accompanied them on their voyages to Southeast Asia have an impact on cultural practices in the local societies? Did the sending of didactic texts and guides to [Chinese] behaviour, as happened frequently during the early reigns, particularly with *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (烈女傳), really have any effect on the Southeast Asia societies? Claudine Salmon has studied the influence of Chinese literature on the literatures of societies surrounding China from the 17th century,[226] but further studies on earlier literature and possible connections with Chinese texts likely to have been distributed in Southeast Asia by Ming agents might prove worthwhile.

Certainly, the use of Chinese languages would have increased in the major port cities of the region, particularly when the huge eunuch-led armadas were in town. The adoption of Chinese terms for a vast range of food and other daily products into most of the major languages of the archipelago likely began or, at least, expanded during the early 15th century. Kong Yuan-zhi has done much work on identifying Chinese lexical items borrowed into Malay and Indonesian.[227] However, determining the periods during which such borrowings were made is nigh impossible.

The rise of hybrid Sino-Southeast Asian societies as a result of fairly large-scale migration of Chinese persons to Southeast Asia in or around the 15th century, with hybrid food, hybrid language and hybrid cultural expression has been discussed elsewhere by Reid.[228] Even the ships and crews which had to remain at Southeast Asian ports to await the monsoon winds, or to provide security for polities and/or Chinese ships and supplies would have been both culturally influential and influenced.

The role of the Zheng He voyages and Chinese Muslims more generally as being carriers of Islam throughout Southeast Asia is a topic which has continued to attract attention. Many of the members of the eunuch commanders' retinues were Muslims and their voyages to the Middle East of many appear to have also included the *hajj*. The Parlindungan/Poortman text,[229] which appears to be derived at least in

[225] *Ying-zong shi-lu*, juan 140.7a.
[226] Claudine Salmon, *Literary migrations, Traditional Chinese fiction in Asia (17-20th centuries),* Bei-jing, International Culture Publishing Corporation, 1987.
[227] See 孔遠志 著 <中國印度尼西亞文化交流>, 北京, 北京大學出版社, 1999. The listing of borrowed lexical items can be seen on pp. 128-156.
[228] See his "Rise and Fall of Sino-Javanese Shipping" and his contribution to this volume.
[229] For which see H.J. de Graaf and Th. G. Th. Pigeaud (edited by M.C. Ricklefs), *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, 1984.

part from Chinese local accounts in Java, claims that there was a network of Chinese Hanafi Muslims throughout Southeast Asia in the 15th century, and that this network, which had derived from the Zheng He voyages, established the first Islamic communities in Palembang, Sambas and in many ports along the north coast of Java. It seems wise to concur with Reid's opinion that "More systematic work needs to be done, however, before it can be accepted as a credible source for the fifteenth century."[230]

The Zheng He voyages also left Southeast Asia with another religious legacy. Throughout the region, particularly among Chinese communities, there still circulate various legends and beliefs about Zheng He, Wang Jing-hong and other eunuchs. Temples have also been erected to worship San-bao-gong, the honorific name for Zheng He. Kong Yuan-zhi has done much work on the temples, legends and beliefs relating to Zheng He in Southeast Asia.[231]

It appears that Chinese weights and measures also had some impact in the archipelago during the 15th century. In 1404, an envoy from Siam to the Ming court requested that Chinese "weights and measures be conferred upon them."[232] Is there any evidence of changes in Southeast Asian metrological standards during the 15th century? This is difficult to assess, but at least by the middle of the 16th century, in a Portuguese text of 1554, we read that "In Malacca the weight used for gold, musk, &c., the *cate*, contains 20 *taels*, each tael 16 *mazes*, each maz 20 cumduryns; also 1 paual 4 mazes, each maz 4 *cupongs*; each cupong 5 cumduryns."[233] The "cate" and "tael" are the Malay terms for the Chinese *jin* (斤) and *liang* (兩) respectively. While it cannot be categorically stated that these units were introduced to Southeast Asia during the 15th century, it seems likely that they were at least introduced to Malacca in that century.

Can it thus be said that the 15th century constituted the first major wave of Sinicisation of Southeast Asia?[234] Given that the way in which the term "Southeast Asia" has been used within this article, as reference to "non-China" that lay to the south of the Chinese polities, this claim cannot be made, as the non-Chinese areas south of the Yangzi were subject to many waves of Sinicisation over the preceding millennium. However, it does seem that the degree of Chinese influence within Southeast Asia did expand in the 15th century, so perhaps it will suffice just to claim, in conclusion, that the 15th century saw the first major wave of Sinicisation of maritime Southeast Asia.

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[230] Reid, "The Rise and Fall of Sino-Javanese Shipping", p. 68.
[231] See Kong Yuanzhi, *Muslim Tionghoa Cheng Ho, Misteri Perjalanan Muhibah di Nusantara Pustaka*, Jakarta, Populer Obor, 2000.
[232] *Tai-zong shi-lu*, juan 34.3a.
[233] Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *Hobson Jobson: Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words & Phrases, & of Kindred Terms Etymological, Historical, Geographical & Discursive*, New edition edited by William Crooke, Fourth edition, Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1984. See entry for Candareen, p. 155, Quoting *A. Nunes*, 39.
[234] Chang Pin-tsun speaks of diaspora rather than Sinicisation in his article "The First Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia" in Roderich Ptak and Dietmar Rothermund, *Emporia, Commodities and Entrepreneurs in Asian Maritime Trade*, c. 1400-1750.

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