The Vermilion Bird

T'ANG IMAGES OF THE SOUTH

EDWARD H. SCHAFER

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS • BERKELEY AND LOS ANGELES • 1967
APOLLONIUS: "We go to the South, beyond the
mountains and the mighty waters, to seek in per-
fumes the secret source of love. . . . The stars
palpitates like eyes; the cascades sing like the mel-
ody of lyres; strange intoxication is exhaled by
blossoming flowers; thy mind shall grow water
in that air; and thy heart shall change even as thy
face."

Gustave Flaubert, The Temptation of St. Anthony,
translated by Lafcadio Hearn

2 Hua People

Reconquest

The disintegration of centralized rule in China between the third and sixth
centuries had allowed the aborigines of the southern provinces a measure of inde-
pendence, and even the possibility of expansion. The reestablishment of universal
Chinese authority under the states of Sui and T'ang met strong resistance from
these hopeful defenders of their ancient homelands. Accordingly, as the armies of
T'ang swept through the central provinces early in the seventh century and the
adherents of Sui gave way, there were repeated "insurrections" of the Lao peoples,
especially in Szechwan and adjoining parts of Kweichow and Yunnan. But
gradually the indigenes submitted to the new power, sometimes without a fight
when they took the men of T'ang to be their natural allies against the oppressive
Sui. Such was the case of a chieftain of the Western Ts'uan, whose family had been
enslaved for rebellion by the Yang dynasts of Sui—he found it easy to accept the
overlordship of the Li family of T'ang, and sent tribute in September of 620. After
this, the T'ang soldiery was able to bring about the submission of peoples never
Hua People

before subject to the Chinese. Among them were the Hsieh (Zya) men of Kweichow, who sent tribute in January and February of 630. The Western Chao nearby submitted formally on January 20, 648, and after them came a number of Yunnanese tribes, culminating in the surrender of 23,000 households of the K'un-ming Man on February 21, 672.

The natives of the southeast had been as troublesome to the Chinese in Sui times as had those of the southwest. The most serious of their uprisings had been led by the Li (Vietnamese Ly) clan in Tongking in the second half of the sixth century. It was Liu Fang, the famous Sui general, the ravager of Champa, who restored Chinese authority there in 603. After the collapse of Sui, however, the transition to T'ang control was relatively peaceful, since the Sui mandarins kept a firm grip on their colonial charges until they bowed to the inevitable—indeed the fall of Nam-Viet before T'ang was chiefly a matter of the transfer of power by the only slightly reluctant officers of Sui. Thus Ch'iu Ho, Sui governor in Tongking, transferred his allegiance in 621, and control of the western roads from Canton to Hanoi was surrendered by the Sui "officer" Ning Ch'ang-chen (by his name, a converted aborigine) to the T'ang representative Li Ching on May 23, 622. Indeed, 622 was the year of final victory for T'ang; a native rebel named Teng Wen-chin, powerful in Kuantchow, together with Ning Hsuan, the Sui agent in Ho-p'u, presumably another aborigine of the powerful Ning clan, and Li Ch'un, the Sui agent in Jih-nan on the Cham frontier, all recognized the overlordship of T'ang in June of that year. In a few cases, however, the Sui commanders held out, to their own loss—they were destroyed by local chiefs and their adherents. Finally Feng Ang, a man of mixed blood and the last great Sui official in Nam-Viet, surrendered to Li Ching on August 29, bringing with him the control of a number of wild mainland counties, but above all the rule of Hainan Island. With this, effective control of all of Nam-Viet passed into the hands of the new dynasty.

A new administration was established in Tongking in 622, under which the province was known simply as Chiao-chou, a title it retained until 679, in which year it was elevated to the status of Protectorate of Annam—that is, of the "Secured South." During this period, Hanoi (the seat of the government in Chiao-chou) controlled a large area, extending from the coastal plain of northern Annam (Ai, Huan, Yen and Fu-Lu) through the Tongking delta (Chiao, Feng, and Ch'ang) and the adjacent uplands (Lu), and along the coast of (modern) Kwantung, including the Leichow peninsula.

The administrative situation in Nam-Viet remained somewhat fluid during the seventh century. A new system emerged during its last decades and was firmly established by the early years of the eighth century. This was a division of the whole region into five administrative areas, governed by the four "Legates" of Kuang, Kuei, Jung and Yung, and the Protector of Annam. The Legate resident in Canton (Kuang) was paramount. These are the "Five Administrations" or
Hua People

"Five Offices" (fu) of Nam-Viet, familiar in T'ang literature, and corresponding ideally to the quinquipartite arrangement of the mountain passes into Nam-Viet, the Wu ling. Of the five, by far the greatest in wealth and prestige, especially during the wonderful years of the first half of the eighth century, was Canton, the great central arsenal for the pacification of the Lao tribes. This metropolis was placed in the large, relatively well-disciplined administration of Kuang, largely safe for the Chinese, and east of the smaller more dangerous administrations of Kuei (in the northwest) and Jung, Yung, and Annam (in the west and southwest).

After the disorders of the Huang Ch'ao rebellion late in the ninth century, the hold of the T'ang authorities on this and other regions gradually loosened—though it is to be noted that when the monarch Hsi Tsung returned to his capital in 885, Lingnan (along with three northwestern provinces) was one of the few regions still to accept his authority. By the end of the century it was the only one to do so. Even as late as 900 Lingnan was ruled by the prince Li Chih-jou, a great-grandson of Ju T'ung. His successor, Hsü Yen-jo, was the last of the T'ang legates there. The wolves were already biting off pieces of the southland: a lieutenant of Li K'o-yung administered Jung-chou in 897; a Hunanese army, sent by Ma Yin, seized the northern counties of Kuei, I, Yen, Liu, and Hsiang (all under Kuei Administration) in 900, and in 902 they captured Shao and besieged Ch'ao in the east; in 905 Chu Ch'ian-yü, the brother of the great rebel Chu Ch'ien-chung and a coarse, worthless fellow, was Legate in Annam. In the year 913 the lands of Nam-Viet were partitioned among five great war lords: Ch'ü Hao ruled Annam; Liu Shih-cheng ruled Kuei; Yeh Kuang-liüeh ruled Yung; P'ang Chü-chao ruled Jung; and Liu Yen ruled Kuang. The last-named of these, Liu Yen, was able to overthrow all of these rivals except Ch'ü Hao, and in 917 he declared himself theocrat (ti) of Great Viet—a name he changed to Han in the following year. So Lingnan became an independent nation for the first time in more than a thousand years. As for Annam, it was ravaged by the battles of rival chieftains for more than twenty years after this, until one of them, Wu Ch'üan, emerged victorious and declared himself King of Great Co-Viet in 939. The history of an independent Vietnam begins in that year.

Now it is time to look at the hot southlands themselves, as their new masters saw them.

 Roads and Cities

The prospect of the long and arduous trip into Nam-Viet must have evoked ambiguous feelings in the northerner. His feelings of excitement and apprehension would be enhanced at the farewell party normally given by his friends just before his departure. At these gay affairs, often held at a wine shop in the suburb,
Hua People

looking off in the direction the traveler was about to take, it was the usual thing
to relate facts and fancies of every kind about his route and destination, and to
write poems on the themes of the physical and moral perils to be encountered
there. These effusions might, depending upon the whim of their composers, either
fill the departing guest with pleasant anticipation for the warmer, greener lands
of the south, or else send him off with sinking heart and trembling hands, his mind
beset with fear of savage tribesmen and horrible diseases. Such was the effect on
his guest, we may imagine, of a farewell poem written by Chang Chi (ca. 765-
ca. 830), "Seeing off a Traveler Moving to the South." 28

Away, away—far-ranging traveler!
Amid miasmas waste your blighted body!
Blue hills and roads without limits;
White heads—of men who do not return.

Countries by the Sea—they mount elephants in battle,
Countries of the Man—they use silver in market.
The family unit split—in several places—
And who may be seen in spring, South of the Sun?

("South of the Sun" is also the Vietnamese province of Jih-nan; the second verse
of the poem refers to the dreaded ravages of malaria.) Little heartened by this sort
of thing, the traveler made his way southward through the well-watered valleys
south of the great Yangtze, choosing either an easterly route through the Kan
basin (in modern Kiangsi), or a westerly route down the Hsiang valley (in modern
Hunan), in either case finding the land increasingly green, the weather increasingly
warm, and the aborigines increasingly numerous.

Let us now follow him into Nam-Viet, by the several possible routes, looking as
we go at the chief Chinese settlements in that land, and regretting that we cannot,
for the most part, see them as real cities, with walls, streets, parks, and markets,
but now, bound by our meager sources, only as abstract economic entities, salted
with some human and historical associations.

The easternmost route may be called the Ch'ien road, since it went southward
from O in Hupei, and up the valley of the Kan to Ch'ien-chou, near the Nam-Viet
border. From that point it was necessary to go by land over the Great Yü Pass. 29 This
was an old road, and, until the eighth century, not an easy one. Then, because of the
great development of the profitable overseas trade coming by way of Canton,
the great minister Chang Chiu-ling, himself a Nam-Viet creole and a supporter
of the southern merchants, was commissioned in December of 716 to see to the
building of a new and easier road over that pass. 30 We are fortunate in having
Chang's own account of this important engineering work. Of the old road he
writes:

21
Hua People

Formerly, an abandoned road in the east of the pass,
Forbidding in the extreme, a hardship for men.
An unswerving course: you clambered aloft
On the outskirts of several miles of heavy forest,
With flying bridges, clinging to the brink
Halfway up a thousand fathoms of layered cliffs...

And of its importance:

The several nations from beyond the sea
Use it daily for commercial intercourse:
Opulence of teeth, hides, feathers, furs;
Profits in fish, salt, clams, cockles. 81

It was this route which the philosophic Li Ao took when he went out to Nam-Viet
To take up an official post in 809. 82 He left a sketch of his itinerary for posterity.
I summarize it here, omitting his notes on local sight-seeing and other details from
the first part, which tells of his journey towards Nam-Viet:

January 31: left Lo-yang and boarded boat with wife and children.
February 6: departed Lo-yang. Delays because of my own and my wife's illness.
February 11: finally entered Pien Canal, going towards Huai region.
February 12: reached Ho-yin.
February 16: stopped at Pien-chou; I was ill again.
February 18: passed night at Ch'en-liu.
February 20: stopped at Sung-chou.
February 23: reached Yung-ch'eng.
February 25: reached Yung-k'ou.
February 27: stopped at Szu-chou.
March 3: left Pien Canal and entered Huai River system.
March 5: reached Ch'ü-chou.
March 10: reached Yang-chou.
March 14: crossed Great Chiang River and reached Jun-chou.
March 21: reached Ch'ang-chou.
March 25: reached Su-chou.
March 28: crossed Sung River.
March 31: reached Hang-chou.
April 5: by water to Fu-ch'un.
April 8: reached Mu-chou.
April 13: reached Ch'i-chou; delay because of wife's illness; we stayed at a
    Buddhist temple.
May 6: daughter born.
May 28: left Ch'i-chou.
May 30: ascended pass from Ch'ang Mountain to Jade Mountain.
Seats of Counties Traversed by Li Ao
Hua People

June 1: reached Hsin-chou.
June 12: reached Hung-chou.
June 23: reached Chi-chou.
July 3: reached Ch'ien-chou.

Hereafter I translate the diary verbatim:

July 12: ascended Great Yu Mountain Pass.
July 13: reached Cheng-ch'ang [a hsien attached to Shao-chou, situated on the Cheng River, a tributary of the Chen, just below the pass on the road to the important towns of Shih-hsing and Ch'ü-chiang.] 82
July 14: ascended Ling-t'ung West Pass and saw the Stones of Shao.
July 15: stayed the night at Ling-ch'iu ("Numinous Vulture") Mountain. [Not far north of Ch'ü-chiang.] 84
July 16: reached Shao-chou [i.e. the seat of Shao County at Ch'ü-chiang.]
July 17: reached Shih-hsing public house. [Presumably at or near Ch'ü-chiang. Shao-chou was sometimes called Shih-hsing chün; the party had already passed Shih-hsing hsien on about July 14.]
July 19: entered Tung-yin ("Eastern Shade") Mountains; looked at the shoots of the great bamboos, like baby boys and girls. Passed Cheng-yang Ravine.
July 20: stayed the night at Ch'ing-yüan Mountain Ravine [on the Chen River, our North River, between Ch'ü-chiang and Canton.]
July 25: reached Kuang-chou. 85

At the end of this journal, Li Ao gives a schedule of the distances covered on various stages of his trip, most of which was by water. Essentially his route was from Lo-yang to Yang-chou via the Pien Canal, then southwest through Chekiang into the Kan River system of Kiangsi, then southwards to the Great Yu Pass on the frontier of Lingnan. This rather leisurely journey, consuming almost six months, should be contrasted with Liu Tsung-yüan's trip into exile in 815—it took him a little more than three months to reach Liu-chou in Lingnan from Ch'ang-an. 86

The entrance to Nam-Viet was a magical stone gateway, the Stones of Shao, for which Shao County was named. These were two great craggy rocks standing opposite each other on the road leading down from the pass. They made a magical and ceremonial portal, one of a series which culminated in the bronze pillars of Ma Yüan at the opposite side of the province. The crags themselves were gray blue, and, in Sung times at least, fragments of Shao stone were taken from the river which flowed between them to make attractive miniature mountains, much desired by collectors. 87

Shao County, being on the chief land route from the north into Nam-Viet, was exceptionally rich in Chinese traditions, and in ancient relics and literary notices
Hua People

of the Hua-men. The county boasted the remains of a wall said to have been built by Chao T'o to mark the northernmost extent of his kingdom. The wall of the T'ang administrative city in Ch'ü-chiang township had been built by the aboriginal magnate Teng Wen-chin on a new site on the west side of the Chen River. Early in the eighth century the county had a tax-paying population of close to 170,000 persons, most of them, no doubt, concentrated in or near Ch'ü-chiang. The chief products of the county—or at least those most prized by the northern aristocrats—were a fine linen of bamboo fibers, medicinal lime powdered from stalactites, and orchids (more probably desired as drugs than as garden ornaments). The most notable places here were Shih-hsing township above the new road from the Great Yü Pass, and Ch'ü-chiang "Bent River," whose name is identical with that of the famous serpentine water park in the great capital, Ch'ang-an. Ch'ü-chiang was the birthplace of the noble minister Chang Chiu-ling. Its hills and rocks were well-known from the reports of cultivated travelers. There was Silver Mountain in the northeast; there were multicolored arrangements of stones in the north, the home of wild goat antelopes; there was "Glorious Mountain" where a silvery star had fallen early in the seventh century—a favorite place for the recreations of all classes, with a two-storey pavilion for parties, the Shao-yang Lou, whose amenities were celebrated in a poem by Hsü Hun in these words: "With cup of jade and gemmy zither, close to the River of Stars." Then there was Lotus Mountain, west of the administrative seat, boasting a Buddhist temple and a deep grotto with ancient Taoist associations. The Mountain of the Numinous Vulture—so named because it resembled a mountain of the same name in the holy land of India—had a fine Buddhist monastery, said to be the most splendid in Lingnan. Indeed the region was a fairyland of religious establishments, not the least of them a pagoda built early in the ninth century, given fame by the name of the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng, and noticed in a poem by Liu Tsung-yüan. After a day or two of sightseeing around Ch'ü-chiang, the visitor would proceed by boat down the Chen River to Canton.

The two other gateways to Nam-Viet were both reached by way of Hunan and the Hsiang River valley. The southbound traveler proceeded upriver by way of T'ien-chou (or Ch'ang-sha) to Heng-chou. From this point there were two possible routes. One, not of great importance, took him to Ch'en-chou near the Lingnan border, whence he crossed over the Ch'ü-tien Pass and so down the Chen River.

Much more important was the Kuei-chou road, the westernmost of the three. This went from Heng-chou to Yung-chou (west of Ch'en in southern Hunan), and over the pass to Kuei-chou in Lingnan.

Kuei was Shao's counterpart in the west, and like Shao was situated in the cool southward-sloping hills above the Tropic of Cancer, but with less than half the population of Shao. Still, it was the most considerable of the many small counties of western Lingnan. Its chief products were mats, deer-skin boots, and utensils of
Hua People

silver and copper. Its fine bronze mirrors were particularly admired. But Kuei's
greatest advantage was its position on the important route from the lakes and
rivers of central China into Nam-Viet, which crossed the mountain pass of the
Walled City of Viet, the westernmost of the Five Passes into the tropical south. Here
were such natural miracles as glittering limestone grottoes, and such man-made
wonders as an ancient wall on the mountain crest, said to have been built by Chao
T'o himself to resist the soldiers of Han. Then there was the walled county seat,
Lin-kuei, a gem of a city, as witness a poem by Han Yu. The poet alludes to a fine
town beyond the source of the great Hsiang River, on the site of a legendary
grove of eight cinnamons (t'hei). In the first quatrains he represents it as a
beautiful woman in rich costume—the Cinnamon River girds her, and the
surrounding pinnacles are her gems my headdress. In the second, the city appears as a
Taoist paradise ("Sylphdom"), rich in turquoise and gold—under the aspect of
kingfisher feathers and oranges:

A green sheen— the luxuriance of Eight Cinnamons—
This is that place which lies south of the Hsiang:
The river makes a blue gauze sash,
The hills seem cyan jade hairpins.

Doorways there mostly send forth halcyon feathers,
Households there freely plant out yellow tangerines:
This far surpasses going off on the ascent to sylphdom—
So borrow no hitch from a flying simurgh! 47

Kuei-chou was a haunted and holy place. "Piebald Deer Mountain" nearby
was named for a supernatural albino deer which used to frequent an ancient
Buddhist temple there. Near the city too was a hill with a shrine to Shun, the
primordial potter god. It is mentioned in a poem by Li Shang-yin, and a Sung
source notes the presence of an eighth-century inscription on the site. This spot
was not far from the supposed graves of Shun's two wives, the goddesses of the
River Hsiang, north of the city. Indeed, the whole region between the River
Hsiang and the River Kuei, here at the end of civilization, was sacred to these
lovely ladies. We shall see them again, along with their august consort, among the
great gods of the south.

Li Shang-yin showed the ghostly influences at work in this beautiful region
in another poem, which he named "Cinnamon Forest." Its first quatrains describes
the physical city; its second, the spiritual city. It ends on a note of alienation:
the constant drumming and fluttering of the aboriginal shamans are addressed to gods
unknown to the Hua-men from the north—they will answer no Chinese prayers.

Its walls squeezed in— the hills about to press on them;
Its river spread out— the lands all buoyed up by it.
East-by-south leads to remote precincts;
West-by-north possesses a tall tower.
Hua People

Gods stand guard on its banks with blue sweetgums;
Dragons move out from its charms of white stone.
In a far-off country, to what can we pray—
Where flutes and drums have not once rested? 61

The special pride of Kuei-chou was an engineering work, the "Holy Canal," which connected the north-flowing Hsiang with the south-flowing Kuei River.62 It ran through an attractive landscape, ornamented with the remnants of ancient limestone hills, now called the Hsiang-Kuei Gap.63 Tradition said that this wonderful waterway was built for the founder of Ch'in in the third century B.C. by a certain Shih Lu, and repaired several hundred years later, by Ma Yuan, the conqueror of Nam-Viet, to facilitate the transportation of provisions to his soldiery. But after that the canal became unusable.64 Nonetheless, a kind of stream, named Li Water, still trickled through the gap. It was still holy water, even if not useful for commerce or war. Its governing spirit was a dragon, prayed to for rain in mid-T'ang times at a riverside temple. The epigene emissaries or avatars of this deity took the forms of blue snakes, called "dragon colts," which crawled about harmlessly in the vicinity of the shrine, and coiled playfully about the hands and heads of visitors.65 The canal was reduged twice in T'ang times. In 835, the governor Li Po (Li Bwêk), after much trouble with inferior materials and the raids of Man tribesmen, made the passage of transport vessels possible once more by employing 53,000 paid workmen to build a great jetty (hua ti "shovel dike") of stone and hardwood to divide the stream in two parts and a series of locks (tou men) to control the level of the water in the navigable channel.66 However, after the loss of Annam to the Yunnanese in 863, the old canal was found to be inadequate for supplying the large Chinese armies kept in Lingnan, and special sea-going grain ships were built to carry rations along the coast from Fukien, a journey of something less than a month.67 In 868-869, a new governor, Yu Meng-wei, rebuilt the system of channel divider and locks to allow "the passage of huge vessels."68 His report of this restoration, written in 870, is an important historical document.69 Apparently the canal remained in use through the ninth century, since the army of Huo Ch'ao, decimated by tropical diseases, floated on rafts up from Lingnan into Hunan on the swollen waters of the canal in the late autumn of 879.69 The remains of the Holy Canal were still admired by tourists in the thirteenth century.70

Whether from Shao (Chü-chiang) or Kuei (Lin-kuei), the south-faring traveler, unless destined for a really out-of-the-way and unpleasant place, came ultimately to the only metropolis of Lingnan. This was the city we now call "Canton," the seat of the T'ang administration of Kuang-chou, a county of considerable extent. Sometimes it was the capital of all of Nam-Viet. Though the city was legally divided between the two townships of Nan-hai and Pan-yu, the men of T'ang called it "Walled-city of Kuang-chou," or simply "Kuang-chou," or often
Hua People

"Kuang-fu." This latter appellation represented the city as the see of a viceroy, and was widely adopted by seafarers, particularly by the Arabs, in the form Khanfu. Indian merchants, however, knew the city as "China." Their name for the great capital Ch'ang-an was more lofty: Mahācina "Greater China."

Although set in a distant frontier region, where most settlements were recent, this was an old town. Its beginnings are unknown, but an old tradition told that its original site in Nan-hai township had been marked off by five Taoist transcendents, who came down from the sky riding on multicolored goats and holding beautiful stalks of millet in their hands. Consequently the popular name for the city was "Walled City of the Five Goats"—indeed this was the proper name of the city considered as a physical entity rather than as the seat of an administrative region. The ancient hero Chao T'o built a wall here when he founded his kingdom. A new city wall was constructed by Pu Chih in the third century of our era when he transferred the administration of Nam-Viet from Hanoi to the Canton area. We are told that it was this wall (it had been repaired and extended many times) which was destroyed by fire when Huang Ch'ao pillaged the city in 879.

In the eighth century, Canton had a population of about 200,000. It was a cosmopolitan city with a huge merchant class, chiefly Indochinese, Indonesian, Indian, Singhalese, Persian, and Arab. This rich entrepôt suffered from a diversity of endemic calamities. One of these was fire, which repeatedly swept through the wood, bamboo, and thatch settlements until, in 806, a governor ordered the populace to install tile roofs. Another was piracy: a ferocious raid of Arabs and Persians in 758, possibly from a base on Hainan, ruined the city's trade. But Canton revived early in the ninth century, and remained fairly prosperous until Huang Ch'ao, the peasants' hero, desiring to cut off an important source of revenue for the imperial court, sacked it. The third scourge of the city was a corrupt officialdom which appeared with monotonous regularity but at unpredictable intervals. Despite all of these, the city seems always to have been capable of resurrection. But despite its wealth and importance, it seems that it was not until Liu Yen founded the Viet nation (later styled Han) in 917, that Canton took on something of the appearance of a sophisticated metropolis. With the revival of trade under that monarch, the riches of the Indies poured in again, and he was able to build palaces and government edifices worthy of his new dignity. We are told, for instance, that one of his royal halls was "decorated with silver, with running water beneath it, and images of the sun and moon in crystal and amber on its two towers." Archaeologists would do well to look for relics of the tenth century here.

Always it was a merchant town, where visitors from the north noticed chiefly "the babble of the voices of the Man in the night markets." The words are those of the poet Chang Chi. But the town's riches were not restricted to the gems, incenses, and ivories of the merchant princes. The countryside itself produced much wealth: the distant court exacted annual tribute of silver, rattan matting, bamboo
Hua People

mats, lichees, edible skins of the green turtle, shells of the soft-shell turtle, medicinal
python bile, dendrobium orchids, aloeswood, onycha, and kanari copal—that is,
household furniture, table delicacies, medicines, and aromatics.

These luxuries were extracted from the aborigines (perhaps partly from Chinese
settlers) by agents of the government, who, if not otherwise completely preoccupied
with lining their own purses, might distract themselves from ennui, the heat, and fear
of native uprisings, by occasional visits to the notable sights of the city, which was,
after all, the scene of famous exploits in the heroic past, a quality possessing eternal
charm for the Chinese. There were the fragments of an old wall, thought to have
been erected by that perennial wall builder King Chao T'o, as well as other ruins con-
ected with his famous reign, such as a terrace or platform not far from the city,
called "Terrace of the King of Viet." This structure was mystically identified with
other semi-divine rulers of the south and their heavenly powers—notably with another
king, the famous Kou Chien, who had ruled over a nation called Viet in Chekiang
in Chou times. Chao T'o's platform is frequently mentioned in the poems written
by reluctant T'ang sojourners in Canton. It was a good place to visit for a picnic
and a nostalgic thrill. One ascended the remains of the terrace and looked off
reverently towards the civilized north as Chao T'o is reputed to have done, weeping
with well-bred emotion. Of the other sights associated with that king's great name
the most notable perhaps was his grave in Nan-hai township. The tomb must have
once been a characteristic kingly barrow, but it had been looted almost a millenium
before, since an excavation carried out as early as 226 had found it empty—though
the tomb of the king's son, dug up at the same time, had yielded such treasures
as a jade casket and thirty-six golden seals. There could not have been much
for a T'ang visitor to see, though doubtless a thoughtful magistrate had raised a
pavilion where one might cool himself while sipping wine—that was the usual
thing. Other agreeable sights in or near the city were connected with the names
of former governors (such as bits of walls built by them), and of saintly Taoists and
Buddhists—for instance, a "Well of Bodhidharma," and the supposed residence
of the probably mythical Taoist immortal An ch'i sheng. For the pious there was
the respectfully "Confucian" Temple to the God of the South Sea in Nan-hai, not to
mention many Buddhist establishments. For the practical there was a productive
lead mine in Hua-meng township, to say nothing of factories for the cupellation
of silver, fisheries, and the docks.

Nowadays we are prone to classify old cities. But it is not easy to find a neat
label for Canton. Was it merely a commercial town or was it a true cosmic city,
or some kind of hybrid? To put it another way—and to use the language of some
sociologists—was it a city of orthogenetic transformation or a city of heterogenetic
transformation?
Hua People

been very different in cities of heterogenetic transformation, particularly in those sub-classified by these authors as "cities of the entrepreneur," where men were concerned primarily with expediency norms and relations between buyer and seller, and where there had developed a consensus appropriate to the technical, rather than the moral, order.79

In T'ang times, Ch'ang-an certainly had all the qualities required of a cosmic city of the "orthogenetic transformation," though it had its great markets and its foreign population. It might be urged that its character was corrupted by the intrusion of an educated bourgeoisie, typified by such men as Chang Chiu-ling, into its administration and spiritual life. Canton, for its part, was more than a mere market town. It had been a sacred city of a sort long ago in Chao T'o's golden time—a character it regained in 927 when Liu Yen of Southern Han seized absolute power. Meanwhile it had a wall, and temples to its protector gods, and ruins, and venerated relics of a holy past. Indeed it was (as were all T'ang cities) a secondary source of charismatic energy radiated by the imperial magistrate in his role of surrogate of the divine king in Ch'ang-an, especially when he performed the sacrifices to the God of the South Sea. In short, the town had a dual role and ambiguous character, but its "heterogenetic" features should, perhaps, be regarded as primary in T'ang times.

Most travelers going beyond Canton on regular business, commercial or political, were headed southwestward for Annam. Before tracing their route, let us look at other quarters of Nam-Viet, beginning with the region east of Canton, towards Fukien.

The large county of Hsün, immediately east of Kuang, although profiting from such simple endeavors as the gathering of python bile, shark skins, and onycha from the native animals, along with a few herbaceous drugs, had also developed some industries, and shipped linen, colored rattan-ware, and "mirrored caskets"—we should call them vanity cases—to the well-to-do citizens of northern cities.80

Ch'ao, furthest to the east, and closest to the Fukien border, claimed between six and seven thousand Chinese residents in town and country, about half the population of Hsün; it produced bananas, and collected shark skins for sword grips, python bile and sea horses for medicine, onycha for incense, a silvery stone—perhaps muscovite schist—presumably for ornamental purposes, and turtles.81 This isolated county was also ill-famed for its colony of crocodiles. Its life was chiefly on the salt sea, but it had no important port—modern Swatow was not even a dream.

At the opposite end of the province from the relatively cool northern hills was a long peninsula projecting towards the tropical island of Hainan—our modern atlases show it as Luichow. In T'ang times it was under the jurisdiction of Lei-chou. Despite its hot and humid climate, the region boasted a tax-paying population of more than twenty thousand, and the chief town sent token tribute of silk
Hua People

floss, spotted bamboo, and peafowl to the imperial court. Of the appearance of the walled city we know nothing—it cannot have attracted many visitors. As for the green island of Hainan itself, the most populous of its five counties were Tan and Wan-an, on the northwest and southeast sides of the island: Tan exported gold and copal; Wan-an produced gold and silver, an unrecognized Golden Chersonese. Again, though many political exiles died here, they have left us no description of the hated island.

Communications with Annam (Chiao-chou) were chiefly overland, and were designed chiefly for military conquest and Chinese immigration. Most commerce, it seems, was still in the hands of sea-going foreigners, especially Arabs and Persians. These men played little part in the acculturation of this part of Indochina, in contrast to the southern, more Indianized parts of the peninsula, where sea-borne traders had an important role in modifying its native cultures. Still, Chinese merchants could not have been unknown on these roads. Perhaps most of them were slave traders. Along with soldiers, administrators, and colonists, they journeyed westward from Canton through the richly mineralized but dangerous province of Jung (silver, cinnabar, and mercury). Its administrative town was on the Yü (Iwê; the name means “jungly”) River, now called simply “West River.” The settlement was much troubled by rampant waters until part of the flow was diverted by Szu-ma Lü-jen in 710-711. This hazardous road led to the Vietnamese lands (not yet distinguished as such), and above them to the Tibeto-Burmans of Nan-shao, in deadly rivalry with the T’ang men for the control of the southwest. Many northern visitors must have found it a frightening experience to pass through the Gate of Ghosts, a gap, thirty paces wide, between two crags in Yü-lin (“Jungle Forest”) County, analogous to the Stones of Shao on the northern frontier of the province. In T’ang times there was still an ancient stele at this spot, reputed to have been erected by Ma Yüan as he marched southward to subdue the savages at the end of the world. The lands beyond this portal reeked with deadly miasmas. An eighth-century folk-saying about them went:

The customs barrier at Ghost Gate—
Ten men go out,
Nine men return.

The road was first open to the men of T’ang in 622 when the Ning tribes who commanded this coastal passage submitted, and their chiefs Ning Ch’un and Ning Ching-chen accepted T’ang commissions to govern the strategic counties of Lien and Chin.

Physically, however, the route from Lingnan into Annam was easy. The passes through low hills, not at all comparable to the highlands of eastern Lingnan, need not be mentioned in the same breath with the rugged mountain barriers which inhibited the passage of Chinese farmers into Kweichow on the north.
Hua People

But some transport was by water. The conqueror Kao P’ien, as Protector of Annam late in the ninth century, enlisted a body of men to dredge a channel through the rocks and shallows along the coast of Po-chou, a county under Jung Administration, immediately east of Lien, and west of the Lei-chou peninsula. This work must have been part of a larger plan to open up a coastal waterway through to the Red River estuary and the capital of Annam, referred to in a report which tells us that in the spring of 867 Kao P’ien ordered the elimination of submerged rocks between Canton and Annam, following the example of Ma Ylian who (it was said) built a mole almost to the frontier of Champa, allowing the quiet passage of boats separated from the terrors of the open sea.

The true location of the Chinese capital of Chiao-chou in the Red River valley of Tongking has always been a problem for historians. During the early centuries of our era it seems to have been at the port of Lung-pien. When, after the native disorders led by chiefs of the Li (Vietn. Ly) clan during the sixth century, the Sui general Liu Fang restored Chinese authority in this region in 603, the administrative seat was placed at Sung-p’ing (Vietn. T’ang-binh), on the south bank of the river. The Red delta had close to 100,000 inhabitants at this time. The distinguished history of both of these old towns was briefly recognized by T’ang in a temporary toying with administrative geography which established a Sung-chou “county” about Sung-p’ing and a Lung-chou county about Lung-pien in 621—but these ephemeral administrations were abolished a few years later.

The old name Lung-pien means Dragon Twist, and is said to have been given to the place in the dim past because of a chiao (kâu) dragon which coiled in the river near the newly founded city. The name was well exploited by such T’ang poets as Lu Kuei-meng, who matched Dragon Twist with Tiger Crouch in a couplet describing this savage country. The old town was also sometimes called Dragon’s Gulf.

The fortified town which protected the County of Chiao (Kâu—possibly the same as the draconian kâu?) was commonly called by the name of its outer wall, the great Lo-ch’eng (La-zheng; Vietn. La-thanh), Enveloping Wall. The history of this citadel, both that of its prototype which surrounded ancient Lung-pien and the more modern one around Sung-p’ing, is obscure. But it appears that the outer wall of the latter town was rebuilt by the Chinese protector Chang Po-i in 767. In the winter of 866/67, Kao P’ien, victorious over the invaders from Nan-chao, built a great new wall, with a circumference of three thousand paces, and ordered a vast project of house-building to make a true metropolis of the ancient fortress-city.

The products of Chiao-chou were bananas, areca nuts, shark skins, python bile, and kingfishers feathers, but Lo-ch’eng and its port also competed with Canton for the great South Seas trade, and sometimes outdid its northern rival in the volume of its foreign commerce. Late in the eighth century, troubled because “in

32

141
Hua People

Recent days, the argosies and other vessels mostly go to trade in the markets of Annam," the great minister Lu Chih advised the establishment of a special agency whose chief function was to encourage the commercial development of Canton.\textsuperscript{102}

For men with business further south, there was a great road which went from the Tongking delta by way of the hardly believable frontier counties of Yen-chou and Huan-chou along the steaming coasts of Champa and Cambodia.\textsuperscript{108} We may imagine that it was not as well traveled as the more famous sea lane. Another road, often interrupted, led northward from Chiao-chou through Feng-chou on the upper Red River and the Clear River (Rivière Claire) into Yunnan. This route remained open to the men of T'ang after the destruction of the invading armies of Nan-chao by Kao Pien in 866.\textsuperscript{104}

Soldiers

As the inhabitants of Nam-Viet were made passive to Chinese rule, the Hua-men gradually settled among them. It is easy to suppose that their soldiers, in the vanguard of the northerners, would have been among the first to take up permanent residence, unless preceded by unrecorded hunters and travelers. This may in fact have been the case, but we have little evidence of it. Some military colonies were established in Lingnan as early as Han times, but the practice of settling soldiers on the land was not carried out on a large scale there until the last decades of the eighth century. Then colonies of aborigines were also established on the frontiers, lent plows and oxen, and given seed, while being employed in public work projects. Thus agricultural settlements of both the Hua and the Man extended the arts and customs of T'ang into the lands of their old enemies.\textsuperscript{105}

The history of soldiers as mutineers in the perilous lands is more intimately documented. This sorry tale had its climax late in the ninth century. A body of eight hundred troops levied in Hsü and Szü (roughly the Huai area, north of modern Nanking), for instance, which had spent six years without relief in Kwei, following active duty in Annam, mutinied in the fall of 868, and looted the countryside.\textsuperscript{106} Or again, the T'ang army in Annam turned against its supreme commander in 880, as did the Kuei-chou army two years later,\textsuperscript{107} and all the while unhappy soldiers from the northern provinces on garrison duty in Yung Administration were deserting and making their way homewards.\textsuperscript{108}

Administrators

With the soldiers, and after them, came the mandarins, to bring the right way of life to the benighted southerners. The Chinese establishment in Nam-Viet was
Hua People

unique, at least as compared with modern imperialist undertakings, in that these hot lands had been nominally Chinese for more than a thousand years. The problems faced by the T’ang administrators were essentially the same as those which had been faced by their remote ancestors of Han. This southern frontier was forever unstable—a wavering, shadowy fringe rather than a clear demarcation. It was a chronic ulceration for which no medicine could be found, differing from the northern frontier of the pastoral nomads in that there was no “gentlemanly” agreement. In short, the Hua-men did not need to make any concessions to the Thais as they did, for instance, to the Uighurs whose horses they required. Nor were there any southern parallels to the alien dynasties of nomadic origin which had ruled over the northern Chinese from time to time. No southern wall, no fixed series of trading posts, marked the boundary between the Chinese and their jungle neighbors, as they marked the agreed-upon frontier between the Chinese and their northern neighbors and sometimes masters, the lords of the steppe and boreal forest. There was no clear-cut line between civilization and savagery, despite the symbolic gateways and boundary stones, only a stippling of Chinese settlements fading into the immensity of the haunted tropical forests.

But not all southern peoples were alike. The men of Lingnan and Annam were different from the Tibeto-Burman peoples of the western and southwestern highlands. Some of these last remained true foreign nations, often troublesome ones, at this time. The men of T’ang tried to pacify the Ning and Huang; they tried to invade Nan-chao. The Man tribesmen of Nam-Viet had long been Chinese subjects by right of conquest, and had somehow to be digested. It was not unlike the difference between “our” Texas and “their” Chihuahua for the nineteenth-century American—or, in view of the great time lapse since the Chinese conquest, between “our” Gaul and “their” Germany for the ancient Roman.

A sensitive modern critic, familiar with the experience of the French in their hot colonies, has remarked that there is a “heroic age” of incipient colonialism, with an “epic” literature appropriate to a period of military penetration, full of the exploits and miseries of soldiers, actors in a sinister landscape inhabited by unattractive natives. The natives, for their part, are shown to be brave in battle, but quickly loosing their redeeming virtues after conquest, becoming a miserable and degraded remnant, their valor replaced by false humility. Such too was the scene in western Nam-Viet, even after hundreds of years of nominal subjection. But the Chinese writings which portray this unpleasant scene lack both epic and heroic qualities. They are officially correct histories and biographies, or plain descriptions of geography and natural history, or, in the realm of belles lettres, the brief and often self-pitying quatrains of overheated and resentful mandarins.

It is and was convenient to classify these reluctant administrators as good or as bad. Much depends on what the official records say of them. “Good” means useful in making Chinese culture palatable, or at least acceptable, to the resigned aborigines,
Hua People

while coupling a degree of generosity and fidelity with the necessary sternness. “Bad” means self-seeking—ambitious, self-indulgent or harsh for one’s own ends, when these disagreed with moral stereotypes or state policy. Good or bad, avarice was the great agent of corruption. The wealth of the tropics offered the possibility of solace for the dangers, discomforts, and emotional strains of life there.

Such were the difficulties of the terrain “that one inevitably arrives there only after several months,” wrote Han Yu, adding that “the Man barbarians are cruel and volatile, and readily show their grievances in rebellion.” The famous writer was pleading for recognition of the importance of administrative excellence in such trying surroundings. But most T’ang officials, though fully aware of the problems, were more sensitive to the profits. They found themselves in an incumbency where “the men of Kuang dwell in the land intermingled with the Man—but their duties are slight, while they reap abundant profits in the markets.” Distasteful as the barbarians, both indigenous and sea-borne, might be, there were compensations not to be disdained. “This country abounds in treasures and jewels,” wrote Ts’en Shen to a friend leaving for a high post in Canton, “—take care that you do not come to despise purity and poverty.”

Let us look at a sampling of highly placed T’ang agents, and see how they faced up to the savages and their undeserved treasures. The shallow vignetees which follow are intended to show that although the experiences of T’ang functionaries had a certain uniform character and although their official biographies tended to be bloodless black-and-white-stereotypes, nonetheless some individual, that is to say human, differences can be detected.

Sung Ch’ing-li

While he was a high officer in Lingnan, between 705 and 709, the native tribes of Hainan were ravaging the agricultural settlements and giving great trouble to the Chinese garrisons. T’ang officials were reluctant to accept responsible posts there from fear of malaria and other tropical diseases. Ch’ing-li went to the island in person, persuaded the chiefs to forget their feuds, and established peace. It became possible to reduce the garrison by five thousand men. (Comment: we should like to know how he persuaded them.)

Li Mien

Governor of the whole province, stationed at Canton during 769-771, an efficient administrator, he suppressed the aboriginal leaders Feng Ch’ung-tao and Chu Chi-shih, who had seized more than ten T’ang counties. He rehabilitated the customs service at the great port, so that where recently only four or five foreign argosies had brought their wealth each year, now more than forty came. On his way home, after his term of duty, he searched the baggage of his retainers and threw a quantity of expensive goods, such as rhinoceros horn, into the river.
Hua People

Wang O

This nabob enriched himself while governing Canton between 795 and 800 by plundering hapless foreign merchants, imposing a levy on them far above that required by his superiors. His private lighters, "burdened with horn, ivory, pearls, and shells," filled his coffers in Ch’ang-an higher than those of the public treasury.116

Tou Ch’üan

After a great flood had undermined the walls of the administrative seat of Ch’ien-chou [in modern Kweichow] in the early fall of 811, this administrator conscripted the wild tribes to repair them. The working conditions were so bad that a general uprising followed, and Tou’s efforts to put it down failed. He was degraded, but turned up as chief magistrate in Jung-chou in Nam-Viet in 813–815.116 (Comment: incompetence could lead to the penalty of reduced status, but not necessarily to removal from the service of the state. It was not the welfare of the native population which concerned the court, only the difficulties and expenses of keeping the peace.)

Küng K’uei

Ruling Nam-Viet from Canton during 817–819, this man was noted for his rectitude and piety, for which he gained the praise of the exiled Han Yü, himself a man of strict principles. He restored the worship of the God of the South Sea, reduced imposts on foreign goods, abolished the custom of receiving “voluntary” gifts from overseas merchants, and did away with the custom of confiscating the property of deceased merchants when left unclaimed by the heirs for three months.117

Li Hsiang-ku

This greedy member of the T’ang royal family was Protector of Annam in 818. Jealous of the prestige of the native magnate Yang Ch’ing, he sent him off to fight against the Huang rebels, but Yang returned secretly and killed him.118

Li-Yüan-tsung

“Inciting Notary” in Yung-chou in the summer of 821, subordinate to the Administrator of Jung, he was out of favor with his superior for having restored some recently conquered territory to the Huang barbarians. He took his official seal and some hundred troops and fled to safety in the “Huang grottoes.” 119 (Comment: was he a Chinese or an aborigine?)

Lu Chün

An irreproachable legate in Lingnan during 836-840, he refused to enforce laws against the intermarriage of Hua and Lao, protected the property of the natives, and
Hua People

did away with a money tax on them, despite the common feeling against the intermingling of the two peoples in towns and farms and the possession of lands and houses by barbarians. A company of several thousand Chinese and Man made a pilgrimage to the great city to ask permission to build a temple and inscribe a monument in his honor, but he stubbornly refused. Comment: the Chinese settlers seem to have been less “race conscious” than their overlords, revealing their true feelings when a rarely tolerant man came to govern them.

Ch'en T'ing-sau

This man was a militant protector of T'ang interests in the hot peninsula of Leichou between 860 and 873. His secret agents went by boat to ferret out pirate nests on the seacoast as far north as Fukien, and he did not hesitate to raid these noxious dens. His county was secure.

Ts'ai Ching

This man, ruler of western Lingnan for T'ang briefly during 862, was driven out by his own officers because of his cruelty, and after futile attempts to recapture the administrative town with local conscripts, was sent into exile by the high government. He fled, but was run down and forced to commit suicide.

Exiles

The high commands in Nam-Viet, that is, the offices of Legate at Canton and Hanoi and of the chief administrators in Kuei, Jung, and Yung, were filled by grandees who enjoyed the favor of the court. Such a one was the minister Cheng Ch'üan, who was seen off by Han Yü as he left for the great sea of Canton in 823. The writer described the physical and moral perils of the new post, and admonished the minister to probity in these words:

In Pan-yü your army depot is thriving—
I wish to tell of it—hold your cup a while!
As canopies on the sea, your banners and pennants go out,
As links with the sky, your lookout and galleries unclose!

At yamen time, the dragon households gather,
On the high days, the horse men arrive.
When the wind is quiet, the frigate birds go away,
When officials are honest, the mussels and cockles come back.

For wares you will be in touch with the Country of Lions,
Your music will be performed at the Warrior King’s Terrace.
One affair after another—each utterly strange!
Do not grudge to condescend your great talents!

37
Hua People

This poem, full of standard images of Nam-Viet, requires a commentary:

P'an-yü is an old name for Canton; lines 2 and 3 describe the Legate's army, navy, and offices in Canton; the boat-people, akin to dragons, assemble when your office is open for petitions; the horse-men (ma men) are the hypothetical latter-day descendants of Ma Yüan, the Han conqueror; "frigate birds" is a very tentative identification of yüan-chü (ywan-kyo), an ill-omened sea-bird mentioned in the Chou classics—they will not appear to condemn the new governor; in Han times, the governor Meng Ch'ang restored the depleted oyster beds near Canton by strict conservation methods; the Country of Lions is Ceylon; the Warrior King is Chao T'o.

Surrounded by such novelties as these, the great mandarins sat cooped up in the walled towns of the southernmost province—high islands in an ocean of sullen aboriginal tribesmen—brooding, many of them at least, on the applicability of Confucian teachings while their captains studied jungle tactics.

But the lesser administrations in the smaller towns were often staffed by exiled metropolitan office holders, often men of rare talent even when not clever politicians—they sometimes had high ethical ideals, and, less often, literary ability. Disgraced politicians were banished to a distance proportional to the degree of the disgrace—the more heinous the crime, the further south they were sent, even to the hot, infected lands of Hainan and Annam, where they were given a minor and unattractive post, with a minimum of the amenities with which they were familiar. This degrading transfer was often accomplished in stages—first a minor post in Hunan, say, then on to Lingnan. The opposite was also true: the unfortunate functionary could be gradually rehabilitated, and proceed northward, post by post, down the temperature gradient to the capital and even to the court. It was in this fashion that Hsüan (Sywen) Tsung brought five magnates banished by his predecessor, the tyrannical Wu Tsung, back to civilization. One of this group was the great Niu Seng-ju, who was transferred in 846 from a minor post to Hsüan (Zywin)-chou to another in Heng-chou in Hunan.\(^{184}\) (Seng-ju had been thrice degraded to a post in Hsüan—a fact curiously omitted from his official biography, as the Sung scholar Ch'ien I observed.)\(^{126}\) Even during the last years of dying T'ang, Nam-Viet continued to serve as a place of exile for political offenders. This was because the far south remained loyal to the dynasty long after other provinces had succumbed to warlords hostile to the throne.\(^{126}\)

Another class of exiles in Nam-Viet were the spoiled favorites of unpopular rulers, most abundant when the royal successors wished to divest themselves of the taint of extravagance and unnecessary luxury at the beginnings of their reigns. Examples are the banishment to Lingnan in January of 827 of the cronies of the assassinated boy-emperor, the self-indulgent Ching Tsung.\(^{127}\) Another is the musician Li K'o-chi, favorite of the music-loving T Tsung: when his sovereign died in 873, his property was confiscated and he himself was sent to Lingnan.\(^{128}\)

The ostracized courtier could not always hope to survive his period of exile—or...
Hua People

even his southward journey. Death often waited for him on a little-traveled roadside or in a distant town, where the sight of his blood would not provoke an intrigue or a riot. Consider the case of three hundred men, more or less, including royal princes, sent into various parts of Lingnan by the Empress Wu because she suspected them of plotting against her unique regime. She despatched an agent to call them all into Canton in the spring of 693, where they were instructed to commit suicide. When they refused with much noisy shouting, they were herded off to the riverside and their heads chopped off. The responsible agent (it is alleged) forged further evidence of their disloyalty to lay before the empress. Less spectacular examples: Tou Ts'an, exiled in 793, was forced to kill himself ("had death conferred") on the road before reaching his office in Huan-chou in Annam; Hua Huan, an officer of the central administration, was required to kill himself after his arrival in Lei-chou in 806; Yang Chih-ch'eng, accused of manufacturing imperial robes and insignia for himself, was sent to Nam-Viet and butchered on the road on December 24, 834.

The sword and the noose were not really necessary in a great many cases. Other malignant agencies lay in wait for the exiles. The most devastating of these were tropical diseases—malaria above all. The histories record the death of a very large number of banished statesmen soon after their arrival in Nam-Viet. A considerable number of them would have lived if they could have remained at home. But we must postpone the discussion of the diseases of the south until a later and more appropriate chapter.

The families of political exiles—both those which accompanied the disgraced father into the tropics and those which he founded there—suffered severely after his death. "Sons and grandsons, poor and despondent, were unable to return on their own, even though they encountered an amnesty." Some had the good luck of living under a high-minded governor. One such was Lu Ch'un—we told of him in the preceding section—who helped such unfortunate by defraying the costs of drugs and funerary expenses, and finding wives and husbands for orphaned children.

The specter of banishment was terrifying. Arthur Waley has translated an unpleasant passage about a fearful minister from an early ninth century text:

"Even in the days of his early obscurity he was obsessed by the idea that his career would end in banishment, and he had a horror of mentioning the name of any place south of the mountains. Later on it was noticed that when he and his fellow secretaries were looking at maps of China, so soon as they came to a map of the south, Wei shut his eyes and would not look. When he became Prime Minister and took over his new official quarters, he noticed at once that there was a map on the wall. For a week he could not bring himself to examine it. When at last he screwed up his courage and looked, he found it was a map of Yai-chou. And sure enough it was to Yai-chou that he was banished in the end, not at Yai-chou that he died when not much over 40."


_Hua People_

addicted. Nostalgia was the plague of the whole officialdom of Nam-Viet. When Shen Ch'üan-ch'i was languishing in Huan-chou he greatly missed the "Cold Food" holiday, and longed for the elegant leisure of the bustling capital, where

Flowers and willows strive to show forth first at dawn,
And high-railed carts fill the roads to greet them.

To some of these displaced mandarins we owe a spate of good poetry about the new world they had to live in and try to cope with. Some coped well, some ill. Both sorts wrote of their feelings. Most suffered in some degree from the boredom and homesickness which most colonials know: "L'ennui est, par excellence, la forme élégante de l'inaptitude à recevoir la nouveauté." Typical of the bewildered poets who saw the whole subtropical wilderness of the northern fringe of Nam-Viet as a kind of dolorous hell was Liu Ch'ang-ch'ing:

The moon goes out from storax woods—the langur's voice is wretched;
The sky is cold at cassia holm—but cassia flowers are sprouting.
There is no place herein not fit for dejection—
Strangers from the Chiang look at each other, their tears like rain.

Among these anxious, alienated writers were some very distinguished personages. The Empress Wu, "Heaven-modeled," degraded her officer Sung Chih-wen to a post in the insignificant township of Shuang. Sung was an admired stylist in verse, praised for his rich language. His name in poetry is usually conjoined with that of Shen Ch'üan-ch'i. But he was not much admired as a man. The official history of T'ang describes him as a rascally self-seeker, "an object of deep derision to public-spirited gentlemen." He went to his new destiny by the usual road (we have already reported Li Ao's description of it) over the Pass of Plums by way of Shao-chou. He has left a series of poems composed on the various stages of this dismal journey—a kind of apprehensive diary in verse. In the one which follows he tells of his descent from the mountains, heading for Ch'ü-chiang, finally to face the well-advertised terrors of Nam-Viet:

I await the dawn to cross the peaks of Min;
Riding with spring, I look off to the Platform of Viet.
Transient clouds fall from the peng-bird's space-aerie,
And waning moons open up inside mussels' shells.

Climbing figs sway in the blue air;
Arenga palms veil the cyan moss.
Fragrance of liquidambar—encased in much dew;
Resonance of stones—whirling in thin springs.

Hugging the leaves, the dusky langurs whistle,
Biting on blossoms, the kingfishers come.
Though here in the south there is something delectable,
And that northern town seems daily more hazy—
Hua People

Yet my glossy black hair will shortly become white,
My loyal-vermilion heart has already turned to ashes.
Then how shall I ever head out on the homeward road
To work the shears on my old garden's weeds? 140

(Comment: the peaks of Min extend westward from southernmost Fukien; the p'eng is an enormous bird mentioned in ancient documents, comparable to the roc; pearls [here miniature moons] were thought to grow inside mussels with the phases of the moon; "climbing figs" are Ficus pumila [p'i-li]; we shall see the arennga palm or sagwire [huang-lang] later.)

Sung's exile poems reiterate this theme of wronged loyalty and misunderstood submission, as in the next he wrote, which tells of an early departure from Shao-chou. After a backward look up the pass he goes forward resolutely towards the "Shore of Pearls" and the "Posts of Bronze," anticipating mists, malaria, moids, damps, and typhoons. Even the weird creatures of the night will be unfamiliar:

Sooner than fend off kobold and troll,
I would rather argue with Otus or Owl

And another despairing reference to his garden:

Green trees—the road to Ch'in Capital,
Blue clouds—the bridge at Lo Water;
My old garden will long stand under the sun—
My soul is gone—no need to call it back.141

Finally, as his boat brings him close to Shuang-chou, the terminus of his hopeless journey, his apprehension increases and his sense of injustice becomes more acute. A new poem, after rehearsing the usual repertory of diseases, apes, dragons, and tattooed savages, protests the poet's gratitude to his distant royal mistress, as he "admires the Capital of Jade from the hazy distance." It ends on a note of sentimentally loyal devotion.142

We find these motifs pursued relentlessly—even when his escape from the green hell is conceivable—in a stylized letter written from Kuoi-chou, presumably after he had spent some time in Nam-Viet. Here Sung tells of his destiny in these "flaming wilds":

To follow up in gloom the routes of the trolls,
To stay far off in the country of tattooed brows;
Cyclonic winds shake the trees,
Ravenous weasels cry through the night;
Poison plagues traverse the skies,
Lamenting kites drop through the day;
But—my heart relies on the divine order—
My very being looks for a live return! 143

Despite his elegantly fervid verses on the sorrows of the south, Sung Chih-wen offers us few new, locally inspired images. He relies rather on such established appari-
Hua People

tions as wailing monkeys, intended to express sadness. His eyes and ears were not open to the new life of the near-tropics. Or perhaps he noticed the odd birds and flowers but did not know their names and so they could not enter his sumptuous but conventional poetry. It must be admitted, however, that most exiles from the north suffered from this same purblind insensitivity in some measure. All were prisoners of their ecological lexicons.

As for Sung Chih-wen the man, although his weeping does not endear him to us any more than his overdone patriotism, it must be remembered that this kind of literary self pity was not despised in T'ang times as it is in our own.

Other exiles are better known. Accordingly, less needs to be said of them.

Liu Yü-hsi suffered political misfortune early in his career. His name is usually associated with that of his friend Liu Tsung-yüan, whose downfall he shared. But he was luckier than Liu Tsung-yüan, who died young in his semi-tropical outpost. Yü-hsi was ultimately brought back to the capital, and lived to a ripe age, esteemed for his fine verses. He may have owed his life to his unhappy colleague, since when, in 815, his final place of banishment had been designated as Po-chou (in modern Kweichow). Tsung-yüan is said to have burst into tears, exclaiming, "Po-chou is no place for a human being to live!" and was able to influence the great minister P'ei Tu to procure for Yü-hsi the lighter sentence of a post in Lien (Lyen)-chou.\[144\] Of particular interest, however, is Yü-hsi's period of residence in an earlier and lesser place of exile, Lan-chou, in southernmost Hupei. Here, in the old kingdom of Ch'u, he wrote new words for the songs of the native shamans, shaping them to the patterns of the classical songs from the same region which we now know as the Ch'u tz'u. It is reported that these new verses persisted among the barbarians there, and it has been assumed that their popularity was due to their fitness to the ancient tradition, which was still alive in medieval times.\[145\] We do not know whether Yü-hsi attempted the same antiquarian literary feats while he was in Nam-Viet—but there, of course, he would have been hard put to find respectively sanctioned antiquarian precedents.

The ill-fated Liu Tsung-yüan is better known, and he turns up frequently in this book. Despite all that has been written about him, it is still difficult to appraise his feelings about the warm lands of his banishment. He seems to have loved the beautiful high landscapes of Yung-chou in southern Hunan, where he spent ten years (805-814), although his full appreciation was apparently inhibited by his feeling of rejection from the civilized world—indeed he wrote of the "imprisoning mountains" during this period.\[146\] Both elated and apprehensive at his recall to the capital in 815, his ambiguous hopes were dashed and he soon found himself on the southward road again, headed for his final destination in forested Liu-chou.\[147\] He still hoped for return, as we see in his parting verses to Liu Yü-hsi:

For twenty years now—together in a myriad affairs—
Now this morning our roads branch, and suddenly it's east and west!

42
Hua People

If the grace of the Illustrious should permit us to return to our fields,
In our twilight years we shall surely be gaffers in neighboring huts! 148

After this sad parting, he had a sadder one. His talented younger brother, who had
accompanied him into exile, died. His melancholy increased. 149 But he threw himself
into his new official labors, more responsible than those required of him in Hunan.
He rebuilt walls, dug wells, planted trees (especially willow trees: liu “willow"
was both his own and his incumbency’s name). Above all, he tried to relieve the
sufferings of the natives placed in his charge—his efforts against slavery have been
noticed elsewhere. 150 He seems to have had a genuine feeling for them, regarding
them as more than mere animals, as they were to many of his colleagues. He wrote
sympathetically of their sufferings: “their stout ones pinioned, their old ones killed,
they howl and cry,” and “curious ulcers spike their bones—their forms are like arrow-
shafts.” 151 But though he was more adaptable than most Chinese officials, he still
suffered. Here he tells of himself in his office in Liu-chou:

In the dank heat of this south country—drunk as if with wine,
Sound asleep, leaning on my table—with the north window open.
Awaking alone at midnight—there is no other sound
Than mountain youths, screened by bamboos, pounding the mortars of tea. 152

(“North window,” contrasted with “south country,” suggests that he has opened it
as a symbolic image of his lost homeland.)

Despite his humane treatment of its people and his appreciation of the beauty of
its hills and rivers, Liu Tsung-yüan never completely accepted the land of his death
as his home:

In the wild hills—an autumn day’s noon:
I go up alone—my thoughts of far-off regretted things.
Why do I look off to my native place?
The northwest—that is Jung-chou. 153

(The key to this quatrain lies in the last verse. Jung-chou is really southeast of him.
There is irony in the ambiguity here: the true savages are the politicians in the
northwest, not the so-called barbarians of the southeast. Also, it seems, the old home
in the northwest is as remote and difficult of approach as the haunted jungles of the
southeast.)

Ambitious young scholars residing in southern Hunan and in Lingnan sought
criticism and help from Liu Tsung-yüan. Although he was reluctant to accept the
formal role of teacher, he sometimes gave advice, as when he cautioned a young man
against the imprecise use of classical particles in his prose.154 Liu's own best writing
was in unadorned prose rather than in poetry—we shall see samplings from it scat-
tered through this book. Accordingly the new southern world provoked no striking
imagery in his writing, which is more often discursive and descriptive than meta-
phorical and imagistic. Even in a poem he presents a southern francolin released
Hua People

from captivity only as the occasion of a decent sentiment on his separation from his friends, not as an emotional sign of a new environment.  

Perhaps an account of literary exiles should not fail to mention Han Yu, the older contemporary of Liu Yü-hsi and Liu Tsung-yüan, who was banished to Ch'ao-chou in 819 for criticizing the Buddhist piety of Hsiien Tsung.  

But his story is well known, and in any case we shall see him again later.  

Most high-placed (in the worldly way) among the ostracized writers was Li Te-yü, the chief minister of the Buddha-hating Wu Tsung in the middle of the ninth century. Upon the accession in 847 of Hsüan (Sywen) Tsung, who gradually restored the monasteries of the realm, he was sent off to Ch'ao-chou in the footsteps of Han Yu, then, in the following year, moved on to endure the greater rigors of Yai-chou. He died there in 849 at the age of 63.  

His approach to Nam-Viet was characteristically apprehensive: he found the twisted roads bewildering, he feared poisonous fogs and venomous plants, he remarked on such exotics as areng palm, areca palms, and tillage in burned-over fields. Everything was oppressively and forbiddingly dark.  

After reaching his ultimate destination on Hainan, he was still overwhelmed by the black labyrinthise mountain forests which surrounded him:

I go up to the high loft alone, to look off to the Divine King's capital.  
To fly like a bird? Still, that is a half-year's journey!  
Blue mountains seem to wish to keep a man on here—  
A hundred circuits, a thousand turnings—girding the walls of the government town.

He seems to have retained a spark of good humor. In a letter to his talented young friend Tuan Ch'eng-shih, written from Yai-chou, he reports that he is still in good health (though he died soon after) and adds: "Most of the people who live here raise chickens. Time and again they fly into my office building. Now I'm going to be just an old man praying to chickens!"  

He had in mind the aura of superstition surrounding the barnyard fowl in Nam-Viet, and its importance for divining the future, thinking ironically that even these holy birds could not tell him the hour of his escape.  

Looking more closely at the three of these famous five who expressed their feelings most openly in their verses, we see that they all felt bewildered and hurt by what seemed undeserved convictions and harsh sentences. The tropics did not invite any of them—all expected only the worst. But there were differences among them too. Sung Chih-wen, always sure of his own virtue, dreaming only of the metropolis, was hardly able to look at the new lands. Liu Tsung-yüan, though staggered by his misfortunes, was more sensitive, and in love with nature. Accordingly he found much with which to reconcile himself. Li Te-yü was more mature, accepting his lot with gloomy but quiet resignation—the great statesman simply declines and disappears into the tropical night.
Hua People

CREOLES

But not all literate Chinese in Nam-Viet were of this sort. Some could honestly call it home. In T'ang times the settlement of Nam-Viet by the Hua people had begun in earnest. The Chinese populations of the south central lake and river districts, extending from modern Hunan to Chekiang, were growing at an enormous rate, and spilling over the mountains into Lingnan, especially by way of Hunan and the low pass at Kuei-chou. Accordingly we begin in T'ang times to distinguish not only primary settlers but creole magnates, some of them well-to-do, such as Teng Yu, a native of Shao-chou who rose to be Protector of Annam and a rich man owning a thousand personal slaves. The cultural level of the new towns was greatly enhanced by the arrival of banished northern literati and of upper-class immigrants fleeing the horrors of war and pillage which devastated the north in late T'ang times. Many of these men lived the rest of their lives in Nam-Viet, and their sons and grandsons grew up as natives, accustomed to the sights and sounds of the far south.

Most distinguished among the Nam-Viet creoles was Chang Chiuling, a native of Ch'ü-chiang in Shao-chou, who, after a successful administrative career in both capital and provinces (including Kuei-chou), rose to the highest office in the land—first minister to Hsüan (Ghwen) Tsung. Chang was a foremost example of the new men in government—administrators of modest “middle class” origins who obtained power through their success in the civil-service examinations, and competed successfully with the ancient aristocratic families of the north. It was largely due to the machinations of this established gentry that he ultimately lost his high position, to be succeeded by one of his enemies, Li Lin-fu. Hsüan Tsung later regretted Chang’s loss; it is reported that when Hsüan Tsung was forced into exile in Szechwan he never thought of Chang Chiuling without weeping, and he even sent a mission to Ch’ü-chiang to make offerings to his maus.

Despite his spectacular rise, Chang remained acutely conscious of his disability as a southerner. Of another minister, Niu Hsien-k’o, he once said: “Your servant is a humble, unaffiliated man from ‘The Passes and the Sea,’ not to be compared with Hsien-k’o, who was born in Central Hua!” But even lacking the social and political advantages of a northerner, he had one advantage most northerners lacked—the ability to see the subtropical and tropical frontier as a beautiful place, full of attractions to a man of sensibility.

Unlike the weeping exiles, Chang exulted in the savage but familiar landscape of Lingnan. Luckily he was a gifted poet. On an official tour south from Kuei-chou, he wrote of the “delightful hills and rivers” (they are his own words) and the richness of their life:
Hua People

Singular crags, winding in front of pinnacles,
Thriving trees, heaped up among their hollows;
Apes and birds—voicing instinctive calls,
Winds and springs—spouting common vapors.¹⁶⁸

Elsewhere he reproaches the northerners for neglecting the beautiful evergreen “vermilion sourpeel tangerines” of the south—and by implication, the talents of southern men as well:

You speak only of planting peaches and plums—
But surely my trees won’t fail to shade you!¹⁶⁹

He expressed his sense of desolation when he had to leave the familiar surroundings of Ch’ü-chiang:

The torrent’s flow is clear, and also deep;
A covering shade of pine and rock overhangs;
Truly then, a place to be esteemed—
Why now this unappreciative heart?

It is because I cannot bear partings—
I am infected even by attachment to brutish things!
But unless you too are declining at a steady pace
Can you comprehend this cry of mine?¹⁷⁰

On a return to visit his old parents “by gift of his glorious lord,” he takes a pleasant walk in his old garden, now subtly changed, with his younger brother:

Forest birds fly to the old hamlets,
Garden fruits ferment the new autumn,
Branches are longer on trees of the south court,
The pool is closer to the flow of the north race.¹⁷¹

Lying ill in Ching-chou, far to the north, his life near its end, he dreams of spring in the forest near his native place, where he once planned to build a house: “to return there would be worth a thousand metal coins for every day!”¹⁷² The remains of his studio near Shih-hsing, “shrouded by mountains, blooming with water,” were still pointed out in Sung times.¹⁷³

“The south was in his blood,” we would say. Yet this opinion has been challenged. The quondam-exile Liu Yü-hai, writing of the great minister more than half a century later, had this to say of him:

The world says of Chang Chiu-ling that as a minister he stated in words that banished vassals should not be granted good land, and that he had most of them exiled to the uncovered [by vegetation] country of the Five Gorges [of Hunan]. But now I read in his own writings that Chang, going from his duties in the penetralia [of the palace] to become Pastor of Shih-an, had sights about the plague of malaria, and retiring from his ministry to become Protector of Ching-chou, had thoughts of being held a prisoner—so he committed his symbolism to animals and birds and transferred his phrasing to herbs and
Hua People

trees, in a mood of dark depression, in the same spirit as that of the Sao-man (Ch’ü Yuan). So, alas! when he himself was sent to a far-off retreat, once his expectations [of return] were lost, he could not bear it. How much less a Hua-man of gentry stock, required to go off to that ill-favored land! After this my thoughts were gay! 174

This illuminating document does not dispose us to think well of Liu Yü-hai’s character. In addition to referring to the minister as no proper Hua-man, and seeing his nature-writing merely as conventional protest-writing, he reveals a decidedly mean and ungenerous spirit in taking pleasure in the realization that Chang’s weakness was as great as his own. If Chang flinched from a southern exile, we may find good reason in his resentment at exclusion from public affairs and the loss of the pleasures of metropolitan life, to both of which he had become accustomed, and to the prospect of the possible termination of his official career and even of his life. Surely Liu might have forgiven him these weaknesses of his declining years, especially since he might have read more carefully in other passages the plain evidence of Chang’s love of his subtropical home.

Whatever their inherent merits, and they were considerable, Chang Chiu-ling’s career and writing must be praised for their stimulation of new attitudes toward Nam-Viet, that strange and fearful land. It is a commonplace of poetry that familiar plants and birds suggest home. Alien forms of life, on the other hand, are repulsive and intensify the tenderness of familiar images by contrast. The cry of a magpie or a swallow made the medieval northerner’s heart swell with happiness; the call of a langur or chukar made him weep with homesickness. It was the writing of southerners like Chang Chiu-ling which made it possible for later generations to see nature in all of its local manifestations without sentimental or parochial distortion. Perhaps, after all, the vermilion bird of the south might lose its ancient symbolic role and become a happy reality.