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T'ang Maritime Trade Administration

INTRODUCTION

Chinese legends and passages in the classics mention sporadic seaborne contacts between the Chinese and their neighbors as early as the Shang dynasty (1600–1100 BC).[1] Recorded Western Chou (1100–771 BC) contacts are more specific, indicating that peoples in ancient Vietnam and Japan had come to China.[2] In about the first millennium BC, the Chinese reached the coastal areas along the Po-hai 渤海 Sea, and later at the beginning of the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BC), people there seem to have mastered shipbuilding and the necessary navigational skills for ocean voyages.[3] Furthermore, the word for sailing is well attested. Confucius (551–479 BC) is reported to have said: "My doctrines make no way. I will get upon a raft, and float about on the sea."[4] Leaving aside his complaint about indifference toward his moral teachings, Confucius' remark reveals an awareness of sailing that was already common.

In south China, the various Yüeh 越 tribal peoples were masters of navigation. They could use boats and oars as skillfully as the inlanders handled chariots and horses.[5] Seaborne trade must have existed in the modern area of Kwangtung long before the Han Chinese extended their influence into this region. The Ch'in dynasty (221–207 BC) annexed south China into its territory and further boosted trading activities there. Archaeologists have

[1] *Shih ching*, "Shang sung 商頌," Shih-san-ching chu-shu edn. (Taipei: Ta-hua shu-chü, 1982), p. 626: "[Then came] Seang-t'oo, all-ardent, and all [within] the seas, beyond [the middle region], acknowledged his restraints"; trans. James Legge, *The She King*, vol. 4 of *The Chinese Classics* (rpt. Hong Kong: Hong Kong U.P., 1960), p. 640.

[2] *Lun heng* 論衡 (SPTK edn.) 5, p. 5a; 8, p. 8a; 19, p. 9b. *Lun heng* was compiled by Wang Ch'ung 王充 (27–97 AD), whose discussions about the Western Chou and earlier dynasties should be treated with caution.

[3] Wu Yü-kan, "China's Overseas Intercourse and Trade in Olden Times," *Eastern Horizon* 4.2 (1965), p. 6. For a discussion of China's expansion to the south, see Harold Wiens, *Han Chinese Expansion in South China* (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1954).

[4] *Lun yü*, "Kung-yeh Ch'ang 公冶長" (Shih-san-ching chu-shu edn.) 5, p. 2473; trans. J. Legge, *The Confucian Analects*, vol. 1 of *The Chinese Classics*, p. 174. See also sect. "Wei-tzu 微子," p. 2530.

[5] Yüan K'ang 袁康, *Yüeh chüeh shu* 越絕書 (SPTK edn.) 8, p. 2b. *Kuo-yü cheng-i* 國語正義, "Yüeh yü 越語" (1880 edn; facs. rpt. Ch'eng-tu: Pa-shu shu-she, 1985) 20, p. 1b.

found imported goods from southeast Asia at Chinese Han-era seaport sites.[6] Moreover, the Chinese acquired detailed knowledge about the sea routes from modern Lei-chou 雷州 peninsula to countries in southeast Asia and in the Indian Ocean.[7] Such historical notices and discovered products testify to a flourishing foreign trade in southern China in Han times. In fact, during Western Han, Fan-yü 番禺 (modern Kuang-chou) had become a trading center for exotic goods.[8] Pearls, rhinoceros horns, and hawksbill turtles attracted the attention not only of merchants and ordinary people, but also of local officials and court nobles far away in the capital.[9] The flourishing of foreign trade in Kuang-chou,[10] and the potential profit to be gained from administering it, naturally would have raised questions about purchasing privileges and the administration of foreign trade.

The largeness of unified China made it so that the central court delegated power to local authorities. In such areas as Kuang-chou the faraway court depended entirely on local officials to execute its orders. Consequently, the administration of foreign trade at busy seaports in south and southeast China also devolved to local officials. Such administrative involvement manifested itself mainly in corrupt administrative behavior. As major consumers of exotic goods, officials, mainly through extortion, accumulated as personal wealth large amounts of foreign valuables. They also bribed higher officials with foreign goods, in the hope of gaining imperial favor and promotion. For example, such corruption enraged soldiers stationed in Chiao-chih 交趾.[11] In 184 AD they staged a mutiny, taking as prisoners the regional inspector (*tz'u-shih* 刺史) of Chiao-chih and the grand protector (*t'ai-shou* 太守) of Ho-p'u 合浦.[12]

The corruption prevalent among the high officials of southern coastal prefectures was nevertheless tolerated by the central court. In his essay titled "On Kuang-tung and Kuang-hsi" ("Liang-kuang lun" 兩廣論), Chang Ju-yü 章如愚, a Southern Sung (1127–1279) scholar, explained the practice. In appointing prefects and county magistrates, Chang pointed out, priority was often given to inland prefectures and counties that were considered strategically and economically more important than those in coastal areas. The governments of those latter areas were consequently often staffed by officials of poor quality.[13] It was not easy to persuade metropolitan officials to accept appointment to office in the remote southern frontier regions. They tended to think of such appointments as an indication of imperial disfavor. Unless he had made serious mistakes in performing official duties or had sided with the wrong faction in power struggles, and was therefore forced to give up his post in the capital, a metropolitan official would avoid accepting office in the southern coastal prefectures.[14] In his mind, the south seemed a terrible place, not only far away from the capital, but also infested with poisonous snakes and insects, and ravaged by tropical epidemics. However, the southern cities, especially Kuang-chou, did offer an irresistible attraction for less scrupulous officials — exotic precious goods. Acquiring even a small amount of these could ensure a comfortable life for the official and his de-

[6] Kwangsi chuang-tsu tzu-chih-ch'ü wen-wu k'ao-ku hsieh tso-tsu 廣西壯族自治區文物考古寫作組, "Kwangsi Ho-p'u Hsi-Han mu-kuo mu 廣西合浦西漢木槨墓," *KK* 5 (1972), p. 30. Ho-p'u, a major seaport during the Western Han, is located in the southern part of modern Kwangsi province. Goods excavated from the tomb include agate, glazed items, crystal, and amber, which are believed to have been imported from southeastern Asian countries. See also Chou Lien-k'uan 周連寬 and Chang Jung-fang 張榮芳, "Han-tai wo-kuo yü tung-nan Ya kuo-chia te hai-shang chiao-t'ung ho mao-i kuan-hsi 漢代我國與東南亞國家的海上交通和貿易關係," *Wen shih* 9 (1980), pp. 15–30.

[7] *Han shu* 漢書 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962) 28B, pp. 1670–71. For a recent study of the trading relations between China and India, see Liu Xinru, *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges A.D. 1–600* (Delhi: Oxford U.P., 1988).

[8] *Shih chi* 史記 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959) 129, p. 3268.

[9] *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1965) 64, p. 2099. It had almost become a routine for the appointees of the governor-general in Fan-yü to send precious foreign items as gifts to their influential patrons in the court. Okazaki Takashi 岡崎敬 has a detailed discussion of the hawksbill trade along the Chinese coast during the Han dynasty. See his "Taimai o tsujite mita kodai Nankai bōeiki ni tsuite たいまいを通じてみた古代南海貿易について," in *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho* (Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1954), pp. 178–200.

[10] Kuang-chou was first established as a "region" (*chou* 州) under the Wu Kingdom in 226. It had jurisdiction over Nan-hai 南海, Ts'ang-wu 蒼梧, and Kao-liang 高梁 commanderies. From the third to the late sixth centuries, the successive dynasties in south China used three categories for their administrative divisions: "region," "commandery" (*chün* 郡), and "county" (*hsien* 縣). This three-category system was also adopted by the Western Chin dynasty (265–316) and by the rulers of the Southern dynasties (420–589). See Hung Liang-chi 洪亮吉, *Pu San-kuo chiang-yü chih* 補三國疆域志, Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng chien-pien edn. (Taipei: Taiwan shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1966) B, p. 108.

[11] The jurisdiction of Chiao-chih covered most parts of modern Kwangtung and Kwangsi provinces and the central and northern part of Vietnam.

[12] *Hou Han shu* 31, p. 1111.

[13] Chang Ju-yü, *Shan-t'ang ch'ün-shu k'ao-so* 山堂群書考索 (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1969) 51, pp. 4a–b.

[14] See Li Lin-fu 李林甫 in *Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975; hereafter *HTS*) 223A, p. 6364 (where Li threatened others with southern exile). As late as the T'ang dynasty, much of the Kwangtung area still remained underdeveloped. Some T'ang officials took Mt. Ta-yü ling, which separates modern Kiangsi and Kwangtung provinces, as the natural boundary between the Chinese and the southern tribal peoples. See *Sung Chih-wen chi* 宋之問集 (SPTK edn.) A, p. 14b; B, pp. 2b, 11b. An appointment to Kuang-chou or Chiao-chou could constitute a threat sufficient to silence one's political enemy or oust him from the political stage. See also P. A. Herbert, "Perceptions of Provincial Officialdom in Early T'ang China," *AM* 3d ser. 2.1 (1989), pp. 25–57.

scendants. As a result, those seeking wealth would try to gain posts there.[15] Their greed led them to set high tax rates for foreign merchants. *Chin shu* 晉書 records, for example, that during the Chin dynasty the regional inspector of Chiao-chou 交州 and the grand protector of Jih-nan 日南 commandery fixed the rate at about twenty to thirty percent.[16] In about 336, regional inspector Chiang Chuang 姜壯 drastically increased the already high tax rate to fifty percent. Moreover, under the pretext of "pacifying barbarians," one of his subordinates, Han Chi 韓戢, mobilized warships and soldiers to attack foreign traders who dared to voice their complaints against the new tax.[17]

Corruption remained constant among officials in Kuang-tung during the Eastern Chin (317–420) and throughout the Southern Dynasties (420–589). These officials forced foreign merchants to sell goods to them at half price and then resold them at high prices fixed by themselves, doubling or even tripling the profits from the trade.[18] This corrupt practice shocked and enraged Wang Seng-ju 王僧孺, a Liang (502–557) courtier appointed grand protector of Nan-hai 南海 commandery in about 502. In a rather sentimental statement, he is reported to have said: "In the old days there was an official sent to supervise the Shu 蜀 tribal peoples. During his tenure, he had never acquired even one item of local product. When I myself die, the estate that I shall leave to my children will consist of no exotic goods."[19] Officials as honest as Wang Seng-ju, however, were rare enough to excite comment. They would be honored and praised by the court,[20] but what they did was merely cast a ray of faint light in the darkness. In most cases corruption was common routine. A vicious circle seems to have gone on among officials in Kuang-chou: they were dispatched there from the capital because of disfavor or from the hope of becoming rich. In the former instance, those seeking personal wealth to compensate for their political disgrace inevitably became corrupted by foreign valuables. Such behavior, however, would not draw much attention from the court unless it triggered off serious disturbances in their jurisdictions. The central court would then replace them with

[15] *Chin shu* 晉書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1974) 90, p. 2341. In T'ang times Cheng Ch'üan 鄭權, for example, sought the position of regional inspector of Ling-nan in 821 because his salary was too moderate to support a big family. See *Chiu T'ang-shu* 舊唐書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1975; hereafter *CTS*) 162, p. 4246.

[16] The jurisdiction of this commandery covers roughly the northern part of Binh Tri Thien province to Mt. Dai Lanh in modern Vietnam.

[17] *Chin shu* 97, p. 2546. [18] *Sui shu* 隋書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1973) 24, p. 673.

[19] *Liang shu* 梁書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1973) 33, p. 470.

[20] For example, see the biographies of Wang Li 王勔 and Juan Cho 阮卓 in *Ch'en shu* 陳書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1972) 17, p. 238; 34, p. 472.

new officials, and they would very likely start the same process over again. Even when the Sui court (581–618) reasserted strong centralized power after centuries of disunity in China, little progress was made in breaking this circle of corruption.[21]

THE ANNUAL TRIBUTE SYSTEM AND "OFFICIAL PURCHASING": SIPHONING PROFIT

During the T'ang dynasty (618–907) maritime trade developed at a strong pace.[22] T'ang geographical works contain information about ancient states located in modern Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Iran, and Iraq, indicating the existence of active trading between China and these countries.[23] Through the long-haul trade, which was controlled mainly by Arab, Persian, and Indian shippers, the Chinese also came in touch with countries in modern Bahrain, Oman, Yemen, and even Tanzania on the eastern coast of the African continent.[24] Fine Chinese silk, porcelain, copper utensils, and iron tools were brought to these countries; incense, spices, and rare stones were carried back. "Persian ships" with a carrying capacity of six to seven hundred people anchored in the Kuang-chou port. Foreign communities, mostly composed of merchants doing business in China, resided in Ch'üan-chou 泉州,[25] Yang-chou 揚州, Ch'u-chou

[21] *Sui shu* 55, p. 1381. *CTS* 59, p. 2325. *HTS* 90, p. 3777.

[22] There are no specific quantitative records, but a strong seaborne trade is seen through the increase in envoys coming from southeast Asian countries to China. Such missions were often of a business nature. See the chart in Wada Hisanori's 和田久徳 "Tōdai no Nankai kenshi 唐代の南海遣使," *TG* 33.1 (1950), p. 71. According to this, during Kao-tsu's nine-year reign, five southeast Asian countries sent envoys to China. This number increased to thirty-four during T'ai-tsung's twenty-three-year reign. Overland trade was also active; see, for example, C. Chen, "Trading Activities of the Turkic People in China," *CAJ* 25 (1981), pp. 38–53; Edward H. Schafer, "Iranian Merchants in T'ang Dynasty Tales," *Semitic and Oriental Studies Presented to William Popper*, U. of California Publications in Semitic Philology 11 (Berkeley, 1951), pp. 403–22, and Yamada Katsuyoshi 山田勝芳, "Kojin saihodan o megutte" 胡人採寶譚をめぐって in Takahashi Tomio 高橋富雄, ed., *Bunka ni okeru juyō to hen'yō* 文化における受容と變容 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1985), pp. 155–60. For a short discussion of overseas trade, see Michael Loewe, "Spices and Silk: Aspects of World Trade in the First Seven Centuries of the Christian Era," *JRAS* (1971.2), pp. 166–79.

[23] *HTS* 43B, pp. 1146, 1153–54. See also the lost T'ang work "Ling-piao lu-i 嶺表錄異," cited in *T'ai-p'ing yü-lan* 太平御覽 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1960) 938, p. 4168.

[24] For a discussion of archaeological findings of Chinese goods in Africa, see Teobaldo Filesi, *China and Africa in the Middle Ages*, trans. David L. Morison (London: Fran Cass and Co. Ltd., 1972).

[25] See Hsüeh Neng 薛能, "Sung Fu-chien Li ta-fu" 送福建李大夫; Pao Ho 包何, "Sung Li shih-chün fu Ch'üan-chou" 送李使君赴泉州, in *Ch'üan T'ang shih* 全唐詩 (Shanghai: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1986) 208, p. 490; 559, p. 1431.

楚州,[26] Kuang-chou, and on Hai-nan 海南 Island.[27] At the same time, Chinese merchants were by no means less active than their foreign counterparts. They sailed to Japan, Korea, and ports in southeast Asia. By the mid-ninth century, they had also reached as far as India and the Persian Gulf.

The maritime trade, however, did not immediately necessitate action by the court to assume direct control. Traditionally, central control over the Ling-nan 嶺南 area had been weak. The founding of the T'ang dynasty in 618 did not bring about any sudden change to this situation. Moreover, Ling-nan was still mostly inhabited by non-Han Chinese: Liao 獠, I 夷, and Yüeh. They were still far from obedient to the central court. During the period of the collapse of Sui and the founding of T'ang, these tribal people often revolted against the center. The actual control of Ling-nan was in the hands of such members of powerful local families as Hsiao Hsien 蕭銑, Lin Shih-hung 林士弘, and Cheng Wen-chin 鄭文進. Only by playing one local family off against another could the T'ang court manage to maintain a delicate balance.[28] It was as late as 622 that the Ling-nan area was formally incorporated into the T'ang empire, and the Area Command (Tsung-kuan fu 總管府) of Kuang-chou established.[29] But to a large degree, the central control of the area still had to be exercised through these influential families, who had offered their loyalty to the T'ang court. Their overwhelming influence is seen mostly in their hereditary power. For example, during five generations, according to the Sui and T'ang records, members of Feng Ang's 馮盎 family held the post of prefect of Kuang-chou.[30]

On the other hand, the national ruling class during early T'ang occupied itself with the consolidation of power, and with the wars against Koguryŏ and with states in the west. These matters were apparently more urgent and important than the control of foreign seaborne trade in the far south. Besides, the concern for its moral image also discouraged the central court from direct involvement in commerce and the collection of taxes on

[26] In 760, when Yang-chou and Ch'u-chou were devastated by a rebellion, almost one thousand foreign merchants were plundered and massacred. See *CTS* 110, p. 3315; 124, p. 3533. *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 資治通鑑 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1956; hereafter *TCTC*) 221, p. 7102.

[27] In 773, there was another massacre of foreign merchants in Kuang-chou. See *CTS* 122, p. 3500.

[28] For example, in 620 when Kao Fa-ch'eng 高法澄 and Hsien Pao-ch'e 冼寶徹 of Kuang-chou and Hsin-chou 新州 rebelled, the T'ang court had to rely on Feng Ang 馮盎, head of another local family, to suppress the rebellion. See *CTS* 109, p. 3287.

[29] *CTS* 41, p. 1711.

[30] *CTS* 109, p. 3288. For a discussion of the situation in the Kuang-chou area during the late Sui and early T'ang times, and the local-family control, see Kawahara Masahiro 河原正博, *Kan minzoku Kanan hattenshi kenkyū* 漢民族華南發展史研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1984), pp. 83–124.

maritime trade, actions that were considered contradictory to Confucian moral teachings and condemned by many scholars as "[the government] competing against its own people for profits" 與民爭利. As a result, it was almost one hundred years after the founding of the T'ang dynasty that a determined effort was made to facilitate transportation and communication between Kuang-chou and the capital. In 716 extensive engineering work was undertaken to open a route through Ta-yü ling 大庾嶺, a natural barrier between modern Kiangsi and Kwangtung provinces that made transportation from the southern coastal areas extremely difficult and expensive. The trails winding up the mountains were too narrow to allow carts to pass. And goods had to be transported over the mountains on the backs of porters.[31] The opening of route through Ta-yü ling facilitated cargo transportation to north China. Goods could now be shipped by the Pei River 北江 to the northern part of Ling-nan region, and then transported overland via Ta-yü ling to Kiangsi, where the Kan River 贛江 provided convenient waterway to the Yangtze, and thence to the Grand Canal.[32]

The "no direct involvement" attitude toward maritime trade certainly did not mean that the T'ang court was not interested in foreign goods and did not want them. On the contrary, the imperial court and the royal family members formed a major group of customers for imported goods. However, foreign goods for their consumption were not acquired directly from markets, but through three indirect channels: "seasonal offerings" of local products (*shih-chin* 時進) by local officials,[33] "official purchasing" (*kung-shih* 宮市), and the "annual tribute system" (*ch'ao-kung* 朝貢). "Seasonal offerings" were personal gifts to the emperor. They went into the Palace Treasury and became part of the emperor's personal income. The practice of presenting goods to the throne in a manner seen often as irregular and improper, if not illegal, started after the 760s.

A privilege granted by the central government to local authorities at the sea ports, "official purchasing" enabled prefectural officials to trade with foreign merchants before ordinary Chinese entered into the market for imported goods, and ensured the supply of foreign goods for the court. As a

[31] *T'ang ch'eng-hsiang Ch'ü-chiang Chang hsien-sheng wen-chi* 唐丞相曲江先生文集 (SPTK edn.) 17, pp. 5a–b.

[32] Ch'üan Han-sheng 全漢昇, "Sung-tai Kuang-chou te kuo-nei-wai mao-i" 宋代廣州的國內外貿易, in his *Chung-kuo ching-chi-shih yen-chiu* 中國經濟史研究 (Hong Kong: Hsin-Ya yen-chiu-so, 1976), p. 90.

[33] *CTS* 151, p. 4060. This was conduct aimed at gaining imperial favor. Towards the end of the eighth century, officials of Kiangsi prefecture had turned "seasonal offering" into "monthly offering" (*yüeh-chin* 月進); and those of Chien-nan prefecture even had "daily offering" (*jih-chin* 日進) to the central court. See *CTS* 48, p. 2087.

matter of fact, "official purchasing" was carried out not only at sea ports, but also in the capital and frontier marketplaces before and during the T'ang dynasty.[34] Foreign goods acquired through "official purchasing" were transported to the capital and handed in to the Directorate of Imperial Workshops (Shao-fu chien 少府監), which would select seasonal items for use in the imperial palace.[35]

Compared with the strictly irregular "seasonal offerings," and "official purchasing," the "annual tribute system" was a well established way for the central court regularly to acquire foreign merchandise. Every year each prefecture was required to provide the court with a specified quantity of certain types of local products. These became part of the court's revenues. This practice is referred to as "deciding upon the tribute in accordance with the locality" (*jen-t'u tso-kung* 任土作貢), sometimes abbreviated as "local tribute" (*t'u-kung* 土貢).[36] Since tributes were brought to the court annually, they were also called "*sui-kung* 歲貢."[37] Among the products acquired through this system were such things as sandalwood (*t'an-hsiang* 檀香), ivory (*hsiang-ya* 象牙), bird-tongue incense (*ch'üeh-she hsiang* 雀舌香), frankincense (*hsün-lu hsiang* 薰陸香), raktacandana (*tzu-t'an* 紫檀), gharuwood (*ch'en-hsiang* 沉香), and lac (*tzu-k'uang* 紫礦).[38] None of these, in fact, was "local product" of the prefecture that submitted it, but was imported from southeast Asia. These products were nevertheless considered by the T'ang courtiers as "local" tribute to the court. This notion may sound peculiar, but was in fact a vivid embodiment of sinocentric mentality: "barbarian" countries that came under the moral influence of the Son of Heaven were part of the Chinese-dominated world, and therefore their local products were not "foreign" goods.

[34] See, for example, *Wei shu* 魏書 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1974) 110, p. 2858; *Sui shu* 28, p. 798; and *Po-shih liu-t'ieh shih-lei-chi* 白氏六帖事類集 (facs. rpt. of So. Sung edn.; Peking: Wen-wu ch'u-pan-she, 1987) 24, p. 92b. A record in *T'ang liu-tien* 唐六典, Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen 6 (Taipei, 1976; hereafter *TLT*) 22, p. 18b, suggests that the origin of "official purchasing" can be traced back to the Western Han dynasty. This practice was also adopted by the Japanese court during the Nara (710–784) and the early Heian (794–1185) periods. See *Ryō no gige* 令集解, Kokushi taikei 2 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1964) 9, p. 299. For a detailed description of the Japanese "official purchasing," see "Shin gishiki" 新儀式, in Hanawa Hokiichi 塙保己一, ed., *Gunsho ruijū* 群書類從 (Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū kanseikai, 1932) 80, p. 76.

[35] *T'ang hui-yao* 唐會要, Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ch'u-pien edn. (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1936; hereafter *THY*) 66, p. 1156.

[36] *Chen-kuan cheng-yao* 貞觀政要 (SPTK edn.) 8, p. 19a. [37] *CTS* 178, p. 4633.

[38] *TLT* 3, p. 10a; 20, p. 11b; 22, pp. 12a–15a; *HTS* 43A, p. 1095. *Yüan-ho chün-hsien chih* 元和郡縣志, Ying-yin wen-yüan-ko ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu edn. (Taipei: Taiwan shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1983) 35, p. 3b. For a detailed study of the trading of incense among East Asian countries, see Yamada Kentarō 山田憲太郎, *Toa kōryō shi kenkyū* 東亞香料史研究 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron bijutsu shuppan, 1976).

T'ang administrative regulations specify in detail the origins of "local goods" to be presented to the capital.[39] They list the "circuits" (*tao* 道) and prefectures responsible for presenting certain "local goods" to the court.[40] These "local goods" were then transported to the capital together with the genuine Chinese local products. In the case of products from Kuei-chou 貴州 and Kuang-chou, the prefectural authorities only shipped them to Yang-chou, from where transport units (*ch'ai-kang pu* 差綱部) would be organized by the Yang-chou authorities to transport them on to the capital.[41] Foreign goods were stored at the Right Storehouse Office (Yu-tsang shu 右藏署), which was subordinate to the Court of Imperial Revenues (T'ai-fu ssu 太府寺).[42]

T'ang court audiences, ceremonies for worshiping the imperial ancestors,[43] and the lavish granting of gifts to loyal officials, foreign rulers, and their envoys consumed quite large amounts of these foreign goods.[44] They were also an essential of the luxurious lifestyle of the royal family members.[45] To meet those very considerable needs, exotic goods acquired through the channels of "seasonal offerings" and the "annual tribute system" might sometimes be insufficient, and this necessitated the practice of "official purchasing."

T'ANG ADMINISTRATION OF FOREIGN TRADE: WHO WAS IN CHARGE?

The "no direct involvement" attitude adopted by the T'ang court towards foreign trade activities in Kuang-chou naturally left the administration of maritime trade in the hands of the chief administrative official in Kuang-chou. This is seen in an edict of 661 entitled "Edict concerning the Confirmation of Precedents for Trading with Barbarian Ships" ("Ting i-po shih-wu li ch'ih" 定夷舶市物例敕).[46] During early T'ang times, "*li*" 例 were collections of earlier events and decisions used as reference by officials in performing their daily duties and making judgments. Since "*li*" were not

[39] *TLT* 3, p. 10a; 20, p. 11b; 22, pp. 11a, 12a–15a; *HTS* 43A, p. 1095.

[40] For example, the Kuan-nei 關內 circuit was responsible for handling tribute from the Tibetans and the Turks, and the Honan 河南 circuit was for Silla and Japan. See *TLT* 3, p. 3b.

[41] Denis Twitchett, "The Fragment of the T'ang Ordinances of the Department of Waterways Discovered at Tun-huang," *AM* ns 6.1 (1958), p. 56. In 742, when Wei Chien 韋堅 was named water and land transport commissioner, he organized the digging of the Kuang-yün t'an 廣運潭 pool in Ch'ang-an. After the pool was completed, boats with tributary goods on board from various prefectures could sail directly to the capital. See *CTS* 105, p. 3222.

[42] *TLT* 20, p. 11b. [43] *TLT* 22, pp. 12a–15a. [44] *HTS* 46, p. 1193.

[45] *TLT* 20, p. 10b.

[46] *T'ang-wen shih-i* 唐文拾遺 (Taipei: Ta-hua shu-chü, 1987) 1, p. 4662.

legally binding, the edict in question implies that, as a practice, the central court issued its local officials only guide lines for overseas trade administration, and had no intention of directly controlling the trade by itself. This was no surprise. Given the existence of the indirect channels through which the T'ang court could acquire the foreign goods it wanted, there was apparently no need for such a permanent control system.

In the T'ang sources, the chief administrative official in Kuang-chou is mentioned by various titles at different times: "area commander-in-chief" (*tsung-kuan* 總管), "governor general" (*tu-tu* 都督),[47] "governor of Nan-hai commandery" (*Nan-hai t'ai-shou* 南海太守),[48] "prefect" (*tz'u-shih* 刺史),[49] and "military and civil governor of Ling-nan" (*Ling-nan chieh-tu kuan-ch'a-shih* 嶺南節度觀察使).[50] These changes in title result from changes in the T'ang administrative system. When the Kuang-chou area was included as T'ang territory in 622, the governing body for the area was called the "Kuang-chou area command" (Kuang-chou tsung-kuan fu 廣州總管府), with a "Kuang-chou area commander-in-chief" as its head. Soon in 624, his title was changed to "grand governor general" (*ta tu-tu* 大都督) when the Kuang-chou area was upgraded to a "superior government-general" (ta tu-tu fu 大都督府). This title was used until 742, when Emperor Hsüan-tsung renamed the second level of the administration, making the prefecture (*chou* 州) become a commandery (*chün* 郡). Along with this switch, the title for the chief administrative official in Kuang-chou was also changed from "commander" to "governor."[51] This new system, however, did not last long. In 758, the "commandery" again became "prefecture." From the early eighth century on, "military governors" were stationed permanently in some frontier areas to enhance local military command. The "military governor of Ling-nan" was first appointed in 733, and given the jurisdiction over five superior prefectures (*fu* 府): Kuang-chou, Kuei-chou 貴州, Yung-chou 邕州, Jung-chou 容州, and An-nan 安南.[52] The Chinese primary sources also indicate that the "prefect of Kuang-chou" often concurrently held the title "military and civil governor" (*chieh-tu kuan-ch'a-shih* 節度觀察使) of Ling-nan.[53]

Although the Chinese primary sources mention him under these varied titles, the prefect of Kuang-chou was the indisputable figure in charge of the

[47] *CTS* 89, p. 2897; 187A, p. 4873; *HTS* 116, p. 4223; *TCTC* 203, p. 6420.
[48] *CTS* 98, p. 3070; *HTS* 126, p. 4418. [49] *CTS* 131, p. 3635; 162, p. 4246; 163, p. 4259.
[50] *CTS* 152, p. 4070; 162, p. 4246; 163, p. 4260; and *TCTC* 224, p. 7214.
[51] See *T'ung tien* 通典, Shih-t'ung edn. (Shanghai: Shang-wu, 1935; rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1984; hereafter *TT*) 33, p. 188; *THY* 68, p. 1196; *CTS* 38, p. 1384.
[52] *Yüan-ho chün-hsien chih* 35, pp. 2b–3a.
[53] *CTS* 100, p. 3217; 131, p. 3635; 154, p. 4098; 162, p. 4246; 163, p. 4259; and *Li Wen-kung chi* 李文公集 (SPTK edn.) 11, p. 93a.

administration of foreign trade. This power allowed him access to foreign valuables and, with a few exceptions, also gave him extensive opportunities for corruption.[54]

The T'ang court itself, however, was largely to blame for the corruption of these prefects since the T'ang bureaucratic system provided them with a salary too meager to maintain a decent life style.[55] To support themselves and their families, many officials not only in Kuang-chou, but throughout the empire, were engaged in such businesses as running hotels, warehouses, and shops.[56] On the other hand, the same system left the prefectural and county authorities alone to raise the money and goods necessary for their own expenditures.[57] Official trading thus became a necessary means of fund raising for local authorities.[58] That the personal well-being of local officials and the revenue for their local government depended to a certain extent on trade obviously made it quite difficult for them to maintain strict honesty when administering overseas trade. Realizing this situation, the court often turned a blind eye to the corrupt behavior of these officials;[59] besides, the distance between Ch'ang-an 長安 and Kuang-chou made it impractical for the court frequently to send surveillance commissioners to discipline local officials, and made it impossible for every complaint against them to reach the central court.

Corruption, however, brought not only personal wealth but also trage-

[54] Apparently, from 618 to the middle of the eighth century only four prefects of Kuang-chou, Sung Ching 宋璟, P'ei Chou-hsien 裴伷先, Li Ch'ao-yin 李朝隱, and Lu Huan 盧奐 could faithfully carry out their duties; see *CTS* 98, p. 3070, and *HTS* 126, p. 4418. Examples of corruption are numerous in the T'ang sources; e.g., Hsü Hao 徐浩, in *TCTC* 224, p. 7214; Yüan Tsai 元載, in *HTS* 145, p. 4717; *CTS* 118, p. 3414; Cheng Ch'üan 鄭權, in *CTS* 162, p. 4246; *Ts'e-fu yüan-kuei* 冊府元龜 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1969; hereafter *TFYK*) 455, p. 5395; Hu Cheng 胡証, in *CTS* 163, p. 4260; *HTS* 164, p. 5048; Wang Mao-yüan 王茂元, in *CTS* 152, p. 4070; and Tang Jen-hung 黨仁弘, in *TFYK* 455, p. 5394.
[55] *CTS* 119, p. 3445, and *TFYK* 484, p. 5787.
[56] *THY* 86, p. 1582; *HTS* 170, p. 5168; and *CTS* 151, p. 4060. Imperial edicts were repeatedly issued, forbidding officials and their family members to do business; *CTS* 9, p. 213.
[57] For a detailed discussion of the sources of revenue for local government, see Denis Twitchett, "Local Financial Administration in Early T'ang Times," *AM* ns 15 (1969), pp. 98–114.
[58] They sold the goods collected as taxes, or sometimes even the military supplies; they also dispatched officials to trade directly with foreigners. See *CTS* 64, p. 2431; *THY* 86, p. 1582; *TT* 11, p. 63; and *Ch'üan-chou fu-chih* 泉州府志 (ca. 1763; facs. rpt of 1870 edn. Tainan: Teng-wen yin-shua-chü, 1964) 40, p. 3a.
[59] Even T'ang T'ai-tsung, the emperor praised by scholars as the "model ruler," showed his sympathy towards corrupt officials. Tang Jen-hung, the "Kuang-chou area commander-in-chief" 640–642, was sentenced to death for taking surrendered tribal people as his slaves, levying exorbitant taxes, and corruption. It is said that when he left the post in Kuang-chou and returned to the capital, his personal belongings filled as many as seventy ships. He was, however, pardoned by T'ang T'ai-tsung, and was only degraded to a commoner status. See *TFYK* 455, p. 5394.

dy to some of the prefects of Kuang-chou. In 684 Lu Yüan-jui 路元叡 was killed by a foreign merchant. A timid man, Lu is said to have been unable to discipline his subordinates, who had repeatedly extorted goods from foreign traders. Troubled by such misdeeds, a foreign merchant lodged a complaint with Lu against his subordinates. But the complaint got nowhere. Lu had the complainant yoked, and intended to imprison him as a punishment. This angered other foreign merchants. Hiding a sword in his sleeve, one of them went directly to Lu's office, and killed Lu and more than ten of his staff.[60] One version of the story even blames this tragedy directly on Lu, suggesting that he himself was also involved in extortion.[61] An even worse incident occurred in 758 when allied forces of Arabs (Ta-shih 大食) and Persians (Po-ssu 波斯) attacked Kuang-chou city. Prefect Wei Li-chien 韋利見 abandoned the city and fled.[62] The T'ang primary sources do not give further information about this event. However, since contacts between China, Persia, and the Arabs in Kuang-chou usually took the form of trading activities between local Chinese officials and merchants from these countries, it seems not unlikely that this event was also related with trading disputes arising out of the corruption of Kuang-chou officials.

Not all the governors of Kuang-chou were corrupt. Under the Empress Wu (r. 684–704), to curb the wide spread of corruption the court appointed Wang Fang-ch'ing 王方慶 area commander of Kuang-chou. His honesty in performing official duties won him fame as the best commander who had ever held the post, and his service was also honored by an imperial edict of citation.[63] Wang Fang-ch'ing was a rare example of selflessness in stark contrast with the greed of his colleagues and predecessors, whose insatiable greed is nevertheless revealing as evidence that as late as the early eighth century, the administration of foreign trade was still in the hands of the prefectural officials.

The prefect of Kuang-chou possessed both administrative and judicial power over foreign merchants. When foreign ships arrived in Kuang-chou and anchored in the port, a tax based on the weight of the cargo was collected. The weight was determined primitively based on the length of the ship; and the tax is therefore similar to the modern tonnage dues. In Chinese sources, it is referred to as *hsia-ting shui* 下碇稅.[64] Chinese officials

[60] *TCTC* 203, p. 6420. [61] *HTS* 116, p. 4223. [62] *CTS* 10, p. 253.

[63] *Po-K'ung liu-t'ieh* 白孔六帖 (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1969) 83, p. 1189; *CTS* 89, p. 2897; *HTS* 116, p. 4223; and Wu Hou 武后, "Pao Kuang-chou tu-tu Wang Fang-ch'ing chih" 褒廣州都督王方慶制, in *Ch'üan T'ang wen* 全唐文 (Taipei: Ta-hua shu-chü, 1987; hereafter *CTW*) 95, p. 435.

[64] *HTS* 163, p. 5009; Wen-tsung 文宗, "T'ai-ho pa-nien chi-yü te-yin" 太和八年疾愈德音, *Wen-yüan ying-hua* 文苑英華 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1966) 441, p. 2231; *CTW* 75, p. 347; *T'ang ta-chao-ling chi* 唐大詔令集 (Taipei: Hua-wen shu-chü, 1968) 10, p. 13a; *Wen-yüan ying-hua* 文苑英華 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1966) 441, p. 2231; and Ma Ch'i-ch'ang 馬其昶, ed., *Han Ch'ang-li wen-chi chiao-chu* 韓昌黎文集校注 (Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1986) 7, p. 531.

would register the goods on board with the help of the chieftain of the local foreign community (*fan-chang* 番長), who probably acted as interpreter and go-between. A banquet with a fine-sounding name: "feast for inspecting [imported] goods" (*yüeh-huo yen* 閱貨宴) was held at the "banquet pavilion" (*yen-k'o t'ing* 宴客亭),[65] during which foreign merchants would display the finest items among their cargoes to Chinese officials. This also offered the corrupt Chinese officials a good opportunity for extortion.[66]

During the early T'ang, "official purchasing" (*shou-shih* 收市) was conducted in a designated marketplace (*shih-ch'ü* 市區) as soon as foreign ships arrived in Kuang-chou.[67] An edict of 661 details the procedure for "official purchasing." Every year in the fourth month the Directorate of Imperial Workshops would send the southern coastal prefectures certain goods to be used as capital for trading with foreign merchants. "Barbarian" ships usually arrived in Chinese ports during the monsoon season, which started around the fifth month and continued to the early ninth. The period of ten days after the arrival of a foreign ship was reserved for "official purchasing," during which time commoners were prohibited from trading with the ship owner.[68]

In early T'ang "official purchasing" was performed in accordance with the precedent approved by the court.[69] In the ninth century changes were made to this practice. Under the new system, ship owners were required to hand in all their cargoes to the Chinese authorities, who would charge them a transportation fee known as *po-chiao* 舶腳 for moving their goods to a government warehouse.[70] The merchandise would be stored for several months until the last ship arrived in Kuang-chou at the end of the monsoon season. This practice was apparently aimed at pricing foreign goods in accordance with the supply and demand of the year, thus preventing their

[65] Chang Chi 張籍, "Sung Cheng shang-shu fu Kuang-chou 送鄭尚書赴廣州," *Ch'üan T'ang shih* 385, p. 4340.

[66] *HTS* 163, p. 5009; and Ma, *Han Ch'ang-li wen-chi chiao-chu* 7, p. 531.

[67] *T'ien-hsia chün-kuo li-ping shu* 天下郡國利病書 (SPTK edn.) 33, p. 53b, a Ch'ing-dynasty work that contains records about earlier dynasties. Although modern scholars tend to believe that Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武, the author, had solid bases, these records should be treated with caution.

[68] *THY* 66, p. 1156.

[69] Kao-tsung 高宗, "Ting i-po shih-wu li" 定夷舶市物例, *T'ang-wen shih-i* 1, p. 4662.

[70] Wen-tsung 文宗, "T'ai-ho pa-nien chi-yü te-yin" 太和八年疾愈德音, *Wen-yüan ying-hua* 441, p. 2231; *CTW* 75, p. 347; and *T'ang ta-chao-ling chi* 10, p. 13a.

prices from shooting up. To comply with this practice, foreign merchants had to stay in Kuang-chou and postpone conducting their business, and because of this the Chinese authorities usually provided them with everyday necessities during their stay.[71]

When the monsoon season was over, cargoes would be returned to their owners after thirty percent of them had been withheld as a tax.[72] A special tax was also imposed according to the amount of each foreign merchant's goods and was used for providing security for his cargo.[73] Officials would then proceed to conduct "official purchasing." Although it was not a total government monopoly on all foreign goods, during purchasing the local government sometimes did exercise a monopoly on certain rare foreign items. Such a monopoly is referred to as "*chin*" 禁, an abbreviation for "*chin-ch'üeh*" 禁榷.

In the T'ang primary sources, the prefect of Kuang-chou was often mentioned as the person in charge of the administration of overseas trade. In practice, however, the day-to-day administrative business of seaborne trade was almost certainly handled by his subordinates: the market director (*shih-ling* 市令), the director of granaries (*ssu-ts'ang ts'an-chün-shih* 司倉參軍事), and the administrators (*ts'an-chün-shih* 參軍事).[74] With the help of

[71] Chang Cho 張鷟, "Po-ssu K'un-lun teng po-tao ni kei shih-liao" 波斯崑崙等舶到擬給食料, *CTW* 172, p. 784.

[72] Fujita Toyohachi 藤田豊八, "Sōdai no Shihakushi oyobi shihaku jōrei" 宋代の市舶使及び市舶條例, in Ikeuchi Hiroshi 池內宏, ed., *Tōsei kōshōshi no kenkyū* 東西交涉史の研究 (Tokyo: Okashoin, 1932), p. 293. His argument is based on an eye-witness account of the Chinese maritime trade administration written by Suleiman, an Arabian merchant who traveled to China in the late T'ang and completed his travel notes in about 851. They were translated into French in 1718 by Abbé Eusebius Renaudot, but later lost. In 1764 a scholar named Deguignes discovered Renaudot's draft in the French Royal Library. But he felt that it was not a translation of actual travel notes, but a work written by Renaudot himself. In 1845 after a careful study of the 1718 translation, M. Reinaud published his own French version of Suleiman's travel notes: "Relation des Voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans L'Inde et la Chine"; trans. Liu Pan-nung 劉半農 and Liu Hsiao-hui 劉小蕙, *Su Lai-man tung-yu chi* 蘇萊曼東遊記 (Shanghai: Shang-wu, 1937); abridged trans. in Chang Hsing-lang 張星烺, *Chung-Hsi chiao-t'ung shih-liao hui-pien* 中西交通史料彙編 (1930; rev. rpt. Peking: Chung-hua, 1977), vol. 2. An English introduction to Reinaud is in George Fadlo Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1951; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1975), p. 72.

[73] Chang, *Chung-Hsi chiao-t'ung shih-liao hui-pien*, vol. 2, p. 201; Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, p. 72.

[74] During the Sui-T'ang period overland trade with foreign countries was administered by a different government office: the Directorate of Tributary Trade (Chiao-shih chien 交市監). See *Po-shih liu-t'ieh shih-lei-chi* 24, p. 92b; and *TLT* 22, p. 18b. It is worth noting that the second record indicates that the administration of overland trade before the Sui was also conducted by local prefectural and county officials. The T'ang practice of letting local officials administer overseas trade was in fact a continuation of the previous practice.

two assistants (*shih ch'eng* 市丞) and about fourteen non-ranking subordinate staff, the market director performed a wide range of duties to maintain order in the market place: for example, the inspection of all weights and measures used in the market, the prevention of unfair price fixing, and the surveillance of foreigners.[75] Foreign trade administration also involved the director of granaries, an official of the minor-seventh rank, lower grade,[76] who had two assistants (*tso* 佐) and five scribes (*shih* 史) working for him if he served, however, in an upper-grade prefecture.[77] Although his title may sound as if he only took care of government warehouses, the director of granaries' role in foreign trade administration was not the mere preservation of exotic goods acquired through "official purchasing." As the person responsible for the active financial administration of his prefecture,[78] the director must have played a larger role in administering foreign trade, since the exotic goods acquired through "official purchasing" would become "government valuables" (*kung-chia chen-pao* 公家珍寶) at his disposal after certain items were withheld as tribute designated for the central court.[79] And the profits from selling them at higher prices constituted an important part of the prefectural revenue.

The administrators were junior officials of the ninth rank, who directly served the prefect.[80] As "probationary" officials, the administers did not have any specific official duties. But sometimes they were dispatched to handle or to inspect matters that required special attention, such as receptions for the prefect's guests.[81] Therefore it seems quite possible that the administrators

[75] *THY* 86, p. 1583. For a detailed discussion of the duties of the market director, see Denis Twitchett, "The T'ang Market System," *AM* ns 12 (1966), pp. 211–13.

[76] If he served in a middle-grade or lower-grade prefecture, he would hold the major-eighth rank and the minor-eighth rank, lower grade, respectively. See *CTS* 44, p. 1918.

[77] The number of scribes would be reduced to three, if a director of granaries served in a middle-grade or lower-grade prefecture. *HTS* 49B, p. 1312.

[78] Matters concerning the administration of lands and households under the public administration (*kung-chieh* 公廨), the inspection of all weights and measures, the collection of taxes and of rents paid by tenant farmers, the supervision of markets, official gardens, and dining facilities all fell into the range of his duties. *TLT* 30, p. 15a; *HTS* 49B, p. 1312. Liang Su 梁肅 detailed the director's duties in his "Honan fu ts'ang-ts'ao ts'an-chün t'ing pi-chi" 河南府倉曹參軍廳壁記, *CTW* 519, p. 2367. See also Denis Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty*, 2d edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1970), p. 105; Yen Keng-wang 嚴耕望, "T'ang-tai fu-chou liao-tso k'ao" 唐代府州僚佐考, in his *T'ang-shih yen-chiu ts'ung-kao* 唐史研究叢稿 (Hong Kong: Hsin-Ya yen-chiu-so, 1969), p. 145.

[79] *CTS* 152, p. 4091. They are also referred to as "kuan-wu" 官物. See *CTS* 48, p. 2087.

[80] Their numbers vary in different prefectures. The upper-grade prefectures had four; the middle-grade prefectures three, and the lower-grade prefectures two. See *HTS* 49B, p. 1317.

[81] *TT* 33, p. 189; *CTS* 42, p. 1811; *HTS* 49B, p. 1314; and Yen, "T'ang-tai fu-chou," p. 158. The upper-grade prefectures were staffed with four administrators, the middle-grade prefectures three, and the lower-grade prefectures one. See *CTS* 44, p. 1918.

were involved in receiving foreign merchants, helping the director of granaries collect taxes on seaborne trade and conduct official purchasing.[82]

The arrival of foreign ships in Kuang-chou turned the city into a trading place filled with noise and excitement.[83] To maintain public security, the local authorities requested that the chieftain of the foreign community in Kuang-chou instruct and discipline foreigners living in his community.[84] In Kuang-chou, foreigners' residences used to be mingled with those of the Chinese. After 836 a specific area was assigned in which foreigners had to live so as to reduce the daily contacts between the Chinese and foreign merchants and to avoid the possible disputes between them.[85] Later, this area was referred to as the "foreigners' ward" (*fan-fang* 蕃坊),[86] which is said to have been located in the west part of modern Kuang-chou, near "Kuang-t'a 光塔" street.[87]

Economic frauds and criminal offenses committed by foreign merchants came within the jurisdiction of the local government. Those who cheated on the registration of goods or tax payment and tried to hide goods from government monopoly would be sentenced to jail.[88] If they were involved in

[82] Ming sources also show administrators' participation in maritime trade; see Ch'en Mao-jen 陳懋仁, *Ch'üan-nan tsa-chih* 泉南雜志, Pao-yen-t'ang mi-chi edn. (Taipei, 1965) A, p. 12a. It describes in detail the staffing of the government in Ch'üan-chou 泉州, another important seaport during the T'ang dynasty. Because of its importance as a seaport, Ch'üan-chou was made an upper-grade prefecture in 811. See *THY* 70, p. 1242,

[83] Chou Hsün-ch'u 周勛初, ed., *T'ang yü-lin chiao-cheng* 唐語林校証 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1987) 8, p. 728. Li Chao 李肇, *T'ang kuo-shih pu* 唐國史補 (Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1957) C, p. 63. Here 至則本道輻輳都邑爲喧闐 is mistranslated as "When (the laden Nan-hai ships) arrive, a report is sent to the court and announcements are made in all the cities," in Wang Gungwu, "The Nanhai Trade," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31.2 (1959), p. 101. Chou Hsün-ch'u's annotation, however, points out that the term 奏報 is a mistake for 輻輳, which is used as a parallel to 喧闐. It seems unlikely that the Kuang-chou authorities should report the arrival of foreign ships and announce it in all the cities.

[84] *Sung hao-seng chuan* 宋高僧傳, Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen ser. 7 (Taipei, 1977) 1, p. 10a.

[85] See *CTS* 182, p. 5367; *HTS* 177, p. 4592.

[86] *T'ien-hsia chün-kuo li-ping shu* (SPTK edn.) 19, p. 104a.

[87] Liang Chia-pin 梁嘉彬, *Kuang-tung shih-san-hang k'ao* 廣東十三行考 (Shanghai: Shang-wu tai kuo-li pien-i-kuan, 1937), p.15. Lo Hsiang-lin 羅香林 suggests that the "fan-fang" was a walled area in which foreigners were allowed to wear their costumes and to practice their own customs, see his *Chung-kuo t'ung-shih* 中國通史 (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1954), vol. 1, p. 243. The term "Kuang-t'a" literally means the "lighting tower." It had a wind vane in the shape of a cock. Every year in the fifth and sixth months, when the wind was blowing from the south to the north, foreigners in Kuang-chou would ascend to the top of the tower early in the morning, praying for tail winds to help ships coming from their countries. See a Sung work by Fang Hsin-ju 方信孺, *Nan-hai pai-yung* 南海百詠, Lin-lang mi-shih ts'ung-shu edn. (Taipei, 1967), pp. 10a–b; also Ch'ou Ch'ih-shih 仇池石, *Yang-ch'eng ku-ch'ao* 羊城古鈔 (1806 edn.) 3, pp. 36b–37a.

[88] *T'ang kuo-shih pu* C, p. 63.

a criminal case, the case would be settled in accordance with Chinese law unless the involved persons were from the same country. In such a case, the common law of their country would apply.[89]

The jurisdiction of the Kuang-chou government also extended to matters related to the handling of the belongings of foreign merchants who died in China. Regulations governed the identification of legal beneficiaries of a deceased foreign merchant, the terms by which they could make claims to such belongings, and related procedures. These beneficiaries were originally confined to the "direct relatives," that is wives and sons, of a deceased merchant who were either in China or in their home country upon the death of the merchant.[90]

In 831 an edict was promulgated to demonstrate the benevolence of the Son of Heaven towards the "barbarians." It broadened the interpretation of the term "direct relatives" to include the parents, wives, sons, brothers, unmarried sisters and daughters, and nephews who accompanied a foreign merchant to China.[91] In 834 another edict was drafted that excluded brothers of a deceased foreign merchant from his legal beneficiaries. Also, his unmarried sisters would receive only one third of his belongings. But the Ministry of Revenue memorialized, suggesting that the brothers of a deceased foreign merchant should also be entitled to his belongings. Claims to the merchant's estate would be honored if they were made by his parents, wives, sons, or unmarried daughters. However, no such claims would be valid if they were made by brothers and nephews who had never lived with the merchant, or by his married daughters who based their claims on financial need for the support of their own children. Moreover, the unmarried sisters of the merchant and his wives who were childless should receive only one third of his belongings.[92]

The legal beneficiaries of a deceased foreign merchant had to make their claims in person to the Kuang-chou government within three months after his death. In the early ninth century, however, the three-month time limit was abolished by the military governor of Ling-nan. He argued that since a sea journey to China took such a long time, any claims to a dead merchant's belongings, no matter when they were made, should be validated as long as the claimants could prove their identities as the legal beneficiaries of the merchant.[93]

[89] *Ku T'ang-lü shu-i* 故唐律疏議 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1983) 6, p. 133.

[90] *HTS* 163, p. 5009; Ma, *Han Ch'ang-li wen-chi chiao-chu* 7, p. 531.

[91] Tou I 竇儀, *Sung hsing-t'ung* 宋刑統 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1984) 12, p. 199.

[92] Tou, *Sung hsing-t'ung* 12, p. 199.

[93] *HTS* 163, p. 5009; and Ma, *Han Ch'ang-li wen-chi chiao-chu* 7, p. 531.

The common practice for handling the belongings of a deceased foreign merchant was first to preserve them at the local government. If no claims were made within the term of validity, the belongings would be confiscated.[94] As soon as the identification of legal beneficiaries was completed, as per the edict of 831, belongings of a deceased merchant would be immediately returned to them. The edict also allowed beneficiaries who were not in China upon the death of a foreign merchant to make their claims later so long as they could prove their identity. In such cases, designated officials would carefully examine their claims. After their identities were verified, they would be required to find guarantors for themselves before the belongings were returned to them. A detailed report would also be drafted and sent to the Department of State Affairs (Shang-shu sheng 尚書省). In effect, the edict of 834 was by far the harsher of the two. It ordered Chinese local authorities to confiscate the money and cargoes of a deceased foreign merchant if his legal beneficiaries were not in China upon his death, and not to make any efforts to contact and inform the merchant's relatives in his home country. At the suggestion of the Ministry of Revenue, however, the edict seems to have been amended before it was issued to local officials. Now the local authorities would bury a deceased foreign merchant and have a gravestone established for him, if none of his relatives was present upon his death. In that case, part of the merchant's estate would be used as payment for the expenses.[95] A document for interoffice communication (*tieh* 牒) was then sent to the home country of the dead merchant, requesting the local authorities, who kept the merchant's household registration, to seek out his relatives.[96]

[94] *HTS* 163, p. 5009; and Ma, *Han Ch'ang-li wen-chi chiao-chu* 7, p. 531.

[95] Tou, *Sung hsing-t'ung* 12, p. 199. The T'ang court was more generous in its paying for the funeral arrangements of foreign ambassadors, vice-ambassadors, and their wives. See *THY* 55, p. 1151. Similar regulations governing the handling of personal belongings of foreign merchants who died in China were also adopted by the Later Chou dynasty (951–960) and by the Sung court (960–1279). See Tou, *Sung hsing-t'ung* 12, p. 200; *Sung hui-yao chi-kao* 宋會要輯稿 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1957) 86, pp. 3367, 3368; and Lou Yüeh 樓鑰, *Kung k'uei chi* 攻媿集 (SPTK edn.) 86, pp. 4a–b.

[96] Tou, *Sung hsing-t'ung* 12, p. 199. Trying to reach the relatives of a foreign merchant upon his death in China could be problematic. The T'ang sources, however, indicate that foreign merchants had their own means of sending messages home: the homing pigeon. They kept them on board ships, which if sunk in a storm, would not stop the pigeons. See *T'ang kuo-shih pu* C, p. 63; see also a report by Cheng Fu-li 鄭復禮, assistant minister of the Court of Judicial Review (Ta-li ssu 大理寺), in Tuan Ch'eng-shih 段成式, *Yu-yang tsa-tsu* 酉陽雜俎 (SPTK edn.) 16, p. 5a. Homing pigeons were also used by the Chinese as a means of communication. Chang Chiu-ling 張九齡 is said to have kept dozens of such pigeons when he was young, referring to them as "flying pets" (*fei-nu* 飛奴). See Wang Jen-yü 王仁裕, "K'ai-yüan T'ien-pao i-shih" 開元天寶遺事, in Ting Ju-ming 丁如明, ed., *K'ai-yüan T'ien-pao i-shih shih-chung* 開元天寶遺事十種 (Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1985) A, p. 69.

THE ROLE OF *SHIH-PO SHIH* IN FOREIGN TRADE ADMINISTRATION

The first appearance of the official title *shih-po shih* 市舶使 is recorded in 714. We learn that Chou Ch'ing-li 周慶立 was granted the title when the court sent him on an official trip to Ling-nan circuit.[97] Based on this, scholars have asserted that starting in the eighth century the *shih-po shih* was responsible for the administration of foreign trade.[98] They have also suggested that the title be translated as "maritime trade commissioner."[99] This commissioner is described as having been similar to our modern chief customs officer, or to the head of the Port Office,[100] who engages himself in inspecting foreign goods, levying import taxes, conducting "official purchasing," and preventing certain goods from leaving and entering China.[101] Some have even suggested that a special government office, the Bureau for Maritime Trade (Shih-po ssu 市舶司), had been established, giving the impression that the T'ang dynasty witnessed a transfer of administrative power over foreign trade from the Kuang-chou prefect to the *shih-po shih*.[102]

[97] *TFYK* 546, p. 6547; *THY* 62, p. 1078; and *HTS* 112, p. 4176.

[98] This assertion was actually first raised by Sung scholars. See, for example, *Pao-ch'ing Ssu-ming chih* 寶慶四明志, Sung-Yüan ti-fang-chih ts'ung-shu edn. (Taipei: Chung-kuo ti-chih yen-chiu-hui, 1978) 6, p. 1a. Hu San-hsing 胡三省 (1230–1302), a Yüan annotator, also followed this assertion; see *TCTC* 223, p. 7157.

[99] See, for example, Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1985), s.v. *shih-po shih*.

[100] Wang, "Nanhai Trade," p. 101.

[101] Wu T'ai 吳泰, "Shih-lun Han-T'ang shih-ch'i hai-wai mao-i te chi-ko wen-t'i" 試論漢唐時期海外貿易的幾個問題, *Hai-chiao shih yen-chiu* 海交史研究 3 (1981), p. 61; Wu T'ing-yü 烏廷玉, "Sui-T'ang shih-ch'i te kuo-chi mao-i" 隋唐時期的國際貿易, *Li-shih chiao-hsüeh* 歷史教學 2 (1957), p. 7; and Wada Hisanori 和田久徳, "Tōdai ni okeru shihakushi no sōchi" 唐代における市舶使の創置, in *Wada hakushi koki kinen Tōyōshi ronsō* 和田博士古稀記念東洋史論叢 (Tokyo: Kōdensha, 1960), p. 1051.

[102] Wang Kuan-cho 王冠倬, "T'ang-tai shih-po ssu chien-ti ch'u-t'an 唐代市舶司建地初探," *Hai-chiao shih yen-chiu* 4 (1982), p. 101; Lin Meng 林萌, "Kuan-yü T'ang Wu-tai shih-po chi-kou wen-t'i te t'an-t'ao 關於唐五代市舶機構問題的探討," *Hai-chiao shih yen-chiu* 4 (1982), pp. 92–99; and Tsukiyama Jisaburō 筑山治三郎, "Tōdai Ryōnan no seiji to Nankai bōeki 唐代嶺南の政治と南海貿易," *Kyōto sangyō daigaku ronshū* 京都產業大學論集 1 (1971), pp. 30–31. Their argument, however, is based on a rather late record found in a Ch'ing work, *T'ien-hsia chün-kuo li-ping shu* 天下郡國利病書 (SPTK edn.) 33, p. 52b, which suggests that the bureau for maritime trade was established in 643. But as Kuwabara Jitsuzō pointed out, judged by its terminology, the record in question is very likely a discussion of the establishment of the bureau for maritime trade during the Sung dynasty. See Kuwabara Jitsuzō 桑原騭藏, *Ho Jukō no jiseki* 蒲壽庚の事蹟 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1948), p. 7. Hu San-hsing also suggested that the bureau for maritime trade already existed in T'ang; see *TCTC* 253, p. 8215. However, this may have simply been a miscopying of *shih-po ssu* 市舶司, a familiar title in his era, for *shih-po shih* 市舶使; see *TCTC* 223, p. 7157, where he uses *shih-po shih*.

However, the T'ang shih-po shih in the early eighth century was not involved directly in the administration of seaborne trade. He was a commissioner dispatched to seaports in south China to acquire exotic goods for the court; and clarification of the actual meaning of *shih-po shih* will help make this point. In Chinese, the term "*shih* 市," when used as a verb, means "to trade" or "to purchase." And the word "*po* 舶" is used in reference to big oceanic ships,[103] which were different from those fit only for shallow coastal water. The expression "*shih-po*" thus implies that the activities of the *shih-po shih* were probably confined to purchasing goods from foreign ships, and the title *shih-po shih* would therefore be better translated as the "commissioner for trading with foreign ships."

Sending envoys to buy goods for the court was not at all new during the T'ang era. For centuries, palace officials, most of whom were eunuchs, were sent out to capital marketplaces to "shop for the palace" (*kung-shih* 宮市). Under the control of the Treasury Bureau (Chin-pu ssu 金部司), "palace purchasing" had been employed as a regular means to acquire goods to be consumed by the court and the imperial family.[104] Examined in the light of "palace purchasing," the activity of the "commissioner for trading with foreign ships" was apparently its extension from metropolitan marketplaces to markets for imported goods in coastal areas. Whereas "palace purchasing" in the capital was frequently conducted for the acquisition of everyday necessities, the early-T'ang "commissioner for trading with foreign ships" was only dispatched occasionally and he only bought foreign goods to be used for special purposes or on special occasions. For example, Chou Ch'ing-li's mission in 714 to Ling-nan circuit was perhaps related to the preparation for a court ceremony held in the twelfth month of the same year, during which princedoms were granted to Emperor Hsüan-tsung's three sons: Ssu-chen 嗣眞, Ssu-ch'u 嗣初, and Ssu-hsüan 嗣玄.[105] This was an event important enough to justify the dispatching of a special envoy to supervise the purchasing of foreign goods, which under normal circumstance would be acquired through the established channel of annual tribute. In the late-seventh century, when the situation necessitated the dispatch of a "purchasing envoy," such an official was referred to as "commissioner for purchasing such and such goods,"[106] a title that reveals the nature of the title holder's commission.

[103] *Hui-lin I-ch'ieh-ching yin-i* 慧琳一切經音義, Hai-shan hsien-kuan ts'ung-shu edn. (Taipei: I-wen yin-shu-kuan, 1967) 61, p. 2a. *Hsüan-ying I-ch'ieh-ching yin-i* 玄應一切經音義, Hai-shan hsien-kuan ts'ung-shu edn. (Taipei, 1967) 1, p. 10a; 47, p. 11a.

[104] *HTS* 46, p. 1193. Eunuchs often used oppressive tactics during "palace purchasing," which might better be described as "forced requisitions," and this created a public scandal in the early-ninth century. See Bernard S. Solomon, *The Veritable Record of the T'ang Emperor Shun-tsung* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1955), pp. 15–16. See also a Northern Sung work by Ch'ien I 錢易, *Nan-pu hsin-shu* 南部新書 (Shanghai: Chung-hua, 1958) A, p. 10.

[105] *HTS* 5, p. 124.

The word "*shih* 使," that is, commissioner, used in the title *shih-po shih* is also evidence of the temporary nature of this position. Throughout the T'ang dynasty, the central court never made the "commissioner for trading with foreign ships" a permanent position. Before the eighth century, commissioners were appointed only when there were matters which had to be handled by representatives from the central court. Commissioner did not become a permanent position and was not permanently stationed in the locality to which he was dispatched until the "eight military commissioners" were appointed in 711 and the "ten investigation commissioners" in 714.[107] The T'ang administrative codes never list "commissioner for trading with foreign ships" either as an established bureaucratic post or as one of the permanently stationed commissioners, and the primary Chinese sources mention only two persons who had ever held this title.[108] If a *shih-po shih* was not permanently positioned in Kuang-chou or at any major Chinese sea ports, it is then questionable whether he ever had any real control of maritime trade administration.

The political atmosphere in the early T'ang also did not favor any attempt by the court to assume direct control of seaborne trade, not to mention the creation of a permanent post for a commissioner to exercise such control. One major concern of the early-T'ang emperors was the creation of a favorable political image of officialdom, and of an honest and frugal government. To reemphasize this goal after his accession, Emperor Hsüan-tsung set up himself and the royal family as an example. He issued an edict in the seventh month of 714, forbidding the extravagant lifestyle of royal family members: court ladies should not wear brocade, embroidery, pearls, and jade; gold and silver utensils used in the court should be melted down and used as payments for military and government expenses. Embroidery workshops in Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang 洛陽 were also shut down. Within only a few days another edict was promulgated, limiting the privilege of

[106] See the case of Yang Chih-pen 楊志本 mentioned by Yen Shih-yüan 嚴識元, "T'an-chou tu-tu Yang Chih-pen pei" 潭州都督楊志本碑, *CTW* 267, p. 1213. He was sent to Ling-nan circuit during Empress Wu's time (r. 685–704) as a "commissioner for purchasing pearls and jade 市珠玉使."

[107] *T'ang kuo-shih pu* C, p. 53.

[108] They were Chou Ch'ing-li 周慶立 and Lü T'ai-i 呂太一. They held titles in 714 and 763, respectively. *Wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao* 文獻通考, Shih-t'ung edn. (Shanghai: Shang-wu, 1935) 62, p. 563.

using precious metals to officials of the third rank and above.[109] It was in this political atmosphere that in the twelfth month of 714, Liu Tse 柳澤, a palace censor, impeached Chou Ch'ing-li, the "commissioner for trading with foreign ships" who had been sent to Ling-nan circuit to conduct "official purchasing." Liu accused Chou of "sending to the court many strange implements that he [Chou Ch'ing-li], with the help of a Po-ssu (Persian) monk, had arranged to be made on a large scale."[110]

The T'ang rulers were of course not devoted believers in asceticism, and Hsüan-tsung's frugal measures were part of a series of measures designed to proclaim that his reign was to take a new and morally acceptable direction. In 716 a foreigner brought Hsüan-tsung the news that countries around the South China Sea were rich in pearls, jade, and precious goods, and proposed that the court should avail themselves of these goods through trade. The emperor's interest was aroused. After he was further informed that there was also medicine for immortality, he decided to send a palace censor to go to Ceylon (Shih-tzu kuo 獅子國) with this foreigner. This involved the emperor himself in criticism. A memorial was presented to the throne strongly opposing any direct court involvement in trade, and condemning it as absolutely inappropriate to compete against Chinese merchants for profits.[111]

Given that the prefect in Kuang-chou was the highest official responsible for both administrative and military affairs in his jurisdiction,[112] it is logical to believe that it was he who shouldered the responsibility of protecting foreign merchants, trading with them and administering matters related to seaborne trade.[113] In most cases, the prefect of Kuang-chou also held concurrently the title "commissioner for trading with foreign ships," unless some special situation occurred that made it essential to appoint a capital official to the post.[114]

[109] *TCTC* 211, p. 6702.

[110] *THY* 62, p. 1078. Translation from Wang, "Nanhai Trade," p. 100.

[111] *TCTC* 221, p. 6718.

[112] According to the T'ang sources, his jurisdiction extended to a number of neighboring prefectures. Among the seventy prefectures to the south of Mt. Wu-ling 五嶺, twenty-two are within the jurisdiction of the military governor of Ling-nan. And this title, as we have discussed, was usually held concurrently by the prefect of Kuang-chou. See Ma, *Han Ch'ang-li wen-chi chiao-chu* 4, p. 283.

[113] Lü Ssu-mien 呂思勉, *Lü Ssu-mien tu-shih cha-chi* 呂思勉讀史札記 (Shanghai: Ku-chi, 1982), p. 1000. Hino Kaisaburō 日野開三郎, *Tōyō shigaku ronshū* 東洋史學論集 (Tokyo, 1980), vol. 5, p. 313.

[114] Kuwabara Jitsuzō, "Fujita kun no Sōdai no shihakushi oyobi shihaku jōrei ni tsuite" 藤田君の宋代の市舶司及び市舶條例について, in Miyazaki Ichisada 宮崎市定 et al., eds., *Kuwabara Jitsuzō zenshū* 桑原騭藏全集 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1968) vol. 3, pp. 481–82.

Not too surprisingly, most of the prefects of Kuang-chou followed the footsteps of their corrupt predecessors in previous dynasties. Historical records of their corruptions, scandals, and abuses of power unmistakably point to the fact that throughout the T'ang dynasty the power to administer maritime trade was firmly in the hands of the prefect of Kuang-chou. Liu Chü-lin 劉巨鱗 is one such example. From 741 to 744 he was the governor of Nan-hai commandery (the new name of Kuang-chou after 741),[115] but was later dismissed from the post for corruption and was replaced by Lu Huan 盧奐. Lu is said to have taken strict measures to stop unscrupulous subordinates from extorting foreign merchants. His new measures were so strict that even eunuchs sent on "official purchasing" trips to Kuang-chou dared not interfere with them.[116]

As a general matter of policy, the prefects of Kuang-chou might well have resisted any interference with their power over seaborne trade, and to have tried to maintain surveillance over the purchasing activities of eunuchs dispatched to Kuang-chou as "commissioner for trading with foreign ships." Tension was building up, and eventually in 767 an unexpected crisis broke out. Lü T'ai-i 呂太一, the eunuch commissioner for trading with foreign ships for Kuang-chou, surprised everybody by forging an imperial edict, conscripting a group of soldiers, and expelling the military commissioner of Ling-nan.[117] Lü's real motive in staging the rebellion remains misty. Modern

T'ien-hsia chün-kuo li-ping shu 33, p. 53b. At this point, it is worth pointing out that during the Northern Sung (960–1127), when a specialized governmental apparatus for overseas trade administration, the Office of Maritime Trade (Shih-po ssu 市舶司), was first created in Kuang-chou in 977, it was still headed by the local prefect and staffed by his subordinates. Gradual administrative centralization of maritime trade did not start until the late eleventh century. During the Yüan-feng period (1078–1088), the Maritime Trade Supervisorship (Shih-po t'i-chü-ssu 市舶提舉司) was established, and local officials were excluded from dealing with foreign merchants. But the office was semi-independent: its business was conducted by officials of the Tax Transport Bureau (Chuan-yün ssu 轉運司) and its operation supervised by the head of the bureau. The supervisorship became a truly independent government agency only in 1101. See *Wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao* 62, p. 563; and *Ch'üan-chou fu-chih* 26, p. 6a.

[115] *CTS* 9, p. 218. Roughly during the same period, he also held the title "investigation commissioner" (*ts'ai-fang shih* 採訪使). See *Sung kao-seng chuan* 1, p. 10a.

[116] *HTS* 126, p. 4418.

[117] *CTS* 138, p. 3781; *HTS* 6, p. 169. *TCTC* 223, p. 7157. For Lü T'ai-i, see also two Sung records: Ts'ai Shao-yün 蔡少霆, *Pi-shu lu-hua* 避暑錄話 (Shih-lin i-shu edn.) B, p. 63a; and *I-chüeh-liao tsa-chi* 猗覺寮雜記 (Chih-pu-tsu chai ts'ung-shu edn.) A, p. 40b. That a eunuch could manage to expel the head official in Kuang-chou may sound incredible. But the T'ang eunuchs, according to a Ch'ing-era study by Chao I 趙翼, maintained a sound power base in modern Kwangtung and Fukien provinces, from where most of them were recruited. Their influence in their home districts compelled Tu Hsüan-yu 杜宣猷, the surveillance commissioner of Fukien, to send his subordinates to pay respect to the tombs of the ancestors of prominent eunuchs almost every year between 860 to 874. See Chao I, *Nien-erh shih cha-chi*

scholars tend to attribute this event to Lü's resentment against the prefect's surveillance over his purchasing; they suggest that Lü's motive in removing the commissioner was to have the lion's share of the profits from trading with foreigners.[118] This event, however, does indicate that on one hand Lü obviously did not have the power to administer maritime trade at Kuang-chou. On the other hand, however, a scramble for power over trade was also going on between *shih-po shih* and military commissioners in Ling-nan. This seems to have been increasingly the case after the An Lu-shan Rebellion in the mid-eighth century, during which eunuchs augmented their power at court,[119] and attempted to encroach on the profits from foreign trade when dispatched to Kuang-chou as *shih-po shih*.[120] This power struggle may simply have resulted from the personal greed of eunuchs, but the eunuchs themselves may also have been acting as the emperor's agents, endeavoring to achieve a greater share of the sizable profit from overseas trade.[121]

A more plausible explanation is that the role of *shih-po shih* evolved and changed during the T'ang dynasty. At the beginning, he was only a temporary court purchasing envoy, who concurrently held a regular local government post: the prefect of Kuang-chou. Gradually and occasionally, in order to ensure the supply of exotic goods for the court, eunuchs were appointed *shih-po shih* to conduct and to supervise the purchase of these goods.[122] A document allegedly from Te-tsung's reign entitled "A Memorial for Presenting to the Throne a Painting of the Court for the Commissioner for Trading with Foreign Ships in Ling-nan" ("Chin Ling-nan wang-kuan shih-po shih yüan t'u piao" 進嶺南王館市舶使院圖表) provides us with a clue to this gradual evolution of the *shih-po shih*'s function in the latter half of the eighth century. It reads:

廿二史箚記 (rpt; Peking: Chung-kuo shu-tien, 1987) 20, p. 266.

[118] Lü, *Cha-chi*, p. 1000; and Tsukiyama, "Tōdai Ryōnan" pp. 31–32.

[119] For a discussion of this topic, see J. K. Rideout, "The Rise of the Eunuchs during the T'ang Dynasty," *AM* ns 1 (1949), pp. 53–72; and ibid. 3 (1952), pp. 42–58.

[120] A record in *TFYK* 665, p. 7956, points out that after the middle of the T'ang dynasty, it was usually the eunuchs who were appointed various "commissioners."

[121] Wada Hisanori believes that the dispatch of *shih-po shih* was linked to the overall financial and administrative reforms during the late T'ang, the principle aim of which was to increase state revenue through new taxes and tighter control of local financial administration. See his "Tōdai ni okeru Shihakushi no sōchi," p. 1057, where, however, he may have overinterpreted the importance of the *shih-po shih*, who was basically a "purchasing envoy" for the court.

[122] Conditioned by primitive knowledge of navigation and shipbuilding, overseas trade in ancient times was a trade of limited variety and quantity. The luxury items brought to China were often in short supply, and were sought not only by the court but by influential central officials, powerful local figures, merchants, and even ordinary people in Kuang-chou. This resulted in a "seller's market."

> In the past, "commissioner [for trading with foreign ships]" was only an empty title. He had no real power to issue instructions [to local officials]. He merely could accomplish the performance of supervising duties in a careless manner, as if he kept his hands cupped all the time. As a practice, the commissioner neither kept any official records [of his activities], nor maintained a permanent office. Having received the holy decree in person, I, your humble subject, have attempted to reform the corrupt practices of previous commissioners. The purchasing of precious imported goods to be presented to the court is now conducted by my subordinates; and the routine administration of maritime trade in the prefecture has come under the jurisdiction of prefectural officials.[123]

This record serves as a clear indication that even when the court decided to augment the power of the commissioner, it did not transfer power over foreign trade from the prefect to the commissioner, but redistributed the power between the two. Common sense tells us that it was technically impossible for a court commissioner to take over the detailed and tedious work of maritime trade administration. He might bring with him a few assistants from the capital. But he simply did not have enough staff of his own to function independently of the local governmental apparatus. Even to perform his purchasing duty, he might still have requested help from the local authorities. In many cases, there was no problem of power distribution, simply because the commissioner and the prefect of Kuang-chou were one and the same person. To assert that the "commissioner for trading with foreign ships" in the T'ang dynasty had already assumed the duty of administering maritime trade in Kuang-chou is a misunderstanding of the primary sources, resulting from reading back the function of *shih-po shih* during the Sung dynasty into the T'ang.

[123] This record is found in *CTW* 515, p. 2350, and must be used with caution. The compilers of *CTW* attributed the author to Wang Ch'ien-hsiu 王虔休, who was active during Emperor Te-tsung's time (r. 780–805). However, the primary T'ang sources have no record of Wang's holding either the post of prefect of Kuang-chou or serving as the military commissioner of Ling-nan. Instead, he was appointed aide of the Lu-chou grand governor-general (*Lu-chou ta tu-tu-fu chang-shih* 潞州大都督府長史) in 795. And his government and military service was basically confined to the southeastern part of modern Shansi 山西 province. See *T'ang fang-chen nien-piao* 唐方鎮年表 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1980) 4, p. 64b. Moreover, this memorial suggests that Wang bought an old building in Hai-yang 海陽, which is located in modern Ch'ao-an 潮安, Kwangtung province, and used it as the Court for the Commissioner for Trading with Foreign Ships in Ling-nan. This is very likely a mistake, for the commissioner was usually stationed in Kuang-chou. These mistakes, however, should not totally discredit the basic contents of the memorial. Misattributing authorship and misstating the location to which the commissioner was stationed might have been merely two of many editorial mistakes that occurred during the compilation of the voluminous *CTW*.

Chinese records of the late-eighth and early-ninth centuries also testify to the fact that the prefect of Kuang-chou still presided over the administration of maritime trade. For example, Li Mien 李勉, the prefect of Kuang-chou from 768 to 772, who also held concurrently the title "military and surveillance commissioner" of Ling-nan, decided in 769 to abolish the practice of inspecting foreign ships and of levying exorbitant taxes on overseas trade.[124] Inspections of this nature offered unscrupulous low-ranking officials and clerks an opportunity to extort valuables from foreign merchants and to force them to offer bribes; and the high taxes on foreign trade made business in Kuang-chou unprofitable, turning traders away to other places. Before Li took office only a few merchant ships called on Kuang-chou every year. His abolition of corrupt practices is reported to have reversed the situation; by the end of his term, the number of foreign ships arriving in Kuang-chou soared to about forty a year. This record gives unequivocal proof that there was no direct central control over foreign trade. Tax rates for foreign merchants and seaborne trade administration policies were all decided single-handedly by the prefect of Kuang-chou.

In this sense, the administration of foreign trade had been "localized" during the T'ang dynasty. And Kuang-chou was not the only place where the authorities had such "localized" power over foreign trade. Other places had also formally localized parts of the overland trade, such as Yu-chou 幽州, near modern Peking, for trade with the Khitan and Hsi 奚 in horses, and Ch'eng-tu 成都 for the western trade.

"Localization" could bring about prosperity and increased trading activities to a Chinese seaport, when an honest prefect stayed in power; it could also contribute to the decline of the same seaport, if a corrupt prefect subjected foreign merchants to his tender mercy. This "localization" was therefore a double-edged sword. It enabled avaricious local officials to abuse their power, accumulating enormous personal wealth;[125] but their corruption would also discourage the profit-seeking foreign merchants from coming to do business in the seaport within their jurisdiction. The decreased trading activities would then make it difficult for them to acquire enough imported goods to meet the quota of "local" products assigned to them under the annual tribute system.

This is depicted in a memorial presented to the court in 792 by Lu Chih

[124] *CTS* 131, p. 3635; and *HTS* 131, p. 4508.

[125] See the biography of Wang E 王鍔 in *CTS* 151, p. 4060; and *HTS* 170, p. 5168. He was appointed prefect of Kuang-chou in 795–801 and is said to have embezzled a large amount of precious goods collected from foreign merchants as tax.

陸贄, a well-known courtier.[126] The memorial cites a report by the military commissioner of Ling-nan that claimed that recently foreign merchants had deliberately avoided trading in Kuang-chou, and instead had conducted their business in An-nan 安南 protectorate.[127] The latter was far away from both Kuang-chou and the Court for Commissioner for Trading with Foreign Ships, and apparently inconvenient to the merchants. This unusual development troubled the military commissioner, who feared that the decrease in the arrival of foreign ships would cause him to be unable to acquire and present enough imported goods as tribute to the court. He proposed to the throne that under the supervision of a eunuch, a team of officials from Kuang-chou be sent to An-nan to conduct "official purchasing." This proposal, however, was turned down flat by Lu Chih. He pointed out that Kuang-chou had long been a communication hub in the south, and a place famous for busy trading activities. Now foreign merchants ceased to come to Kuang-chou, but went all the way to An-nan to do business at great inconvenience. The reason underlying this strange development, Lu Chih pointed out, must be the mismanagement of foreign trade in Kuang-chou and the poor reception accorded by local officials to foreign traders. Since merchants pursued only profits, if they were treated with moderation there should be no reason that they would not come to Kuang-chou to do business. Lu Chih condemned the request to dispatch a eunuch to An-nan to preside over "official purchasing," arguing that it would "display a covetous disposition to the world, openly invite the use of bribery at court, befoul the pure atmosphere of the times and corrupt the divine imperial task of transformation through virtue."

Lu recommended to the throne that the request should not be granted. He also stated that there was simply no reason for the court to trust only the authorities of Ling-nan, and not those of An-nan; or to favor the eunuchs and play down the local officials. Ling-nan and An-nan were both territories of the Central Kingdom; eunuchs and local officials were all subjects of the emperor. Dispatching a eunuch on an "official purchasing" trip would violate the principle of treating metropolitan and provincial officials with equal sincerity, and would corrupt the Confucian value of honesty. As for the foreign goods needed by the court and the army, in fact statutes, ordinances

[126] For a discussion of Lu's life and career, see Denis Twitchett, "Lu Chih (754–805): Imperial Adviser and Court Official," in A. F. Wright and D. C. Twitchett, eds., *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1962), pp. 84–122.

[127] The jurisdiction of this protectorate covers the area to the north of Mt. Hoanh Son, with its capital located in modern Hanoi.

and established practice had already detailed the procedures for acquisition. Since local officials were urged to carry out faithfully their duties, they hardly dared not meet the quota assigned to them under the annual tribute system.[128]

The important messages in Lu Chih's memorial point to the following facts: until the end of the eighth century, the "normal" channel for the court to acquire foreign goods remained the "annual tribute system"; there were statutes, ordinances, and established practice that governed the procedures for "official purchasing." It was the local officials at Kuang-chou and An-nan, not the *shih-po shih*, who were administering the trading activities in their respective localities; when a eunuch was appointed *shih-po shih* to a seaport, his major duty was probably to conduct and to supervise "official purchasing," not to perform by himself the routine administration of seaborne trade.

These facts are elaborated in related contemporary T'ang records. In 802, for example, Hsü Shen 徐申, the prefect of Kuang-chou from 802 to 806, ordered that exotic goods collected as tax in kind from foreign merchants should not exceed the amount sufficient to fill the tributary quota (*ch'ang-kung* 常貢) assigned to Kuang-chou by the court. Freed from excessive taxation, maritime trade is said to have enjoyed a constant growth during Hsü Shen's term of office in Kuang-chou.[129] In 817 the "feast for inspecting goods" was abolished. A corrupt practice, it had offered local officials, and even their servants who attended the feast, an opportunity for extortion.[130]

These records also throw a new light on an important but somewhat controversial source, which has been taken as a conclusive evidence for the transfer of administrative power over foreign trade from the head official in Kuang-chou to a *shih-po shih* dispatched from the capital. This record is to be found in *T'ang kuo-shih pu* 唐國史補, by Li Chao 李肇, a Hanlin scholar and a secretariat drafter (*chung-shu she-jen* 中書舍人) during the Yüan-ho period (806–820). We read that a *shih-po shih* in the ninth century was responsible for the registration of foreign merchants' names and their cargoes, the collection of taxes, and the monopoly of precious and rare foreign goods.[131] However, examining this record in the light of the previous discussion, it seems quite safe to assume that the *shih-po shih* in question was a concurrent post held by the prefect of Kuang-chou. If that is the case, the transfer of power from the prefect of Kuang-chou to some other official titled *shih-po shih* probably never happened.

[128] *T'ang Lu Hsüan-kung han-yüan chi* 唐陸宣公翰苑集 (SPTK edn.) 18, pp. 1a–2a; and *TCTC* 234, pp. 7532–33.
[129] *Li Wen-kung chi* 11, p. 93b; *Po-K'ung liu-t'ieh* 83, p. 1185; *HTS* 143, p. 4694; and Li Ao 李翱, "T'ang ku Chin-tzu kuang-lu ta-fu Hsü kung hsing-chuang" 唐故金紫光祿大夫徐公行狀, *CTW* 639, p. 2899.
[130] *HTS* 163, p. 5009.
[131] *T'ang kuo-shih pu* C, p. 63.

Corruption on the part of the prefects of Kuang-chou usually serves as a reliable indication that they still tightly held power over maritime trade administration. And the Chinese records of the late-ninth century abound in evidence on this point. To generate profits for themselves, some head officials in Kuang-chou are recorded to have formulated their own regulations for foreign trade administration.[132] These regulations allowed them to buy foreign traders' goods at a price considerably lower than the market value, making them enormously rich in a short time.[133] For instance, Hu Cheng 胡證 was appointed the prefect of Kuang-chou for only three years (826–828). However, during such a short period of time he accumulated a huge amount of personal wealth, which enabled him to buy in the capital several blocks of real estate. Precious imported goods were continuously transported from Kuang-chou to his residence, making him "newly rich" in the capital.[134]

Another example is Wang Mao-yüan 王茂元, the prefect of Kuang-chou from 833 to 835. His personal wealth is said to have been worth "ten thousand" strings of copper cash.[135] A rare exception is Lu Chün 盧鈞, the prefect of Kuang-chou from 836 to 840. He memorialized to the throne to be relieved of the duty of seaborne trade administration. Lu is described as a man of benevolence and forbearance. He did not want to be tainted by or held responsible for scandals related to extortion of foreign traders. As the chief administrative official in Kuang-chou, however, Lu apparently could not shirk his legal responsibility, should a scandal break out involving his subordinates. To protect his reputation, Lu made a request to the court in 836, asking the dispatch of a eunuch to take the post of "commissioner for trading with foreign ships," so as to prevent unscrupulous low-ranking officials from "hiding and cheating" in doing business with foreigners.[136] Whether Lu's request was granted or not remains a question. What is obvious is that in his time supervision and administration of foreign trade came within the functions and powers of the prefect in Kuang-chou.

[132] *CTS* 177, p. 3591.
[133] *Po-K'ung liu-t'ieh* 83, p. 1185.
[134] *CTS* 163, p. 4260.
[135] *CTS* 152, p. 4070. The term "ten thousand" is, of course, not an accurate figure. It usually means "enormous" in classical Chinese.
[136] *CTS* 177, p. 3591. *Po-K'ung liu-t'ieh* 83, p. 1185.

CONCLUSION

During the T'ang dynasty Kuang-chou was a city of strategic importance. Domestically, it was the administrative center of Ling-nan superior prefecture (*fu* 府), the jurisdiction of which extended to twenty prefectures south of the Wu-ling 五嶺.[137] Maintaining stability in this vast area was the key to effective control of southern China. But this was also a region inhabited mostly by militant non-Han tribesmen, a region which had often been harassed by banditry, theft, homicide, and natural disasters. The exercise of governance in this area had traditionally been a tough job. Internationally, Kuang-chou was a gate to the outside world. Through this gate, China could come into contact with foreign merchants from overseas, acquiring precious exotic goods, and, perhaps more important, spreading the moral influence of the Chinese Son of Heaven to "barbarians" through trading activities.[138] None of these objectives, however, could be achieved if the prefect of Kuang-chou was not a person well versed in both polite letters and military arts, and able to control the overall situation. The domestic and international importance of Kuang-chou made it a crucial issue for the court to choose the right person for the post.[139] If finding such a person among the Chinese officialdom was not the most difficult part, preventing him from becoming corrupt after assuming office often proved to be impossible. The precious imported goods in Kuang-chou, and the fact that a prefect could so easily acquire them through abusing his power and becoming rich, constituted too strong a seduction for him to resist. Nevertheless, the importance and the difficulty in governing Kuang-chou justified the delegation of both military and civil power to a single person: the prefect. But, the appointment of a plenary prefect could be disastrous, if his performance was not properly supervised and he degenerated into avarice. As a matter of fact, during early-T'ang times, the geographical distance between Ch'ang-an and Kuang-chou (the journey from the capital took perhaps two months) made it quite difficult to reach the area, and crippled any efforts in bringing local officials under regular and timely supervision by the central government.

Examining his function in this historical context, it is quite evident that a

[137] *Yüan Chen chi wai-chi* 元稹集外集 (SPTK edn.) 5, p. 667; see also Yüan Chen 元稹, "Shou Wang Shih-lu teng Ling-nan p'an-kuan chih" 授王師魯等嶺南判官制; and Feng Ao 封敖, "Shou Ts'ui Kui-ts'ung Ling-nan chieh-tu shih chih" 授崔龜從嶺南節度使制, *Wen-yüan ying-hua* 412, p. 2088; 455, pp. 2312–13.

[138] *Ch'ang-li hsien-sheng chi* 昌黎先生集 (SPTK edn.) 21, pp. 8a–9b; and *T'ang Liu hsien-sheng chi* 唐柳先生集 (SPTK edn.) 26, pp. 6a–7b.

[139] *Ch'ang-li hsien-sheng chi* 21, pp. 8a–9b.

shih-po shih was a purchasing envoy for the court. As a normal practice, this commission was concurrently held by the prefect of Kuang-chou. But there were also occasions on which a capital official was appointed *shih-po shih*, because special court events or unusual situations in Kuang-chou required the dispatch of a central official to handle these matters by himself and to subject them to his supervision. The function of *shih-po shih* and the holder of the post were therefore not unchanging. This seems to be increasingly the case after the An Lu-shan Rebellion, when eunuchs rose as a political power in the central court. At the same time, perhaps as an attempt to gain better control of local officials, commissioners on supervisory duties were also occasionally sent to Kuang-chou. Their titles varied. They were referred to as "commissioner for supervising ships" (*chien-po shih* 監舶使),[140] "commissioner for befriending foreign countries" (*chieh-hao shih* 結好使),[141] and "commissioner for supervising barbarian ships" (*ya fan[-po] shih* 押蕃[舶]使).[142]

The prefect of Kuang-chou presided over the administration of foreign trade, albeit sometimes subjected to the supervision of a central official. The prefect set the rates for taxes on foreign trade, regulated the activities of foreign merchants, and handled legal disputes involving those merchants. He could make changes to any existing administrative regulations of maritime trade without prior consultation with or approval from the court. He, however, was held responsible for presenting the court with imported goods as annual tribute, the types and amounts of which were set by the court. Throughout the T'ang dynasty, the central court and its officials were not enthusiastic about taxing commerce, domestic or foreign, and as a practice, usually left such business to local officials.[143] By so doing, the T'ang court wanted to create for itself an image of a moral and benevolent government. Unless urged by special needs, the court often hesitated in sending out a eunuch as its "purchasing envoy." The well-established "annual tribute system" remained the major channel for the court to acquire foreign goods.[144]

[140] Hsiao Yeh 蕭鄴, "Ling-nan chieh-tu shih Wei kung shen-tao pei" 嶺南節度使韋公神道碑, *CTW* 764, p. 3565.

[141] P'ei Tz'u-yüan 裴次元, "Tsou Kuang-chou chieh-hao shih shih-yu feng chao-shu hsieh-en chuang" 奏廣州結好使事由奉詔書謝恩狀, *Wen-yüan ying-hua* 630, p. 3258; *T'ien-hsia chün-kuo li-ping shu* 19, p. 104a; 33, p. 54a. His duty was described as "investigating matters and reporting to the court when foreign ships arrive at Kuang-chou."

[142] *T'ang Liu hsien-sheng chi* 10, p. 7a; 26, p. 7b; and *T'ang kuo-shih pu* B, p. 53. In the former work, the tile is given as "*ya fan-po shih*," and in the latter as "*ya fan shih*."

[143] Denis Twitchett, "A Confucian's View of the Taxation of Commerce," *BSOAS* 3.2 (1973), p. 445.

[144] In this conjunction, it is worth remembering that the "annual tribute system" played the same role during the Five Dynasties (907–960). See *Chiu Wu-tai shih* 舊五代史 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1976) 3, p. 52.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CTS	*Chiu T'ang shu* 舊唐書
CTW	*Ch'üan T'ang wen* 全唐文
HTS	*Hsin T'ang shu* 新唐書
TCTC	*Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 資治通鑑
TFYK	*Ts'e-fu yüan-kuei* 冊府元龜
THY	*T'ang hui-yao* 唐會要
TLT	*T'ang liu-tien* 唐六典
TT	*T'ung-tien* 通典