

SI VUONG (SHI XIE)

Introduction

Local society during the later Han period (1st to 3rd centuries CE), especially in the central Red River delta, became a merger of indigenous peoples and families of Chinese descent. Many elements of the northern Chinese civilization entered the local culture (for example, writing with Chinese characters, eating with chopsticks, aspects of Chinese thought and religion). Power remained in Chinese hands, sometimes with officials from the north and sometimes with local clans. In addition, this was a period of increasing international contact and trade. Buddhism was the ideology of this international circuit that linked India and Central Asia, as well as Southeast Asia and China. Buddhist monks and traders brought their religion as well as foreign material goods to the Vietnamese. In the early third century CE, as the Han empire to the north began to crumble, in northern Vietnam the Shi family led by Shi Xie (known to later Vietnamese as Si Vuong or King Si [137-226 CE]) maintained stability and prosperity in the region.

Document Selections with Questions (Longer selection follows this section)

Excerpted from *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* (of which this segment is from that of the Wu Kingdom [ca. present-day Shanghai]). The author of the *Chronicle* was Chen Shou, and it was published in 297 CE, and the *Chronicle* reflects a scholar's composition of the history of third century China. Source for the excerpt is Stephen O'Harrow, "Men of Hu, Men of Han, Men of the Hundred Man," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 75 (1986) (Appendix).

Si Vuong (Shi Xie)

Shi Xie's brothers were all commandery notabilities, and they occupied a dominating position throughout the province; ten thousand *li* away from the court, their majestic influence was incomparable. Whenever (Xie) entered and whenever he went out, the reverberation of bells and stone chimes was heard; pomp and decorum were fully observed and the flutes and pipes were sounded. Chariots and outriders filled the road while men of Hu¹ by the dozen, with incense smoldering, marched close beside the wheels of his carriage. Then there came the curtained coaches of his wives and concubines and then his sons and younger brothers, followed by the cavalry. All this while, his splendor awed the hundred Man² and kept them at bay; even Commandant To could not compare with him.

Shi Xie had the courtesy name of Wei-yan. He was from (the sub-prefecture of) Guanxin³ (in the commandery of) Zangwu.⁴ His forebears were originally from (the district of) Wen-yang⁵ in the

¹ "Men of Hu" was the term employed as a general designation for central or southern Asians, such as Sogdians or Indians.

² "Man" referred to the "barbarians" of the south, the indigenous inhabitants of what is now Vietnam. (Also see footnote 35, below.)

³ Guangxin, capital of Zangwu.

⁴ Zangwu, commandery in what is now Guangxi province.

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state of Lu.⁶ At the time of the rebellion of Wang Mang,⁷ his family had taken flight to Jiaozhou⁸ and Xie was of the sixth generation thereafter. His father's name was Ci and during the reign of the Emperor Huan (of the Han) he was Grand Administrator⁹ of Jinan.¹⁰

When Xie was young, he went to study in the capital,¹¹ where his teacher was Liu Ziqi of Yingquan.¹² He studied the *Zuozhuan* commentaries on the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles*. He was selected as a Candidate of Probity and Piety and appointed Gentleman Master of Writing but he was dismissed from office due to certain official matters. Once the period of mourning for his father, Ci, had ended, he was titled Candidate of Accomplished Talent and named Prefect of Wu,¹³ whence he was transferred to become Grand Administrator of Jiaozhi.¹⁴...

Xie was a man of generous capacity and broad forbearance and he treated his subordinates with humility and open-mindedness. As for the Chinese literati who fled to him from the troubles, they numbered in the hundreds. He indulged with pleasure in the exegesis of the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles*. Yüan Hui of the country of Chen¹⁵ wrote to Xun Yu, Prefect of the Masters of Writing, saying: "This gentleman and official of Jiaozhi named Shi is not only highly learned in literary matters but also very able in the affairs of government. In the midst of the great rebellions, he was able to preserve and protect the whole of the commandery; for more than twenty years there were no incidents within his borders. The people are not without employment; those who sojourn in their travels all receive his blessings. Even Dou Jung's¹⁶ preservation of Hexi¹⁷ was not more remarkable than this. When he can spare time from official duties, he indulges himself in the study of the classics; he is incisive and profound particularly on the *Zuozhuan* commentaries to the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles*. I frequently had occasion to ask him about problems of the *Zuozhuan* and he always answered me in a most scholarly fashion; his ideas were all very closely and finely reasoned. And with regard to the *Book of Documents*, he is equally familiar with the old and with the new schools of thought; his knowledge of the principles is of a surpassing thoroughness. In the capital he has heard the heated debates of the old and new scholars; he now intends to forward to the throne his own commentary on the matters of the *Book of Documents* and the *Zuozhuan*." Thus was he praised by others.

⁵ Wen-yang, located in what is now Shandong province.

⁶ Lu, a state of the Spring and Autumn period during the Zhou and the home of Confucius.

⁷ Wang Mang usurped the Han throne and ruled from 9 to 23 CE (the so-called Xin Dynasty).

⁸ Jiaozhou is an anachronistic (before 203) reference to Jiao province, i.e., China south of Lingnan.

⁹ Grand Administrator, the civil chief of a commandery.

¹⁰ Jinan, a commandery located in what is now modern central Vietnam.

¹¹ Referring to Lo-yang, capital of the Eastern or Later Han dynasty.

¹² Yingzhuang, located in what is now Anhui province.

¹³ Wu, a prefecture located in what is now Sichuan province.

¹⁴ Jiaozhi, a commandery located in what is now modern northern Vietnam.

¹⁵ Chen was an area located in what is now Henan province.

¹⁶ Dou Jong (16 BCE-62 CE) was a native of the Shenxi region and served both the Xin and Later Han in the far west with distinction.

¹⁷ Hexi was the area south of the western reaches of the great wall, corresponding roughly to modern Gansu province.

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Questions:

1. Who held political power in the region?
2. How did these people show their power?
3. What different ethnic groups were involved?

Longer Selection

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¹⁸ See footnote 1, above.

¹⁹ See footnote 2, above.

²⁰ See footnote 3, above.

²¹ See footnote 4, above.

²² See footnote 5, above.

²³ See footnote 6, above.

²⁴ See footnote 7, above.

²⁵ See footnote 8, above.

²⁶ See footnote 9, above.

²⁷ See footnote 10, above.

²⁸ See footnote 11, above.

²⁹ See footnote 12, above.

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but he was dismissed from office due to certain official matters. Once the period of mourning for his father, Ci, had ended, he was titled Candidate of Accomplished Talent and named Prefect of Wu,³⁰ whence he was transferred to become Grand Administrator of Jiaozhi.³¹

His younger brother, Yi, was at first Investigator in the commandery, and when the Inspector³² Ding Gong was recalled to the capital, Yi served him as an escort with much diligence and attention. Gong was very moved and addressed him on the point of parting, saying: "If I serve as an official in the Three Offices,³³ I should invite you to be employed in my bureau." Later, Gong was made Minister over the Masses and he was to bring Yi into his employ. However, when Yi arrived to take up his post, Gong had already been replaced by Huang Wan as Minister over the Masses. (The latter) was particularly courteous to Yi, but when Dong Zuo rebelled, Yi fled to his hometown.

COMMENT (by Bei Songzhi³⁴): The Wu-shu says: Wan and Zuo detested each other. But Yi was wholeheartedly loyal to Wan and was especially reputed for it. Zuo (thus) hated Yi. Zuo thereupon gave out instructions saying, "The Head Clerk to the Ministry over the Masses, Shi Yi, should not be employed. Thus, he went for many years without promotion. On the occasion of Zuo's entry into the court, Yi fled home."

The Inspector of Jiaozhou, one Zhu Fu, was killed by the Yi³⁵ bandits and the provinces and commanderies rose up in rebellion. Xie thereupon recommended that Yi take over as Grand Administrator of Hebu.³⁶ His second brother, Hui, formerly the Prefect of Xuwen,³⁷ was made Grand Administrator of Jiuzhen.³⁸

COMMENT: "Hui" has the syllable initial sound of "Yu" and the syllable final sound of "Pi"; see the Zilin.

And Hui's younger brother, Wu, was appointed Grand Administrator of Nanhai.³⁹

³⁰ See footnote 13, above.

³¹ See footnote 14, above.

³² Inspector, the supervisor of a province of Zhou.

³³ "Three offices" refers to the Three Dukes: the Minister of Works, the Grand Commandant, and the Minister over the Masses.

³⁴ Bei Songzhi (371-451). The *Sanguozhi* of Chen Shou (233-297), from which this translation is taken, though completed in the late third century, was not received as the official history of the dynasties it covered (i.e., from the fall of the Han until 265) until the addition of the commentaries of Bei Songzhi in 429. The latter made use of many works, which now appear to have been lost.

³⁵ Yi is a term used in a general sense to denote "barbarians," whether the barbarians who border China on four sides or more specifically those who live in the east. Both this term and "Man," barbarians of the south, were used to refer to the indigenous inhabitants of what is now Vietnam.

³⁶ Hebu was a commandery located in the south coastal region of what is now Guangdong province.

³⁷ Xuwen was capital of Hebu.

³⁸ Jiuzhen was a commandery corresponding to modern northern central Vietnam.

³⁹ Nanhai was the name of a commandery located in the area around what became modern Guangdong.

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*COMMENT: Gehong in the Shenxian zhuan*⁴⁵ says: "Three days after Xie took sick and died, the immortal Dong Feng fed him but a single pill and some water with which to wet his mouth. He then held Xie by the cheeks and shook him for a moment. After swallowing the medicine, Xie's eyes opened, he moved his hand and his facial color gradually revived. A half day later he could sit up and four days later his speech returned. He recovered totally. Feng's courtesy name was Junyi and he was from Houguan."

(Xie's younger brother) Wu took sick and died first. After the death of Zhu Fu, the Han appointed Zhang Jin as Inspector of Jiaozhou. Jin was later assassinated by his own general,

⁴⁰ See footnote 15, above.

⁴¹ See footnote 16, above.

⁴² See footnote 17, above.

⁴³ See footnote 1, above.

⁴⁴ See footnote 2, above.

⁴⁵ *Shenxian zhuan*: a Taoist treatise of the Qin dynasty.

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Jujing. Subsequently, the Governor⁴⁶ of Jingzhou,⁴⁷ Liu Biao, appointed Lai Gong from Lingling⁴⁸ as Jin's replacement. At about the same time, the Grand Administrator of Zangwu, Shi Huang, passed away. Biao thereupon appointed Wu Ju to take his place. Along with Gong, he arrived to fill his post. The Han court, having learned of the death of Zhang Jin, sent an imperial proclamation to Xie, saying: "Jiaozhou is a very distant region, so far beyond the rivers and seas to the south, a place where our beneficence can barely reach and whence the gratitude of the people can hardly flow back. It has come to our attention that the rebellious Liu Biao has had the effrontery to have appointed Lai Gong to office and that he has his ambitious eye on our southern lands. Thus we now charge you to become our General of the Gentlemen of the Household who Comforts the South, in charge of all seven commanderies, maintaining as before your authority as Grand Administrator of Jiaozhi."

Later, Xie sent out the official Zhang Min with tribute to the capital. At that time there were revolts among the people everywhere and the road was cut off. Nevertheless, Xie did not cease sending tribute and so, exceptionally, the court again issued an imperial declaration (of recognizance); he was bestowed the title of General who Brings Tranquility to the Far Reaches and raised to the dignity of Marquis of the Commune of Lungdu.

After that, Ju fell out with Gong and raised troops to chase Gong away. Gong fled back to Lingling.

In the fifteenth year of Jianan,⁴⁹ Buzhi was appointed by Sun Juan⁵⁰ to act as Inspector of Jiaozhou. Once Zhi had arrived, Xie, at the head of his brothers, respectfully received him and presented him with the revenues. But as for Wu Ju, who harbored treacherous intentions, Zhi had him beheaded.

Juan promoted Xie to the position of General on the Left. In the closing years of Jianan, Xie sent his son, Xin, as a hostage to the court. Juan employed him as Grand Administrator of Wuchang.⁵¹ All the sons of Xie and Yi in the south were made Generals of the Gentlemen of the Household. Xie also prevailed upon the powerful clans of Yizhou,⁵² upon men such as Yong Kai and others, who brought the people of their commandery to submit to the Eastern Court (i.e., Wu). Juan praised him all the more, gave him the title of General of the Guards, and invested him as Marquis of Longbian.⁵³ His brother, Yi, became a General of the Chariot Squadron and Marquis of Duxiang.

⁴⁶ "Governor" was the civil chief of a province, sometimes called Shepherd, not unlike the position of Inspector (also see footnote 13).

⁴⁷ Jingzhou was a province covering what is now roughly Hunan and Hubei provinces.

⁴⁸ Lingling, a commandery located in what became modern Hunan province.

⁴⁹ 15th year of Jianan, 210 CE.

⁵⁰ Sun Juan was founder of the Wu dynasty (229-280) of the Three Kingdoms period.

⁵¹ Wujuang was the first capital of the Wu.

⁵² Yizhou was a province roughly overlapping modern Sichuan province.

⁵³ Longbian is usually identified with modern Hanoi.

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Each time Xie sent officials to Juan, he always presented as well different kinds of spices and finest grass cloth and always by the thousand-fold, glossy pearls and great conches, Liuli pottery, emerald kingfisher feathers, shell of tortoise and horn of rhinoceros, elephant tusks and various valuables and strange fruits: bananas, coconuts, longans and such like. And in no year did these things not come. Now and again, Yi would send horses in tribute, hundreds of head at a time. Juan would always send letters increasing royal favors to assuage them in reciprocation.

Xie spent more than forty years in the commandery and in the fifth year of Huangwu,⁵⁴ at the age of ninety, he passed away.

Because Jiaozhi was so remote, Juan divided Jiaozhi, giving everything north of Hebu to Guangzhou⁵⁵ and making Lu Tai its Inspector. The portion to the south became Jiaozhou and Dai Liang was appointed Inspector there. In addition, Chen Shi was sent to take Xie's place as Grand Administrator of Jiaozhi. Tai remained in Nanhai but Liang and Shi had both gotten as far as Hebu when Xie's son, Hui, proclaimed himself to be the Grand Administrator of Jiaozhi. He sent out clan troops to oppose Liang. Huan Ling of Jiaozhi, who had been Xie's clerk, kowtowed to Hui and admonished him to receive Liang. Hui was outraged and had Ling whipped to death. Ling's elder brother, Zhi, and his son, named Fa, succeeded in bringing together the various clan armies to attack Hui. Hui took refuge in the citadel. Zhi and his men kept up the attack for several months yet they were unable to raise the stronghold. Thereupon, the solution of a treaty marriage was arrived at and all the troops were sent home.

Lu Dai received the imperial order to kill Hui. Coming down from Guangzhou with his troops, he rode night and day. He went through Hebu and then continued forward together with Liang. Guang, son of Yi, who was a General of the Gentlemen of the Household, was old friends with Tai, who had appointed him Aide-de-Camp and took counsel from him. Tai first wrote to Jiaozhi, setting forth the various consequences of the situation; then he sent Guang to meet with Hui to convince the latter to admit his guilt. Although he was to lose the office of Grand Administrator, Hui was told he would be guaranteed safe from further harm. Tai arrived on the scene in Kuang's wake. Hui's elder brother, Zhi, and his younger brothers, among whom were Gan and Song, six men altogether, welcomed Dai stripped to the waist (in token of submission). Dai thanked them and told them all to dress. They then proceeded to the capital. The following dawn, Dai threw back the curtains of his tent and invited Hui and his brothers to enter one by one in order. Inside, many guests were seated. Dai stood up and, holding his official warrant, he read the imperial proclamation, enumerating the accusations (against them). Guards from the right and left then bound the brothers and took them outside where they were prostrated and immediately executed. Their heads were sent on to Wu-chang.

COMMENT: Sun Sheng says: "If you wish to win the hearts of the frontier peoples and bring them close, there is nothing better than honesty. To preserve greatness and maintain accomplishments, there is nothing as good as righteousness." Thus (Duke) Huan of Qi built up his country; his virtue shone in his forging of the alliance at Ke. (Duke) Wen of Jin was still an Earl yet his righteousness was manifested in his punishment of Yuan; thus were the nobles

⁵⁴ Fifth year of Huangwu: 227 CE.

⁵⁵ Guangzhou is identified with modern Guangdong province.

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gathered together in a single unit. The leaders of Xia made a covenant; their good reputation lasted for generations and set an example for a hundred princes. Lu Dai was a friend of and took counsel from Shi Kuang and yet he embroiled the latter through letters and oaths so that Hui and his brothers bared their breasts in all sincerity; Tai thereupon murdered them for the advancement of his own profit and accomplishments. A gentleman⁵⁶ would conclude from this that Sun Juan could not control events from afar and that Lu Dai's position was not to last for long.

Yi, Hui, and Guang afterwards came forth and Juan forgave them their mistakes. Along with Xie's hostage son, Xin, they were all reduced to commoner status. After several years, Yi and Hui were both executed for having broken the law. As for Xin, he died of illness and without issue, and his wife remained a widow. The throne ordered the local government to provide her with a monthly allotment of grain and she was bestowed a grant of 400,000 pieces of cash.

Questions:

1. Was Shi Xie (Si Vuong/King Si) Vietnamese?
2. What did the Han Chinese bring into this territory and society?
3. How do you think the local people responded to this show?

⁵⁶ "Gentleman" here refers to the ideal man who learns from this historical commentary, not so very unlike the gentle reader of the present article.