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Alexis Lycas. Intertextuality, Customs and Regionalism in the 'Geographical Treatise'. Daniel Patrick Morgan; Damien Chaussende. Monographs in Tang Official Historiography: Perspectives from the Technical Treatises of the History of Sui (Sui shu), 3, Springer International Publishing, pp.287-322, 2019, Why the Sciences of the Ancient World Matter, 978-3-030-18037-9. 10.1007/978-3-030-18038-6_10 . halshs-02308370

HAL Id: halshs-02308370

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Version auteur du chapitre soumis aux éditeurs en septembre 2018 et publié après corrections supplémentaires en septembre 2019. Référence bibliographique : A. Lycas, « Intertextuality, Customs and Regionalism in the ‘Geographical Treatise’ », dans D. P. Morgan et D. Chaussende (dir.), *Monographs in Tang Official Historiography: Perspectives from the Technical Treatises of the History of Sui (Sui shu)*, Cham, Springer, 2019, p. 287-322.

Chapter 11

Intertextuality, Customs and Regionalism in the ‘Geographical Treatise’

Alexis Lycas (黎康)*

Abstract After an introductory overview of the treatises on geography and their content in official histories prior to the seventh century, my analysis will focus on the general introduction of the *Sui shu* ‘Geographical Treatise’ in order to understand the historical information given behind the geographical description of the empire. Basing further comments on readings from the concluding remarks and judgments of the ‘Treatise’ together with a close study of the middle Yangzi region, its customs and its integrating process in the empire, I will attempt to discuss how history can be written through the representation of space (here, the administrative and cultural structure of the empire).

11.1 Introduction

‘L’ensemble de ces notes nous présente une image approximative de la Chine telle qu’elle était au début du VII^e siècle, étirant voluptueusement ses membres libérés des chaînes de la partition médiévale’
Étienne Balázs (‘Le Traité économique du Souei-chou’, 309)

The *Sui shu* 隋書 and *Jin shu* 晉書 ‘Dili zhi’ 地理志 (Geographical Treatises) were the first of their kind to be written in a period of imperial unity since the respective treatises of the *Shiji* 史記, *Han shu* 漢書, and *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 more than three centuries earlier.¹ There is, for this reason, a bond across time between these works, and the territorial scope and data covered therein is of unique importance to the study of official geographical knowledge in early medieval China. In this chapter, I shall introduce the history of the geographical genre up to the Tang 唐 (618–907), foregrounding those that played the role of generic models and, as of 822/823, the subject of the imperial examinations (Section 11.2).² An overview of the structure and contents of the respective treatises of Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145 – c. 85 BCE), Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE), and Fan Ye’s 范曄 (398–446) histories gives us a baseline to better understand the early-Tang treatise’s compilation and to appreciate its relation to Northern and Southern Dynasties locality writings (Sec-

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* I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Daniel Patrick Morgan and Yang Shao-yun for their insightful comments on this paper, and to Pablo Blitstein and Damien Chaussende for their comments on an earlier draft.

¹ The *Jin shu* ‘Dili zhi’, which recounts the events of the earlier Jin 晉 dynasty (265–420), was compiled slightly prior to the *Sui shu* treatise, in 646–648, by a group of literati supervised by Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648); for more on the context of the *Jin shu* and *Sui shu* treatises, see Chapter 2. On the *Sui shu* ‘Dili zhi’ specifically, see the important studies of Yang Shoujing (1996), Shi Nianhai (1998) and Felt (2014).

² See Des Rotours (1932, 150).

tion 11.3). Having introduced its forerunners, I will turn from there to an analysis of the structure and contents of the *Sui shu* geographical treatise, the proper focus of this chapter (Sections 11.4–5).³ In order to understand what geography can be on a regional level, lastly, I will examine the treatise’s concluding remarks on ‘regional characterology’ (Balázs 1953, 309) as divided according to the traditional division of space inherited from the ‘Yu gong’ 禹貢 (Tribute of Yu) chapter of the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Section 11.6).

With a focus on the text of the *Sui shu* ‘Geographical Treatise’, its predecessors, and, especially, its models, I wish to explore what such treatises tell us about geography and the representation of space among medieval historians. As strange as this may sound for the historian of geography, this chapter will not, for want of sources, be dealing with maps.⁴ Neither will it focus on topographical or demographical inaccuracies, as these treatises are inherently unreliable on that front: their compilers are not professional ‘geographers’ in the modern sense; they do not always travel to the places they describe, and the data they do possess may not be up to date with the sort of political and administrative changes particularly frequent at the frontiers.⁵ Our medieval historians certainly did have *maps* at their disposal (be they precise topographical maps or schematic images of space), but *texts*, like maps, I argue, are graphic and textual representations that equally facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world. In this, I mean that they present us with what Balázs (1953, 309) calls an ‘approximative image’: whatever the ‘scientific’ (or ‘proto-scientific’) value often attributed to technical treatises, they are also literary works written by semi-independent literati or court-appointed officials and, as such, bear a subjective scope. In the case of geography, the exactness of the data appears less interesting than the ideas they convey, that is, how space (in its manifold acceptations) is represented.

11.2 The ‘Geographical Treatise’ genre up until the Tang (618–907)

Before examining the ‘Geographical Treatise’ genre, it is worth considering the broader tradition of geographical writings to which it belongs. With the exceptions of Pei Xiu 裴秀 (223–271) and Jia Dan 賈耽 (730–805), there are no real ‘geographers’ (or scholars that consider themselves as such) in pre-modern China. As to ‘geographies’, there are certainly texts prior to the standard histories that discuss *geographical matters*, like the ‘Yu gong’, *Shanhai jing* 山海經, *Huainanzi* 淮南子, *Lü shi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, *Erya* 爾雅, *Liji* 禮記, and *Zhouli* 周禮, but geography *per se* is not the point thereof—it is a bridge serving the general purpose of the text as recounted from a mythological, ritual, cosmological, or political standpoint.⁶

The first true extant *treatises* on the subject are the fourth-century *Huayang guo zhi* 華陽國志 (Treatise on the Lands south of Mount Hua), the early sixth-century *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (River Classic Commentary), and the mid-sixth-century *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (Notes on the Buddhist Monasteries of Luoyang). Early local writings or ‘gazetteers’ (*difang zhi* 地方志) also saw wide circulation prior to the Tang, though few have survived from the period in question. We get a glimpse of what early locality writing looked like as excerpted in contemporary texts like

³ Although it would require a full study on its own, the *Jin shu* ‘Geographical Treatise’ is concerned with an earlier period, its compilation started earlier in time, and it was inspired by earlier *Jin shus* and Shen Yue’s *Song shu*.

⁴ Although maps existed long before the period under consideration, almost none have survived from the period between the Han 漢 (206 BCE – 220 CE) and Song 宋 (906–1279). Prior to this period, we do however have two maps excavated from Fangmatan Tomb 1 (3rd cent. BCE) and Mawangdui Tomb 3 (2nd cent. BCE), on which see Tan Qixiang (1975), Yee (1994, 37–46), and Venture (2014).

⁵ For excellent modern Chinese studies already exist on the topographical issues of the standard history geographical treatises, see the *Zhengshi dili zhi huishi congkan* 正史地理志匯釋叢刊 series, edited by Tan Qixiang. On the geographical treatises themselves, see Dorofeeva-Lichtmann (2001).

⁶ Mathieu (1982, 130–144).

the *Shuijing zhu* and in later encyclopaedia and compendia, such as the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 and *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, but a reconstruction of its genre has yet to be done. Before turning to the standard history treatises, therefore, let us not forget all the contemporary geographical writing that has been lost—texts that the historian likely read and expected his reader to know. Of the 138 geographical titles (*dili ji* 地理記) in 1432 *juan* in the *Sui shu* ‘Jingji zhi’ 經籍志, for example, only 6 in 106 *juan* are still extant (with minor losses); half of them (73) are fragmentary, and 59 have been lost.⁷

Bibliographic treatises like the ‘Jingji zhi’ remind us of this loss, but the standard histories also act to preserve quite a bit on the topic of space and its representation. There are the ‘geographical treatises’, to which we are coming, but space is also at the forefront of those treatises on the economy (*shihuo* 食貨), ‘heavenly patterns’ (*tianwen* 天文), and the five phases (*wuxing* 五行), as well as in the primary annals (*benji* 本紀) and the ‘biographies’ (*zhuan* 傳) devoted to ethnographic notes on foreign peoples. The bibliographical treatises, moreover, do tell us something about what contemporary scholars might have been reading. Out of the *Sui* catalogue’s 138 geographical titles, for example, we find approximately 50 dealing with local or regional geography (prefectures and regions), which we know, under the *Sui*, to have become a source of inspiration for officially sponsored books, e.g. the ‘Map-classics’ (*tujing* 圖經).⁸ The conclusion to the *Sui shu* ‘Jingji zhi’, lastly, appears helpful to our understanding of their position in the history of geographical writing:

周則夏官司險，掌建九州之圖，周知山林川澤之阻，達其道路。地官誦訓，掌方志以詔觀事，以知地俗... 周知利害，辨九州之國，使同其貫...

During the Zhou 周 (1045–256 BCE), the agents of the Ministry of Summer (in charge of war and the military), were in charge of the difficult task of mapping the Nine Regions of the world, for they knew well the obstacles posed by mountains and forests, rivers and marshes, and they managed to make these routes accessible. The Guide-Instructor to the King (who escorts the King’s travels and must learn about the history and customs of the countries they visit) under the Ministry of Finance directed local monographs in order to distinguish between actions and know the local customs. ... They all had to know the advantages and disadvantages of the earth, be able to distinguish the countries of the Nine Regions, and their profitable items. ...

武帝時，計書既上太史，郡國地志，固亦在焉... 丞相張禹使屬朱貢條記風俗，班固因之作地理志。其州國郡縣山川夷險時俗之異... 是後載筆之士，管窺末學，不能及遠，但記州郡之名而已...

Under [Han] Wudi 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE), the annual records on the activities of the prefectures and principalities that were sent to the court were submitted to the Grand Clerk (*taishi* 太史), a practice that carries on to our day. ... Chancellor Zhang Yu 張禹 (d. 5 BCE) sent his delegate to the provinces Zhu Gong 朱貢⁹ to collect the facts regarding local customs. Ban Gu took this as an inspiration to write his geographical treatise when discussing the differences between customs, plains and slopes, mountains and rivers, districts, prefectures and principalities, territorial boundaries, and local products. ... Later historians had limited and superficial knowledge of these things; they were unable to record data from places afar, and restricted themselves to recording choronyms.¹⁰ ...

今任、陸二家所記之內而又別行者，各錄在其書之上，自餘次之於下，以備地理之記焉。

⁷ *Sui shu*, 33.982–987. These numbers aside, note that more ‘geographical’ texts can be found in other subsections of the *Sui shu* ‘Jingji zhi’. For a partial overview of the fragmentary geographical texts compiled up until the Tang, see *Han Tang dili shuchao* and Liu Weiyi (1997). On the use of the *Sui shu* ‘Jingji zhi’, see Felt (2014, 56–59).

⁸ Chittick (2003, 37).

⁹ Note that the name Zhu Gong appears earlier in *Han shu*, 28B.1639–1640, written Zhu Gong 硃贛, but clearly referring to the same person (see also the translation in Section 11.5 below), I choose here to render Zhu Gong 贛 in lieu of Gong 貢.

¹⁰ By ‘choronym’, I mean spatial unit names of a larger scope than mere cities: regions, provinces, countries, etc.

Thus one can find first the content of the books recorded by Ren [Fang] 任昉 (460–508) and Lu [Cheng] 陸澄 (425–494) as well as other travelogues. The other texts are included after those. This makes a complete list of geographical texts.¹¹

These lines tell us something of the sort of data collection that made its way, if indirectly, into a ‘Geographical Treatise’. Another striking feature here, as we shall see, is the discrepancy between such treatises and the broader genre of geographical writing from which they draw. From a standard history treatise on the subject one might expect the political vision of a unified realm translated in geographical terms—a comprehensive and coherent treatment of a unilateral empire. If anything, however, it is a strong sense of *regionalism* that emerges from a close examination of the *Sui shu*’s descriptions of the nine provinces. It is an emphasis on the *regional* and *local writings*, moreover, that we see in the bibliographical treatise’s list of geographical works.

Turning finally to the ‘Geographical Treatise’ itself, one notes that, from the Han dynasty on, 17 of the 24 standard histories contain such a treatise, be it entitled *dili* 地理 (‘ordering/structure of the earth’), *dixing* 地形 (‘forms of the earth’), *junguo* 郡國 (‘prefectures and kingdoms’), *zhoujun* 州郡 (‘provinces and prefectures’), or *junxian* 郡縣 (‘prefectures and districts’). The more standard title, *dili* or *dixing*, clearly evokes *tianwen* ‘heavenly patterns’, geography being the terrestrial counterpart—the chthonic translation—of the celestial order (see Chapter 7). Not only is geography a matter of ‘order’ (*li*), it is a matter of ‘ordering’ the various features of the earth (soil, mountains, rivers) to make it liveable and productive for the government and population alike. When at war, one must know the land to turn it against one’s enemy. When at peace, one must know how to exploit it so as to turn it into riches. Following this kind of description, first found in the ‘Yu gong’, the treatises supply the necessary details as mostly gathered through ‘fieldwork’.

The typical ‘Geographical Treatise’ is composed of an introduction, a body gathering demographical data and a record of the administrative units of the empire (provinces, prefectures, and districts), and a personal statement from a historical perspective similar to that of the annals and biographies. The focus of such a treatise, of course, is not only people or human events but *institutions* (the same as those on rites, administration, law, astronomy, etc.), and the treatise genre, in a way, allows a stronger authorial voice than in the annals.¹² That said, the geographical treatises are mostly descriptive, introducing communication and transportation networks (canals, roads, and byways) and the establishment of people throughout the empire. This emphasis on the economic aspects of geography is linked to territorial domination, and it explains why these treatises differ in their representations of space from the more ancient texts that they frequently cite (like the ‘Yu gong’ and *Shanhai jing*). As such, they give us a useful window into the distribution of wealth and people (mostly peasants) across the Chinese territory. It is from these treatises, for example, that we know the population to have been between 50 and 60 million under the Qin 秦 (221–206 BCE) and 48 million in 741, shortly before the rebellion of An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757).¹³ Despite the lack of maps, lastly, the list of toponyms and natural and administrative boundaries therein provide a valuable source for reflecting upon contemporary methods of spatial representation.¹⁴

Ever since Sima Qian, the ‘Geographical Treatise’ had been a standard feature of a ‘standard history’. The fact of territorial unification, i.e. the constitution and interconnection of a physical geography, would indeed seem to necessitate a commensurate textual constitution to illustrate the economic, social, and political reality of a young empire. Whatever the use of such a treatise

¹¹ *Sui shu*, 33.987–988.

¹² Mansvelt Beck (1990, 37).

¹³ *Jiu Tang shu*, 38.1393.

¹⁴ On the exploitation of similar texts for geographical data in Early Medieval Europe, see Gautier Dalché (1990, 9).

when governing an oikoumene hardly larger than the Yellow River basin,¹⁵ when, as in the case of the Qin, one unifies a territory of more than 3 million km²—15 times the size of the 200 000 km² Qin kingdom—it seems, by contrast, rather worth writing about.¹⁶ The prototype of the ‘Geographical Treatise’ was established by Sima Qian, the ‘first Chinese historian’, along with the model of the annals-treatise-biography form. His ‘Hequ shu’ 河渠書 (‘Text’ or ‘Document on the [Yellow] River and [its] Canals’), however, focuses solely on hydrography, and it does not cover the entire empire. The first true ‘treatise’ (*zhi* 志) on ‘the organisation of the earth’ (*dili*), albeit inspired by Zhu Gong, is thus that in Ban Gu’s *Han shu*. This distinction is important, because Ban Gu actually follows up the ‘Hequ shu’ in a separate chapter—the ‘Gouxu zhi’ 溝洫志 (Treatise on Irrigation Canals), which comes *after* the ‘Dili zhi’. The change of title from *shu* 書 (‘text’ or ‘document’) to *zhi* (‘treatise’) is likewise important, because a *zhi* on ‘the Organisation of the Earth’, rather than a *shu*, implies an empirical scope grounded in facts rather than a venue for theoretical abstractions.¹⁷ This ‘Dili zhi’, more importantly, is empire-wide.

No one treatise can be divorced from the greater context of the history for which it was written, and the political stability of the early Eastern Han and the input of Ban Gu’s knowledge are thus critical for understanding the *Han shu* ‘Dili zhi’. The geographical treatise stands as a human, natural and cultural work that is sifted through an administrative and economic geography logically implied by a compulsory universal order that stems from the Empire and the consequent division of land. In turn, this division influences the representation of space of the treatise, as well as that of the texts claiming a direct or indirect filiation with the geographical treatise.¹⁸ As we shall see, Ban Gu’s *Han shu*, in general, and in the specific themes analysed in the treatises, serves as an absolute model for later treatises.

11.3 Historiographical models

The *Han shu* ‘Dili zhi’ begins with an introduction, a historical foreword on geography, and two excerpts: one from the ‘Yu gong’, referring to the traditional ‘Nine Regions’ terrestrial model, and the other from the ‘Zhifang shi’ 職方氏 (Agents of Direction) entry of the *Zhouli* 周禮.¹⁹

後受禪於虞，為夏後氏。殷因於夏，亡所變改。周既克殷，監於二代而損益之，定官分職，改禹徐、梁二州合之於雍、青，分冀州之地以為幽、並。故『周官』有職方氏，掌天下之地，辯九州之國。Then, [Yu] received the imperial dignity from Shun, and founded the Xia 夏 dynasty. The Shang 商 (?–1046 BCE) inherited their system from the Xia, without changing it much. The Zhou overcame the Shang, and they modelled themselves on the prior two dynasties while adding to or subtracting from [their institutions], standardizing official posts and delegating responsibilities, merged Yu’s Xuzhou 徐州 and Liangzhou 梁州 into Yongzhou 雍州 and Qingzhou 青州, and cut the Jizhou 冀州 into Youzhou 幽州 and Bingzhou 並

¹⁵ See Maspero (1927) and Shaughnessy (1989).

¹⁶ Before Greece emerged as a global Empire under Alexander (356–323 BCE), for example, the geographical representation of space was not essential: in the previous system of city-states, a geography that would venture outside the immediate borders of each *polis* was considered superfluous, with the notable exception of maritime trade, an activity that required precise information and coordinates. A similar analysis can be given for the Roman Empire; see Nicolet and Gautier Dalché (1986, 158).

¹⁷ That being said, Sima Qian’s *shu* is not a theoretical work: as the postface of the ‘Hequ shu’ in *Shiji*, 29.1415, explains, his empirical enquiries into mapping the Chinese territory were only for the sake of compiling the information found in said treatise.

¹⁸ The historical information of the *Han shu* ‘Shihuo zhi’ 食貨志 (Treatise on Food and Money) is similarly strong, and, like many of Ban Gu’s treatises, it has played an archetypal role for quite a few subsequent standard histories; see Swann (1950) and Chapter 9.

¹⁹ On the content of the *Han shu* ‘Dili zhi’, see Zhou Zhenhe (2006).

州. That is the reason why the *Zhou[li]* contains a chapter dedicated to the ‘Agents of direction’, that are in charge of the land under heaven, and the management of the kingdoms within the Nine Regions.²⁰

Such is the description of the evolution of political geography and its management since high antiquity. It appears that Ban Gu feels it necessary to make explicit the filiation of his geography with the sage kings and ancient classics. More than simply paying his respects, Ban Gu invokes these hallowed exemplars, one might surmise, to lend to the legitimacy of his geography to set the stage for latter-day dynastic unity—a fragile and fledging thing coming on the heels of the aptly-named Warring States 戰國 (453–222 BCE).

Ban Gu proposes a history of the (Han-time) territory through the (sage-time) frame of the Nine Regions, providing a list, for each region, of mountains, waterways, populations, products, and the origin of the choronyms.²¹ This *data*, if you will, he furthermore splices with discussions on customs and spatial organisation (and it is here where the *Han shu* really establishes itself as a model for later treatises). After these lists, a second part delivers a historical analysis of the Han Empire as seen from the territorial organisation:

周爵五等，而土三等...漢興，因秦制度，崇恩德，行簡易，以撫海內。至武帝攘卻胡、越，開地斥境，南置交趾，北置朔方之州，兼徐、梁、幽、並、夏、周之制，改雍曰涼，改梁曰益，凡十三部，置刺史。先王之跡既遠，地名又數改易，是以采獲舊聞，考跡『詩』、『書』，推表山川，以綴『禹貢』、『周官』、『春秋』，下及戰國、秦、漢焉。

The Zhou instituted the five ranks of nobility, and the three degrees of subservience. ... Upon the founding of their dynasty, the Han continued the institutions of the Qin, [but] kindness and simplicity were favoured, which helped to maintain control within the [Four] Seas. Then [Han] Wudi chased the Hu 胡 and the Yue 越 away, he widened the borders of the country, established Jiaozhi 交趾 in the south and Shuofang 朔方 in the north; he annexed the provinces of Xuzhou, Liangzhou and Youzhou, adopted the system of the Xia and the Zhou, changed Yongzhou into Liangzhou, and Liangzhou into Yizhou, making a total of thirteen regions, and he created the title of inspector (*cishi* 刺史). The traces left by the ancient sovereigns are distant, and many toponyms have also changed; and so in order to gather information on this matter, one must consult old records and anthologies, such as the *Shijing* 詩經 and *Shangshu* 尚書; when it comes to mountains and rivers, one must read the ‘Yu gong’, *Zhou[li]*, and *Chunqiu* 春秋, all of which have been transmitted through the Warring States up to the Qin and Han.²²

These thirteen provinces (*zhou*) differ from those of the Zhou, and they correspond only to their greatest extent under Han Wudi, but the parallel, however forced, underlines the Han’s realisation of its Zhou heritage. This is a history of imperial expansion and domination, of course, but it is also an economic and geographical history of people and regions, Ban Gu explaining how climatic and geographical factors determine the character of the empire’s various peoples.

Namely, the *Han shu* follows this historical survey with a catalogue of place names—the largest part of the treatise, in volume—the basic unit of which is the prefecture (*jun* 郡). As this is a treatise on administrative geography, the official divisions of the land are political, and not physical.²³ The first part of this catalogue is a list of the 83 prefectures (*jun* 郡), 1314 districts (*xian* 縣), 32 circuits (*dao* 道), 241 marquisates (*hou* 侯), and the dimensions of the empire: 9302 *li* 里 from east to west, and 13 368 *li* from north to south.²⁴ The demographic data corresponds to the numbers (approximately 60 million people) collected during the census of 2 CE, and it reflects

²⁰ *Han shu*, 28A.1539.

²¹ Swann (1950, 71).

²² *Han shu*, 28A.1542–1543.

²³ Mansvelt Beck (1990, 176).

²⁴ *Han shu*, 28B.1640. Note that the unreliability of such measurements and the fact that Chinese measures have varied over time make it difficult to come up with a rough estimate of the dimensions of the Han Empire in modern units.

geographic distribution, the extent of occupied land, and its limits.²⁵ It is here where we are presented with different modalities of geographical knowledge: natural (more than 300 waterways, noting source, direction, length, and mouth; the positions of mountains and natural resources, etc.), human (capitals, administrative centres, census, and unassimilated peoples), ritual (temples, tombs, and other religious sites), economic (salt and iron industries, hydraulic works), and military (passes, dams, roads, evolution of the toponyms). However, the main function of this section lies in the transmission of the customs of the empire.

Moving on to geographical treatises written after the fall of the Han, let us turn to Fan Ye's *Hou Han shu*. Fan Ye, to be clear, did not write the *Hou Han shu* treatises, which were taken from Sima Biao's 司馬彪 (240–306) *Xu Han shu* 續漢書, and later added to the *Hou Han shu*. The *Xu Han shu*, in turn, Sima Biao compiled out of admiration for Ban Gu's work (and out of disdain for his contemporaries), intending his to be its successor and 'continuation' (*xu* 續). Not surprisingly, the *Hou Han shu* treatise cites and (partially) reproduces the model of the *Han shu* 'Dili zhi':²⁶

『漢書·地理志』記天下郡縣本末，及山川奇異，風俗所由，至矣。今但錄中興以來郡縣改異，及『春秋』、『三史』會同征伐地名，以為『郡國志』。凡前志有縣名，今所不載者，皆世祖所并省也。前無今有者，後所置也。凡縣名先書者，郡所治也。

The *Han shu* 'Dili zhi' records thoroughly and precisely all information dealing with the origin and the end of the districts and prefectures of the empire, as well as the special mountains and rivers, and the origins of the customs. In compiling the present 'Junguo zhi' (Treatise on Prefectures and Principalities), I shall only record the changes in districts and prefectures that have occurred since the Han restoration, and the information that can be found in the *Chunqiu* and the Three Histories.²⁷ Since all the previous treatises record the district names, I have not provided them in this treatise, as they were all removed by Guangwudi 光武帝 (r. 25–57 CE). What was not before and is now will remain after. All the names of districts that are mentioned in the previous treatises are the prefecture capitals.²⁸

The title has changed from 'Dili zhi' to 'Junguo zhi', but the contents devoted to each 'prefecture and principality' are essentially the same: date of establishment, distance from the capital, number of districts, villages, and households, graphic sites, mountains, rivers, forests, swamps, and potential traces of salt or iron. The *Hou Han shu* likewise begins with a list of geographical names, but, unlike the *Han shu* 'Dili zhi', it does not go into *history* as such, leaving out the 'Yu gong', climatology, and foreign peoples. Instead, after five *juan* dedicated to geographical names, it concludes with an afterword offering general statistics followed by a eulogy. Its sole nod to history, the final eulogy, mentions the establishment of Empire under the ancient sage kings and the Qin before it concludes with words on the passing of time.²⁹

In his study of the *Hou Han shu* treatises, Mansvelt Beck (1990, 270) notes of the 'Junguo zhi' that 'Later Han China is depicted at its greater extent, without regard for subsequent losses'. In other words, this vision of an empire larger than it really was is based on dimensions corresponding to its previous territorial apex in the Western Han 西漢 (206 BCE – 9 CE). Apart from some compulsory informative data, Mansvelt Beck concludes, the *Hou Han shu* treatise is not, like its predecessor, about regions and customs but merely the projection of imperial power. It is in the introduction, moreover, he concludes, that the explicit historiographical principles of the author lie, the implicit ones to be found in the text itself. This I agree with, but I think what matters here more than charges of anachronism in Sima Biao's 'Junguo zhi' is its *coherence*: that the image of

²⁵ See Bielenstein (1947).

²⁶ *Hou Han shu*, 109.3389.

²⁷ These are the *Shiji*, *Han shu*, and the *Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記, the latter of which was lost and replaced by the *Hou Han shu* under the Tang.

²⁸ *Hou Han shu*, 109.3385.

²⁹ See Mansvelt Beck (1990, 180–181, 194).

Empire is correct to the vision of the author and to the vision that he wants to convey to the reader.

The majority of standard histories to follow in and for the period of disunity do not include a ‘Geographical Treatise’: the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (3rd cent.), *Liang shu* 梁書 (636), *Chen shu* 陳書 (636), *Bei Qi shu* 北齊書 (636), *Zhou shu* 周書 (636), *Nan shi* 南史 (659), and *Bei shi* 北史 (659). It is the *Song shu* 宋書 (493) that picks up where the *Hou Han shu* treatise leaves off in the Three Kingdoms 三國 (220–280), and it is the *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 (537) and the *Wei shu* 魏書 (554) that pick up from there, for the south and north, respectively, the *Jin shu* (648) and *Sui shu* (656) treatises coming in later to fill out the the remaining details. It is thanks to these five standard histories that we have a more or less complete picture of the geography of the period prior to reunification. Thus, I shall briefly explain the context of the four geographical treatises that predate the *Sui shu* geographical treatise.

First, turning to the south, the *Song shu* ‘Junzhou zhi’ (Treatise on Regions and Prefectures) by Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) starts by presenting each region, which it follows with a list of prefectures and their respective histories. The introduction explains Shen Yue’s authorial intentions vis-à-vis geography and his methodology for the division of territory:

今志大較以大明八年為正，其後分派，隨事記列。內史、侯、相，則以升明末為定焉。地理參差，其詳難舉，實由名號驟易，境土屢分，或一郡一縣，割成四五；四五之中，亟有離合，千回百改，巧曆不算，尋校推求，未易精悉。今以班固、馬彪二志、太康元康定戶、王隱『地道』、晉世『起居』、『永初郡國』、何、徐『州郡』及地理雜書，互相考覆。

The present treatise takes [the situation] around the eighth year of the Daming 大明 era (464) as its standard [reference point], any subsequent [re]divisions being noted pursuant to [a given] event. [Matters of] provincial administrators, marquises, and magistrates are fixed however as per [the situation in] the last year of the Shengming 升明 era (479). The order of the earth (i.e. geography) differs [from one time to the next], the details of which are difficult to put together. In reality, appellations suddenly change, borders are frequently redrawn, sometimes a single prefecture or a single district is carved up into four or five, and these four or five are immediately split or joined. [And so it goes], a thousand times over, through hundreds of changes, such that even an expert of *li* 曆 (mathematical astronomy) could not keep count—it takes patient analysis, it is not easy to understand everything all at once. In the present [treatise], I [therefore] perform a comprehensive and comparative analysis of the Ban Gu and [Si]ma Biao treatise, the Taikang 太康 (280–289) and Yuankang 元康 (291–299) era censuses, Wang Yin’s [*Jin shu*] ‘Didao’ 地道 (Ways of the Earth), the Jin 晉 (265–420) *Qiju* 起居 (Journal of the Emperors), the *Yongchu junguo* 永初郡國 (Treatise on Prefectures and Principalities of the Yongchu (420–422) Era), He [Chengtian] 何承天 (370–447) and Xu [Yuan]’s 徐爰 (395–475) [original *Song shu*] ‘Zhoujun [zhi]’, as well as a variety of other geographical writings.

且三國無志，事出帝紀，雖立郡時見，而置縣不書。今唯以『續漢郡國』校『太康地志』，參伍異同，用相征驗。自漢至宋，郡縣無移改者，則注云「漢舊」，其有回徙，隨源甄別。若唯云「某無」者，則此前皆有也。若不注置立，史闕也。

Moreover, while the *Sanguo zhi* does not have treatises, such matters do appear in its imperial annals—one finds the date of the establishment of [various] prefectures, [at least], but not [the situation regarding] the establishment of districts. Here, I will simply use the [*Hou*] *Han shu* ‘Junguo [zhi]’ to collate the *Taikang dizhi* 太康地志 (Geographical treatise of the Taikang [Era]), deriving my evidence [of the aforementioned historical changes] from their discrepancies and similarities. Those prefectures and districts that were neither moved nor changed from the Han to [Liu-]Song 劉宋 (420–479) shall be noted as ‘the old Han [such-and-such]’—and for those that may have been changed and then changed back again [between the *Hou Han shu* and *Taikang dizhi*], I follow the original for the sake of differentiation. Where all it says is ‘such-and-such did not have’, on the other hand, this means that [said administrative unit] was established before that [time]. If there is no note about its establishment, however, it is due to the fact that they are missing in historical [records].³⁰

Shen Yue’s take on the matter of geography-writing is revelatory in a number of regards. First, Shen fills out our knowledge about the geographical sources from which he is working, many of

³⁰ *Song shu*, 35.1027–1028.

which are now lost, which helps us measure the genre's evolution between the Han and Tang. Second, he acknowledges the interrelation between history, political power, and geography: spatial control is power, and the administrative changes described here speak to the political instability he witnessed, and, as a southerner, he logically dismisses the northern rulers as illegitimate.

In the *Nan Qi shu* 'Zhoujun zhi' of 537, Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489–537) follows the *Song shu* in both name and contents, his treatise, half as long (two *juan* vs four), consisting of a bare enumeration of administrative units, followed by a eulogy. Whereas the *Song shu* limits itself to territories controlled by the southern court, however, the *Nan Qi shu* treatise presents a global geography of China as if every region from north to south belonged to the same empire.

This, in turn, may have provided the model for Wei Shou 魏收 (507–572), writing several decades later in the north. In the *Wei shu*, by showing how he treats the provinces beyond the Yangzi, Wei Shou likewise stresses the legitimacy of his northern dynasty over the south, portraying the Tuoba-Wei 拓跋魏 (386–535) as the unifiers of the realm. Sporting a new title—'Dixing zhi' (Treatise on the Forms of the Earth)—the *Wei shu* geographical treatise furthermore earns a new place (along with the other treatises) *after* the biographies, and it introduces each region with detailed population numbers for each prefecture.

This, and more justifiably so, is also the model that finds itself perpetuated in the *Jin shu* 'Dili zhi', the Jin having restored, in the first few decades of their history, the more or less full extent of the Han territories. It is *this* the Empire that the *Jin shu* commemorates in its historical presentation of districts and prefectures, opening with a rich historical introduction harkening back, once again, to the *Shangshu*, *Shiji*, and *Han shu*.

Admittedly, each of these treatises has its own scope and its own approach to the topic of geography, but they are all variations upon (and reactions to) the model established by the *Han shu*. We can see this in the way that the Six Dynasties 六朝 (220–589) treatises waffle between global geographies of the (former) empire and those of their own rather limited territories. We can see this also in the return to and the insistence upon the importance of characterology, customs, and local products, repeated in the *Sui shu* 'Dili zhi', and the necessity of their unification (*fengsu yiyi* 風俗以一).

11.4 The *Sui shu* Treatise and History, Geography, and Administration under the Tang

The Tang presided over the reunification of the lands of the empire; the context of geographical writing is different, and we are speaking once again of a continental-scale space. The territory under Tang control was not as vast as that of the Han (approximately 5 versus 6 million km²), but the dimensions are of the same nature.³¹ The Sui, by contrast, failed to recover the areas corresponding to modern Yunnan (which would become Nanzhao 南詔 in the 8th century), Liaodong and North Korea (Koguryō 高句麗), but they claimed modern Zhejiang and Fujian, and consolidated their control of modern Gansu, before the Tang conquered the Tuyuhun. This new empire—the Tang—was organised administratively and geographically through new divisions befitting its new dimensions and befitting also the need to turn the page on the period of disunion from which it arose. The borders were consolidated, new territories were mapped, and the southern populations were slowly but steadily integrated. The demographic centre of the empire progressively shifted towards the south, and, by the tenth century, more than half of the Chinese population was living south of the Yangzi in what was to become the economic and cultural centre of the empire.³²

³¹ Twitchett and Wright (1973); cf. Loewe (2006, 197–200).

³² Holcombe (2004) argues that the Sui–Tang conquest of the south was successful because of the south's longing for reunification—a longing sometimes felt stronger than in the north.

The Tang's efforts towards unification were not limited to space alone: they extended also to *time* via the establishment of an Office of History (Shiguan 史館). It is the Tang that we have to thank for the bureaucratisation of history in China, but like the empire itself, the project of unity was to bring different voices into harmony.³³ Treatises and locality writings alike saw wide circulation among the literati, granting them access to a vast array of conflicting sources.³⁴ Among the 'standard histories', the first four were personal creations, and those written during the period of division were understandably *divisive*, so the promise of a centralised Office of History was, one might say, to ensure the 'neutrality' of historiography.³⁵ Projects like the *Jin shu* were indeed designed to bring northern and southern scholars together, at the same table, to work out their differences through collaboration.³⁶ As a result, interest in anecdote, personal feats, and 'pure conversation' (*qingtan* 清談), prevalent in the time of clanic rivalries, gave way to a focus on establishing intersubjective, committee-determined fact. The true turning point in the geographical writing of this era remains the development of local treatises, which fed into the officially sponsored histories, but the latter are no less interesting for what they represent.

Namely, and especially upon their inclusion into the civil service examinations, standard history treatises like the *Sui shu* 'Dili zhi' represented source books of theoretical and practical examples of good government for use by future Tang officials. And in this respect, the *Sui shu* played a somewhat unlikely role. Compared with other histories of the genre, the *Sui shu* devotes a disproportionate amount of space to its treatises over the 'Basic annals' (*benji* 本紀) and 'Individual Biographies' (*liezhuan* 列傳). The reason for this is somewhat accidental: what began as a separate, more global project covering the 'Five Dynasties' 五代 (502–618) was later integrated into the history of the last of the five (Chapter 2). The Sui was a short-lived dynasty—three emperors in less than thirty years—but after more than a century without, the treatises of the *Sui shu* were prime material for Tang civil servants.³⁷

The three *juan* of the *Sui shu* geographical treatise form a rather homogenous ensemble that lists all the prefectures of the empire and the evolution of their names. In terms of contents, this list of administrative units presents the number of households at the prefectural level and serves as a tool to apprehend the distribution and the density of the population on the land. It follows a general historical introduction and precedes concluding remarks on regions that are mostly ethnographic. In terms of structure, the treatise recreates the division of space into the nine regions originating in the 'Yu gong' and the *Han shu*'s adaptation thereof—a division that was abandoned until the compilation of the *Sui shu* and re-abandoned immediately thereafter. Apart from the symbolic and authoritative value of returning to the 'Yu gong' (via the *Han shu*), this regional division highlights the *character* of peoples from the larger regions of the empire, the description of each region focusing on the specific nature of the individuals that populate it.³⁸ Though each was assigned an administrator—a 'regional inspector' (*cishi* 刺史)—these regions are cultural (and somehow social) entities rather than administrative ones.

Most of the treatise is devoted to raw administrative information, as is clear from a glance through the Appendix, but the introduction and concluding remarks to individual sections deal with other matters. If one follows the general chronology of the introduction, one obtains, in a

³³ Twitchett (2002, 3–4).

³⁴ In the words of Chittick (2003, 37), 'Both kinds of private historical writing naturally exchanged a substantial amount of material with officially sponsored works, but local writing only saw systematic administrative oversight and a correspondingly narrower generic range in the late sixth century, when the Sui government mandated the regular compilation of local works called *tujing* 圖經, or "map classics".'

³⁵ François Martin, personal communication (September 2012).

³⁶ Chaussende (2010, 87).

³⁷ See Des Rotours (1932, 150).

³⁸ These aspects are ignored in the *Jiu Tang shu* but reappear in the *Xin Tang shu*; therefore, the *Sui shu* treatise is a compromise between the dryness of the former one and the abundance of the latter.

linear reading of the text and a traditional sequence of periods.³⁹ However, a reading of the following excerpts taken from the general introduction gives the sense of a constructed chronology that tends to explain in terms other than political the occupation of the land, the conquest of new territories, and the government of the land and the people.

11.4.1 The *Sui shu* ‘Dili zhi’ Introduction: Structure and Models

The general introduction to the *Sui shu* geographical treatise (*Sui shu*, 29.806–808) is very much focused on the administrative division of contemporary ‘prefectures and districts’ (*junxian* 郡縣) and its evolution over the Northern and Southern Dynasties. It starts, however, back in the time of the Sage Kings, to whom it traces the heavenly-ordained origins of the ordering and representation of space:

自古聖王之受命也，莫不體國經野以為人極。上應躔次，下裂山河，分疆畫界，建都錫社。是以放勳御曆，修職貢者九州。文命會同，執玉帛者萬國。泊乎殷遷夏鼎，周黜殷命，雖質文之用不同，損益之途或革，而封建之制，率由舊章。於是分土惟三，列爵惟五，千里以制畿甸，九服以別要荒。十國為連，連有帥，倍連為卒，卒有正。皆所以式固鴻基，蕃屏王室，興邦致化，康俗庇人者歟！

Since the sage kings of antiquity received their Mandates, all [those in their wake] have demarcated cities and surveyed fields to serve as the [sovereign] pole of man.⁴⁰ Above, [they] followed the steps and stations,⁴¹ below [they] divided mountains and rivers, allotting lands and drawing borders, establishing capitals and conferring appanages. That is how [Yao] assumed his term by radiant merit, and [why] the Nine Regions restored their service and tribute; [it is how Yu] summoned together by civilised decree, and [why] the Myriad Kingdoms came bearing jade and silk. And then the Yin 殷 (i.e. Shang 商) moved the tripod of the Xia 夏, and the Zhou 周 took the mandate of the Yin; and though their use of substance and pattern had differed, and though their roads to profit and loss sometimes varied, their system of demarcation and establishment (of lands) followed from the olden institutions. Thereby, the divisions of land were three, and the ranks of nobility were five; the royal lands were set at a thousand *li*, and the Nine zones established in order to separate them from the heartlands and wilds. Ten cities made a league (*lian* 連), and the league had a commandant; two leagues made a company (*zu* 卒), and the company had a chief. All of these are the ways by which [they] modelled and solidified the vast foundation and fenced and screened the royal house, [how they] raised the state to grant salvation and healed its customs to protect the people!⁴²

Like the *Han shu*, we open here with the story of the world’s division into symbolic provinces (*zhou* 州) and the efforts of Yu the Great to secure tribute therefrom. This is a ‘Geographical Treatise’, so the story of Yu focuses on his geographical exploits rather than matters of flood control, and the opening will justify the treatise’s resurrection of the nine-province structure of the ‘Yu gong’–*Han shu* model. It is upon this incipient, sage-revealed ‘organisation of the earth’, the introduction affirms, that the very foundation of the empire’s economic and cultural prosperity is built.

The introduction goes on from there through the historical evolution of Yu’s dominion as fractured, contested, reunited, and lost, again and again, up to the author’s day. Seeing as how the

³⁹ Namely, and in chronological order, the Sage kings Yao and Yu, the Zhou, the Springs and Autumns, the Warring States, the Qin, Han, Three Kingdoms, Western Jin, Sixteen kingdoms, Eastern Jin, Liu Song, Qi, Liang, Chen (and the Tuoba Wei, Northern Qi and Zhou for the North).

⁴⁰ This line is referencing the *Zhouli zhushu*, 1.11, which describes the establishment of the royal domain as beginning by ‘differentiating the directions and correcting the positions, demarcating the cities and surveying the fields, establishing offices and distinguishing functions, to serve as the [sovereign] pole of the people’ 辨方正位，體國經野，設官分職，以為民極。

⁴¹ The ‘steps’ (*chan* 躔) and ‘stations’ (*ci* 次) refer to the sun’s position and seasonal travel-posts over its yearly journey through the stars. The juxtaposition of celestial and terrestrial divisions here is to invoke the theory of ‘field allocation’ (*fenyue* 分野), by which the ‘geography’ of heaven and earth were theorised to correspond; see Pankenier (1999), Pankenier (2005), and Pankenier (2013).

⁴² *Sui shu*, 29.806.

histories mentioned in Section 11.3 treat the various dynasties from 221 BCE – 502 CE, one of the main contributions of the *Sui shu* treatise's introduction is to give a voice to the histories of those that came after:

梁武帝除暴寧亂，奄有舊吳，天監十年，有州二十三，郡三百五十，縣千二十二。其後務恢境宇，頻事經略，開拓閩越，克復淮浦，平俚洞，破牂柯，又以舊州遐闊，多有析置。大同年中，州一百七，郡縣亦稱於此。既而侯景構禍，臺城淪陷，墳籍散逸，注記無遺，郡縣戶口，不能詳究。

Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) crushed the outbursts of violence, he pacified this chaos and regained the ancient territory of Wu 吳, the tenth year of the Tianjian 天監 (512, Emperor's control over the territory) era, the regions totalled 23, the prefectures 350, and the districts 1022. He then reclaimed the rest of the empire, and set a plan to take control over the territory of the Min 閩 and the Yue, he reclaimed the territory around the Huai River, pacified the grottoes of the Li 俚 people, and broke the Zangke 牂柯. As the distance between the most ancient regions was too vast, he divided them. In the middle of the Datong 大同 era (540), there were a total of 107 regions, and the prefectures and districts evolved in the same fashion. Shortly after Hou Jing 侯景 (d. 552) rebelled and provoked chaos, the imperial palace was sacked, the ancient classics as well as the contemporary archives were scattered and lost, and we cannot give precise information on the matter of population in the prefectures and districts.

逮于陳氏，土宇彌蹙，西亡蜀、漢，北喪淮、肥，威力所加，不出荆、揚之域。州有四十二，郡唯一百九，縣四百三十八，戶六十萬。

Under the Chen 陳 (557–589), the territory had shrunk even more: to the West, Shu 蜀 and Han 漢 were lost, to the North, Huai 淮 and Fei 肥. The military forces could not pass the areas of Jingzhou 荊州 and Yangzhou 揚州. There were 42 provinces, only 109 prefectures, 438 districts and 600 000 households.

後齊承魏末喪亂，與周人抗衡，雖開拓淮南，而郡縣僻小。天保之末，總加併省，洎乎國滅，州九十有七，郡一百六十，縣三百六十五，戶三百三萬。

The Later Qi 後齊 (550–577) inherited the last chaotic years of the Wei. They fought the people of the [Northern] Zhou 北周 (557–581), and even though they managed to expand their territory south of the Huai, the number of prefectures and districts under their control diminished. At the end of the Tianbao 天保 era (559), the number of provinces was increased through division, and until the country collapsed, there were 97 provinces, 163 prefectures, 365 districts and 3 300 000 households.⁴³

Prior to getting to the Liang, however, the introduction focuses on the classic historiographical approach of 'praise and blame' (*baobian* 褒貶), outlining the reasons for earlier dynasties' successes and failures. As a mirror to the current situation of the Sui and Tang period, for example, the text attributes the short-lived victory of the Qin (= Sui) to their topographical advantage and art of war, which, over Qin Shishuang's reign, failed to transition into the art of *government*. And so, 'when he died the world collapsed; his son inherited the power, and the country was destroyed'.⁴⁴

The longevity of the Han (= Tang), the introduction explains, lied in the administrative reorganisation they oversaw. First, the introduction tells us that a military geography of conquest is not sufficient to govern; second, we read that the ideal model would be one that could work on an orderly administrative organisation—one in harmony with the natural order, sparing some expansionist wishes through the conquests of Emperor Wu, and promoting agriculture. The result is population growth, an obvious sign of prosperity:

漢高祖挺神武之宏圖，掃清禍亂，矯秦皇之失策，封建王侯，並跨州連邑，有踰古典，而郡縣之制，無改於秦。逮于孝武，務勤遠略，南兼百越，東定三韓。通邛、笮之險塗，斷匈奴之右臂，雖聲教遠洎，而人亦勞止。昭宣之後，罷戰務農，戶口既其滋多郡縣亦有增置。至于平帝，郡國一百有三戶一千二百二十三萬。

⁴³ *Sui shu*, 29.807.

⁴⁴ 身沒而區宇幅裂，及子而社稷淪胥, *Sui shu*, 29.806.

Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BCE) swept away the cause of disasters; he repaired the errors of Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 (r. 221–211 BCE). He reinstated the system of fiefdom for princes and marquises, widened the perimeter of the regions, and linked the feudal states together. He went beyond ancient limitations. Only the prefecture and district system inherited from the Qin was not modified. Xiaowu[di] set a brilliant plan for the future: in the south, he unified the Hundred Yue 越, and in the east he quelled the Three Han 三韓; he pierced the perilous roads of the Qiong 邛 and Zuo 笮, and he shattered the right arm of the Xiongnu 匈奴. Although his prestige had infiltrated and educated people afar, the population was still poor. After the reigns of Zhao[di] 昭帝 (r. 86–74 BCE) and Xuan[di] 宣帝 (r. 73–49 BCE), wars were ended and agriculture was encouraged, so that in the end the number of inhabitants and of counties and prefectures increased. During the reign of Pingdi 平帝 (r. 1 BCE – 5 CE), the number of prefectures and principalities reached 303, with 230 000 households.⁴⁵

Up until the late medieval period, the Central Plain was considered to be the historical core of the empire. As soon as it was lost, the following dynasties, even the ‘legitimate’ southern courts, were not fully recognised until the Central Plain was recovered. The Plain was the condition and first step on the road to conquest for any aspiring dynasty:

有晉太康之後，文軌方同，大抵編戶二百六十餘萬。尋而五胡逆亂，二帝播遷，東晉泊于宋齊，僻陋江左，苻、姚之與劉、石，竊據中原，事跡糾紛，難可具紀。

After the Taikang era of the Jin (280–290), roads and writings were unified, and the population amounted approximately 2 600 000 households. Shortly after, the Five barbarians rebelled and the two emperors [Huai 懷 (r. 306–311) and Min 愍 (r. 313–316)] fled.⁴⁶ From the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420) to the [Liu-]Song and [Southern] Qi 南齊 (479–502), dynasties had to govern the rough and distant Jiangnan 江南, while the clans of Fu 苻 (Former Qin), Yao 姚 (Later Qin), together with the Liu 劉 (Former Zhao) and Shi 石 (Later Zhao) occupied the Central Plain as usurpers. Their legacy is inextricably complex, and it is very difficult to give its details.⁴⁷

Moving into the period of disunity, one notes that the introduction treats the south before the north, reunification coming later, by northern hands. In this vein, the author presents a rather positive vision of the Northern Zhou 北周 (557–581) as preparing the way for the ultimate conquests of the Sui. The Sui, in turn, are presented as natural restorers who renewed the administration:

周氏初有關中，百度草創，遂乃訓兵教戰，務穀勸農，南清江、漢，西兼巴、蜀，卒能以寡擊眾，戡定強鄰。及于東夏削平，多有省廢。大象二年，通計州二百一十一，郡五百八，縣一千一百二十四。

At first, the house of the Northern Zhou controlled the area within the pass. They began to establish the various institutions and thereupon trained their troops in warfare, grain was planted and agriculture was encouraged; in the south, the Middle Yangzi and Han River were pacified, and in the West, Ba 巴 and Shu were annexed. Although outnumbered, the soldiers managed to overthrow more important armies, and defeated powerful neighbours. When they finally controlled the eastern half of North China, numerous administrative units had been abolished. During the second year of the Daxiang 大象 era (580), there were a total of 211 provinces, 508 prefectures and 1124 districts.⁴⁸

Because the Sui reunified the Chinese realm, the three *juan* of the geographical treatise form a homogenous whole that recounts all the prefectures of the empire together with the evolution of their toponyms. The treatise also contains information on economic history, communication networks, etc. Beside the secular reference to the ‘Yu gong’, the regional division of space enables an approach of the populations of the empire via their regional characteristics.

⁴⁵ *Sui shu*, 29.806.

⁴⁶ They were actually exiled and Huai was executed in 313.

⁴⁷ *Sui shu*, 29.807.

⁴⁸ *Sui shu*, 29.807.

The ‘Yu gong’ set for ages the distinction between the inner and outer realm. This distinction greatly influenced geographical treatises and marked contemporary imaginings of the Chinese realm, which should spread across the Nine Regions. In reality, it did not, and the gap between this vision and the actual distribution and allegiance of Chinese peoples, if anything, only reinforced the canonisation of the ‘Yu gong’. Are *any* of these regions part of the Chinese realm? They are, so long one defines that realm by the borders established by the ‘Yu gong’, whatever the actual reach of the current dynasty into the empire’s margins. This cognitive dissonance is even more striking when we examine the geographical treatises of the *Wei shu* and *Nan Qi shu*: histories of dynasties that ruled *parts* of the realm and whose treatises recount provinces far beyond their respective reaches.

11.4.2 The *Sui shu* ‘Dili zhi’ Concluding Remarks: Centre vs Peripheries

Like the general introduction, the concluding remarks on individual body entries act to place the spatial aspects of the regional descriptions in a historical context, at the core of which is the relationship between the centre and its peripheries.⁴⁹ Four centuries of Han political unity was not enough to erase the regionalism of the Springs and Autumns 春秋 (722–481 BCE) and Warring States, and regionalism continued to be a permanent feature of the Chinese world long thereafter.

The concluding remarks of the geographical treatise are to be taken through a North-South dichotomy: the regional breakdown reinforces the focus on the regions and the customs of their peoples in order to inform and prepare the civil servant or the military official about to be sent. The Northern and Central regions are generally treated in much shorter paragraphs, such as the one on Xuzhou, a region delineated by Mount Tai, the Huai River and the Yellow Sea and which roughly corresponds to modern Shandong:

『禹貢』：「海、岱及淮惟徐州」。彭城、魯郡、琅邪、東海、下邳，得其地焉。在於天文，自奎五度至胃六度，為降婁，於辰在戌。其在列國，則楚宋及魯之交。考其舊俗，人頗勁悍輕剽，其士子則挾任節氣，好尚賓遊，此蓋楚之風焉。大抵徐、兗同俗，故其餘諸郡，皆得齊魯之所尚。莫不賤商賈，務稼穡，尊儒慕學，得洙泗之俗焉。

The ‘Yu gong’ says: ‘Xuzhou is located between the Ocean, Mount Tai, and the Huai River’. It is the land of Pengcheng 彭城, Lujun 魯郡, Langya 琅邪, Donghai 東海, and Xiapi 下邳. In terms of the heavenly patterns (*tianwen* 天文), [the region’s corresponding celestial zone] runs from Straddler.L15 (Kui 奎, ζ And) 5 *du* to Stomach.L17 (Wei 胃, 35 Ari) 6 *du*, which constitutes [the Jovian station] Jianglou 降婁, or *xu*.B11 in terms of the chronograms.⁵⁰ At the times of the principalities, it was between Chu 楚, Song 宋, and Lu 魯. According to their ancient customs, the people are brave and fearless, and scholars are honest and are keen to adventure; this is similar to what prevailed in Chu. Generally speaking, Xuzhou and Yanzhou [provinces] share the same values, hence influencing those of the people in Qi 齊 and Lu. They despise trade and enjoy farming, they praise Confucianism and learning, and are inspired by [the Confucians school of] the rivers Zhu 洙 and Si 泗.⁵¹

As this brief passage shows, the concluding remarks dealing with the ‘Central’ provinces (i.e. the traditional Central States) are shorter: Xuzhou totals some 122 characters, whereas Jingzhou contains approximately 785. The information provided by the historian is not very relevant in this context, because it is already known by the expected reader. Instead, one seeks information on the less-known peripheral regions that are usually less controlled. Those entries provide us with

⁴⁹ For instance, urban issues are not addressed. Thus, Liu Zhiji advocated in the *Shitong* for treatises specifically focused on capitals, which are mostly absent of the geographical treatise, despite their spatial importance as the centre of the Chinese realm (Chaussende 2014, 61–62).

⁵⁰ On the ‘field allocation’ theory of the correspondence of such celestial and terrestrial zones, see Note 41.

⁵¹ *Sui shu*, 31.872–873.

important information on the extent of the historian's fieldwork and literature at hand (what is known to him) and his geographical thought (what he seeks to express).

<Map 11.1>

Let us turn in the remainder of this chapter to the peripheries, especially those of the Yangzi River area, particularly as treated in the treatise's concluding remarks. As we shall see, the importance allocated to Chinese customs as a discriminant criterion between (to remain schematic) the Chinese centre and the barbaric peripheries varies in the geographical treatise, because the stages of integration into the empire are different. The regional characterology previously evoked constitutes the main feature of the treatise's concluding remarks and their sketching of ethnographic portraits of the people living on the margins of the empire. Even though the Southern regions officially belonged to that empire, they actually are the territory of the Southern Lao 南獠, the Southern Yue 南越, the proto-Tibetan Qiang 羌, and, especially, the Man 蠻.⁵²

More specifically, I wish to focus on the Liangzhou, Jingzhou and Yangzhou populations as it is upon them and their customs that the geographical treatise goes into the greatest detail. This fact may seem odd given that these regions are not included in the demographic statistics of the geographical treatise. Indeed, these populations are not counted in the census of the Chinese population because they are not considered Chinese. This is a clear sign of the paradoxical importance that is given to autochthonous peoples: the official form of the geographical treatise *includes them*, by obviously necessity, but it affords them space only in the concluding remarks on a given region, as a sort of curious footnote to a Chinese world.

11.5 Customs and Regions

The paradox is this. Officials need information about the people they are to govern, and 'barbarians', administratively speaking, are part of the territory under their jurisdiction, particularly as that jurisdiction has expanded in the wake of unification. The idea of Empire is based on land. There can be no Empire without land, nor can the people of that land be other than of the Empire, whatever the geocultural acrobatics and historical revisionism that that requires. A people like the Man, therefore, are at once barbarian and Chinese, and this disturbing, liminal status is why the concluding remarks insist on the *integration*. In the meantime, however, they are not part of the Chinese census, and remain for that reason another category, different from the regular subjects of the empire, and different even from foreigners belonging to kingdoms or more definable tribes and polities.

But what real difference is there between the peoples of the centre and peripheries? The following examples on the treatment of customs in the *Sui shu* helps put it into more concrete terms. Here, to begin, is how the bibliographic treatise frames the subject of geography:

昔者先王之化民也，以五方土地，風氣所生，剛柔輕重，飲食衣服，各有其性，不可遷變。是故疆理天下，物其土宜，知其利害，達其志而通其欲，齊其政而修其教。故曰廣谷大川異制，人居其間異俗。書錄禹別九州，定其山川，分其圻界，條其物產，辨其貢賦，斯之謂也。

Long ago, the education of the people by the ancient kings was based on the winds and the airs that are born on the land within the Five Directions, some of which are firm, soft, heavy, or light. [The inhabitants] have their own food, clothing, and their own nature that [the ancient kings] could not change. So was the world delineated, the proprieties observed, the advantages and disadvantages known, aspirations were attained and desires penetrated, the administration put in order and the teachings corrected. That is why it is said [in the *Liji*

⁵² The ethnonym 'Man' may refer to the Southern barbarians in general ('South' running from the outskirts of Luoyang to modern Vietnam) or to autochthonous tribes from the southern hills and rivers scattered in the Middle Yangzi area.

‘Wang zhi’ 王制]: ‘the forms and structures of larges valleys and great rivers are not same, so the customs of the people who populate them are different’. The *Shangshu* recorded Yu the Great’s division of the Nine Regions, how he fixed the mountains and the rivers, separated the borders, ordered the different products, and distinguished between taxes and tribute. These are the matters discussed here.⁵³

Citing the *Liji*, the concluding remarks of this heading of the *Sui shu* ‘Jingji zhi’ emphasises the role of ‘customs’ (*su* 俗), which it juxtaposes with everything that has to do with central, official rites, cults, and general etiquette. ‘Customs’ are not necessarily the mark of ‘barbarian’ populations as distinct from the civilised Chinese but, rather, the various social expressions of localism: local cults, regional funerary traditions, a semi autochthonous literature, different gender relationship, dressing habits, etc. Whatever the status of the Man of Southern China, many of the people whose ‘customs’ are depicted in the geographical treatise are unquestionably Chinese. The previous quote, much inspired by the *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 and the *Han shu* ‘Dili zhi’, shows that customs are ‘the response of living beings to the impact of their natural surroundings’ (Lewis 1990, 216). Furthermore, the recognition of ‘customs’ is essential to the effective management of a territory, as is made clear in the reference to Yu the Great: this (and a well-regulated tax system) is indeed a human and undebatable response to the features of the land.

The study (and critique) of ‘customs’ enjoys a long tradition in China. From the Warring States on, it has been an important social and political marker in efforts to define nationwide policies in favour of imperial unity and, on the contrary, in praise of regionalism when the Han Empire collapsed and locality writing first arose.⁵⁴ The key terms *feng* 風 and *su* 俗 are related and often go hand in hand; still, *feng*, *su*, and *fengsu*, all cover quite a large spectrum of meanings. *Feng* can convey a moral and spatial idea of a ‘wind’ influencing the land of the people whose customs (*su*) can be civilised by its regulatory and modulating force.⁵⁵ In the pre-imperial texts that lay the ideological foundations for Qin and Han political unity, *feng* bears a positive, superior meaning—that of a civilising force and corrective for the common and vulgar *su* of the people. In the words of the *Shangshu*, speaking of Junchen 君陳, heir to the Duke of Zhou 周公 (r. 1042–1036 BCE): ‘You are the wind; the inferior people are the grass’.⁵⁶ An expanded version of this metaphor can be found in the *Lunyu*: ‘The virtue of the Superior Man is wind; the virtue of the common people is grass. Wind on the grass is bound to bend it’.⁵⁷ Such, in kind, is how the *Han shu* ‘Dili zhi’ first ports this onto imperial geographical writing:

凡民函五常之性，而其剛柔緩急，音聲不同，系水土之風氣。故謂之風；好惡取捨，動靜亡常，隨君上之情慾，故謂之俗。孔子曰：移風易俗，莫善於樂。

In general, the people have the five (Confucian) consistencies. However, one’s firmness or softness, slowness or speed, and the musical differences are all determined by the local wind-*qi*. Therefore it is called ‘wind’. Taste, impermanence in action or passivity and conforming oneself to the emotions and desires of one’s lord is called ‘custom’ (*su*). Confucius said: ‘To move the wind and change customs, nothing is better than music’.

言聖王在上，統理人倫，必移其木，而易其末，此混同天下一之乎中和，然後王教成也。漢承百王之末。國土變改，民人遷徙，成帝時劉向略言其地分，丞相張禹使屬潁川硃贛條其風俗，猶未宣究，故輯而論之。終其本末著於篇。

When the ancient sage kings governed, they would administer the five relations of the human order; they had to change the roots and the tips, from confusion the world would unite and become harmonious, so that the teaching of the sovereign could accomplish itself. When the Han inherited from the last of the old sovereigns, the land of the kingdom had changed, the people had moved out. During Emperor Cheng’s reign (33–7 BCE),

⁵³ *Sui shu*, 33.987.

⁵⁴ On these matters, see Lewis (2006, 189–244).

⁵⁵ See Gibbs (1972, 286) and Hsu (2007, 123).

⁵⁶ 爾惟風，下民惟草, tr. Legge (1865, 539).

⁵⁷ 君子之德風，小人之德草，草上之風必偃, tr. Legge (1861, 258).

Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) offered his vision of the division of land, Chancellor Zhang Yu 張禹 (d. 5 BCE) sent his delegate to the provinces Zhu Gong 硤巘 (i.e. Zhu Gong, above), from Yingchuan 潁川 out so that he could define and register the customs (*feng su*). Since he did not complete his task, they are gathered here to be discussed, and their core as well as their details can be exhausted.⁵⁸

The *Han shu* polarises its attention on ‘moving the wind and changing the customs’ (*yifeng yisu* 移風易俗): *feng* bears a naturalistic and environmental value; *su* is the expression of its impact on the people at the regional level; and the combination of the two helps define them and the regions in which they live.⁵⁹ With the spatial turn relating to imperial unification, moreover, *su* come to epitomise the representation of a region. ‘Customs’ are the local practices that are defined in the classification of imperial subjects and, consequently, the very regions that they populate, all as opposed to the universal ritualistic order promoted by the central court.⁶⁰

Some customs are good, others are bad, but, as a general rule, the further we move from the centre the more customs are in need of a rectifying ‘wind’. In its concluding remarks on Yongzhou (modern Gansu and Shaanxi), to turn now back to the the *Sui shu* treatise, winds are mentioned in order to insist on the close relation the province maintains with the capital. Here, the vision of the land and its people is entirely positive:

其風大抵與京師不異。安定、北地、上郡、隴西、天水、金城，於古為六郡之地，其人性猶質直。然尚儉約，習仁義，勤於稼穡，多畜牧，無復寇盜矣。

Their manners (*feng*) are usually not very different from those of the capital. Anding 安定, Beidi 北地, Shangjun 上郡, Longxi 隴西, Tianshui 天水, and Jincheng 金城 are the same territory of the antique Six Commanderies (whose families formed the core of the imperial guards). The nature of the people is simple and straight. They are caring and fair, they dedicate themselves to planting and harvesting while they practice animal husbandry, and they never rebel.⁶¹

In Yuzhou (modern Henan), previously rogue populations are put back on a righteous path through the respect of rituals; the same happens in Qingzhou (modern Shandong), where people end up improving the customs:

滎陽古之鄭地，梁郡梁孝故都，邪僻傲蕩，舊傳其俗。今則好尚稼穡，重於禮文，其風皆變於古。譙郡、濟陰、襄城、潁川、汝南、淮陽、汝陰，其風頗同。

Xingyang 滎陽 is the ancient land of Zheng 鄭, and Liang Prefecture is the former capital [region] of Liang Xiao[wendi of the Western Han, named Liu Wu]. Their customs have been that of wickedness and debauchery. Now the people excel at farming, they value the rites, their customs have radically changed from what they used to be. The customs in Qiao 譙郡, Jiyin 濟陰, Xiangcheng 襄城, Yingchuan 潁川, Runan 汝南, Huaiyang 淮陽, and Ruying 汝陰 are similar.⁶²

In Jizhou Province (modern Shanxi and Hebei), we see the modification of customs with reference to both previous positive and negative historical examples helping bring the population into conformity with the proper rites. On the bad end of things, we have, for example, the customs of Xin 辛, the Shang emperor whose cruelty and debauchery brought an end to the dynasty, and the brave and reckless Zilu, one of Confucius disciples who serves in this case as a proverbial example of filial impiety by framing his father. The treatise stresses how bad the customs of this region once were and, on the contrary, their ability to be positively transformed. Whatever the trans-

⁵⁸ *Han shu*, 28B.1639–1640; tr. Lewis (1990, 215–216).

⁵⁹ Nylan (1982, 8–9). By establishing a bridge with a former golden age, Ying Shao 應劭 (140–204), author of the *Fengsu tongyi*, tried to define the order of things and phenomenon during an era of moral and political decline.

⁶⁰ Lewis (2006, 190).

⁶¹ *Sui shu*, 29.817.

⁶² *Sui shu*, 30.843.

formative power of ritual propriety, however, the strength and influence of climate can sometimes overshadow the efficacy of human action:

汲郡、河內，得殷之故壤，考之舊說，有紂之餘教。汲又衛地，習仲由之勇，故漢之官人，得以便宜從事，其多行殺戮，本以此焉。今風俗頗移，皆向於禮矣。長平、上黨，人多重農桑，性尤朴直，蓋少輕詐。河東、絳郡、文城、臨汾、龍泉、西河，土地沃少瘠多，是以傷於儉嗇。其俗剛強，亦風氣然乎？

The Prefectures of Ji 汲 and Henei 河內 are ancient [Shang]-Yin territory. An examination of ancient texts shows the influence of the customs of [the wicked King] Zhou 紂 (1086–1045 BCE). Ji prefecture was Wei 衛 territory; following the courageous example of Zhong You 仲由 (542–480 BCE), Han officials were allowed to act expediently [when governing this area], and their frequent use of mass executions was based on this. Now that the customs have changed, the people all act sincerely according to the rites. People from Changping 長平 and Shangdang 上黨 practice agriculture and sericulture, their nature is frank and direct, and deceit is rare among them. In Hedong 河東, Jiang 絳, Wencheng 文城, Linfen 臨汾, Longquan 龍泉, and Xihe 西河 the soil is not fertile, hence the people are stingy. Is their customary toughness and resoluteness not also a result of their wind and *qi*?⁶³

After the regions of the Central Plains, a more nuanced judgment is provided for the more distant Liangzhou (modern Sichuan):

其人性並輕悍，易興逆節，椎結踦踞，乃其舊風。其俚人則質直尚信，諸蠻則勇敢自立，皆重賄輕死，唯富為雄。巢居崖處盡力農事。刻木以為符契，言誓則至死不改。

The men are valiant and eager to rebel, they wear the hair tied up in a hammer-shaped bun and sit [rudely] with their legs apart—these are their old customs. The Li populations are sincere and straightforward, they hold faithfulness in high esteem, they are courageous and independent, they despise death, and among them only the wealthiest can become chief. They live in tree huts or along cliffs, and strive in agriculture. They make contracts by carving markings into wood, and when they swear a verbal oath, they do not depart from it as long as they live.⁶⁴

Moving on to Jingzhou (modern Hubei and Hunan), the *Sui shu* treatise provides the following anecdote about Qu Yuan 屈原 (fl. 4th cent. BCE), one of the authors of the *Chu ci*, and literati hero of Chu culture. Here, the games and traditions of Chu serve as a paradigm to the question of cultural interpenetration. It seems Qu Yuan is mentioned in order to serve as a moral and literary guaranty, an agent who can harmonise relations between the people of the South and the Chinese:

大抵荊州率敬鬼，尤重祠祀之事，昔屈原為制九歌，蓋由此也。屈原以五月望日赴汨羅，土人追至洞庭不見，湖大船小，莫得濟者，乃歌曰：「何由得渡湖！」因爾鼓櫂爭歸，競會亭上，習以相傳，為競渡之戲。其迅楫齊馳，櫂歌亂響，喧振水陸，觀者如雲，諸郡率然，而南郡、襄陽尤甚。二郡又有牽鈎之戲，云從講武所出，楚將伐吳以為教戰，流遷不改習以相傳。鈎初發動，皆有鼓節，羣譟歌謠，振驚遠近，俗云以此厭勝，用致豐穰。其事亦傳於他郡。

Generally speaking, Jingzhou leads the way in the reverence of ghosts and places particular emphasis to cults of local deities. Qu Yuan composed the *Nine Songs* in reference to that matter. On the fifteenth day of the fifth month Qu Yuan drowned in the Miluo 汨羅 River; locals tried in vain to retrieve his body up to Lake Dongting 洞庭; but vast was the lake, and small was their boat. No one could reach the bank, and someone cried: 'Where can we cross?' The boats raced with all their strength against the current, they did their best to be the first to reach the pavilion, and this [custom] has been passed down as the dragon boat race. The beat of the oars and the boats together with the songs create a chaotic cacophony, making the water tremble. People watch them, as numerous as clouds, and the same happens in other prefectures, especially in Nan 南 and Xiangyang 襄陽. Both of these prefectures possess the game of tug o' war, which was originally made for military training at a time when Chu was about to attack Wu. It has been transmitted in time and space without modification. First one must throw a hook, then a gong signalling the beginning is heard, and everyone

⁶³ *Sui shu*, 30.860.

⁶⁴ *Sui shu*, 31.888.

sings; the people have mastered this custom to obtain exceptionally good harvest. It has been copied in other prefectures.⁶⁵

It is here where we are faced with a rather glaring discrepancy between treatise writing and what we otherwise know. Here, the descriptions of Jingzhou, which might hold just as well for Liangzhou, focuses on the Chinese penetration into and cultural integration of Man territories through their customs, games, rites, and common culture heroes. The Man, however, as treated in standard history ethnographical notes (*zaiji* 載記), are otherwise generally framed in terms of their rebellious outbursts, their savagery, and the heroic acts of the Chinese generals to suppress them.⁶⁶ The geographical treatise, however, insists against all odds on the intermixing and acculturation following the Chinese expansion into the south. Immediately prior to the anecdote about Qu Yuran, cited above, it opens its concluding remarks on Jingzhou with an account of the pacifying, educating, and civilising virtues of integration:

多雜蠻左。其與夏人雜居者，則與諸華不別。其僻處山谷者，則言語不通，嗜好居處全異，頗與巴渝同俗。諸蠻本其所出承盤瓠之後，故服章多以班布為飾。其相呼以蠻，則為深忌。自晉氏南遷之後，南郡、襄陽皆為重鎮，四方湊會，故益多衣冠之緒，稍尚禮義經籍焉。九江襟帶所在，江夏、竟陵、安陸，各置名州，為藩鎮重寄，人物乃與諸郡不同。

[The Prefectures of the region] feature a heavy mix of Man peoples. Those that live mixed among the Chinese (Xiaren 夏人) [in the plains] are [indeed] impossible to distinguish from any other Chinese (Hua 華). As to those that live in mountains and valleys, they speak a different language [than the Chinese autochthons], and their interests, clothing, and dwellings are completely different, their customs (*su*) being [more] similar to those of Ba 巴 and Yu 渝. The ancestor of the Man is Panhu 盤瓠, and that is why their clothing is so colourful. Calling them 'Man' is strictly taboo.⁶⁷ After the Jin moved to the south, people came from all over China to the areas of Nan and Xiangyang, and this contributed to create more heirs that respected the rites and the classics. Jiujiang 九江 was a strategic place, and only officials with big responsibilities were sent to the famous prefectures of Jiangxia 江夏, Jingling 竟陵, and Anlu 安陸; the people's character was different than in other prefectures.⁶⁸

Is this *evidence* of integration or just the rhetoric of official speech? It might simply be a question of genre. The format and objectives of a 'Dili zhi' leave no real space for the matter of *rebellion*, as the point is to reveal the spatial and cultural integrity of a reunified empire. Despite the incorporation of Jingzhou into the oikoumene, this area clearly remained a backwater, still in the process of integration. The same was true of the southern province of Yangzhou (modern Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi and Guangdong). Territories of the autochthons, Jingzhou and Yangzhou were at once the largest and least populous regions of the entire empire (6.4 per cent of the total registered population),⁶⁹ and here again, as concerns Yangzhou, the *Sui shu* 'Dili zhi' focuses on the transformation of customs and the assimilation of barbarian peoples:

江南之俗，火耕水耨，食魚與稻，以漁獵為業，雖無蓄積之資，然而亦無饑餒。其俗信鬼神，好淫祀，父子或異居，此大抵然也。江都、弋陽、淮南、鍾離、蕲春、同安、廬江、歷陽，人性並躁勁，風氣果決，包藏禍害，視死如歸，戰而貴詐，此則其舊風也。自平陳之後，其俗頗變，尚淳質，好儉約，喪紀婚姻，率漸於禮。其俗之敝者，稍愈於古焉。

The customs (*su*) of the Jiangnan region consist in burning the ground and irrigating the soil [before planting rice]. The people eat fish and rice, they live on fishing and hunting, and though they gather no stock, they are never hungry. By custom (*su*), they believe in ghosts and spirits, and they are fond of lascivious sacrifices. Fathers and sons live in separate houses, or at least such is commonly the case. People from Jiangdu 江都, Yi-

⁶⁵ *Sui shu*, 31.897.

⁶⁶ See Lycas (2014, 502).

⁶⁷ Apparently, it is considered as an extremely derogatory term by the Man.

⁶⁸ *Sui shu*, 31.897.

⁶⁹ Balázs (1953, 310).

yang 弋陽, Huainan 淮南, Zhongli 鍾離, Qichun 蘄春, Tong'an 同安, Lujiang 廬江, and Liyang 歷陽 are by nature restive and impetuous, prone to making quick decisions, treacherous and deceitful, fearless of death, and given to using deception in warfare. Now that the Chen have been subdued, their customs have evolved: they esteem probity, they have become thrifty, and they have gradually conformed to the rites related to funerals and weddings. The flaws of their customs (*su*) have somewhat come around since antiquity.⁷⁰

Here, one obvious point of divergence between people from the Central Plains and the margins is their appearance: in the Central Plains, controlling one's hair means controlling one's emotions, and unbound hair is a sign of barbarism; the same can be said of clothing, naked people resembling animals.⁷¹ So too does their 'bravery', their mountainous habitats, their numerous rebellions, and their clothing all serve as signs of their otherness, but nothing is perhaps quite so worthy of underlining as the funerary practices and purported origins of the Man:

其死喪之紀，雖無被髮袒踊，亦知號叫哭泣。始死，即出屍於中庭，不留室內。斂畢送至山中，以十三年為限。先擇吉日，改入小棺，謂之拾骨。拾骨必須女婿，蠻重女婿，故以委之。拾骨者，除肉取骨，棄小取大。當葬之夕，女婿或三數十人，集會於宗長之宅，著芒心接籬，名曰茅綏。各執竹竿，長一丈許上三四尺許，猶帶枝葉。其行伍前却，皆有節奏，歌吟叫呼亦有章曲。傳云盤瓠初死，置之於樹，乃以竹木刺而下之，故相承至今以為風俗。隱諱其事，謂之刺北斗。既葬設祭，則親疎咸哭，哭畢家人既至，但歡飲而歸，無復祭哭也。

In their funerary rites, although they do not leave their hair untied, expose their left arms, and dance [as prescribed in Tang Chinese ritual], the [Man] do know how to wail and weep. When a person dies, the corpse is put out in the courtyard; it cannot stay in the house. After the body has been placed in the grave, it is sent in the mountain for 13 years. Then the most auspicious day is picked, and the corpse is placed in a smaller coffin—this is called the 'bone collection'. This collection must be done by the deceased's son-in-law; the Man [particularly] value [the role of] son-in-law, which is why they entrust them with [this task]. The bone collector must remove any [remaining] flesh in order to collect the bones and should only keep the big ones. At the twilight of the day of [re]burial, the son-in-law and some thirty or so men gather in the house of the clan patriarch, covering the head of the deceased with a turban made of reed, which is called a *maosui* 茅綏. Each of them holds a stem of bamboo around 1 *zhang* in length, the top 3 to 4 *chi* of which, roundabouts, still retains its branches and leaves. The procession moves back and forth, all according to the rhythm, and the men shout out an emblematic song. Legend has it that when Panhu died, he was placed on a tree, and they buried him by poking and piercing [his body] with bamboo, and this has been transmitted until today as a custom (*fengsu*). Since naming this practice is taboo, they refer to it as 'poking the Northern Dipper (Beidou 北斗, UMa)'. After the burial, they prepare sacrificial rites. The relatives and acquaintances cry solid tears, and once they have no more tears to cry, the family members arrive, but they return after only having made their toasts, there being no further sacrifice or crying [on their part].⁷²

These ethnographic descriptions are suggestive of an informational guide to local practices for the use by the scholar-official about to be dispatched to local office—a guide providing the local equivalent to the empire's cultural foundations (rituals, traditions, etc.). Because they are more familiar to the historian (and to the potential user), the entries for the central provinces are considerably shorter and less detailed than those for the border areas. This aspect confirms the informative scope of the geographical treatise.

11.6 Imperial Integration and Territorial Control

Wresting control over the external provinces provided the imperial regime an efficient buffer (and distraction) protecting the more critical, internal provinces. In the words of the *Sui shu* treatise

⁷⁰ *Sui shu*, 31.886–887.

⁷¹ Lewis (2006, 76).

⁷² *Sui shu*, 31.897–898.

tise, quoting the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, ‘Excepting under a sage ruler, when there is quietness abroad, sorrow is sure to spring up at home’.⁷³ Still, was its control of the Nine Regions real, or was it simply an expression of the official *doxa* that ‘All-under-heaven’ (*tianxia* 天下) is *ipso facto* the purview of the ‘son of heaven’ (*tianzi* 天子)? Maps can be deceptive, and it is easy to take away from those with which one is presented in the museums and textbooks of today the vision of an imperial China that extended as far and deep as the current polity of the People’s Republic. The South, however, one must bear in mind, was a new addition to the Chinese world. The South, with the notable exception of Jiankang (modern Nanjing), the mouth of the Yangzi delta and the Xiang 湘 and Gan 贛 river banks, was still, between the Han and the Tang, a semi-frontier territory that may have ‘remained loyal, regularly contributing revenue’ (Twitchett 1976, 1, 10) but abounded nonetheless with restless, unassimilated peoples. Beyond the reaches of the centralised empires, the picture with which we are presented in pre-Tang sources is one of a decentralised state composed of more-or-less independent *marches*. The question, in other words, is whether the natural position of the Southern frontier region—together with the presence of autochthonous tribes and a relative absence of militarisation—allow imperial authorities to contain this space? The ethnographic note on the Man and other autochthonous people of the Sui-time South would seem to insist that they had never been, and had never wanted to be, part of China.⁷⁴

The Tang, in contrast with previous, more rebellious times, presided over an era of relative calm lasting for 40 years, up to the end of Xuanzong’s 宣宗 reign in 859.⁷⁵ South of the Yangzi, apart from some civil and military outposts and the few alluvial plains optimised for agriculture, the Chinese were still not much of a presence, the mountains and hills predominating its rough terrain being mostly the territory of the Man. There were religious centres, and some disengaged literati settled in and around graphic and religiously symbolic mountains like Mt Lu 廬, in modern Jiangxi, and Mt Heng 衡, in modern Hunan. This period was also marked by the expansion of Buddhist temples into agriculturally marginal lands, but these were sociocultural oases gathered on the foot of a very few mountains, leaving most of the space to the autochthons. In the end, true Chinese control over the South really only crystallised in late-medieval times with the development and expansion of urban centres.⁷⁶

How should we define the relationship between the Man and the Chinese over the period covered here? It is organised on two levels: between individuals, where it often results in rebellion (and, eventually, in submission), and between products, where it takes the form of exchange, including the establishment of taxes and tributary relations. A rather rewarding approach to understanding this back and forth between centre and periphery lies in the study of particular taxation systems, such as tribute (*gong* 貢). Though tribute was supposedly the expression of government trade between external polities with which the court maintained diplomatic ties, tribute relations also extended to populations living on the edges as a social marker of their submission.⁷⁷ Tribute is thus the first stage of exchange between parties, and as such it reveals much about the two sides (borders, peace, the circulation of knowledge, interethnic relations, etc.). It also tells us about the specific products coming from a particular region—products considered a technical manifestation of the particularities, that is, the customs of the land.⁷⁸

Does the tribute have a merely diplomatic or symbolic value, or does it play a financial role? Under the Tang, there are examples of tribute having the same economic importance as the transport of grains.⁷⁹ The *Sui shu* ‘Dili zhi’, for its part, mentions a few examples of trade (con-

⁷³ 非聖人，外寧必內憂, *Sui shu*, 82.1838–1839, citing *Zuo zhuan*, Cheng 成 16; tr. Legge (1872, 396).

⁷⁴ *Sui shu*, 82.1831.

⁷⁵ See Wang Gungwu (1973, 207).

⁷⁶ For a case study of the ‘civilizing’ of Southeast China in Medieval times, see Clark (2016).

⁷⁷ On the general matter of tribute between China and tributary countries, see Bielenstein (2005).

⁷⁸ For an example of the interest of foreign products and trade relations in historiography, see Chapter 13.

⁷⁹ Wang Gungwu (1973, 212).

cerning people within the border of the empire) and tributary relations (for populations beyond the borders) such as the following passage on taxes in its concluding remarks on Liangzhou:

人多工巧，綾錦雕鏤之妙，殆侔於上國。貧家不務儲蓄，富室專於趨利。其處家室，則女勤作業，而士多自閑，聚會宴飲，尤足意錢之戲。

The people [of Liangzhou] are skilled craftsmen who manufacture prodigious brocades, silks, and prints, equal to those of the capital. The poor families make no effort to store up their grain, while the wealthy families are devoted to profit [in commerce]. It is not uncommon in a household for the women to work while the men are idle. When they gather for celebrations, they usually enjoy gambling.⁸⁰

We get a similar description as concerns Yangzhou:

然數郡川澤沃衍，有海陸之饒，珍異所聚，故商賈並湊。其人君子尚禮，庸庶敦龐，故風俗澄清，而道教隆洽，亦其風氣所尚也。豫章之俗，頗同吳中，其君子善居室，小人勤耕稼...自嶺已南二十餘郡，大率土地下濕，皆多瘴厲，人尤夭折。南海、交趾，各一都會也，並所處近海，多犀象瑋瑁珠璣，奇異珍瑋，故商賈至者，多取富焉。

Thus, their rivers and marshes are fertile and contain a bounty of products from both sea and land, and that is why traders tend to gather there. Among them, the gentlemen cherish rituals, and the common people are honest, this is why traditions are pure; the Daoist religion prospers here, and this is also because the region's wind and *qi* favor this. The customs (*su*) at Yuzhang 豫章 are quite similar to those of Wu: gentlemen are good at managing households, and the commoners dedicate themselves to ploughing and sowing. ... The twenty prefectures south of the Ling 嶺 mountain range are mostly possessed of a moist soil, and all of them are ridden with miasma, the people there [tending to] die particularly young. The Prefectures of Nanhai 南海 and Jiaozhi are each possessed of a large city by the sea. There are elephants and rhinoceros, tortoise shells and jades, round and irregular pearls, and extraordinary stones. This is the reason why a great number of the merchants who went there became very wealthy.⁸¹

The products of tribute are a part of the empire's quest for universal control. When placed in the imperial garden, these objects, artefacts and representative animals advocate the dynasty's power over All-under-heaven and symbolise the imperial sway over distant parts of the known world. These objects are elements of imperial unity because they are local characteristics that have undergone domestication.

11.7 Conclusion: What is a Geographical Treatise?

The models for the standard history geographical treatises are, not surprisingly, pre-imperial canonised texts, but no classic—not even the *Shangshu*—has exerted nearly the same influence upon the genre as has the *Han shu*. The preoccupation of such treatises is imperial unity, and that was one to which the *Han shu*, of all ancient books, was best qualified to speak. In order to realise the model of Han unity, officials of later dynasties had to understand the character of the regions and the subjects they sought to rule—to understand the strategies of speech and modes of exchange (taxation, tribute) necessary to acculturate them to the proper rites. Prior to the imperial era, the division of regions tended toward the natural and the symbolic, bound by rivers, mountains, seas, climates, *terroirs*, and satellite polities more or less within the central states' orbit, their integration measured roughly by physical distance and conformity to a set of socio-cultural principles. With the birth of Empire, however, the demarcations (now measured by surveyors) became increasingly real, feeding as they did into increasingly ambitious military logistics and local bureaucratic structures. To Balázs (1968, 56), the 'treatise on administrative geography' was more than an initiation to geography, it was a *guide* directed precisely at the administration of contem-

⁸⁰ *Sui shu*, 29.830.

⁸¹ *Sui shu*, 31.887–888.

porary institutions. This educational function is not to be overlooked, as helps explain why the empire and its many regions beyond the capital and major cities are described the way they are—i.e. the way they *should be*, lest the land mould the official and not the other way around.

Prior to the seventh century, *dili* ‘geography’ was not defined very precisely; it was sometimes confused for geomancy, and it did not mean the same thing as used in administrative circles or in everyday life.⁸² In translating the ‘Dili zhi’ as a ‘geographical treatise’, one cannot but wonder which type of geography (physical, human, administrative, economic, demographic) is promoted. And setting aside the lengthy administrative data that constitutes its longest part, the general introduction and the concluding remarks *do* promote a particular vision. The modern reader must furthermore separate what can be considered first-hand information (direct observations, land surveys, and census) from the second-hand (historical and mythological information on Ancient kings, autochthonous population, excerpts from canonical texts, etc.). Without claiming that one part is more important than the other, one must try to understand the balance its compiler(s) consciously struck between them.

As for aspects pertaining to administrative and demographic geography, the list of choronyms representing each region and their natural and human limits appears to be the products of an honest process of spatial representation. These enable the classification of data and the establishment of a human order in the world. Through the variation of population, the census is an important indicator of the quality and extent of administrative control as well as the stability of a given region. The Han saw an increase in districts, prefectures, and population, which Han historiographers were keen to document as signs of its prosperity. We have, for the same reason, very little information concerning the Northern and Southern Dynasties, which saw the weakening of central power and mass migration, mostly southwards.⁸³ In a nutshell, where it goes into detail, the geographical treatise serves as an excellent indicator of the distribution of the people and the social and political state of the empire at a given time.

Since it studies the intersections between humans and their milieux through customs, the geographical treatise also presents us with a human, ethnographic geography. The angle is administrative, but such treatises differ from the work of a historian relying on written material alone, as the data that they provide implies the practice of the field—a History, i.e. a physical quest, in Herodotean terms.⁸⁴ This practice is proven by the use of maps (although now mostly lost) and demographical data. The distances between prefectures and the measures of the population in these treatise are without any doubt knowledge taken from practice. The same can be said about the vivid ethnographic depictions that often go beyond a classic list of literary *topoi* on barbarians. Under the Tang, geographical conceptions of non-Chinese peoples are as follows: internal versus external, Chinese versus non-Chinese.⁸⁵ However, the first difficulty in drawing a clear line between inside and outside lies in the fact that the borders under consideration here are constantly moving, and that they are as internal as they can be external. For example, the territory of the Man tribes is delineated by a natural border, the Yangzi, and by unstable alluvial plains, a sort of no man’s land located between the Xiang and Gan Rivers. The second difficulty in including or excluding a population has to do with the division of borders, which, in the *Sui shu* geographical treatise, are modelled nostalgically on the symbolic divisions of the ‘Yu gong’.

The presence of non-Chinese populations on Chinese lands creates an aporia: how to be within the Chinese oikoumene, here the topographical one that stems from the theoretical one presented in the ‘Yu gong’, without being Chinese? In the case of the *Sui shu*, the solution presents itself in the integrating discourse of the concluding remarks: the customs that are the source of division

⁸² Unno (1983, 83, 87).

⁸³ Pulleyblank (1961, 295).

⁸⁴ See Legrand (1932, 66). Under the Tang, we know that material/data was sent to court historians, there being people in charge of fieldwork matters.

⁸⁵ Abramson (2007, 119).

are to be studied in order to meditate upon and facilitate their assimilation. This was its solution to the stage set by the *Han shu* and the literature before it going back to ‘Yu gong’. The latter’s distinction between the inner and outer realm greatly influenced subsequent geographical treatises and Chinese conceptions of their realm: China was the Nine provinces, and the Nine Provinces China, any sign otherwise as concerns the presence of Chinese peoples or political reach closing a circuit of cognitive dissonance. Politically, the Chinese may have constituted a minority in the Yangzhou-Jingzhou-Liangzhou area, and the outer borders set by the ‘Yu gong’ may seem limitless, but this space is part of China, so as long as it is within the borders drawn by Yu the Great. It’s all China, or it will be if the authors have their way, and the constellation of different customs, products, commerce, and characters of peoples are of one sky revolving inexorably around a common pole.

In the end, the *Sui shu* geographical treatise may constitute a form of administrative geography, but the modalities of the perception of space have also evolved. Starting from a central point of view under the Han (through the treatises in the histories), the representation of space shifted to the local viewpoint during the North/South partition before moving to a regional level in the formal division of the Sui treatise. On top of these underlying conceptual levels, the description of local customs allows a perception of the space that is rarely lived (because of the feeble Chinese presence there), more likely travelled (through the description of some regional customs or local cults), and sometimes imagined (through the thoughts on the nature of the autochthons). China was still in the process of integrating the *marches*, and this text may serve as a *vade-mecum* for the young official preparing himself to be sent to borderlands. The period under consideration is crucial as it marks an assessment of the previous attempts, but it also directly precedes the Song 宋 (960–1279) development of locality writings and their establishment as a proper genre.

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Appendix: Table of Contents of the *Sui shu* ‘Geographical Treatise’

地理上 29 Geography A
[Historical Introduction]: (¶1) Symbolic division of space and ordering of the land with reference to canonical texts; prosperity can be achieved through proper management of the administrative space; historical examples showing the evolution of administrative control over the territory up until the Sixteen States. (¶2) Detailed historical geography data for the Liang, Chen, Later Qi, and Northern Zhou, namely the dynasties that do not have a geographical treatise in their respective histories. (¶3) Historical geography and geographical extent of the Sui’s territorial extent, as well as dimensions and population figures.
[Yongzhou 雍州]: complete list of administrative units (¶4–31), organized by prefecture, with a sub-list enumerating the districts of each prefecture with population figures; information including date of establishment, distances within and between districts, numbers, administrative evolution of said district, numbers of villages <i>li</i> 里, and markets <i>shi</i> 市. Concluding remarks (¶32): position of the region according to heavenly patterns (<i>tianwen</i>) with quotes from the <i>Zhouli</i> and <i>Shiji</i> ; nature of the people’s customs according to their social heritage and geographical origin.
[Liangzhou 梁州]: complete list of administrative units (¶33–66), organized by prefecture. Concluding remarks (¶67): position of the region according to heavenly patterns with quote from the ‘Yu gong’; nature of the people, funerary practices, and local traditions; information on the territory of the Liao, Di, and Qiang barbarians; local crafts and special taxation.
地理中 30 Geography B
[Yuzhou 豫州]: complete list of administrative units (¶1–16), organized by prefecture. Concluding remarks (¶17): position of the region according to heavenly patterns with quote from the ‘Yu gong’; the nature of the people is good because it is the capital (Luoyang) region, and the place of origin of many nobles and officials.
[Yanzhou 兗州]: complete list of administrative units (¶18–23), organized by prefecture. Concluding remarks (¶24): position of the region according to heavenly patterns with quote from the ‘Yu gong’; it is a virtuous Confucian region, the people respect righteousness and their nature is good.

<p>[Jizhou 冀州]: complete list of administrative units (¶25–55), organized by prefecture. Concluding remarks (¶56): position of the region according to heavenly patterns; in general, the people are simple but their nature is good.</p>
<p>[Qingzhou 青州]: complete list of administrative units (¶57–60), organized by prefecture. Concluding remarks (¶61): position of the region according to heavenly patterns with quote from the <i>Zhouli</i>; references to the Springs and Autumns period; with one exception, all the people are intelligent, well educated, and temperate (birthplace of Confucius).</p>
<p>地理下 31 Geography C</p>
<p>[Xuzhou 徐州]: complete list of administrative units (¶1–5), organized by prefecture. Concluding remarks (¶6): position of the region according to heavenly patterns with quote from the ‘Yu gong’; Confucianist region where the customs of the people are similar to those of Chu (they are courageous and righteous literati).</p>
<p>[Yangzhou 揚州]: complete list of administrative units (¶7–50), organized by prefecture. Concluding remarks (¶51): position of the region according to heavenly patterns with quote from the ‘Yu gong’; Southern characteristics (slash-and-burn agriculture, fish, and rice), the people believe in spirits, they are fierce and violent; however the Sui reunification has brought them back into respecting proper rites; some parts of Yangzhou are then introduced, depending on their local characteristics (customs, economy, habits of the nobility, types of poisons, exotic animals).</p>
<p>[Jingzhou 荊州]: complete list of administrative units (¶52–73), organized by prefecture. Concluding remarks (¶74): position of the region according to heavenly patterns with quote from the <i>Shangshu</i> (in fact the ‘Yu gong’); it is said that the people and their customs are similar to those of neighbouring Yangzhou; focus on the Man, their customs, funerary practices and how they relate to their ancestors and with the Chinese; reference to Qu Yuan and the invention of dragon-boat racing and other Southern activities.</p>