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**Caochang**

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# The Southern Man People in Western Han China: Manuscript Evidence from Zoumalou and Hujia Caochang

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## 西漢時期的南蠻：走馬樓和胡家草場簡牘 之所見

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### Abstract

The political importance of the Southern Man peoples (Nan Man 南蠻) and the process of their integration into the Sinitic empire are usually dated back to the Early Medieval period. However, the past thirty years have witnessed numerous excavations of sites containing manuscripts in the Middle Yangtze area, more specifically in Zhangjiashan, Zoumalou, and recently in Hujia caochang. These documents reveal a more complex picture of the Man and attest to their presence and importance as early as the Western Han, and most certainly earlier. The aim of this article is to identify the Man's place in the sources, and to analyze the range of measures – administrative, fiscal, judicial, social – put in place to control them and/or negotiate their presence. Here, I propose to analyze the dual importance, of the Man, and of their control by the local administration. First, we will review what both medieval history and modern historiography have to say about the Man. We will then look at the potential but still limited contribution of material culture, by mentioning a few burials and insignia attributed to the

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Man. We will eventually analyze what the Zoumalou and Hujia caochang manuscripts tell us about the practices implemented by the regional administration to manage the problems, real or supposed, posed by the Man.

## Keywords

Southern Man – manuscripts – Zoumalou – Hujia caochang – administration – law

## 摘要

南蠻在政治上的重要性及其逐步融入中華帝國的過程通常被認為始於中世紀早期。然而，過去三十多年來在長江中游地區數個遺址出土的簡牘，特別是張家山、走馬樓以及最近發現的胡家草場諸簡，展現了一幅有關“蠻人”更為複雜的圖像，並證實了在西漢甚至更早的時期，“蠻人”的存在及其重要性。本文旨在確認“蠻人”在文獻中的地位，並分析國家采取行政、賦稅、律法、社會等方面的措施對他們進行掌控，並/或協調其存在。我們在此分析“蠻人”和地方政府對他們控制的雙重重要性。首先，我們回顧了中世紀史及現代史學對“蠻人”的記述。其次，通過一些被認為“蠻人”的墓葬和官印來探討物質文化方面潛在但依然有限的貢獻。最後，我們將分析走馬樓和胡家草場簡牘，解讀地方行政為解決“蠻人”所引發的——實際或假定的——問題而採取的措施。

## 關鍵詞

南蠻、簡牘、走馬樓、胡家草場、行政、律法

The political importance of the Southern Man peoples (or, Nan Man 南蠻, hereafter simply referred to as “Man”) and the process of their integration into the Sinitic empire are usually dated back to the Early Medieval period, i.e., from the end of the Eastern Han to the Tang. This period did mark the definitive integration of the Man who then populated areas corresponding to the present-day Hubei, Hunan and Chongqing.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, this is how their

1 I only deal here with the Southern Man who populated the imperial territory stretching south to the Nanling mountain range. The Man located in the Yunnan-Guangdong arc and beyond were historically considered as outer barbarians, and are therefore excluded from my analysis.

history is presented in early medieval historical accounts, especially in collective biographies such as the *Hou Han shu's* 後漢書 “Nan Man Xinan Yi liezhuan” 南蠻西南夷列傳, or other geographical treatises and biographies found in standard histories written up to the Tang period.<sup>2</sup>

However, the past thirty years or so have witnessed numerous excavations of sites containing manuscripts in the Middle Yangtze area, more specifically in Zhangjiashan 張家山, Zoumalou 走馬樓, and recently in Hujia caochang 胡家草場, which all reveal a more complex picture of the Man. These documents attest to their presence and to the importance of their role, before the Eastern Han period, i.e. definitely as early as the Western Han, and most probably earlier; as we will see, the question of how to deal with the Man was already an important one for the people who governed them. The aim of this article is therefore to identify the Man's place in manuscript sources, and to analyze the range of measures – administrative, fiscal, judicial, social – put in place to control them and/or negotiate their presence. Here, I propose to analyze the dual importance of the Man and of their control by the local administration. This strong and effective control by local officials operating far from the central government – a phenomenon well attested since the Qin in other remote localities such as Liye – comes as no surprise in itself. However, that such control was applied to the Man may seem a little more surprising when we compare it with what the transmitted literature tells us on this matter – which is to say, not much.

First, I will review what both medieval history and modern historiography have to say about the Man. I will then look at the potential but still limited contribution of material culture, by mentioning a few burials and insignia attributed to the Man. I will finally analyze what the Zoumalou and Hujia caochang manuscripts tell us about the practices implemented by the regional administration to manage the problems, real or supposed, posed by the Man.<sup>3</sup>

## 1 History and Historiography of the Southern Man

Producing a history of the Man on their “own terms” would involve the transmission of some of their oral history as well as that of their knowledge and

2 Fan Ye 范曄 and Sima Biao 司馬彪, *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 86; Wei Zheng 魏徵, *Sui shu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 31.897–898.

3 Throughout this article, my intention is not to pit the two documentary systems – traditionally handed-down sources versus documents unearthed in an archaeological context – against each other.

technologies. This task is currently not achievable due to a lack of first-hand information about the Man: written sources up to the Tang indicate that the Man had no written language. In the absence of emic sources, only Chinese sources, official or private, have been handed down. What do they say about possible Man productions? We know that, on very rare occasions, Chinese historians do make others “talk,” or “translate” their speeches and poems.<sup>4</sup> Besides, Non-Chinese influences can sometimes be found, outside the standard histories’ chapters specifically devoted to them, in premodern southern works such as the *Chu ci* 楚辭 or the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, where descriptions of local practices can appear authentic due to the profusion of details they contain.

Testimonies taken from the *Shishuo xinyu* are quite convincing in this respect. In this collection of anecdotes written by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444) and his collaborators, numerous lively dialogues and precise situations tend to historicize the anecdotes scattered throughout.<sup>5</sup> The first excerpt evokes the language spoken by the Man:

王仲祖聞蠻語不解，茫然曰：「若使介葛盧來朝，故當不昧此語。」<sup>6</sup>

On hearing the Man language without understanding it, Wang Meng observed dryly: “If Ge Lu of Jie were to come for an audience, no doubt we wouldn’t be in the dark about this language.”

During the Warring States, Ge Lu was renowned for his ability to understand the language of domestic animals; the analogy with the linguistic abilities of the Man seems quite clear here. The comment attributed to the poet Wang Meng (309–347) probably echoes more closely the environment of his childhood, in what were then the Man-populated areas of modern-day Jiangxi and Hunan, than the Jiangnan region where he spent most of his adult life.<sup>7</sup> The

4 See, for example: Ruan Yuan 阮元 ed., *Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 32.558b; *Hou Han shu*, 86.2855–2857.

5 Valérie Lavoix, “Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444),” in François Martin and Damien Chaussende eds., *Dictionnaire biographique du haut Moyen Âge chinois: Culture, politique et religion de la fin des Han à la veille des Tang (III<sup>e</sup>–VI<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2020), 322–323.

6 Liu Yiqing 劉義慶, *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian* 世說新語校箋 (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1999), 2.111; translation from Richard B. Mather, *Shih-Shuo Hsin-Yu: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 65.

7 See his biography in Fang Xuanling 房玄齡, *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 93.2418–2419.

second anecdote, also dating from the middle of the fourth century, is even more instructive:

郝隆為桓公南蠻參軍，三月三日會，作詩。不能者罰酒三斗。隆初以不能受罰，既飲，攬筆便作一句云：「媿隅躍清池。」桓問：「媿隅是何物？」答曰：「蠻名魚為媿隅。」桓公曰：「作詩何以作蠻語？」隆曰：「千里投公，始得一蠻府參軍，那得不作蠻語也？」<sup>8</sup>

While Hao Long was serving as Huan Wen's aid to the Commandant of the Southern Man barbarians, there was a gathering on the third day of the third month,<sup>9</sup> at which everyone composed poems. Whoever was unable to do so paid a forfeit by drinking three dipperfuls of wine. At first, Long was unable to compose anything and paid the forfeit. But after drinking the three dipperfuls, he seized the brush and wrote the words: "The *juyu* leaps in the clear pool." Huan Wen asked, "What on earth is a *juyu*?" Long replied, "The Man barbarians call 'fish' *juyu*." Huan asked, "Who ever heard of using the Man language to compose poetry?" Long replied, "I came a thousand *li* to serve under Your Excellency's command, and only got to be an aid in the Man-barbarian headquarters (Xiangyang, Hubei), so how can I avoid using the Man language?"

The anecdote symbolizes the linguistic porosity that permeates social and military circles. It is striking to note that a scholar, albeit a minor one, has no hesitation in using the Man's vocabulary to convey a simple poetic image. While the justification provided here sounds like the bravado of a neglected loyalist, it also expresses the consequences of cohabitation between imperial subjects and Man peoples. It also underlines the territorial and social hold exerted by the Man on the newly settled official representatives of the state. That a bureaucrat should be so imbued with the idiom of the indigenous people in his charge leaves little doubt that this influence also affected non-Man communities.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the exchange between Hao Long and the powerful official Huan Wen (312–373) – the real master of Jiangnan during the third quarter

8 *Shishuo xinyu jiaojian*, 25.720; translation from Mather, *Shih-Shuo Hsin-Yu*, 448.

9 This is the day on which the rite of spring purification is performed.

10 This phenomenon is all the more interesting when we consider the lack of interest shown by Chinese scholars in foreign languages in various historical studies of translations and linguistic exchanges during the imperial era. See Wolfgang Behr, "To translate' is 'to exchange' – Linguistic diversity and the terms for translation in ancient China," in Michael Lackner, and Natascha Vittinghoff eds., *Mapping meanings: The field of new learning in late Qing China* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 227.

of the fourth century – demonstrates the curiosity and erudition displayed by the aid, and illustrates how the dynastic forces gathered to the east knew little about the social reality upstream from the Yangtze. Conditions for exercising power there were very different, mainly because of the presence of the Man, as proven by the existence of “Man bureaus” (*manfu* 蠻府), a system unheard of elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

These anecdotes should not obscure the fact that the main reason why the Man are mentioned in official Chinese sources is because they posed problems for those who were supposed to govern them. These problems are embodied in two phases, distinct temporally and typologically: first, conflictual and therefore military relations, and second, the fiscal and social mechanisms of control and integration. From these questions stem other important issues, with regard to otherness and bureaucratic efficiency on the imperial side, in relation to consent to taxation and forms of moral economy on the Man side.

There is no need here to revisit the history of the conflicts that pitted the Man against the imperial armies, as it has already been extensively studied.<sup>12</sup> Although these conflicts began before and continued after, they occurred mainly between the Eastern Han and the Liu Song. To give a summary of their general process, it appears that they were usually due to the questioning and challenging of the fiscal privileges long obtained by Panhu 盤瓠, the Man’s mythical dog ancestor.<sup>13</sup> Despite the imperial, i.e., etic origins of the sources that recount these conflicts, their authors do not hesitate to pinpoint that the responsibility for the conflicts and problems quite often falls upon the Han, not just the Man.

One of the problems with the concept of imperial integration in Rome, China or elsewhere, is that it is commonly interpreted according to ethnic, moral and ritual factors, issues often far removed from administrative and social realities. While the otherness of the Man peoples may be debatable, the official sources at our disposal indicate that they mostly constituted a political and fiscal problem in the eyes of the imperial power.<sup>14</sup> In such a context, the

11 On this system which was meant to pacify the Man, see Wang Wan-chun 王萬雋, “Yi jun yu Man—Liang Jin shiqi de Manfu” 以軍御蠻——兩晉時期的蠻府, *Zaoqi Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 早期中國史研究 5 (2013), 1–49.

12 For a chronological account, see Hans Bielenstein, “The Six Dynasties, Vol II.,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 69 (1997), 65–69; Alexis Lycas, *Les Man du fleuve Bleu: La fabrique d'un peuple dans la Chine impériale* (Toulouse: Anacharsis, 2023), 171–184.

13 On Panhu’s myth, see David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 140–160.

14 Alexis Lycas, “The Southern Man People as a Political and Fiscal Problem in Han Times,” *Monumenta Serica* 67 (2019), 145–164.

stakes for the state are reduced to the question of how to control and enforce imperial sovereignty over the geographic margins of the empire, and over the indigenous communities occupying them.

Sovereignty is usually determined by the reality of a polity's military power, political administrative and fiscal control. Here, it can be measured through consent to taxation, a subject amply dealt with in other times and places, but somehow neglected in pre-modern Sinicized East Asia.<sup>15</sup> To this we can add the military conscription of Man males, a source of conflict with the administration because the Man would claim that they were not ordinary subjects. The negotiations that invariably ensued from these conflicts shift the questioning to that of a more general consent to the imperial presence. It materialized for the Man through daily cohabitation with the imperial civil and military agents, as well as with the farming population.

Let us begin by analyzing examples of the Man's specific taxation system as told in historical sources. After presenting the original myth of the Man, the *Hou Han shu* specifies in a following paragraph that: "[Man] adults had to pay annually a whole piece of cloth, and a two *zhang*-long [piece] per child; this is called the cloth-*cong*" (歲令大人輸布一匹，小口二丈，是謂竇布).<sup>16</sup> But what does *cong* 竇 refer to? The term has been around since at least the third century BCE. According to the *Shuowen jiezi*, *cong* is "the tax paid by the Southern Man" (南蠻賦也).<sup>17</sup> The *Jin shu* proposes a slightly different interpretation of *cong*, which was not limited to the Man, and whose amount depended on geographical distance: "Each household sends one whole piece, and those who are far away one *zhang*" (戶一匹，遠者或一丈).<sup>18</sup> As for the *Hou Han shu*, it specifies that the Banshun Man 板楯蠻 (located around Chongqing) can also pay the *cong* in monetary form: "[Households] had to pay *cong* in cash each year, [to the amount of] forty [coins] per person" (歲入竇錢，口四十).<sup>19</sup> It was by paying *cong*, which is not a form of tribute, that the Man were exempted from paying other taxes.

Originally the term *cong* was used to designate a group based in eastern Sichuan whom Liu Bang 劉邦 (d. 195 BCE) offered preferential tax treatment

15 On tax compliance or resistance in modern Britain and France, see Martin J. Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan: The Politics of Taxation in Britain, 1799–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Nicolas Delalande, *Les batailles de l'impôt: Consentement et résistances de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 2014).

16 *Hou Han shu*, 86.2831.

17 Xu Shen 許慎, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 6b.131.

18 *Jin shu*, 26.790.

19 *Hou Han shu*, 86.2842.



when he established the Han dynasty in reward for the help they provided during the pacification of Guanzhong (Shaanxi).<sup>20</sup> Researchers disagree on whether the Cong people belong to the Banshun Man, the Linjun Man 廩君蠻 (scattered between the Huai River and the Yangtze) or both.<sup>21</sup> In any case, under the Han, *cong* encompassed all types of taxation that specifically concerned the Man, and it was theoretically, thanks to annual payments, a means to avoid corvée labor and conscription. These payments were made in cash (*congqian* 實錢) or cloth (*congbu* 實布). As for the cloth, it was probably made of palm fibers (*zongpi* 棕皮), a tree species widespread in the south, as well as a possible etymological origin for the word *cong*.<sup>22</sup> Alongside *cong*, one should also mention *jia* 幪, a tax also payable in cloth which appears in connection with the Linjun Man.<sup>23</sup>

The existence of a form of taxation embodied in *cong* (or *jia*) means that we can definitely discard the idea that the Man were not subjected to any form of contribution, and therefore control. They were, at least from the Qin and Han periods onwards. Nevertheless, the idiosyncrasies that led to the establishment of the Man taxation system have been a source of controversy and conflict, as government officials regularly attempted to challenge the Man's own tax system.<sup>24</sup>

If we look at the historiography of the Man, we find that most studies touch upon ethnographic and religious approaches. However, more detailed studies have been carried out in recent years on administrative and fiscal issues, usually from a social historical perspective. For a long time, ethnographic accounts on the Man have been understood as a mirror image of the political and military relations that imperial Sinitic entities maintained with Northern and Central Asian polities, from the times of the early Xiongnu raids up to the various steppe regimes of the pre-modern and modern eras.<sup>25</sup> In the

20 Chang Qu 常璩, Ren Naiqiang 任乃強 ed., *Huayang guozhi jiaobu tuzhu* 華陽國志校補圖注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 1.14; also quoted by Wang Zhongqian 王仲孳, *Wei-Jin Nanbeichao shi* 魏晉南北朝史 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2003), 187–189.

21 Wang Wan-chun 王萬雋, “Qin Han Wei Jin shidai de ‘cong’” 秦漢魏晉時代的實, *Zaoqi Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 早期中國史研究 1 (2009), 125–126.

22 Wang Wan-chun, “Qin Han Wei Jin shidai de ‘cong,’” 137. Wylie translates it as “guest cloth:” Alexander Wylie, “History of the Southern and South-Western Barbarians. Translated from the *How Han Shoo*, Book CXVI,” *Revue de l'Extrême-Orient* 1 (1882), 203.

23 *Hou Han shu*, 86.2841; Fan Chuo 樊綽, Xiang Da 向達 ed., *Manshu jiaozhu* 蠻書校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 10.258–260.

24 *Hou Han shu*, 86.2833.

25 See Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ursula Brosseder, and

south, Sinitic influences stretching as far as modern Vietnam and the gradual integration of the regions that were then at the empire's margins have been questioned in a number of important works, including from the perspective of ethnicity and identity.<sup>26</sup> Ethnography has been used to describe southern Daoist religious communities and travels of Buddhist pilgrims.<sup>27</sup> Literary studies have also dealt with descriptions of foreign populations based on accounts of long-distance travels and religious pilgrimages to imagined lands.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the relative lack of interest modern research has shown towards the Man, a few scholars have turned their attention to them. There has recently been a growing number of studies devoted to the Man, among which those by historian Wang Wan-chun 王萬雋 clearly stand out.<sup>29</sup> Some highly interesting works have been produced since the late 1990s concerning religious, literary or social history perspectives, while other works have limited themselves to compiling the occurrences of “Man” entries in primary sources (while

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Bryan Miller, *Xiongnu Archaeology – Multidisciplinary Perspectives of the First Steppe Empire in Inner Asia* (Bonn: Vor- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 2011).

- 26 Rolf A. Stein, “Le Lin-yi, sa localisation, sa contribution à la formation du Champa et ses liens avec la Chine,” *Han-hiue, bulletin du centre d'études sinologiques de Pékin* 2 (1947), 1–335; Wang Gung-wu, “The Nanhai Trade: A Study of the Early History of Chinese Trade in the South China Sea,” *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 31 (1958), 3–135; Jennifer Holmgren, *Chinese Colonisation of Northern Vietnam: Administrative Geography and Political Development in the Tongking Delta, First to Sixth Centuries A.D.* (Canberra: Australian University Press, 1980); James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Catherine Churchman, *The People between the Rivers: The Rise and the Fall of a Bronze Drum Culture, 200–750 CE* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Nicolas Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Yang Shao-yun, *The Way of the Barbarians: Redrawing Ethnic Boundaries in Tang and Song China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019).
- 27 Terry F. Kleeman, *Great Perfection: Religion and Ethnicity in a Chinese Millennial Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998); Eli Alberts, *A History of Daoism and the Yao People of South China* (Youngstown: Cambria Press, 2007).
- 28 Paul Demiéville, “La Montagne dans l'art littéraire chinois,” *France-Asie* 183 (1965), 7–32; Linda R. Feng, “Producing Knowledge of the Sea Coast: Marine Life and a Tang Geographical Miscellany of Lingnan,” *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 54 (2022), 268–303.
- 29 Among others, see: Wang Wan-chun, “Qin Han Wei Jin shidai de 'cong,’”; Wang Wan-chun 王萬雋, *Qin-Han zhi Nanchao de guojia yu Manren—yi zhengqu, guan jue he fuyi zhidu wei zhongxin* 秦漢至南朝的國家與蠻人——以政區、官爵和賦役制度為中心 (PhD. Diss., Taiwan daxue, 2012); Wang Wan-chun 王萬雋, “Yi jun yu Man—Liang Jin shiqi de Manfu” 以軍御蠻——兩晉時期的蠻府, *Zaoqi Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 早期中國史研究 5 (2013), 1–49.

superimposing an ethnological lens that relies heavily on the orientations of the political regime within which it developed).<sup>30</sup>

Finally, I would like to mention briefly the pioneering work of Édouard Mestre (1883–1950): a former customs officer in colonial Southeast Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century, he became interested in the Man through the mountain communities he met while learning Chinese. He thus approached the Man – and their supposed descendants – as an ethnographer before becoming a sociologist and philologist of early Chinese religions. His death stopped the publication of his monograph on the Man, but some of his working documents were left in the archives of the Institut des hautes études chinoises (IHEC), at the Collège de France in Paris.<sup>31</sup>

Much of the scholarly literature I have mentioned is concerned with describing who the Man were in order to define their identity. As a result, ethnic, literary and religious issues predominate in these works. Yet, most ethnographic descriptions show that the Man were analyzed through the lens of Chinese officials. There is thus just as much reason to turn the focus around and offer a history of Chinese administrative and bureaucratic practices in an imperial context, seen through the management of the Man issue. That is why I wish to move away from ethnic, literary and religious issues and refocus on administrative functioning and bureaucratic practice. By showing the problems posed by the Man, my aim is to take the ethnic out of the ethnographic,

30 He Guangyue 何光岳, *Nan Man yuanliu shi* 南蠻源流史 (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1988); Bai Cuiqin 白翠琴, *Wei-jin Nanbeichao minzu shi* 晉南北朝民族史 (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1996), 422 *passim*; Terry F. Kleeman, *Great Perfection: Religion and Ethnicity in a Chinese Millennial Kingdom*, 11–60; Weng Dujian 翁獨健, *Zhongguo minzu guanxi shi gangyao* 中國民族關係史綱要 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2001), 264–265; Eli Alberts, *A History of Daoism and the Yao People of South China*, chap. 2–3; D. Jonathan Felt, *The Man barbarians: As recorded in Chinese sources from the Han through the Southern Dynasties* (MA. Diss., University of Colorado, 2008); Alexis Lycas, “Représentation et intégration dans l’empire des populations Man 蠻 du Jingzhou 荊州 en Chine Classique,” *Journal asiatique* 302 (2014), 485–509; Lycas, “The Southern Man People as a Political and Fiscal Problem in Han Times;” Tian Xiaofei, “Migration, Identity, and Colonial Fantasies in a Fifth-Century Story Collection,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 80 (2021), 113–127; Lycas, *Les Man du fleuve Bleu: La fabrique d’un peuple dans la Chine impériale*.

31 Rolf A. Stein, “Nécrologie – Édouard Mestre (1883–1950),” *Annuaire de l’École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), Section des sciences religieuses* 59 (1950), 9–13; Édouard Mestre, IHEC, boxes 21–27. The Mestre archives consist of numerous handwritten sheets containing notes, translations and copies of books and articles. I should also mention François Martin (1948–2015), who translated several sources related to the Man in the early 1980s, before turning his attention to ethnological works on the Tibetan and Burmese populations of the far south. His archives are less voluminous than Mestre’s, as Martin possessed the primary and secondary sources that Mestre had to copy from libraries.

in order to understand how the empire functioned and how those who administered it worked.

In addition to the information provided by official historiography, I will present how manuscript evidence can contribute to our understanding of the Man phenomenon in the Middle Yangtze, particularly under the Western Han. But before turning to manuscripts, let us look at what other archaeological remains tell us.

## 2 Material Culture: Burial Sites and Insignia

Any historian wishing to trace the genealogy of premodern East Asian human communities with no known writing is quickly confronted with the problem of sources emanating exclusively from Sinitic political regimes. While Yue 越 archaeological sites have been found and are well studied, archaeological remains for the Man are currently non-existent, with the potential exception of several rock-cut burial sites. In Sichuan, a first type of pre-imperial caves containing “coffin-baskets” may have belonged to local communities.<sup>32</sup> The discovery of other troglodytic tombs dating from the Eastern Han period along the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze, i.e. in Man territory, has recently enabled archaeologist Lia Wei to distinguish them from the first type of caves. By analyzing their singularity, she has shown that they cannot be linked to Han funerary practices.<sup>33</sup> Although the small size of the coffins certainly hampered the disposal of a whole body, a heap of collected bones could on the contrary be placed in it; here, it is worth noting that the *Sui shu* attributed to the Man the practice of “bone collecting:”

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。拾骨必須女壻，蠻重女壻，故以委之。拾骨者，除肉取骨，棄小取大<sup>34</sup>

When a person dies, the body of the deceased is first moved to the courtyard, it is not left in the house. Once the body has been washed, it is

32 Alain Thote, “The Archaeology of Eastern Sichuan at the End of the Bronze Age (Fifth to Third Century BC),” in Robert Bagley ed., *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2001), 203–210.

33 Lia Wei, “A comparative study of burial caves south of the Yangzi River: Highland routes and frontier communities at the fall of the Han Empire (2nd to 3rd century CE)” (PhD. Diss., University of London SOAS, 2018), 61–69.

34 *Sui shu*, 31.897.

placed in a coffin and sent up the mountain for thirteen years. On the most auspicious day, the body is transferred to a smaller coffin: [this process] is known as the “bone collection.” This collection must be carried out by the son-in-law of the deceased; he has an important role among the Man, and is therefore entrusted with this task. Whoever collects the bones must remove the flesh to group the bones together, and leave out the small bones to keep only the large ones.

The epigraphic evidence found in these funerary sites does not reveal explicit mentions of Man names, nor does it provide implicit references to their ritual practices: the stone inscriptions are often terse and factual, recording only names, contractual relationships and information on the craftsmanship of the tomb.<sup>35</sup> This is why their attribution by archaeologists and present-day local inhabitants to the Man is slightly problematic. Although it can be tempting to link the people who built these troglodytic tombs to the Man, it seems more reasonable to refrain from doing so. Moreover, the archaeological absence of information regarding the Man does not make them exceptional – on the contrary, it underscores their “ordinary” nature, shared with the common people who left very few traces: early and early medieval tombs mainly provide information on elite groups.

Since the Man were not urban communities, no architectural remains can be attributed to them, be they domestic or funerary. Despite these limitations, and despite more scattered discoveries than in Central China or in Sichuan, the material culture of the Middle Yangtze has produced a number of artifacts. As early as the Bronze Age, numerous instruments, including large bells were unearthed in this region, testifying, according to Alain Thote, to a “cultural originality” distinct from other bronze cultures, such as those from Anyang or Sanxingdui.<sup>36</sup> However, and even when they emanate from aristocratic tombs, few artistic representations (in rock and funerary art or maps) of local populations in the northwest, and even fewer in the south, have been preserved.<sup>37</sup> Nor

35 Lia Wei, “A comparative study of burial caves south of the Yangzi River: Highland routes and frontier communities at the fall of the Han Empire (2nd to 3rd century CE),” 268.

36 Alain Thote, “L’Art du bronze,” in *Chine antique, voyage de l’âme: Trésors archéologiques de la province du Hunan, XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J.C.–II<sup>e</sup> siècle après J.C.* (Daoulas: Centre culturel Abbaye de Daoulas, 1992), 44.

37 For the Han period, see Michèle Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, “Imperial Aura and the Image of the Other in Han Art,” in Fritz-Heiner Mutschler and Achim Mittag eds., *Conceiving the Empire: China and Rome Compared* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 311. For example, the only mention of the Man in Albert Dien’s work on the material culture of the Six Dynasties is not related to remains, but to one of their plunders: Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 401. Annette Kieser

are there any traces of craftsmanship (weapons, furniture) or manufactured coins; official sources actually pay very little attention to the Man's abilities in these areas. Aside from these inconclusive archaeological elements and traditional historiography, which provides secularized information on local customs, clothing and culinary habits, we can thankfully turn to sigils.

When the State recognized the importance of some Man leaders, it granted them titles that could be accompanied by official seals that testified to their status and to their administrative use by imperial services.<sup>38</sup> Thanks to Ye Qifeng's 葉其峯 landmark study of the Man seal matrices, we now know a significant number of titles that were not included in official sources.<sup>39</sup> It is possible to separate these seals into two categories: those whose first engraved character refers to the granting dynasty, and those which make no mention of the issuing body. Of the first category, two seals are dated by Ye Qifeng to the Eastern Han because of their content.<sup>40</sup> The first refers to a "Town Marquis of the Cong [people] returning to allegiance to the Han" 漢歸義賓邑侯, and the second to a "Town Chief of the Man returning to allegiance to the Han" 漢歸義蠻邑長. The "Eastern Han" hypothesis is justified by the author on two counts: the first is the mention of the term "Han," which enables Ye Qifeng to reduce the temporal focus to either the Western or the Eastern Han; the second leads him to give priority to the Eastern Han, a period when the greatest number of Man insurrections erupted, propelling an equivalent number of imperial responses: these ended with the "return to allegiance" (*guiyi*) of the Man, a set phrase referring to the submission to the empire. The author also suggests that the groups of Man concerned by these seals were certainly the most "active," and therefore probably those who populated Wuling commandery.

Ye Qifeng's demonstration is convincing. However, there is a number of reasons not to link these seals to the Eastern Han, but rather to the following Three Kingdoms period, and more specifically the Shu. We know from the *Sanguo zhi*

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confirms a similar situation regarding the early medieval southern dynasties: Annette Kieser, "Southern Material Culture," in Albert E. Dien, and Keith N. Knapp eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Vol. 2, The Six Dynasties, 220–581* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 418–442.

38 On seals and their definitions, see Michel Pastoureau, *Les sceaux* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981), 21–24.

39 Ye Qifeng 葉其峯, "Gudai Yuezu yu Manzu de guanyin" 古代越族與蠻族的官印, in Wang Rencong 王人聰 and Ye Qifeng 葉其峯 eds., *Qin-Han Wei-Jin Nanbeichao guanyin yanjiu* 秦漢魏晉南北朝官印研究 (Hong Kong: Xianggang zhongwen daxue wenwuguan, 1990), 156–163. The author accompanies his work with reproductions of existing matrices.

40 Ye Qifeng, "Gudai Yuezu yu Manzu de guanyin," 158.

三國志 that, in 221, Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234) granted, on behalf of Liu Bei 劉備, seals to several Man chiefs:

先主稱尊號，以良為侍中。及東征吳，遣良入武陵招納五溪蠻夷，蠻夷渠帥皆受印號，咸如意指。<sup>41</sup>

The former ruler [Liu Bei] granted [Zhuge] Liang the honorary title of palace officer. During the eastern expedition against Wu, [Liu Bei] sent [Zhuge] Liang to penetrate Wuling in order to attract the Five Streams Man. All Man chiefs were given a seal and a title, each designated according to his desire.

It seems that the earliest seals claiming to be “Han” can just as easily be traced back to the kingdom of Shu, founded by Liu Bei. As a distant descendant of the Han imperial family, he saw himself as their legitimate heir in a new region, and therefore gave his regime the name Shu-Han – literally, “Han of [the land of] Shu.” The reference to “Han” in both seals may thus well refer to Shu. In addition, the first seal refers to the Cong, which is not the Man tax, but the eponymous Man group of eastern Sichuan, right in the heart of Shu territory. Another seal, undated, is added to the list concerning the area controlled by the Shu. It refers to a “Chief of the Banshun barbarians” (Banshun yizhang 板盾夷長), named after the Man living in Ba and Shu.<sup>42</sup> Although it is difficult to formally distinguish the seals of the Three Kingdoms from those of the Han period, the addition of these clues leads me to link these three seals to the Shu kingdom. In addition, two years before Liu Bei, the Wu kingdom of his rival Sun Quan 孫權 also conferred insignia to some Man:

備宜都太守樊友委郡走，諸城長吏及蠻夷君長皆降。遜請金銀銅印，以假授初附。<sup>43</sup>

Fan You, governor of Yidu, abandoned the commandery and fled. The heads of the local offices and the Man chiefs all submitted. [Lu] Xun requested to confer gold, silver and bronze seals to those who had submitted from the start.

41 Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 39.983.

42 Ye Qifeng, “Gudai Yuezu yu Manzu de guanyin,” 161.

43 *Sanguo zhi*, 58.1345.

Lu Xun (183–245) was Sun Quan's closest advisor. More importantly here, he was a major player in the conquest of the Middle Yangtze, a highly disputed area between the two southern kingdoms. In this respect, control over the Man who populated the area was crucial, as was decorating them. These various excerpts from the *Sanguo zhi* and the three seals we have seen are striking examples of competing attempts to attract Man peoples. They emanate, almost simultaneously at the very beginning of the Three Kingdoms, from two rival states eyeing the same Man-populated territory, between the Yuan and Xiang rivers.<sup>44</sup>

Six additional seals are dated to the Jin period: “Man King of the Jin [dynasty]” 晉蠻夷王, “Man King returning to allegiance to the Jin [dynasty]” 晉蠻夷歸義王, “Man Marquis returning to allegiance to the Jin [dynasty]” 晉蠻夷歸義侯, “Exemplary and amiable Town Chief Man of the Jin [dynasty]” 晉蠻夷率善邑長, “Man Chiliarch returning to allegiance to the Jin [dynasty]” 晉蠻夷歸義千長, and “Exemplary and amiable Man Centurion of the Jin [dynasty]” 晉蠻夷率善佰長. Without being able to specify whether these seals concern the Western or Eastern Jin, Ye Qifeng rightly believes that they must have been attributed to the Man by strongmen stationed on either side of the Middle Yangtze like Tao Kan 陶侃 (259–334).<sup>45</sup> However, as the expression “exemplary and amiable” (*shuwaishan* 率善) is an honorary title mainly granted by northern regimes, it is quite plausible that the three seals featuring this wording date from the Western Jin.

The last three seals make no reference to any dynastic power whatsoever: “Town Lord Man barbarian” 蠻夷邑君, “Town Chief Man” 蠻夷邑長, “Village Chief Man.”<sup>46</sup> These more ordinary insignia meant that the Man elites were not the only ones who enjoyed state recognition. Attention also had to be paid to the mid-level Man leaders, who were the heads of some towns, as shown below in the Hujia caochang slips. Whether such titles served as generic insignia or were given during periods of transition and inter-state competition, they do attest to the regional importance of the Man phenomenon.

The seals impressed for the Man are material evidence which, when added to historical testimonies, confirm the social and political impact of the Man on the early medieval political evolution of the South. They partly reveal how the bureaucratic apparatus (both civil and military) tried to solve the problem

44 We also note another title of “Exemplary and amiable Chiliarch of the Man of the Wei [dynasty]” 魏蠻夷率善千長, a sign that the Wei was just as involved in this system of vassalage of Man chiefs: Ye Qifeng, “Gudai Yuezu yu Manzu de guanyin,” 159.

45 Ye Qifeng, “Gudai Yuezu yu Manzu de guanyin,” 159–160.

46 Ye Qifeng, “Gudai Yuezu yu Manzu de guanyin,” 160.



posed by the Man. The seals also highlight the different scales of intervention of the Man leaders, at the administrative (as village or town heads), military (they could lead hundreds or thousands of men), and nobiliary (when appointed as king or duke) levels. Far from being neutral individuals, their leaders became historical actors in their own right.

Despite the contributions of historiography and material culture to our knowledge of the Man, two problems remain. The first is that the materials we have analyzed so far refer back to the Eastern Han period at the earliest, masking or ignoring what may have happened before. The second problem is that in the standard histories (and particularly in the collective biographies on foreign peoples), the mechanisms that the authorities implemented to optimize the geographical, economic and social integration of the Man only provide us with a partial picture, to which it is essential to add the exponential number of manuscripts discovered in Hunan and Hubei. These manuscripts confirm the reality of the problems that the Man posed for the State, as reflected already in the historiography. More interestingly, they record the administrative and judicial solutions – specific taxation, (partial) exemption from conscription, establishment of *ad hoc* governing bodies, awarding of honorary titles – that were put in place locally to counteract the Man's irregular outbursts. The following two sections are meant to shed light on these aspects.

### 3 Legal Cases from Zhangjiashan and Zoumalou

The recent finds of manuscripts amplify our understanding of the Man phenomenon by unveiling the kind of information that was produced locally and that was not reproduced centrally. These documents have been unearthed from elite tombs or discovered in wells where they were discarded, intentionally or not. They enable us to measure the degree of integration of the Man. If the many conflicts reported in the standard histories tell us anything, it is that this integration took place slowly and unevenly throughout the early medieval period. Leaving aside for the moment the question of consent to taxation, we will focus on the issue of conscription: it appears to be a complex one, not least because the existence of an exceptional form of taxation raises the questions of how the state considered the Man, and of the making of their social status in the Han political economy.

We have an example of an administrative archive specifying that the Man of Nanjun 南郡 were fully mobilizable and should as such join the garrisons

when circumstances required them to do so.<sup>47</sup> Excavated in Zhangjiashan 張家山 among other documents including a collection of laws dated to 186 BCE, this excerpt from a collection of cases entitled “Zouyan shu” 奏讞書 (“Book of submitted doubtful cases”) dates to 196 BCE and concerns a Man (ironically) named Wuyou 毋憂. It is now well known, but I think it is worth recalling here the parts that deal with opposite perceptions of what he owed to the state:

毋憂曰：變(蠻)夷大男子。歲出五十六錢以當徭賦，不當為屯，尉窳遣毋憂為屯，行未到去亡。(…)律：變(蠻)夷男子歲出賣錢，以當徭賦，非曰勿令為屯也。<sup>48</sup>

Wuyou stated: “[I am a] Man adult male. Every year, I give fifty-six cash to match my government service and poll taxes. I ought not to be made a garrison [conscript]. [Commandery] Commandant Yao sent me to become a garrison [conscript]. I was on my way [to my post] but had not yet arrived when I left and absconded.” (...) “[According to] the statute: ‘Male Man, every year, are to remit cash-*cong* to match their government service and poll taxes.’ It is not the case that it says, ‘do not order them to be garrison [conscripts].’”

Having been ordered to report to a garrison, Wuyou preferred to desert, as he, like other members of his community, considered he had paid the taxes expected from a Man such as himself by the local administration. He knows the amount of the *cong*, which he provides precisely and laconically. Although court cases like the one involving Wuyou rarely leave room to develop the psychological aspects of the protagonists, the assurance of this Man is striking, when being judged for a fault he believes he did not commit. Indeed, we should remember that the settlement of the *cong*, here in cash, is specifically aimed at relieving the Man of any other form of obligation towards the

47 Maxim Korolkov, “Arguing about Law. Interrogation Procedure under the Qin and Former Han Dynasties,” *Études chinoises* 30 (2011), 51–52.

48 Zhangjiashan ersiqi hao Han mu zhujian zhengli xiaozu 張家山二四七號漢墓竹簡整理小組, *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian: 247 hao mu* 張家山漢墓竹簡：二四七號墓 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2001), 213. See the complete study by Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, and Robin D.S. Yates, *Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China. A Study with Critical Edition and Translation of the Legal Texts from Zhangjiashan Tomb No. 247* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 1171–1183 (I use their translation, slightly modified, 1175). See also Chen Qingyun 陳慶雲, “Qin-Han shiqi minzu guanxi de falü tiaozheng—yi shubang lü he Manyi lü wei zhongxin” 秦漢時期民族關係的法律調整——以《屬邦律》和《蠻夷律》為中心, *Qijing shifan xueyuan xuebao* 曲靖師範學院學報 26 (2007), 54–55.

administration. But it is precisely in this crucial passage that Wuyou's fate is at stake. Commandant Yao's intervention, and that of other administrators with apparent power over judicial matters, concerns the interpretation of a legal loophole in the Man's status. While Wuyou considers that he is free of all constraints once the *cong* has been settled, the officials consider that the absence of an explicit correlation between the *cong* and military conscription does not exempt the Man.

While the Man were required, since the first descendants of Panhu, to contribute to taxation through *cong*, and while we know the form (cloth, cash) that it usually took, it is impossible to state with certainty the nature of the privileges that accompanied it. We should mention here a passage that has had a considerable impact on the status attributed to the Man. It is a short commentary to the *Hou Han shu* made by Li Xian's 李賢 (651–684) team. It suggests that: “[The Man were] so favored and pampered that they were exempt from taxation and conscription” (優寵之，故蠲其賦役也).<sup>49</sup> The obvious problem with this line is that there is really no historical evidence that such a statement, made by a team of Tang court historians regarding a much older (actually legendary) legal decision, was necessarily implemented under the Han and later.

In the Zhangjiashan case, the attention paid by different officials (a military officer and civilian magistrates) to Wuyou, an individual, reflects the Man's importance at the local level. Furthermore, the existence of a “Statute of the Man barbarians” (*Manyi li* 蠻夷律), which certainly existed prior to the case of Wuyou, testifies to the consideration the state accorded to the Man. It is also worth noting that by proposing a less severe punishment than the one that was ruled by high-level magistrates from the imperial court, local magistrates expressed a more sensitive and fine-grained management of the Man problem.

I would now like to look at another court case, drawn from the documents recently uncovered from well J8 at Zoumalou 走馬樓, Changsha. Unlike the vast majority of this site's documentation that was unearthed since the 1990s, these two thousand or so bamboo slips date from the Western Han. Studying some of the slips referring to a case dating to 124 BCE provides additional information on the Man taxation system.<sup>50</sup> They show the social importance of the Man

49 *Hou Han shu*, 86.2830.

50 The corpus has not yet been published in full. For the time being, only a few reproductions and transcriptions are available in two recent articles, including an excavation report: Changsha jiandu bowuguan 長沙簡牘博物館 and Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 長沙市文物考古研究所, “Changsha shi Zoumalou Xi Han gujing ji jiandu fajue jianbao” 長沙市走馬樓西漢古井及簡牘發掘簡報, *Kaogu* 考古 2021.3, 35–62; Chen Songchang 陳松長, “Changsha Zoumalou Xi Han gujing chutu jiandu gaishu” 長沙走馬樓西漢古井出土簡牘概述, *Kaogu* 考古 2021.3, 97–108.

in an area where they accounted for almost half the population.<sup>51</sup> Admittedly, the social, temporal and geographical context differs somewhat from the Zhangjiashan case involving Wuyou. However, the Zoumalou documents confirm the weight of the Man, and their integration into the local economy of a peripheral kingdom like Changsha towards the end of the second century BCE. Although the deciphering of slips 3 and 17 is complex given the absence of the entire corpus, they nonetheless offer valuable additional information to the elements known up to this time. Slip 17 outlines the interrogation of the local tax collector (*sefu* 嗇夫), a man named Xiang Ren 襄人:

□□史巴人、胡人訊襄人，要道辭曰：府調無陽四年竇糶賣取錢輸臨沅食官、廩，償所贖重賈（價）錢，皆急緩。夷聚里相去離遠，民貧難得。襄人令譯士五（伍）搞[收竇]□。52

The secretaries [in charge of prisons] Ba Ren and Hu Ren questioned Xiang Ren. The important points of the testimony read that “The [Changsha] bureau collects from Wuyang [district]<sup>53</sup> [in Wuling commandery] the *cong* on the fourth-year [of the Changsha king], from which they sell the grains to receive cash to be given to the kitchen and stable service of Linyuan<sup>54</sup> [district], and repay the heavy cost of [sentence] remission. [These matters] are all urgent. The barbarian villages are far apart, and the poverty of the population [makes] the collection [of taxes] difficult. Xiang Ren orders the Common soldier and interpreter Gao to [retrieve the *cong*].”

The first important lesson is that the Man tax, the *cong*, is an integral and vital part of the regional circuit of public financing. While its epicenter is Changsha, the kingdom seems to have control over two districts of a neighboring commandery, in this case Wuling. *Cong* collection is entrusted to a certain Gao 搞, not because of his hierarchical responsibilities (he is at the lowest existing rank), but because of his linguistic skills, the usefulness of which will emerge later in the case report. Nowhere is it stated that Gao is a Man. However, his

51 Wang Su 王素, “Shuo Yimin—du Changsha Zoumalou Sanguo Wu jian zhaji” 說“夷民”——讀長沙走馬樓三國吳簡札記, *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 2004-5, 50.

52 “Changsha shi Zoumalou Xi Han gujing ji jian du fajue jianbao,” 56–57, slip 17; Chen Songchang, “Changsha Zoumalou Xi Han gujing chutu jian du gaishu,” 104–105, slip 17.

53 Located in the town of Huaihua, over 400 km west of Changsha.

54 On the site of Changde city, 175 km northwest of Changsha, and more than 300 km from Wuyang.

knowledge of Man territory, his mastery of the idiom of the Wuling Man and the fact that, as will be shown, he employs other Man in his tax-collecting task, show at the very least considerable knowledge of the Man world. The rest of the case concerns the nature of the taxes that were collected, and the fact that Gao employed other Man to do so:

☐☐船一艘士五定所，當米八斗。腸七十五斤，士五強秦、麿、仆各廿五斤。非搞家賣腸，襄人自賣得士五共吸為[大]男共來予腸十五斤。士五工期為☐<sup>55</sup>

... boat, to the office of Common soldier Ding, equating eight bushels of rice. Of the seventy-five pounds of tripe, Common soldiers Qiang Qin, Jun and Pu, [divided] twenty-five pounds each. Having failed to receive the tripe-*cong* from Gao's household, Xiang Ren himself sold [his share] so that the Common soldiers, with some young man named Xi (?), to come together and [each] donate fifteen pounds of tripe. Common soldier Gong Qi for ...

As unusual as it may seem, it should be pointed out that the Wuling Man could pay their *cong* in tripe (and possibly in boats, but the lacuna at the beginning of the slip makes this interpretation tentative at best). It was therefore possible to pay the tax in ways other than cash or cloth. All the examples mentioned so far confirm that *cong* is indeed a generic term referring to all forms of taxation specific to the Man. Moreover, the standard measurement used to determine the amount of the taxes specific to the Man seems to have been the bushel of rice; this is not very surprising in a rice-growing region, but is also perhaps a sign that rice was a significant part of the Man's farming practices.

The problem, and the cause of the legal issue between Gao and his superior Xiang Ren, seems to be that Gao did not contribute his share to the collection, even though he himself commissioned three other Man to help him with the task. Qiang Qin, Jun and Pu each brought in 25 pounds of tripe, unlike Gao, from whom a similar amount was probably expected. Xiang Ren then tried to make up for the missing part, but only managed to gather 15 pounds of tripe. The rest of the process, leading up to the formal report (*yuanshu* 爰書), is not known. Here is the report, as it appears on slip 3:

55 "Changsha shi Zoumalou Xi Han gujing ji jian du fajue jianbao," 56–57, slip 17; Chen Songchang, "Changsha Zoumalou Xi Han gujing chutu jian du gaishu," 105, slip 17.

□□[獄] 史胡人爰書：以襄人、搞辭、證律告麿、強秦、仆。麿、強秦、仆皆不能楚言，即以襄人、搞辭證不言請（情）、擇（譯）訊人出入罪人律，出（告）擇（譯）共里不更當，令訊麿、仆、強秦。當曰：強秦、麿、仆。<sup>56</sup>

Formal report from Hu Ren, secretary in charge of prisons: according to the testimony and state of evidence regarding Xiang Ren and Gao: Jun, Qiang Qin, and Pu are accused. Jun, Qiang Qin, and Pu are not proficient in the Chu language. Hence, because the testimony and evidence [involving] Xiang Ren and Gao mentions neither the concrete situation nor the interpreter, [we] interrogate the man about the state of revenue and expenditure, and about the man's guilt, [we] inform and translate for the Service rotation exempt [of the fourth order] of all the villages, [and we] order the interrogation of Jun, Pu and Qiang Qin. The sentence reads: Qiang Qin, Jun, and Pu.

Despite the omission of the information that occurred between the questioning and the conviction, and in spite of the difficulty to fully understand the passage, we can gather that Gao succeeded in having these three subordinates convicted in his place. The rest of slip 3 mentions the defense of the three Man who explained that they handed over their share to Gao, then moved on to arable land, and came across a minor official on the Yong 涌 River.<sup>57</sup>

Beyond the legal aspects of the case, this fragment is interesting for socio-linguistic reasons. A Common soldier like Gao appears at the administrative and social interface between the local government and the Man. He seems to belong to an existing professional category employed by the administration, without this being a source of surprise to the Han authorities. As for Qiang Qin, Jun and Pu, these three Man “could not [understand] the language of Chu,” but they could be assisted by interpreters. Chu's language was considered official, since interpreters like Gao worked for the government. The mobilization of a professional body of interpreters to assist non-Chinese-speaking Man and the importance of the contributions paid by the Man peoples suggest that they were fundamental local players.

56 Changsha jiandu bowuguan and Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Changsha shi Zoumalou Xi Han gujing ji jiandu fajue jianbao,” 57, slip 3.

57 Changsha jiandu bowuguan and Changsha shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Changsha shi Zoumalou Xi Han gujing ji jiandu fajue jianbao,” 57, slip 3.

#### 4 Between Obligations and Privileges: Documents from Hujia Caochang

Manuscripts mentioning the Man question the effectiveness of the social control of local populations. Some of the more than 4,000 documents excavated between 2018 and 2019 in tomb M12 at the Western Han site of Hujia caochang 胡家草場 (Jingzhou, Hubei) show that the Man were a source of concern, and that measures were put in place to control them. The Hujia caochang corpus consists mainly of legal documents, including a code (*lüdian* 律典) in three chapters. According to Li Zhifang 李志芳 and Jiang Lujing 蔣魯敬 who co-authored the preliminary report of the site, the third *juan* of the code contained important information and legal cases regarding the Man who were employed as soldiers or civil servants and the various exemptions that concerned them, thus displaying both the Man's obligations and privileges.<sup>58</sup> I will examine how the tension between what the Man were required to do and what they were allowed to do appears primarily in matters related to taxation, titles and conscription.

As we have already seen, the problem of taxing the Man people is a recurring theme in historical discussions. Sources suggest that in early medieval times, and especially from the Liang dynasty onwards, the taxation system affecting the Man shifted geographically southwards beyond the Nanling Mountains and westwards in and beyond Sichuan.<sup>59</sup> However, this question emerged at least as far back as the Western Han period in the Middle Yangtze area. The following slips from the Hujia caochang manuscripts provide precise information on the Man's administrative and fiscal organization:

蠻夷百戶以上為大邑，不盈百戶為中邑，卅（卅）戶以下為小邑。令其長有車馬者閒歲<sup>60</sup>

58 Li Zhifang 李志芳 and Jiang Lujing 蔣魯敬, "Hubei Jingzhou shi Hujia caochang Xi Han mu M12 chutu jiandu gaishu" 湖北荊州市胡家草場西漢墓 M12 出土簡牘概述, *Kaogu* 考古 2020.2, 25.

59 *Sui shu*, 31.898; See also Wang Wan-chun, "Qin Han Wei Jin shidai de 'cong,'" 140, 151.

60 Li Zhifang 李志芳 and Li Tianhong 李天虹, *Jingzhou Hujia caochang Xi Han jiandu xuan-cui* 荊州胡家草場西漢簡牘選粹 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2021), 93, slip 2601. See also Tong Chun Fung 唐俊峰, "Xinjian Jingzhou Hujia caochang 12 hao Han mu 'Waiyue lü' 'Manyi lü' tiaowen duji yu jiaoshi" 新見荊州胡家草場12號漢墓《外樂律》《蠻夷律》條文讀記與校釋, in Zhou Dongping 周東平 and Zhu Teng 朱騰 eds., *Falü shi yi ping* 法律史譯評, vol. 8 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2020), 82, 88–89.

More than one hundred Man barbarian households constitute a large town; not fully one hundred households constitutes a medium town; less than forty households constitutes a small town. Order those of their chiefs who own carriages and horses to ... every two years ...

蠻夷長以上，其戶不賚；其邑人及戎、翟（狄）邑，歲出賚，戶百一十二錢，欲出金八朱（銖）者，許。<sup>61</sup>

[At the level] of Man chiefs and above, their households do not [contribute] to the *cong*-tax; the inhabitants of the towns as well as [those] of the towns of the Western and Northern [barbarians], must each year take out the *cong*-tax, at 112 cash per household; those who [instead] wish to take out eight *zhu* of gold, are permitted.

The administrative organization of the Man is structured rationally by size of the town. Levels of taxation among the Man attest to clear social hierarchies. This organization is further confirmed by the various titles held by their chiefs (see below, slip 2597). The combination of these elements complicates the simplistic image of the Man as disorganized tribal peoples. From a fiscal point of view, the obligation to pay the *cong* was accompanied by privileges for some Man chiefs, and compromises for certain households that were authorized to pay their taxes using gold instead of cash. Slip 1582 also shows that Man taxation was not necessarily conceived independently from the other forms of local taxation that were applied to other non-Chinese populations. This should perhaps be seen as a nuance to the supposed exceptionalism of the Man, as conveyed through misreadings of Li Xian's commentary.<sup>62</sup> The following example, devoted to the Man elite burial practices, suggests that they also depended on the structure and power of the deceased's estate:

蠻夷長死，欲入禾粟戎葬者，許之。邑千戶以上，入四千石；不盈千戶，入二千石；不盈百戶，入千五百石；不盈五十戶及毋（無）邑人者，入千石。<sup>63</sup>

61 Li Zhifang and Li Tianhong, *Jingzhou Hujia caochang Xi Han jian du xuancui*, 90, slip 1582.

62 See footnote 49 above.

63 Li Zhifang and Jiang Lujing, "Hubei Jingzhou shi Hujia caochang Xi Han mu M12 chutu jian du gaishu," 27, slips 2621 and 2630; Li Zhifang and Li Tianhong, *Jingzhou Hujia caochang Xi Han jian du xuancui*, 94–95, slip 2630. See also Tong Chun Fung, "Xinjian Jingzhou Hujia caochang 12 hao Han mu 'Waiyue lü' 'Manyi lü' tiaowen duji yu jiaoshi," 85–87, 91.



[When] a Man chief dies and if it is desired [to proceed with] the military burial by handing over grains, [the administration] agrees. If [the deceased chief's] apauage contains more than one thousand households, hand over four thousand piculs; if it does not contain one thousand households, hand over two thousand piculs; if it does not contain one hundred households, hand over one thousand five hundred piculs; if it does not contain fifty households or there are no inhabitants, hand over one thousand piculs.

Slips 2621 and 2630 show that Man dignitaries could maintain their funeral rites by paying a fee that was proportional to the size of the group led by their chief. This is yet another example of the variety of local goods, not limited to cloth or cash, that could be exchanged. But above all, it is a sign of the political skills of local officials, who understood how important it was for Man elites to maintain their privileges in terms of funeral rites. In order to preserve the forms of social distinction that their ranks brought them, and to avoid an ordinary burial, Man dignitaries had to comply with obligations imposed by the imperial administration.

This to-and-fro between obligations and privileges is reflected in their titles. Although the Man did not enjoy a political structure comparable to that of powerful foreign polities such as the Xiongnu or some of the Sixteen States, they were led by identified and powerful leaders. They therefore had their own range of titles, as this excerpt from the *Hou Han shu* shows:

有邑君長，皆賜印綬，冠用獺皮。名渠帥曰精夫，相呼為婁徒。<sup>64</sup>

The village chiefs all receive a seal and wear a marten-skin cap. Their supreme leader is called “Seminal one,” and they call each other “companion.”

Mentioning these two (presumably) emic terms masks several other titles, whose existence and usage are known to us through Hujia caochang slip 2597. To secure the support of a given social group such as the Man, imperial authorities logically bestowed official titles on them. This practice seems like it is part

64 *Hou Han shu*, 86.2829–2830. The expressions “seminal one” (*jingfu* 精夫), and “companion” (*yangtu* 婁徒), are, like *cong*, most likely Man words, transcribed into Chinese. See Fang Gaofeng 方高峰, “Liuchao Manzu shehui jingji shitan” 六朝蠻族社會經濟試探, *Hunan chengshi xueyuan xuebao* 湖南城市學院學報 24.1 (2003), 60.

of an ordinary process of political control. But there is something more complex at play here:

蠻夷君當官大夫，公、諸侯當大夫，右大夫、左大夫、冑（冑）靖、  
 嚳（徹）公子當不更，籍<sup>65</sup>

[The title of] Lord of the Man corresponds to [that of] Grand officer bureaucrat [of the sixth order], [the titles of] Duke and Marquis correspond to [those of] Grand officer [of the fifth order], [the titles of] Grand officer of the right, Grand officer of the left, Terrifying scion and Noble and penetrating scion correspond to [that of] Service rotation exempt [of the fourth order]. Recorded on ...

To analyze these nobility titles raises questions of analogy and equivalence. We learn that the Man enjoy – at their own hierarchical level situated between the sixth and fourth Chinese hierarchical orders – more titles than the Han: this testifies to the existence of different statuses within the same social class and confers the Man social importance. At the same time, this equivalence between several honorific titles from the same category goes against the strict Han classification system of titles. Such a phenomenon equates *and* differentiates Man titles in an innovative way, while bearing limited political consequences.

These skills and the general art of compromise needed in the management of the Man are also reflected in the way conscription is apprehended and interpreted. Following the examples drawn from the Zhangjiashan and Zoumalou manuscripts analyzed in the previous section, the Hujia caochang documents provide two very enlightening slips for understanding the issues at stake:

亡道外蠻夷及略來歸、自出，外蠻夷人歸義（義）者，皆得越邊塞  
 徼入。<sup>66</sup>

Those Man barbarians who absconded beyond [their] circuit, those who plan to return or those who decide to go outside, and those Man barbarians from outside who return to [Han] allegiance, all will be able to cross the border fortifications to return.

65 Li Zhifang and Jiang Lujing, "Hubei Jingzhou shi Hujia caochang Xi Han mu M12 chutu jian du gaishu," 27, slip 2597; Li Zhifang and Li Tianhong, *Jingzhou Hujia caochang Xi Han jian du xuancui*, 92, slip 2597. I have modified the punctuation according to Tong Chun Fong's thorough analysis: Tong Chun Fong, "Xinjian Jingzhou Hujia caochang 12 hao Han mu 'Waiyue lu' 'Manyi lu' tiaowen duji yu jiaoshi," 83, 88.

66 Li Zhifang and Li Tianhong, *Jingzhou Hujia caochang Xi Han jian du xuancui*, 89, slip 1272.

蠻夷人不可令乘城亭鄣者，勿令戍邊；其有罪當戍邊，令居= (居) 縣道。<sup>67</sup>

Those Man barbarians unable to serve in the defense of a city or a fortified border post, do not [have them] serve as border guards; those who have committed an offense [and whose sentence] was to guard the border, [they may] serve quietly in [their own] district circuits.

These two slips concern privileges relating directly (slip 2596) or indirectly (slip 1272) to mandatory conscription. Instead of punishing Man deserters, the incentive policy put in place exempts them and welcomes them back if they decide to return. If we compare this example with Wuyou's, we realize that the incorporation of the Man into the conscription system was an important regional issue for two reasons: on the one hand, the Man's avoidance of conscription must have been a more common phenomenon than we can imagine, perhaps because they imagined themselves to be free from it once the *cong* was paid; on the other hand, and since the Man enjoyed a well-deserved reputation in official sources as excellent and fierce warriors, it was important for the state to be able to count on them from a military viewpoint. How then can we justify the fact that rallied Man who accepted a military post were not required to be sent to frontier areas where their qualities would have been useful? It would thus seem that it is the very aspect of their privileged status that explains why the Man were not considered as ordinary soldiers.

## 5 Conclusion

While relations between the Man and the government agents could be peaceful, attention from historians has often been attracted to more violent interactions. By analyzing the administrative procedures used to control the Man, my aim here has been to show how Man areas were appropriated and then managed locally by the imperial power. The examples we have seen show that while it is complicated to subjugate any given population by force, it can sometimes suffice to show consideration and a sense of compromise by granting them titles, advantages and a relative autonomy. This situation recalls the principle of "relying on barbarians to administer barbarians" 以夷治夷, which is the administrative counterpart of "using barbarians to attack other barbarians" 以

67 Li Zhifang and Li Tianhong, *Jingzhou Hujiacaochang Xi Han jian du xuancui*, 91, slip 2596.

夷伐夷.<sup>68</sup> Whether it was formally thought of or not, it surely provided Man leaders with a legal status and a political legitimacy to enable them to control their people, all the while being themselves controlled by the imperial state.

Man leaders therefore gained autonomy and power. Their role became notable, especially after the Three Kingdoms, as attested by some of the seals I have analyzed. These titles confirmed the leaders in the prerogatives they already had. I do not think it is fruitful to speculate on the purely honorary nature of these titles. Beyond the historicization of the emergence of Man leaders, these titles made the Man visible as a social group.

Examining the Zoumalou and Hujia caochang documents provides us with undeniable proof of the regional weight of the Man. These manuscripts show the ways in which the Man forced the administrators to take them into account in their bureaucratic practice. But these documents also signal how local officials thought of simplifying mechanisms to deal as efficiently as possible with the numerous legal cases concerning the Man. Man-related decisions were thus taken under the regime of compromise with and equivalence to the imperial model. Between privilege and obligation, the social and cultural representations of the Man put them in a liminal position: they were neither Chinese nor truly barbarians.

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68 *Hou Han shu*, 16.609, 89.2953; Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 ed., *Ming shi* 明史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 166.4497.

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