

From Tribute to Traditional Dai Trade: The Cross-Cultural Exchange in China- Burma Borderland During the 14-19th Century

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Abstract

Since 15th century, the military expansion made by Mengmao/Luchuan superior leader(??/??) triggered the war with Ming court. Ming launched three times defeated the superior leader of Mengmao and rewarded other contributed Dai/Shan leaders as Ming Chieftains. The new Chieftains started to utilize Ming policy to regulate their social position and the gift flow direction that shaped by traditional blood tie. Since then, Chinese gift was passed to Dai/Shan chieftains under the framework of Ming Chieftain system. However, in the south, the Chinese gifts passing to Dai/Shan leaders were finally transferred to the coastline by changing hands to Burma court, Meng court(??), to Ceylo(??), along with military conflicts and religion tribute. Since 17th century both China and Burma went on centralization reform, gifts circulation ran by Dai/Shan leaders was shuttered by China-Burma conflict. Shan leaders changed strategy with Burmese King in the south, reducing military attack but enforcing bloody tie, to pay tribute and receive ritualistic gifts. Whereas on the northern side, Qing government rewarded subordinate Dai leaders as new Chieftains, ask for silver tax. Dai/Shan leaders became giver on both sides. To maintain the goods circulation, leaders converted traditional military troops into merchant groups, created a trade pattern of their own. Merchant commander would follow traditional military-blood tie, and lead troops to trade with related Dai leaders region. Related Dai leaders would deliver the goods to further related region. It formed an overlapping- circle system of markets, and proceeded hands changing tradition into market economy up to 20th century. It can be found that both tribute and latter Dai trade pattern were rooted in Dai/Shan institutional framework: military-blood tie. It will adapt to different political situations by absorbing new policy or converting into different forms.