Siam as Chinese Utopia: Overseas Chinese, Colonialism, and Race in the 17th-Century Chinese Novel *The Sequel to the Water Margin*

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Abstract—This article considers how Siam became the locus of utopian imagination for the Chinese cultural elite residing in China and overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia in the 17th century. The settlement of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and the kingdom of Ayutthaya proffered sources of imagination for Chen Chen (1615–1670) to compose the novel *The Sequel to the Water Margin* (*Shuihu houzhuan*). He channeled ideas and ideals on free trade, refuge, colonialism, and Han Chinese racialism into a story on Chinese pirates' conquest of Siam. The emergence of such utopian imagination was bound up with late Ming ideals of passion, love, and self-invention and the 17th-century Chinese discourse of oceans and pirates.

This article considers how Siam became the locus of utopian imagination for the Chinese cultural elite residing in China and the Chinese diaspora settled in Southeast Asia in the 17th century. Drawing on the kingdom of Ayutthaya (1351–1767), the novel *The Sequel to the Water Margin* (*Shuihu houzhuan*, hereinafter *The Sequel*) by the Chinese literatus Chen Chen (1615–1670) channels ideas and ideals on free trade, colonialism, and Han Chinese racialism into a story about Chinese pirates' conquest of Siam.

A native of Nanxun in Zhejiang province, Chen Chen grew up in the late Ming and lived through the Ming–Qing transition after the Manchus took over China in 1644. The earliest extant edition of *The Sequel* is dated 1664. In his preface to the novel, he expresses his despair over the fall of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) in 1644 and his twenty-plus years of reclusion that followed. In his mind, the Wanli reign (1572–1620) was a Golden Age. To honor this flourishing era, he dates the preface back to 1608. Chinese literati who survived the fall of the Ming tended to have cultural nostalgia for the late Ming period. Wai-yee Li points out how late Ming courtesans epitomize the early Qing male literati's cultural ideal: "self-conscious passion, dramatic gestures, and deep concern with the meaning of creating a self or a persona."[1] By dating his book to the late Ming period, Chen Chen intends to revalorize passion, heroism, and self-invention.

[1] Wai-yee Li, "The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Chinese Ideal," in Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang, eds., *Writing Women in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 46–73.

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The Ming–Qing transition, like China's earlier dynastic transitions, was an era of great uncertainty for the Chinese. The Manchus conquered China and established the Qing dynasty (1644–1912). During the conquest, numerous Chinese women and men were killed, committed suicide, and surrendered in shame.[2] Some loyalists chose to abandon officialdom to live as independent scholars and monks in resistance to the foreign regime. Literati such as Gu Yanwu (1613–1683), Gui Zhuang (1613–1673), and Chen Chen established the Poetry Club of Astonishment and Recluse (*Jingyin shishe*) to resist the Qing dynasty. Gu Yanwu further became an official of the Southern Ming (1644–1683) which later retreated to Burma (Myanmar) and Taiwan.[3] In Taiwan, Zheng Chengong (1624–1662), whose father, the pirate and smuggler Zheng Zhilong, was executed by the Manchus in 1661, proclaimed Ming loyalism, leading the Han Chinese army to fight vehemently against the Manchus in mainland China.[4]

The Sequel symbolically captures the activities of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. The Ming–Qing transition witnessed numerous Chinese migrating into Southeast Asia and forming Chinese diasporic communities. Immigration offered overseas Chinese opportunities to reinvent their lives and identities. Lin Er, also known as Ta Khun Lok, a native of Putian in Fujian province, for example, migrated to Siam in the late 1640s and soon became a vassal appointed to rule the city of Nakhon Si Thammarat.[5] Wang Gungwu insightfully notes that the two decades from the 1620s to the 1640s marked the peak of Chinese commercial activities in Southeast Asia. After the fall of the Ming, thousands of Chinese lived on the mainland in the empires of Vietnam and Siam, in the Malay Archipelago, Moluccas, Makassar, Bali, and West Borneo.[6]

The Sequel rewrites the ending of its parent novel *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan*) published in the mid-16th century. *The Water Margin*, *Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin Ping Mei cihua*), *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji*), and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi*) are the four masterworks of the Ming dynasty. *The Water Margin* tells the story of 108 bandit heroes who are forced to station by the water margin of Mount Liang to resist the corrupt Song court. These bandit heroes die a tragic death. They submit to the Song court out of their loyalty for China. But the Song court does not trust them, so the evil minister Tong Guan sends them to the northern frontiers of China to battle the

[2] On the catastrophic impact of the Qing invasion and the downfall of the Ming on the Chinese people, see, for example, Lynn A. Struve, "Confucian PTSD: Reading Trauma in a Chinese Youngster's Memoir of 1653," in *History & Memory*, 16, no. 2 (fall/winter 2004): 14–31.

[3] Lynn A. Struve, *The Southern Ming 1644–1662* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

[4] Hang Xing, *Conflicts and Commerce in Maritime East Asia: The Zheng Family and the Shaping of the Modern World, c.1620–1720*, Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[5] For Chinese settlements in Indonesia in the 15th century, see Anthony Reid, "Hybrid Identities in the 15th-Century Straits," in Geoff Wade and Sun Laichen, eds., *Southeast Asia in the Fifteenth Century: The China Factor* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 307–332. For a study on the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia during the Ming-Qing transition, see, for example, Hang Xing, "Soaring dragon amid dynastic transition: dates and legitimacy among the post-Ming Chinese diaspora," in Kenneth Swope, ed., The Ming World (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 279–303.

[6] Wang Gungwu, *The Chinese Overseas: From Earthbound China to the Quest for Autonomy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 41, 46.

army of the barbarian Khitan Liao's kingdom and to Hangzhou in the lower Yangtse (Yangzi) river delta to quell the peasant uprising led by Fang La. Many of the bandit heroes die in battle.[7] Yet when depicted in a Daoist light, the outlaws are "36 heavenly deities and 72 earthly demons."[8] In the denouement, these demons are rewarded with a divine rank among the stars. The early Qing critic Jin Shengtan (1608–1661) revised the original text, truncating it into seventy chapters and refusing to grant amnesty to the bandits.[9] *The Water Margin* has several sequels—Chen Chen's *The Sequel* and Yu Wanchun's (1794–1849) *Records of Quelling Bandits* (*Dangkou zhi*, 1847) are the two most popular.[10] *The Water Margin* has been translated into Thai several times. The first translation was initiated by Somdet Chao Phraya Chuang Bunnak (1808–1883) during the reign of King Rama V (1868–1910). A few famous scenes from the *Water Margin* are among the most well-loved Chinese operas performed in Thailand.[11]

Existing scholarship on *The Sequel* overlooks the 17th-century history of the Chinese diaspora in Siam and an early modern globality in terms of maritime colonialism and racial imagination. Ellen Widmer considers Siam a utopia that replicates the bygone Ming dynasty, or a metaphor for Taiwan where Zheng Chenggong retreated and resisted the Qing.[12] David Der-wei Wang sees *The Sequel* as "not a rupture but an overseas re-establishment of Chinese orthodoxy."[13] But this article aims to consider Siam as a regime of alternative possibility to the "Chinese orthodoxy." The 16th and 17th centuries were the age of exploration for Europeans and the age of Asian expansion. Christopher Columbus crossed the Atlantic and discovered the Americas in 1492. In 1602, the Dutch founded the East Indian Company in Batavia (Jakarta) on Java. People from East Asia and Southeast Asia also traded indigenous products for foreign commodities such as porcelain, silk, spices, gold, silver, and sea animals. The rapid growth of maritime trade connected East Asia and Southeast Asia with Europe and the Americas.[14] When the

[7] For existing scholarship on the *Water Margin*, see, for example, Andrew Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: Ssu ta ch'i-shu* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), and Ge Liangyan, *Out of the Margins: The Rise of Chinese Vernacular Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001).

[8] Shi Nai'an and Luo Guanzhong, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, trans. Sidney Shapiro (Bloomington and Beijing: Indiana University Press and Foreign Languages Press, 1999) 1: 1; Luo Guanzhong and Shi Nai'an, *Shuihu zhuan* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chuban she, 1990), 1.

[9] On Jin Shengtan's recension of the *Water Margin*, see David Rolston's "Chin Sheng-t'an on How to Read the *Shui-hu chuan* (*The Water Margin*)," in *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: How to Read Between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 19–50.

[10] For a scholarly study of sequels in late imperial Chinese literature, see Martin W. Huang, ed. *Snakes' Legs: Sequels, Continuations, Rewritings, and Chinese Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

[11] I thank one anonymous reviewer for this information. For a preliminary study of the Thai translation of Chinese stories, see Prapin Manomaivibool, "Thai Translations of Chinese Literary Works," in Claudine Salmon, ed., *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17th–20th Century)* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2013), 196–198.

[12] Ellen Widmer, *Margins of Utopia: Shui-hu hou-chuan and the Literature of Ming Loyalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asia Center, 1987); Huang, *Snakes' Legs,* 32–33.

[13] David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siecle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1849–1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 289.

[14] Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 19.

Ming enforced the policy banning sea trade, these maritime merchants became pirates. During the Jiajing reign (1521–67), piracy raids spread across the Jiangnan region from the 1540s to 1560s. The daimyo Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) invaded Korea in 1592–1598. Pirates based in Fujian province and Taiwan marauded the seas in the 17th century. These were tempestuous times in the waters off China's shores.

In times of tremendous uncertainty and opportunities at sea, a volatile cultural discourse about pirates emerged in China from the mid-16th to the mid-17th century. A flourishing publishing enterprise produced vernacular literature about pirates, oceans, and exotic islands, along with a proliferation of unofficial histories and geographical accounts of naval combat and foreign cultures. Beside *The Sequel*, stories and novels that imagine pirates and exotic islands include Luo Maodeng's *Eunuch Sanbao's Voyages on the Indian Ocean* (*Sanbao taijian xiyangji*), Feng Menglong's (1574–1646) "Yang Baolao's Strange Encounter in the Country of Yue," and a number of vernacular stories on the pirate king Xu Hai's romance with courtesan Wang Cuiqiao.[15]

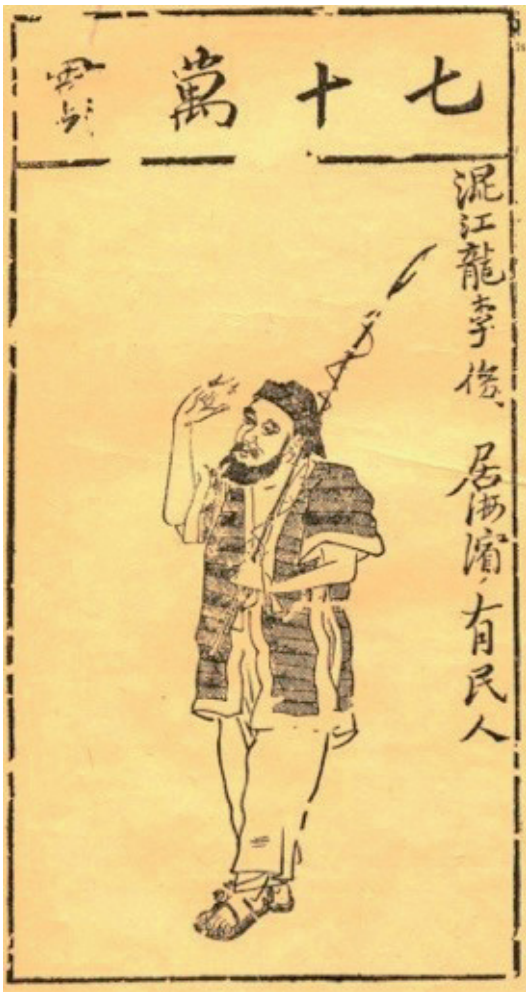

Figure 1. Chen Hongshou's portrayal of the Chinese pirate Li Jun. The inscription reads: "River-Stirring Dragon Li Jun, living by the sea, followed by his people." See Chen Hongshou, *Shuihu yezi* (Playing Titles of The Water Margin) (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1979).

It is not a coincidence that Chen Chen chooses Siam as his *locus primus*. Situated on a plain where the Chao Phraya, the Pa Sak, and the Lopburi rivers join, Ayutthaya was a significant international entrepôt. Thriving trade brought forth major revenues for the royal household.[16] The kingdom was cosmopolitan, with people of different races and cultures living there. Laotians, Mons, and Cambodians served as corvée labor. Vietnamese, Muslims, Portuguese, Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, Persians, Makassarese, Malays, and Chams all had settlements.[17] Ayutthaya regularly sent tribute to Ming and Qing emperors. King

[15] My forthcoming book is devoted to discussing this Chinese discourse of pirates and the sea in the 17th century. See Yuanfei Wang, *Writing Pirates: Vernacular Fiction and Oceans in Seventeenth-Century China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2021).

[16] Charnvit Kasetsiri and Michael Wright, *Discovering Ayutthaya* (Bangkok: Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks Foundation, 2019), 22.

[17] Kasetsiri and Wright, *Discovering Ayutthaya,* 138–177.

Prasat Thong (r. 1629–1656), father of King Narai (r. 1656–1688), was one of the first kings to send a tributary envoy to the Qing court in 1652. Moreover, the enhanced sexual practice of Siamese men further contributed to the late Ming cult of passion and love. Overall, Ayutthaya's active advocacy of trade, diplomacy, and cosmopolitanism provided sources of imagination for *The Sequel* to portray Chinese pirates transforming Siam into a multiracial, military, and trade-based kingdom, and a haven for outlaws and refugees. In the following sections, I will discuss two themes in *The Sequel*: first, the theme of colonialism and immigration; and second, the theme of Han Chinese racism, interracial marriage, and sexuality.

Seafaring adventures: disenchanted pirates, free trade, and island colonialism

It is a world of despair. The outlaws of Mount Liang—they are each other's sworn-brothers—yearn for the freedom of the seas. *The Sequel* opens by telling us that the Song imperial court not only searches for the escaping bandits of Mount Liang, but also prohibits maritime trade. Pirate Hu Cheng is captured, and his exotic goods are unjustly confiscated. These goods obtained from the tropical islands near Siam include agarwood, amber, rhino horn, and coral. Disappointed by the political persecutions in China, Li Jun, the pirate and smuggler on the Yangtse River, decides to move overseas.

> "I, Li Jun, am young and strong. My ambition has not dwindled. Wherever I go, I can establish myself. It is just that things will always come to an end. I am happier while I am drinking liquor with my pals. I heard that Song Jiang and Scholar Lu both died from poison. Their loyalty was cast away like flowing water. Had I not escaped, I could have been like them." After speaking, he drank again.[18]

After receiving a heavenly prophecy, he believes that he is destined to "develop his career overseas." He does "not want to deal with these petty-minded people here anymore."[19]

So Li Jun disguises himself as a pirate or maritime merchant. Followed by an entourage of his family and some 200 fishermen, leading ten fishing boats, he departs from the Wusong River, and sails toward the dark blue ocean.[20] Concerned that their fishing boats cannot withstand the fierce ocean voyage, Li Jun and his gang plunder a Japan-bound European naval vessel operated by two "Western merchants" (*xishang*). On their way, they capture a giant whale: "Its erect dorsal fin resembles a large red flag. With flowing whiskers, emitting foamy water, the creature swims forth."[21] Capturing the whale signals the pirates' entry into the maritime world of freedom and autonomy where

[18] Chen Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan*, in Yang Jialuo, ed., *Zhongguo tongsu xiaoshuo minzhu diyi ji, disan ce* (Taipei: shijie shuju, 1968), 80. All translation in this article is mine, unless otherwise noted.

[19] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 94.

[20] Huang, *Snakes' Legs,* 27.

[21] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 110.

they can "launch their ambitious careers" (*kai baye*).

Siam is an assemblage of islands. Li Jun quickly conquers Golden Turtle Island (*jingui dao*) by defeating the corrupt and lustful island ruler Sha Long (Sand Dragon). The Golden Turtle Island is the strongest island among the twenty-four islands ruled by the Siamese king Ma Saizhen residing in the Siamese capital. Each island has a chieftain. Chen Chen compares such geopolitical ties between the islands and the Siamese court to the feudalist terrorization (*fanzhen geju*) in the Tang empire after the An Lushan rebellion (775–763). There are 300 *li*[22] between Golden Turtle Island and the Siamese capital. Surrounded with mountains and city walls, Golden Turtle Island is accessible

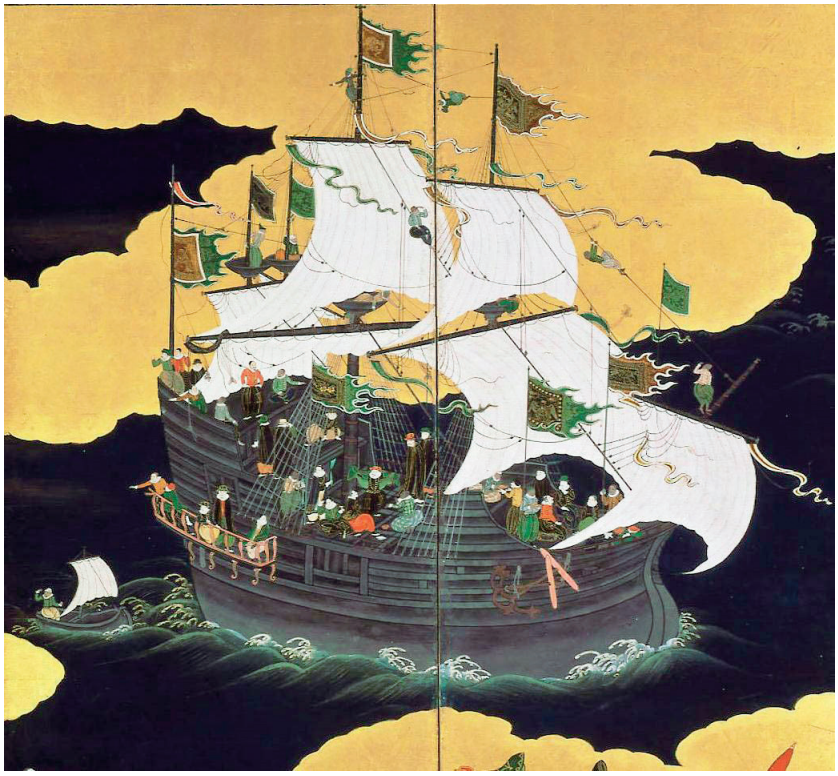

Figure 2. A Portuguese Namban ship in Nagasaki in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Author: Kano Naizen. Source: Kobe City Museum. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan%E2%80%93Portugal_relations

via only one entrance from the sea.

Sha Long is a "caved barbarian" (*dongman*). Strong, tall, and muscular, with yellow hair all over his body, he can lift thousands of *jin*[23] in weight. He is adroit at shooting arrows, sporting a heavy ax weighing fifty *jin*, riding, and nautical navigation. He is "murderous by nature" (*xing jihao sha*) and loves to drink snake-infused coconut wine. Because lustful Sha Long enjoys having sex with captive women at night, Li Jun is able to sneak into the city in the evening, kill him, and burn the city down. Before long, the

[22] The *li*, also known as the Chinese mile, was historically about one-third of a mile.

[23] The *jin* or catty historically equated to about 604 g, but is now equal to 500 g in China.

Chinese pirates defeat the Siamese army. Such conquest soon turns into acculturation and colonization through marital alliance. Hua Fengchun marries the Siamese princess Yuzhi.

Under the governance of Li Jun, Siam becomes a kingdom of military defense and maritime commerce, a shelter for refugees and outlaws, and a place of freedom. "[Li Jun] summoned outcasts and opened markets to trade. Siam gradually became richer and stronger."[24] An Daoquan, a Chinese doctor from *The Water Margin*, becomes shipwrecked on his way back from Korea. The waves take him to Siam where Li Jun rescues him. Seven other bandit heroes and sworn-brothers from Mount Liang also have to seek refuge in Siam. Siamese people view the outlaws as representatives of the Song dynasty. But Li Jun believes that "the Chinese are all evil, crooked, and jealous. They are hard to live with. The people beyond the seas are honest and straightforward. Therefore, they can be easily educated and civilized."[25] Li Jun's disillusion with China corresponds to Chen Chen's ethnographical depiction of Siam whose "geography and customs are no different from those of China." Siam's geographical and customary similarity with China makes it possible for the Chinese pirates to settle down in Siam and further acculturate Siam according to their ideals.

Li Jun's colonization of Siam alludes to Chinese diasporic communities there. The pirates refer to the historical Chinese salt merchant Xie Wenbin during the Chenghua reign (1465–1487). Xie was a salt smuggler before emigrating to Siam where he was appointed a minister. Later, he became an ambassador in Siam's tributary mission to China where he traded in Southeast Asian textiles.[26] Another famous pirate in history is Lin Daoqian. *The Veritable Records of the Ming* shows that "In the fourth month of the eighth year of the Wanli reign, maritime pirate Lin Daoqian secretly occupied some islands and made maritime trouble. Generals could not pursue him. He then escaped to Pattani and made Siam his den."[27] The radical Neo-Confucian Philosopher Li Zhi (1527–1602) a native of the port of Quanzhou and a contemporary of Lin Daoqian, glorified him for his talent and courage. He notes that the pirate far exceeded the government in terms of moral character, since the Ming only "abandons those courageous and knowledgeable people without an intention to recruit them. ... [They] are thus driven to be bandits."[28]

Under King Narai, the capital city of Ayutthaya was oriented toward international maritime trade. Foreigners were accommodated in the foreign quarters around the city and hired as court officials and corvée labor. The Chinese paid poll tax, and were treated as clients and exempted from corvée labor. Strategically positioned on the Chaophraya and other connected regional riverine systems, Ayutthaya is accessible by boats and

[24] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 114.

[25] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 115.

[26] Yan Congjian, *Shuyu zhouzi lu* (Beijing, zhonghua shuju, 1993), 278–286.

[27] *Shenzong Wanli Shilu*, 99: 4, in *Ming Shilu* (Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1961–7), 1978.

[28] Tang Lixing, *Merchants and Society in Modern China: From Guild to Chamber of Commerce* (London: Routledge, 2017), 9–20. Also see Hang Xing's conference paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies in 2018, "The Enigma of Lin Daoqian: The Pirate and Historical Memory in Maritime East Asia."

ships but protected against pirate raids coming upriver from the Gulf of Siam.[29] Further, *The Sequel* reflects the social spectrum of Siam, ranging from upstream agricultural zones to downstream deltas and littorals. The plot of Chinese pirates conquering and colonizing the Siamese islands leverages the pattern whereby Chinese settlers resided on the lower reaches of the rivers and coastlines, and acted as intermediaries with China-based sojourners who rarely went beyond the South China Sea.[30]

The Japanese also went to Siam in considerable numbers in the 17th century. By 1605, the Japanese shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu issued eleven licenses to merchants to undertake voyages to Southeast Asia for trade. Four of them were for Siam, four for Pattani, two for Shinichu, and one for Kachan.[31] The Siamese migrants settled outside the city of Ayutthaya at a place known today as "the Japanese quarter." They competed with the Chinese diasporic merchants. Both communities traded in Cambodia, the Cham region, the southern and central Vietnam coastlines, and Taiwan. The Thais traded deer hides, ray skins, sappanwood, and black lac with Japan in exchange for silver and copper currency.[32] Another factor that initiated Japanese migration to Siam was the persecution of Christians in Japan. Japanese Christian converts enjoyed more religious freedom in Ayutthaya, similar to the case of the Mount Liang bandit heroes.[33] Doctor An Daoquan speaks about his fear of not being able to speak the truth in Song China. His major motivation to seek refuge in Siam was Siam's haven policy at the time.

The competition between the Chinese and the Japanese diaspora in Southeast Asia is fictionalized as battles between Hideyoshi and Li Jun. After Li Jun began his rule of Siam, the king of the Qingni Island—Iron Monk—schemes with Tu Kong of the White Stone Island, Yu Loutian of the Fishing Island, and Ge Peng of the Yellow Weed Island to seek military assistance from Japan to vanquish Li Jun and his ally. The Japanese Shogun declares Siam to be Japanese territory. "Siam is our kingdom on the seas, how can we let it be occupied by Chinese? Summon Hideyoshi to lead 10,000 soldiers to kill Li Jun and snatch back our territory of Siam."[34] Hideyoshi's invasion of Siam may allude to Japanese immigration in 1612–1630.[35] The celebrated Japanese emigrant Yamada

[29] Ilicia J. Sprey, "International Maritime-Based Trade in the Thai Realm of Ayutthaya in the Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries: Deer Hide Trade Asian Access Point for Re-Evaluation," in Kenneth R. Hall, Rila Mukherjee, Suchandra Ghosh, eds., *Subversive Sovereigns Across the Seas: Indian Ocean Ports-of-Trade from Early Historic Times to Late Colonialism* (Kolkata: The Asiatic Society, 2017), 109–145.

[30] Kenneth R. Hall, "Identity and Spatiality in Indian Ocean Ports-of-Trade c. 1400–800," in Hall, Mukherjee, Ghosh, eds., *Subversive Sovereigns Across the Seas*, 49.

[31] Iwamoto Yoshiteru and Simon James Bytheway, "Japan's Official Relations with Shamuro (Siam), 1599–1745: As Revealed in the Diplomatic Records of the Tokugawa Shogunate" in *Journal of the Siam Society* 99 (2011): 81–103.

[32] Ryuto Shimada, "Economic Links with Ayutthaya: Changes in Networks between Japan, China, and Siam in the Early Modern Period," *Itinerario*, 37.3 (2013), 92–104; Iwao Seiichi, "Reopening of the diplomatic and commercial relations between Japan and Siam during the Tokugawa period." *Acta Asiatica* 4 (1963): 1–31; and Iwao Seiichi, "Japanese foreign trade in the 16th and 17th centuries," *Acta Asiatica* 30 (1976): 1–8.

[33] Kasetsiri and Wright, *Discovering Ayutthaya*, 152.

[34] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 318.

[35] Yoneo Ishii, "Seventeenth Century Japanese Documents about Siam," *JSS* 59, 2 (1971): 161–174; and Cesare Polenghi, *Samurai of Ayutthaya: Yamada Nagamasa, Japanese Warrior and Merchant in Early Seventeenth-Century Siam* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2009).

Nagamasa (1590–1630), for example, was a leader of the Japanese community, who excelled at military exploits and promoted commercial trade and diplomatic relations between Siam and Japan after the king of Siam passed away in 1621. He was involved in the royal succession from King Songtham in 1628 to the consolidation of King Prasat Thong in 1629–1630, but the hired foreign official was killed in 1630 when he threatened to become too powerful for the monarchy.[36]

Hideyoshi's invasion of Siam particularly shows Chinese cultural memory and anxieties about a threatening foreign invasion. The Imjin war in Korea, that happened seventy years before the publication of *The Sequel*, was a strong source of anxiety that was displaced onto the exotic and politically safe land of Siam. Standing in as a typical foreign invader, Hideyoshi may also represent the Manchu conquest of China.

The Sequel embellishes the account of the Japanese with a story from the Patola Shahi dynasty (AD 600–800) in the western Himalayas. Hideyoshi sends 500 "black demons" (*heigui*) to drill holes in the bottom of Li Jun's ships. To defeat the Japanese, Li Jun requests that Daoist Gongsun Sheng make a snow storm in the tropics. The heavy snow falls continuously for one day and one night. The ocean then freezes over, and Hideyoshi and his soldiers are all "frozen into crystal figurines."[37] The author notes that he adapts the magical episode from He Qiaoyuan's (1558–1632) unofficial historical account *The Mountain of Fame* (*Mingshan cang*):

> In the Tianbao reign (742–756) of the Tang Emperor Xuanzong (r. 713–756), the Patola Shahi (who ruled the country of Bolor in today's Northern Pakistan during the 6th and 8th centuries) did not submit five-colored jade as tribute. Li Linpu advised the emperor to conquer the country. The emperor summoned 40,000 soldiers together with various barbarian armies to conquer it. When they were close to the country of the Patola Shahis, a Daoist among them claimed that the Tang army were not righteous and therefore the conquest would be doomed. The troops marched several hundred *li*. Suddenly, a strong wind arose. Snowflakes fell as if they had wings. The wind blew up a small sea whose water was all frozen into icy pillars. The 40,000 people were all frozen to death. The corpses of the soldiers were either standing or sitting, as transparent as crystals. Only one Chinese and one barbarian were able to return. I read about this event from *The Mountain of Fame*. So I appropriated this story here.[38]

The Sequel also imaginatively makes Hideyoshi adopt Siamese royal customs. The Japanese daimyo rides a white elephant and wears a king's crown inlaid with eight types of gems. *The Records of Four Barbarian Embassies* (*Siyi guankao*) tells that a certain Siamese king wore "a gold crown decorated with gems."[39] Nonetheless, a Siamese king

[36] Yoshiteru Iwamoto, "Yamada Nagamasa and His Relations with Siam," *JSS* 97 (2007): 73–84

[37] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 323.

[38] Chen Chen, *Cai Yuanfang pindian shuihu houzhuan*, in *Mingqing shanben xiaoshuo congkan chubian,* vol. 9 (Taibei: Tianyi chubanshe, 1985), 46.

[39] Wang Zongzai, *Siyi guankao,* vol. 2 (Beijing: Dongfang xuehui, 1924), 19–24.

never rides a white elephant. White elephants were palladia of the kingdom, symbols of power and prosperity. To give away a white elephant was to cede power. *The Phra Vessantara Jataka*, the best-known story in Siam, tells what happens to a king who gives away his white elephant—he is deposed and driven into the forest. Thus, *The Sequel* fabricates both Siamese and Japanese royal customs.

At the end of the novel, Li Jun civilizes Siam. He introduces the Song dynasty's sacrificial and ritual customs and orders the Siamese commoners to "completely correct their barbarian customs." He builds Confucian temples, and orders Chancellor Wen to acculturate the children of the ministers and the social elite of Siam. He trains soldiers, builds military camps on water, makes warships, and purchases weapons. He also builds a Chinese embassy to accommodate envoys and ambassadors from China and neighboring countries.[40] He dispatches ambassadors to form diplomatic relations with Korea, Ryukyu, Champa, and Vietnam, and further to rule the twenty-four islands of Siam including the Golden Turtle, the Green Dragon, the Fishing Island, and the White Stone Island. But Li Jun does not further expand Siam's tributary system to make it as all-encompassing as China's "all under heaven" or *tianxia*. Siam remains an isolated island-kingdom on the sea: "A jade palace of seashell roofs, a caved mansion of purity and void."[41]

The multi-racial empire: Han Chinese racialism, inter-racial marriage, and sexuality

Based on the international model of the Ayutthaya empire, Siam in *The Sequel* is a multiethnic cosmopolitan society where indigenous Siamese, Japanese, and Chinese collaborate in maritime trade and national defense. The centrality of race and ethnicity is evinced in the deployment of "hybridity" and "pure blood," which often shows up in the context of marriage and sartorial portrayal. In his book *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, Kuan-Hsing Chen uses the term "Han Chinese racism" to point out that "racism existed long before China's encounter with the West" and that a shared racial consciousness based on kinship and blood ties encouraged both mainland and overseas Chinese to claim "an alternative modernity" in order to contest Western dominance in the global arena.[42] My analysis of the Chinese pirates' racial consciousness in *The Sequel* aims to further elicit such ambivalent racial underpinnings in early modern Southeast Asia and China before the advent of Western colonialization in these regions.

The soldiers on the Golden Turtle Island appear to be hybrid images of Japanese and indigenous Siamese people. Dress is a marker of ethnic difference. "The barbarian soldiers all used variegated cloth to cover their hair, tied in the shape of a river snail. They wore cotton jackets, with six-foot-long Japanese katana swords hanging on the two

[40] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 353.

[41] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 312.

[42] Kuan-Hsing Chen*, Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 4. Also see Fiona Lee, "Han Chinese racism and Malaysian contexts: cosmopolitan racial formations in Tan Twan Eng's 'The Garden of Evening Mists,'" in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies,* 20 (2): 220–237.

sides."[43] This sartorial portrayal roughly corresponds to historical records on Siamese clothing. *The Overall Survey of the Star Raft* (*Xingcha shenglan*) records that in Siam, "Men and women tied up their hair in a cone, used white cloth to cover their hair. They wore long garments, a blue-colored cloth wrapping around the waist."[44] The Japanese katana swords indicate the presence of the Japanese. This corresponds to the time when numerous Japanese mercenaries joined the Siamese army to assist Ayutthaya's military defense.

Figure 3. Bald-headed Japanese mercenaries, carrying Japanese swords, dressed in Japanese-style robes in a Siamese army in the seventeenth century. See Charnvit Kasetsiri and Michael Wright, *Discovering Ayutthaya* (Bangkok: Social Science and Humanities Textbooks Foundation, 2019), 152. Reproduced with Permission.

Whereas dress reinforces ethnic boundaries rather than racial integration, wearing a different national costume also transforms outsiders into insiders. The Chinese women that Sha Long abducts from Xiangshan in Guangdong province all dress up as Siamese women.

> The black hair on top of her head piles up into a vase shape.
> Her silvery round face is small, so are her red lips.
> The jacket made of foreign fabric reaches her waist.
> Her red-silk dancing skirt drags on the ground.
> Her necklace rings ding-dong on her chest.
> Fragrant and dazzling wild flowers decorate her body.
> Her bright eyes allure to seduce men.
> Her black eyebrows are worthy of a painting.

[43] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 101.

[44] Feng Chengjun, *Xingcha shenglan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1954), 11–12.

Rumor has it that she can take down the Wu kingdom.
Now we see that the Golden Turtle is also vanquished.[45]

Although the Chinese woman is a captive, turning her into a Siamese seductress demonstrates the transborder social mobility of the 17th-century ocean. The fluid sense of self corresponds to the fluidity of ethnicity and culture. Siamese people are not much different from the Chinese.

The Siamese male's possession of Chinese women at once evokes fear of the Chinese being assimilated into a foreign culture while sparking fantasies of colonial conquest through sexual contact. Early modern European writing crafts analogies between sexual and colonial conquests.[46] Similarly, the erotic and sexual otherness embodied in the Siamese woman evokes the male Chinese self's desire to conquer and dominate fertile foreign lands. The Chinese man's marriage with a Siamese princess further denotes Chinese desire for colonial expansion. The Siamese king Ma Saizhen is "gentle and weak" (*yourou shaoduan*), therefore Li Jun proposes that his sworn-brother Hua Fengchun marry the king's daughter with the goal of ultimately dominating Siam and securing their political alliance in an alien land.

But both the Siamese king and the queen claim Chinese lineage. The queen hails from the Eastern Capital of China. The king is a descendent of the Han-dynasty General Ma Yuan (14 BC–AD 49), so he inherits a Chinese bloodline. This means that the princess herself is most likely a pure Chinese as well. In emphasizing the Chinese heredity of the Siamese monarchy, *The Sequel* divulges fears of miscegenation among the Chinese diaspora and assumes a hierarchy between different bloodlines. The Chinese diaspora need to maintain "pure Chinese blood" through lawful marriage.

Cultural and linguistic superiority is central in the narrative of maintaining "pure" Chinese blood among the ruling elite through legal marriage. The princess "dresses as a Chinese" (*zhonghua zhuangshu*). She is "virtuous and liberal, skilled at Chinese literature and calligraphy. Learning from her mother, she speaks fluent Mandarin without any barbarian accent." The Siamese ruler Li Jun also marries the daughter of Chancellor Wen because of her inheritance of Confucian ritual and ethics. The close allies of Li Jun also form marriage alliances among themselves to secure both their Chinese identity and political power. Huyan Zhuo marries his daughter to the son of Xu Sheng. Demanding that his son must marry a woman from a "Confucian scholarly family," Song Qing arranges the marriage of his son with the daughter of Xiao Zhongmi. To secure the Chinese ruling elite's power in Siam, Li Jun promotes marriages beween lesser Chinese officials and daughters from local Siamese families. "It is not inconvenient for the Chinese to marry Siamese people. Solders and commoners will feel peace. Guests and hosts will forget about their identities. People will think about themselves as natives. Soldiers will not desert."

Historically, the Chinese diaspora were acculturated into Southeast Asia. For instance, Ma Huan's *Overall Survey of the Oceans* (*Yingya shenglan*) records how

[45] Chen, *Shuihu houzhuan,* 115.

[46] Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 29.

Chinese immigrants in Siam were able to maintain sexual relationships with the wives of local men:

> They all follow the decisions of their wives, [for] the mental capacity of the wives certainly exceeds that of the men. If a married woman is very intimate with one of our men from the Middle Kingdom (China), wine and food are provided, and they drink and sit and sleep together. The husband is quite calm and takes no exception to it; indeed he says "My wife is beautiful and the man from the Middle Kingdom is delighted with her."[47]

It has been suggested that Chinese diasporic marriages with local Southeast Asian women produced communities of "creole" or Peranakans: "descendants of mobile men and local women." Such communities were created not only by the Chinese diaspora, but also the Arab and Indian diasporas. The hybrid descendants continued to become leading merchants and rulers of local polities.[48] One of the earliest examples is a South Asian (Funan) sojourner who married a princess in southern Vietnam.[49] In another case, an early 16th-century Demak ruler on the northeast coast of Java married an east Java Majapahit court princess.[50]

Nonetheless, the hierarchy of bloodlines in *The Sequel* suggests that high class strictly prohibits hybridity. This racial prejudice overlaps with class and cultural hierarchy. In his study of early modern history, Étienne Balibar observes a kind of "neo-racism" toward Muslim immigrants in modern-day Europe. He points out that anti-Semitism in early modern Europe informed a perception of Islamic cultural difference as an inflexible barrier between Muslims and white Christians.[51] *The Sequel* similarly features a Chinese cultural and linguistic superiority that shows the anxieties of Chinese immigrants and cultural elites over their identity overseas. Such diasporic sentiments in the 17th century permeate *The Sequel*.

At the same time, Sha Long symbolizes a Chinese perception of Southeast Asians and South Asians as hyper-sexual and hyper-lustful peoples. The strangeness of exotic geography is represented through the Siamese male's enhanced sexual practice. Ma Huan records that Siamese men in their twenties will

> take the skin which surrounds the *membrum virile*, and with a fine knife shaped like [the leaf of] an onion they open it up and insert a dozen tin beads inside the

[47] Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan: "The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* [1433]*,"* trans. J.V.G. Mills (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 104.

[48] Engseng Ho, "Inter-Asian Concepts for Mobile Societies," *Journal of Asian Studies* 76, no. 4 (November 2017): 907–928.

[49] Michael Vickery, "Funan Reviewed: Deconstructing the Ancients," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 90/91 (2003-2004): 101–143.

[50] Kenneth Hall, "Commodity Flows, Diaspora Networking, and Contested Agency in the Eastern Indian Ocean c. 1000–1500," *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 4, 2 (July 2016): 387–417.

[51] Étienne Balibar, "Is There a Neo-racism?", in Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 17–28.

> skin; [then they close it up and protect it with medicinal herbs. The man waits till the opening of the wound is healed; then he goes out and walks about. The [beads] look like a cluster of grapes. . . . If it is the king of the country or a great chief or a wealthy man [who has the operation], then they use gold to make hollow beads, inside which a grain of sand is placed, and they are inserted [in the *membrum virile*]; [when the man] walks about, they make a tinkling sound, and this is regarded as beautiful. The men who have no beads inserted are people of the lower classes. This is a most curious thing.[52]

The heat of Southeast Asia and South Asia plays into a heated fascination with love and passion in the late Ming Chinese culture in which Chen Chen grew up. Such "revalorization of desire"[53] which was suppressed in the orthodox Confucian philosophy represented by Zhu Xi (1130-1200) prioritized the role of sexuality in the cult of love.[54] To promote the agency of love and passion, the playwright Tang Xianzu (1550–1616) composed the famous romantic play *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting*, 1617) which portrays the dream world of the heroine Du Liniang. She dies from her lovelorn condition after dreaming of making love to a man named Liu Mengmei who also resurrects her from death because of love. The man hails from Liuzhou in Guangxi province. In other words, Du Liniang's erotic desire is geographically associated with China's subtropical region in the Southwest. Another example is the "Burmese bell" (*mianling*) portrayed in *Jin Ping Mei cihua* (*The Plum in the Golden Vase*) that merchant Ximen Qing uses as a sex toy. It is a small hollow metal ball with mercury rolling inside. Placed inside a woman's vagina, the ball can enhance her pleasure. In Venetian traveler Niccolò de' Conti's (1395–1469) account during his visit to the Ava Kingdom (1364–1555) that ruled upper Burma, Burmese bells closely resemble the Siamese male penis inserts. "This they do to satisfy the wantonness of the women: because of these swellings, or tumours, of the member, the women have great pleasure in coitus."[55] The Chinese later turned penis inserts into metal balls for women. Historian Sun Laichen has concluded that penis bells came to the attention of the Chinese during the Ming-Chinese frontier war in the 1570s when Burmese and Thai soldiers were captured. It was also a time of Ming China's "sexual revolution."[56] More symbolically represented in *Jin Ping Mei cihua* is an Indian monk who bestows an aphrodisiac on Ximen Qing. The medicinal overdose directly causes the libertine's excessive ejaculation, which leads to his horrible death. The Indian monk is described vividly as a phallus, reflecting the merchant's libido.[57] In summary, the tropical geography and exotic customs in Siam, Burma, and

[52] Ma, *Ying-yai sheng-lan,* 104.

[53] Plaks, *The Four Masterworks*, 20.

[54] See Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, distributed by Harvard University Press, 2001), Harvard East Asian Monographs 202: 5–85.

[55] Sun Laichen, "Burmese bells and Chinese eroticism: Southeast Asia's cultural influence on China," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 38, 2 (2007): 259.

[56] Sun, "Burmese bells and Chinese eroticism," 271.

[57] See Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative*, 101, and Shang Wei, "The Making of the Everyday World: *Jin Ping Mei cihua* and Encyclopedias for Daily Use," in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late*

India—kingdoms in South and Southeast Asia—became the locus of erotic imagination in the late Ming cult of love with which Chen Chen was familiar.

In conclusion, I have discussed how Chen Chen channels the utopian imagination of mainland and overseas Chinese into his fictional narrative on Chinese pirates' colonization of Siam. The emergence of such utopian imagination concerned the late Ming ideals of passion, love, and self-invention and the 17th-century Chinese discourse of the sea and pirates. The settlement of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and the kingdom of Ayutthaya provided sources of imagination for Chen Chen to improvise a perfect kingdom based on trade, refuge, colonialism, and Han Chinese racism.

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Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 89.