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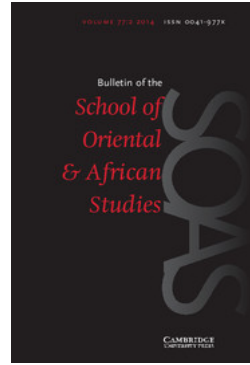
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The rebellion of Zhang Yuxian 張遇賢 (942–943)

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Abstract

This paper is about a rebellion in southern China in the first half of the tenth century and its depiction in historical sources from the tenth to the seventeenth centuries. At the core of this study is Zhang Yuxian, the rebel leader, and his allegiance to a spirit. The latter suggested moving from Guangdong, the territory of the Southern Han empire (917–971), and the original area of the rebellion, to Jiangxi, the territory of the Southern Tang empire (937–976). The approach of the paper is twofold: first, it examines the historical setting and context; and second, through a close reading of some of the major features of the sources, such as the labelling of Zhang as a *yaozei*, the adoption of red clothes by the rebels, and so forth, the essay makes evident the close relationship and dependency between successive historical texts.

Keywords: Zhang Yuxian, Pre-modern Chinese historiography, Song to Qing, Rebellion, Five Dynasties and Ten States, Southern Tang, Southern Han

Introduction

The rebellion of Zhang Yuxian 張遇賢(942–943), represents just one episode in the history of the Five Dynasties and Ten States (907–960); it adds, however, to a list of rebellions throughout the history of imperial China. Having started on the territory of the empire of the Southern Han 南漢 (917–971) in eastern Guangdong, it was defeated in a military prefecture on the territory of the empire of the Southern Tang 南唐 (937–976) in southern Jiangxi. In modern Chinese publications, Zhang Yuxian's rebellion is generally viewed within the parameters of Marxist historiography and thus as a peasant rebellion (*nongmin qiyi* 農民起義).¹ In Western publications such as the recent volume in the

* I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their useful suggestions: I have tried to incorporate as much as possible. Moreover, I would like to express my special gratitude to the Institute of Chinese Studies, University of Heidelberg, which through a research affiliation made it possible for me to access the extremely useful databases available at the East Asian Department, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

1 See for instance *Zhongguo lishi dacidian: Sui Tang Wudai shi juan* 中國歷史大辭典：隋唐五代史卷 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1995), 430–31; Song Yanshen 宋衍申 (ed.), *Liang Wudai shi cidian* 兩五代史辭典 (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 412; Zeng Guofu 曾國富, “Wudai ‘daozei’ jianlun” 五代盜賊簡論, *Zhanjiang shifan xueyuan xuebao* 30/1, 2009, 103–8. Interestingly, Huang Weihu 黃偉虎 does not apply the term *nongmin qiyi* to characterize the rebellion though he refers to the rebels as a rebel army (*qiyi jun* 起義軍). See *Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu: Zhongguo lishi er* 中國大百科全書：中國歷史 II (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaiké quanshu chubanshe,

Cambridge History of China series, the rebellion does not feature at all.² There are no eye-witness accounts, no interrogation records, nor any other official documentation – except for one treated below – to provide essential sources for delineating mentalities, uprisings and rebellions especially in the early modern period in both Europe and China.³

The approach of this article is twofold: it deals with the rebellion as both a historical and a historiographical event. The article will thus address the depiction of the rebellion in the surviving sources, and how successive texts changed the shape of the rebellion. In the following section I examine those Song dynasty texts that provide information on the rebellion, in order to demonstrate how the narrative of the rebellion has become enriched over time. To illustrate how later authors arranged and rearranged the Song period material, I attach short analyses of three texts, dating from the Ming (1) and from the Qing (2), respectively. It should be noted that the rebellion is represented quite selectively within the sources and therefore general statements about its true nature remain problematic.

Sources

An official proclamation from the Southern Tang court

The collected works of Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (916–991) preserve a text entitled “Regulation for the suppression of wicked bandits” (*zhao tao yaozei zhi* 招討妖賊制) that Xu drafted for the second Southern Tang emperor Li Jing 李景 (canonized as Yuanzong 元宗, r. 943–961).⁴ The Southern Tang state was the result of a usurpation of power by Xu Zhigao 徐知誥, grand councillor of the Wu 吳

1992), 719. Du Wenyu 杜文玉 deals with the rebellion in detail, but still retains the politically correct vocabulary in characterizing it. See Du Wenyu, *Nan Tang shilüe* 南唐史略 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 104–8.

- 2 Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). This work provides only a basic, limited treatment of popular rebellions of the Song dynasty. Given its scope, dealing principally with political history at the top level this is understandable, but regrettable.
- 3 See Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Village Occitan, de 1294 à 1324* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Susan Naquin, *Shantung Rebellion: The Wang Lun Uprising of 1774* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).
- 4 *Xu jisheng ji* 徐騎省集 (Sibu congkan), 7.6a–8a. The text is also contained in Dong Gao 董誥 *et al.* (comp.), *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 879.7b–9a (9191–2). Xu Xuan, a native of Yangzhou, with the accession of the second Southern Tang ruler, had been appointed drafter to the imperial secretariat. Xu not only served the Southern Tang but also rose to prominence in the court of the second Song emperor Taizong. Xu's submission and consequent service to the Song earned him the epithet of a turncoat in late twentieth-century China. See for instance Zhou Jun 周軍, “Xu Xuan qi ren yu Song chu ‘erchen’” 徐鉉其人與宋初貳臣, *Lishi yanjiu* 4, 1989, 120–32. For a more recent and balanced treatment of Xu see Jin Zhuandao 金傳道, “Xu Xuan sanci biangan kao” 徐鉉三次貶官考, in *Chongqing youdian daxue xuebao* 19.3, 2007, 99–103.

state, in 936.⁵ The territory he controlled had been largely conquered by Yang Xingmi 楊行密 (852–905), the Wu founder, in the late ninth century.⁶ The Tang dynasty confirmed Yang in his position in 904, as it did a number of other warlords, in order to maintain a semblance of control. The uneasy relationship Wu maintained with the Tang's successor, the Later Liang, ceased officially with the proclamation of Yang Pu 楊溥, the third ruler of Wu (r. 920–937) as emperor in 927.

Having succeeded as king of Qi in 937 (Qi wang 齊王), Xu Zhigao had since 939 laid claim to the Tang heritage. He consequently assumed the new name Li Bian 李昇 and ruled until his death in early 943. The “Regulation for the suppression of wicked bandits” reveals how the Southern Tang ruler set out to curb a rebellion that began in the territory of the Southern Han state, but shifted to Qianzhou 虔州 in Southern Tang territory. Qianzhou (modern-day Ganzhou 贛州 in Jiangxi province) was the seat of Baisheng military prefecture (*Baisheng jun* 百勝軍).⁷ This military prefecture was relatively large, comprising eleven districts (most Southern Tang prefectures and military prefectures consisted of three to seven districts). The Southern Tang military prefectures guarded regions where military threats from neighbours were most likely to occur.

Li Jing expressed in the proclamation his concern for the local population and his indignation at the havoc the rebels created once they had entered Southern Tang territory. In order to redress the situation, he pledged a temporary stop to tax payments in the affected region of Qianzhou and its districts. His first direct addressees were the common people and followers of Zhang who were promised far-reaching rewards for capturing and delivering Zhang to the authorities. The rebel leader is referred to as Zhang Maoxian 張茂賢 which, given the context, was certainly Zhang Yuxian.

Historical accounts of the rebellion from the Song dynasty

Wudai shi, 974

The *Wudai shi* 五代史 (also *Jiu Wudai shi* 舊五代史, presented in 974) compiled under the supervision of Xue Juzheng 薛居正 (912–981), is the earliest source on Five Dynasties and Ten States history and was officially commissioned by the first Song emperor Taizu. The sections on the Southern Tang and the Southern Han provide information on the rulers, but do not refer to Zhang Yuxian's rebellion.⁸ Shortly before the compilation of the *Wudai shi*,

- 5 Interest in Southern Tang history has grown in mainland China since the 1980s. In 1985 Zhu Zhongyu 朱仲玉 produced a historical novel on the Southern Tang entitled *Nan Tang yanyi* 南唐演義 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1985). In addition to Du Wenyu's work we have Ren Shuang 任爽, *Nan Tang shi* 南唐史 (Changchun: Dongbei shifan daxue chubanshe, 1995), Zou Jingfeng 鄒勁風, *Nan Tang guo shi* 南唐國史 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2000), and Zou Jingfeng 鄒勁風, *Nan Tang wenhua* 南唐文化 (Nanjing: Nanjing chubanshe, 2005).
- 6 Zou Jingfeng 鄒勁風 provides an outline of the policies used by Yang Xingmi to secure his kingdom. See Zou Jingfeng, “Yang Xingmi shulüe” 楊行密述略, *Anhui shixue* 1, 1996, 30–2.
- 7 For more information on Qianzhou see Yue Shi 樂史, *Taiping huanyuji* 太平寰宇記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 108.2172–93, and Wang Xiangshi 王象之, *Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 91.2919–39.
- 8 See Xue Juzheng 薛居正 *et al.* (comp.), *Jiu Wudai shi* 舊五代史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 134.1784–89, on the Southern Tang, and 135.1809–10 on the Southern Han.

Liu Chang 劉鋹 (r. 958–971), last ruler of the Southern Han, had surrendered to the Song while the Song court accepted the formal surrender of Li Yu 李煜 (r. 961–976), the last of the Southern Tang rulers, in early 976 in Kaifeng.

The work was superseded by Ouyang Xiu's 歐陽修 (1007–72) *Wudai shiji* 五代史記 (also *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史, 1073) and ceased to exist as a complete text after the early Ming dynasty when portions of it were included in the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (submitted in 1408). Shao Jinhan 邵晉涵 (1743–96) recompiled the work from entries in the *Yongle dadian* in the late eighteenth century.⁹ The loss of portions of the original text may explain why the rebellion did not feature in the reconstructed work.

The two imperial encyclopaedias compiled during the early Song period, the *Taiping yulan* 太平禦覽 (983) and the *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (1013), do not mention Zhang's rebellion, nor is it recorded in the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (978). Anecdotal works compiled by former Southern Tang officials likewise ignore Zhang Yuxian (e.g. those by Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶 (953–1013) and Chen Pengnian 陳彭年 (961–1017)),¹⁰ and Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (917–992) and his son-in-law Wu Shu 吳淑 (947–1002) do not refer to the rebellion in their books on extraordinary people in Jiangnan.¹¹

A number of sources that may have provided more information are no longer extant, i.e. the *Jiangnan lu* 江南錄 by Tang Yue 湯悅 (fl. 940–983) and Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (916–991), the *Liushi xingwang lu* 劉氏興亡錄 (Record of the Rise and Decline of the Liu Family) by Hu Binwang 胡賓王 (fl. late tenth century), and the *Shiguo jinian* 十國紀年 (Chronological Records of the Ten States) by Liu Shu 劉恕 (1032–78).

The *Jiangnan lu* was a history of the Southern Tang which emperor Taizong ordered two former Southern Tang officials to compile in or around 979, making it the only official history of any of the southern states. It was available to historians in the Song dynasty, but has disappeared since.¹² The *Liushi xingwang lu* recorded the history of the reign of the Liu family, rulers of the Southern Han state. According to Qing writer Liang Tingnan 梁廷柎 (1796–1861), Hu Binwang compiled it originally under the title *Nan Han guoshi* 南漢國史 (Dynastic History of the Southern Han, 12 *juan*), but modified the title to *Liushi xingwang lu* when he submitted to the Song throne in 971.¹³ The

9 See R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 118. Moreover, Gu Liren 顧力仁 has studied how the compilers of the *Yongle dadian* made use of books otherwise lost. See Gu Liren, *Yongle dadian jiqi yishu yanjiu* 永樂大典及其佚書研究 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1985).

10 These are the *Jiangbiao zhi* 江表志 and *Nan Tang jinshi* 南唐近事 by Zheng Wenbao, and the *Jiangnan yuzai* 江南餘載 attributed to him, as well as the *Jiangnan bielu* 江南別錄 by Chen Pengnian. On these and other texts dealing with the history of the Southern Tang, see Johannes L. Kurz, "Sources for the History of the Southern Tang", in *Journal of Sung Yuan Studies* 24 (1994): 217–235.

11 The *Jishen lu* 稽神錄 and the *Jiang Huai yirenlu* 江淮異人錄, respectively.

12 See Chen Xiaoying 陳曉瑩, "Jiangnan lu: xiantian buzude 'qianqu xinshu'" 江南錄: 先天不足的'千古信書', *Shixue jikan* 2, 2014, 51–7.

13 Liang Tingnan, *Nan Han shu* 南漢書, 13.6496, in Fu Xuancong 傅璿琮, Xu Meirong 徐梅榮, and Xu Jijun 徐吉軍 (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian* 五代史書彙編 (Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe, 2004), vol. 10. See also Steven B. Miles, "Rewriting the Southern

Shiguo jinian is mentioned a few times in the commentary in the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (presented in 1084), in which Liu Shu collaborated with Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–86) but is otherwise lost.¹⁴

Jiangnan yeshi, early eleventh century

The earliest extant description of the uprising of Zhang Yuxian is found in the *Jiangnan yeshi* 江南野史 (also *Jiangnan yelu* 錄) by Long Gun 龍袞 (fl. 1010–22).¹⁵ This work, originally comprising twenty *juan*, of which only ten survive, has as its focus the history of the Southern Tang dynasty. Long's description of events begins with the arrival of Zhang Yuxian in Southern Tang territory in the district of Nankang and the consequent actions of the Southern Tang forces trying to subdue him.¹⁶

Han (917–971): the production of local culture in nineteenth-century Guangzhou”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62/1, 2002, 66, and Kurz, “Survey”, 220.

- 14 Zhang Youchen 張友臣 provides a description of the work and discusses its disappearance. See his “*Shiguo jinian* cunwang lue kao” 十國紀年存亡略考, *Qi Lu xuekan* 5, 1987, 83–5. On Liu Shu, his writings, and his collaboration with Sima Guang on the *Zizhi tongjian*, see Lin Ying 林英, “Liu Shu jiqi shixue gailun” 劉恕及其史學概論, *Wenshi zazhi* 2, 2003, 54–6, and Wu Guoyi 鄔國義, “Liu Shu yu gushi yanjiu” 劉恕與古史研究, *Shehui kexue* 7, 2005, 94–10; see moreover Wong Kuan Io (Huang Kunyao 黃坤堯), “*San Liu jia ji yu* Bei Song de renwen jingshen” 三劉家集與北宋的人文精神, *Journal of Chinese Studies* 52, 2011, 170–3. The preface to the *Shiguo jinian* (“*Shiguo jinian xu*” 序) composed by Sima Guang survives and is found in *Quan Song wen* 全宋文 (Chengdu: Ba-Shu shushe, 1992), vol. 28, 459.
- 15 Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 has collected a number of sources that provide small pieces of information on Long Gun. See his *Siku tiyao bianzheng* 四庫提要辨證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 7.392. Among these is Wang Mingqing 王明清 (1127–after 1214), who addresses Long as the author of a biography of the father of Ouyang Xiu. See *Huizhu houlu* 揮塵後錄 (Congshu jicheng 叢書集成), 6.500. Wu Zeng 吳曾 (?–after 1170) says that Long hailed from Ji’an 吉安 (in Jiangxi), which Hu Sijing 胡思敬 confirms in his colophon to the text in *Yuzhang congshu* 豫章叢書 (dating from 1916). See *Nenggazhai man lu* 能改齋漫錄 (Congshu jicheng), 5.93. Yu further maintains that Zeng Minxing 曾敏行 (?–1175) referred to Long as a Jinling man. The text of the *Duxing zazhi* 獨醒雜誌 in *Zhibuzuzhai congshu* 知不足齋叢書, 7.1b, however, clearly marks Long Gun as a native of Luling 廬陵, a variant designation of Ji’an. It is possible that Long Gun was active as a painter (see Dong You 董道, *Guangchuan huaba* 廣川畫跋 (Congshu jicheng), 6.71–2). Qian Zeng 錢曾 (1629–1700) claims to have had a complete hand-written copy of the *Jiangnan yeshi* in twenty *juan* in his possession. See *Shugu tang cang shumu* 述古堂藏書目 (Yueya tang congshu 粵雅堂叢書), 1.13b–14a. This is rather improbable as that copy was in fact in the library of his great-great-uncle, the famous collector Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664). See *Jiangyun lou shumu* 絳雲樓書目 (Yueya tang congshu), 1.20. When his library burnt down in 1650, all of its books were destroyed. This means that after 1650 – if we accept that Qian Qianzeng indeed had a complete copy – no further *Jiangnan yeshi* in twenty *juan* survived. See also Yan Yongcheng 燕永成, “Long Gun he tade *Jiangnan yeshi*” 龍袞和他的江南野史, in *Gannan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 4, 1994, 77–9, and Liu Yongming 劉永明, “Long Gun yu *Jiangnan yeshi*” 龍袞與江南野史, *Wenshi* 2, 2002, 169–80.
- 16 Long Gun, *Jiangnan yeshi*, 2.5159, in Fu Xuancong 傅瓊琮, Xu Meirong 徐梅榮 and Xu Jijun 徐吉軍 (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian* 五代史書彙編 (Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe, 2004), vol. 9.

The rebels, whom we are told were clad in red and hence known as “red army troopers” (*chi junzi* 赤軍子) approached Qianzhou in large numbers from the south after seizing the district of Nankang 南康. Nankang, the southernmost district of Qianzhou prefecture, was located about 25 km to the south-west of the prefectural seat and bordered on Southern Han territory. The military governor of Qianzhou, underestimating the strength of the rebel force, was soon forced to defend the city of Qianzhou. The rebels, for their part, did not seize the city, and therefore set up camp at a nearby mountain. The Southern Tang generals sent by the court defeated the rebels and put an end to the rebellion. They captured Zhang Yuxian who was subsequently executed in the Southern Tang capital.

The *Jiangnan yeshi* provides no information on the rebels and their leader Zhang Yuxian, other than the name of Huang Boxiong 黃伯雄, Zhang’s deputy.

Jiuguo zhi, early eleventh century

The *Jiuguo zhi* 九國志 by Lu Zhen 路振 (957–1014)¹⁷ is the earliest extant history of the southern states during the Five Dynasties and Ten States period, along with the anonymous *Wuguo gushi* 五國故事.¹⁸ It is also the oldest surviving record of the events that led to the confrontation between Zhang’s rebels and the Southern Tang authorities in Qianzhou.

In 942 the empire of the Southern Han experienced a succession crisis. The Tang court in 905 had confirmed Liu Yin 劉隱 (874–911), the warlord of Lingnan, which comprised the modern provinces of Guangdong and Hainan as well as parts of Guangxi, as military governor.¹⁹ Liu Yin was content to accept the title of prince of Nanping (Nanping wang 南平王) offered by the

- 17 See Yves Hervouet (ed.), *A Sung Bibliography (Bibliographie des Sung)* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1978), 115. The state missing from Lu’s list of regimes was Jingnan 荆南 (924–963) a description of which was added by his grandson upon re-submission of the work in 1064. The work was consequently renamed *Shiguo zhi* 十國志. See Kurz, “Survey of the historical sources for the Five Dynasties and Ten States in Song times”, *Journal of Song–Yuan Studies* 33, 2003, 192–3. See also Yue Yiping 岳毅平, “*Jiuguo zhi* congkao” 九國志叢考, *Wenxian* 2, 1999, 112–20; Luo Wei 羅威, “Lu Zhen *Jiuguo zhi* shuping” 路振九國志述評, *Changsha shifan zhuanke xuexiao xuebao* 71.1, 2007, 72–4; Luo Wei 羅威, “*Jiuguo zhi* de banben ji xueshu jiezhi” 九國志的版本及學術介質, *Changsha daxue xuebao* 21.4, 2007, 158–9; Zhang Jing 張靜, “*Jiuguo zhi* shixue yanjiu” 九國志史學研究, *Anhui wenxue* 3, 2009, 233–4.
- 18 The five states referred to in the title were Wu, the Southern Tang, the Former and Later Shu (treated as one), the Southern Han, and Min. All of these had been proclaimed empires. See Hervouet, *A Sung Bibliography*, 114–5; and Kurz, “Survey”, 192.
- 19 According to the majority of historical accounts, Liu Yin was a scion of a family from north China that moved southwards in the late Tang period. See Miles, “Rewriting the Southern Han (917–971)”, 45. Tang Sen 唐森 (“Nan Han Liushi zushu pingyi” 南漢劉氏族屬平議, *Jinan xuebao* 15.1, 1993, 70–8) discusses the ethnicity in a review of works of which one claims that Liu was the descendant of an Arab trader, while another maintains that Liu was an ethnic Lao 僚. Hugh Clark similarly suspects that Liu Yin belonged to an indigenous ethnic group referred to as *man* 蠻 or southern barbarian, see Clark, “The Southern Kingdoms between the T’ang and the Sung”, in Twitchett and Smith (eds), *The Cambridge History of China Volume 5 Part One*, 153; and “Scoundrels, rogues, and refugees: the founders of the Ten Kingdoms in the late ninth century”, in Peter Lorge (ed.), *Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press of Hong Kong, 2011), 63.

Later Liang in 909. His younger brother and successor Liu Yan 劉龔 (889–942) in 917 proclaimed himself emperor of the state of Great Yue (Da Yue 大越), which he renamed Great Han (Da Han 大漢) the following year. Liu Yan thus underlined his claim to a distant relationship with the original Han dynasty with which he shared the family name. Upon his death in 942, his third son Liu Hongdu 劉宏度²⁰ assumed the throne and changed his name to Bin 玢.

Liu Yan favoured his fifth son Liu Hongchang 劉宏昌 (also 劉弘昌, ?–944) as his successor and thus his councillor Wang Lin 王翻 developed a plan to invest Liu Hongchang as heir apparent. Shortly before Liu Yan's death, however, another official by the name of Xiao Yi 蕭益 interfered, warning the dying emperor that the appointment of a younger over an older son would lead to serious calamity. Hence Liu Hongdu was reinstated.²¹

The *Jiuguo zhi* biography of Liu Honggao 劉宏杲 (also 劉弘杲, 924–943), prince of Xun (Xun wang 循王) and tenth son of Liu Yan, includes a description of one of the first encounters between rebel and government forces.²² The rebellion started early in the Guangtian 光天 era, the first and only reign title proclaimed by the new emperor Liu Bin (r. 942–943), in the prefecture of Xunzhou 循州 about 200 km north-east of the Southern Han capital Xingwang fu 興王府 (modern Guangzhou).²³ Zhang Yuxian did not adopt a dynastic designation, but only the title King of the Eight Kingdoms of the Middle Heaven (*zhongtian baguo wang* 中天八國王). The rebel forces captured a number of prefectures and were endangering the hold of the Southern Han on its eastern regions.

There must have been considerable concern at court since just four years earlier another Southern Han prince, Liu Hongcao 劉弘操, had perished with his troops in an attempt to bring a local leader in northern Vietnam under the control of the court at Guangzhou.²⁴ Liu Honggao nonetheless asked to be given command of an army to eliminate Zhang, but the ruler considered him too young and instead appointed Liu Honggao's older brother Liu Hongchang, the prince of Yue (Yue wang 越王), as the commander-in-chief of the Southern Han forces, with Liu

20 As the personal name of the father of the founder of the Song dynasty was Zhao Hongyin 趙弘殷, the original character 弘 in the names of the Southern Han princes in Song sources were represented with the characters 宏 or 洪. By contrast, the *Jiu Wudai shi* dropped the first characters completely. I suspect that the use of the character 弘 in the *Zizhi tongjian* is due to the fact that modern editors used a Qing dynasty copy of a Yuan dynasty block print of the work. See the editorial notes in Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 1.

21 Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Wudai shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 65.813–4.

22 Lu Zhen, *Jiuguo zhi*, 9.3329, in Fu Xuancong, Xu Meirong and Xu Jijun (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian* (Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe, 2004), vol. 6.

23 Xunzhou had until 894 consisted of six districts: in that year Liu Yin restructured the prefecture and created Zhenzhou 禎州 out of four of the original districts under the administration of Xunzhou. See *Taiping huanyuji*, 159.3060. Confusingly, Xunzhou, the former prefectural seat, kept its designation, while the new prefecture of Xunzhou, consisting of the remaining two districts of the Tang prefecture, was established to the east of it. Leixiang 雷鄉 served as the prefectural seat for this new Xunzhou. See *Taiping huanyuji*, 160.3067. This arrangement was maintained in the Song.

24 James Anderson, *The Rebel Den of Nùng Trí Cao: Loyalty and Identity along the Sino-Vietnamese Frontier* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 43.

Honggao acting as his deputy. They proceeded with their troops to a place named Qianbo Inn (Qianbo guan 錢帛館), obviously without scouting the area beforehand, since the rebels mounted an attack that took them by surprise. In the ensuing bitter battle the two princes escaped capture and certain death thanks to the timely arrival of general Wan Jingxin 萬景忻. The text explains that the rebels were eventually dispersed but does not provide more detail.

Wudai shiji, 973

Ouyang Xiu, in a note at the end of the description of the Southern Tang ruling house, states that he received much information from his ancestors from Jiangnan²⁵ – his great-grandfather, a resident of Anfu 安福 in Jizhou prefecture in Jiangxi, who received his *jinshi*-degree under the Southern Tang, and his grandfather Ouyang Yan 歐陽偃.²⁶ His fondness for the Southern Tang is attested also by his description of an ink stone of the era.²⁷ It is easy to imagine a scenario in which Ouyang Xiu inserted into the record information he had gathered through his relatives because his narrative differs in a number of respects from the earlier histories.

The sequence of events in the *Wudai shiji* biography of the second Southern Tang emperor suggests that turmoil had been brewing in eastern Guangdong prior to the reign of Liu Bin, but that things came to a head through his poor handling of the government.²⁸ Ouyang Xiu links the emergence of Zhang as rebel leader to the appearance of a spirit. We are not told how exactly the spirit communicated with the people and Zhang Yuxian, other than that it surfaced in a “commoner’s house” in the Luo 羅 district (Boluo 博羅 district) in Xunzhou prefecture.²⁹ It did not introduce itself nor do we learn anything about its followers, except that Zhang Yuxian was among them. Though it predicted fortunes, Ouyang Xiu is silent about the efficacy of its forecasts. The spirit after identifying Zhang Yuxian as a *luohan* 羅漢 chose him to serve it.³⁰

Since the rebel groups could not agree on which chieftain should be leader, they turned to the spirit, who recommended Zhang. The adoption of a royal title by Zhang, as well as the creation of a bureaucratic system, were accompanied by the proclamation of the reign title Yongle 永樂. This promised eternal peace at a time when the region was indeed not at peace. The title Yongle was also used by Fang La 方臘 and by the third Ming emperor Zhu Di 朱棣 (r. 1402–24), who

25 Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Wudai shi*, 62.779.

26 See “Ouyang gong xingzhuang” 歐陽公行狀 by Wu Chong 吳充 (1021–80), in *Ouyang Xiu quanji* 歐陽修全集 (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1986), 1335. According to Egan, Ouyang Xiu always referred to himself as a Luling man, even though he was not born and brought up there, and only returned to bury his mother in 1053. See Ronald Egan, *The Literary Works of Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–1072)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2.

27 See the entry on *Nan Tang yan* 南唐硯 in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1047.

28 *Xin Wudaishi*, 62.769.

29 This district was located about 100 km to the east of the Southern Han capital. See *Taiping huanyuji*, 159.3069–71; *Yudi jisheng*, 99.3077–78.

30 Bong Seok Joo provides a detailed study of *luohan* in a PhD dissertation entitled “The Arhat cult in China from the seventh through thirteenth centuries: narrative, art, space and ritual” (Princeton, 2007).

both had good reasons to proclaim better times: Fang La was under pressure from the Song authorities and Zhu Di had to justify the disappearance of the legitimate emperor.³¹

The *Wudai shiji* provides the name of the Qianzhou military governor Jia Hao 賈浩. In this account he is not so much made responsible for not being able to overcome the rebels; rather, the rebel forces were too numerous to be vanquished by the troops sent against them.

The grottoes referred to as Zhang's chosen headquarters are situated at Baiyun Cliff (Baiyun zhang 白雲嶂)³² to the west of Luo'ao 羅坳 town in Yudu 雩都 district (to the east of modern Ganzhou). From this vantage point the rebels could control traffic on the river, while their backs were guarded by the Yu 雩 mountain range to the north. The military leaders of the Southern Tang campaign were Yan Si 嚴思 and Bian Hao 邊鎬. For Yan Si, also referred to in the sources as Yan Sili 嚴思禮³³ or Yan En 嚴恩,³⁴ there is no information other than his involvement in the defence of Qianzhou. Bian Hao, in contrast, started his career under Li Bian and used Zhang Yuxian to further it, becoming one of the best-known generals of the Southern Tang.³⁵

The *Wudai shiji* portrays Liu Bin as an incompetent ruler who sought entertainment and neglected the administration of the state. The *Jiu Wudai shi* similarly characterizes Liu Bin as base and ignorant and describes him not only as shameless, but also as mean; it does not say in which way this influenced people's opinion of him, but explains that his brothers conspired to remove him from power because of his contemptible behaviour.³⁶ The *Zizhi tongjian* straightforwardly accuses Liu Bin of neglect of governmental matters and, like the *Jiu Wudai shi*, depicts him as being interested exclusively in pleasure.³⁷ In addition he was extremely suspicious of his brothers but had no idea of the danger they posed to his position and life. The biography of Liu Bin in

31 Shih-shan Henry Tsai discusses in detail the takeover of power by Zhu Di and his efforts to redress wrongs, but does not explain why Zhu Di adopted the reign title – see Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), chapters 4 and 5. Kao Yu-kung believes that because the first Ming emperor Taizu, the Yongle emperor's father, was involved with Manichaeism and in Kao's reading Fang La was as well, the adoption of Yongle was not a coincidence. See Kao Yu-kung, "Source material on the Fang La Rebellion", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 26, 1966, 212. There is no indication though that Manichaeism played any role in Zhang's rebellion.

32 Zang Lihe 臧勵穌 (ed.), *Zhongguo gujin diming dacidian* 中國古今地名大辭典 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1982), 257.

33 See Ma Ling 馬令, *Nan Tang shu* 南唐書, 2.5268 and 26.5426, below, in Fu, Xu, and Xu (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian*, vol. 9.

34 See *Zizhi tongjian*, 283.9255, below.

35 Bian has biographies in Ma Ling, *Nan Tang shu*, 11.5340, and Lu You, *Nan Tang shu*, 5.5504–05, in Fu, Xu, and Xu (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian*, vol. 9. His biography in Ma Ling's *Nan Tang shu* is corrupted because part of it has been lost. It incorrectly states that "Zhang Yuxian was made Inspector-in-chief of all garrisoned forces". The name of Zhang Yuxian needs to be replaced with that of Bian Hao, who received the appointment after the suppression of the rebellion.

36 *Jiu Wudai shi*, 135.1809.

37 *Zizhi tongjian*, 283.9249.

Wudai shiji does not mention the appearance of the spirit, and thus implies that Zhang was merely an ordinary bandit chieftain.³⁸

Yuhu qinghua, 1078

The *Yuhu qinghua* predominantly records events of the Song dynasty until 1077, but the last two chapters report on the Southern Tang.³⁹ Wenyong's account⁴⁰ of the rebellion generally follows the earlier texts. The spirit, in contrast to the earlier descriptions, actively orders Zhang to become his servant, and specifies his identity of *luohan* as the eighteenth of the group. According to Qing Chang, the eighteenth *luohan* Pindola (*bintoulu zunzhe* 賓頭廬尊者), also referred to as the Vanquishing the Tiger *luohan* (*fuhu* 伏虎), entered the circle of *luohan* only in the first half of the tenth century.⁴¹ Bong Seok Joo provides evidence that the veneration of the Eighteen *Luohan* goes back to either the famous Eighteen *Luohan* paintings by Guanxiu 貫休, an artist active in Sichuan during the late Tang dynasty and the Former Shu state (Qian Shu 前蜀, 903–925), or those by Zhang Xuan 張玄 (fl. 890–930), who also worked in Sichuan.⁴²

In contrast to the *Wudai shiji* account, the *Yuhu qinghua*, once the spirit has pointed to Zhang as their leader, has the bandits confer the monarchic title on Zhang Yuxian. Given the history of transmission of the *Yuhu qinghua* the reign title Changle 長樂 may be traced back to a copying error. The narrative then follows established lines, but adds a meeting between Li Jing and Bian Hao prior to the latter's departure from the capital. Though Li Jing uses the term sorcery he does not explain what he means other than that it involves a spirit. The original order to suppress the rebellion makes it evident that Zhang was treated as a rebel, because there is no specific mention of sorcery.

Wenyong, moreover, provides an exchange between Zhang and the spirit shortly before the rebels were defeated. In the *Wudai shiji* Zhang attempted to enlist the help of the spirit, which remained silent; in the *Yuhu qinghua* the spirit explains that it cannot save Zhang and the rebels, arguing that while it can make predictions, it is up to Zhang to take the right decisions. Thus the spirit blames Zhang for the failure to take Qianzhou, and since government forces are about to conquer there is nothing left for the spirit to do. This complements Li Jing's statement about the lack of an "outstanding man" among

38 *Xin Wudai shi*, 65.814.

39 It is difficult to assess how these chapters reflect the original text because in the Ming only the first five of the total of ten chapters were extant. However, a certain Wu Xiu 吳岫 managed to get hold of the five missing chapters which Fan Qin 范欽 (1506–85) borrowed from him. Fan, after having procured another copy of the work, began editing the whole text, but had to stop because he was afflicted by a disease that damaged his vision. His friend Wang Ning 王凝 continued the work and corrected the text – which had many xylographic errors – and it is this text that survives today. See the colophon by Wu Yifeng 吳翌鳳 (1742–1819) dated 1777, in Wenyong, *Yuhu qinghua*, 115, in *Xiangshan yelu, xulu, Yuhu qinghua* 湘山野錄, 續錄, 玉壺清話 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997).

40 *Yuhu qinghua*, 10.105–6.

41 Qing Chang, "Indigenizing deities: the Budai Maitreya and the group of eighteen Luohans in niche no. 68 at Feilaifeng", *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* 32, 2010, 33–4. I would like to thank Qing Chang for providing me with a copy of his article.

42 Joo, "Arhat cult", 121–3.

the rebels (中無英雄), which appears earlier in the text, and sketches Zhang as a powerless and indecisive leader.

Zizhi tongjian, 1084

The *Shiguo jinian* is the most likely source for the depiction of the rebellion in the *Zizhi tongjian* which is scattered across various entries in chapter 283.⁴³ The text introduces new information concerning Zhang's age and experience, saying that he was still young and did not know how to lead troops. The *Zizhi tongjian* underlines that Zhang's position did not depend on his leadership skills, but on his close relationship with the spirit, which was honoured by the other rebel leaders, who nonetheless did not seek authorization from Zhang Yuxian for their raids.

The *Zizhi tongjian* ascertains the Southern Han regions affected by the rebellion as the prefectures of Chaozhou 潮州 and Huizhou 惠州.⁴⁴ The text then follows the earlier accounts by narrating the first Southern Han campaign under the command of the two princes, the battle at Qianbo Inn, and the near escape of the princes due to the efforts of Chen Daoxiang 陳道庠.⁴⁵ It provides a date for the capture of Xunzhou by the rebel forces – early December 942 – as well as the name of its prefect Liu Zhuan 劉傳.⁴⁶

The Southern Han made no major effort to renew the campaign against the rebels until August 943: they needed to regroup after the defeat at Qianbo Inn and, more importantly, a new ruler ascended the throne. Once Liu Bin was in power, his brother Liu Hongxi 劉宏熙 (920–958) plotted his removal in order to gain the throne. He had help from Liu Honggao and Liu Hongchang, as well as from Chen Daoxiang who hired a gang of bullies to kill Liu Bin in early 943.⁴⁷ Liu Hongxi changed his given name to Cheng 晟 and became the third emperor of the Southern Han (r. 943–958).

Wan Jingxin, the general in charge of the pacification campaign against Zhang Yuxian, had proven his mettle in the earlier battle at Qianbo Inn. Zhang's northerly retreat is testimony to the efficiency of Wan Jingxin.

Qianzhou was on the territory of the Southern Tang empire and it seemed that Southern Han forces would not pursue Zhang and his people onto foreign soil. The advice from the spirit in *Zizhi tongjian* is more explicit than that reported in

43 *Zizhi tongjian*, 283.9239, 9252, 9255.

44 Chaozhou was the easternmost Southern Han prefecture, bordering on the territory of the empire of Min. It consisted of the districts of Haiyang 海陽 and Chaoyang 潮陽. See *Taiping huanyuji*, 158.3034–37. In the Southern Song, Zhaozhou administered an additional district, Heyang 揭陽. See *Yudi jisheng*, 100.3103–22. Huizhou was the Song designation for the old prefectural town of Xunzhou in Zhenzhou prefecture. Zhenzhou was renamed Huizhou, but the prefecture retained its four original districts, namely Guishan 歸善, Boluo, Haifeng 海豐 and Heyuan 河源. See *Taiping huanyuji*, 159.3067–72; *Yudi jisheng*, 99.3075–102.

45 In *Xin Wudaishi*, 65.814, he is credited, together with Wan Jingxin 萬景忻, with having saved the two princes. See above.

46 *Zizhi tongjian*, 283.9240.

47 Chen Daoxiang was killed on imperial orders soon after Liu Cheng had taken to the throne. See *Jiuguo zhi*, 9.3331–9332.

Wudai shiji: it promised a successful end to the rebellion under the condition that Qianzhou was captured.

Another noteworthy observation concerns the borders the rebels crossed: rather than pursuing the rebel forces, Southern Han commanders were content to guard Southern Han territory. The Southern Han and the Southern Tang each respected the other's sphere of influence. This is remarkable in itself, but what is more important is that the rebels used the borders between the two empires to their advantage.⁴⁸

Zhang seized most districts in Qianzhou prefecture⁴⁹ apart from the city itself, which resisted with tenacity. The city had an excellent defensive position, surrounded by the You River 猶江, a tributary of the Gan 贛 River, on almost all sides, leaving only one direct approach from the north-west. For this reason Zhang moved to the Baiyun Grottoes to establish his headquarters there, and settled for a siege.⁵⁰

When Zhang attacked Qianzhou, he became a problem for the Southern Tang state, though several months passed before they responded to Zhang Yuxian's presence. The prefecture chosen for the start of the campaign was Hongzhou 洪州 (modern-day Nanchang) and its military prefecture of Zhennan 鎮南軍. Hongzhou, a centrally located major prefecture in the Southern Tang empire, was ideal for assembling men, equipment and provisions, as it linked the Yangzi River to the Gan River system. The governor of Zhennan military prefecture in Hongzhou was, until the spring of 943, Song Qiqiu 宋齊丘 (887–959), the foremost adviser of the first Southern Tang emperor. He was appointed in July 942⁵¹ and remained there until Li Jing ascended the throne in March 943. The new ruler eventually recalled Song as one of his main councilors in April or May 943.⁵² The post of military governor probably remained vacant after Song's departure, and this may explain why Yan En and Bian Hao were appointed as commanders.

In November 943 Southern Tang relief forces arrived at Qianzhou. The *Zizhi tongjian* introduces a local informer called Bai Changyu 白昌裕 who, together with Bian Hao, developed a plan for the defeat of Zhang Yuxian.

Bian Hao, on Bai Changyu's advice, had his troops clear a path through the forested area behind the rebel headquarters. Faced with government troops confident after their successes in previous skirmishes with the rebels, Zhang tried in

48 Heyuan district, as part of the Southern Han prefecture of Huizhou, bordered on the Southern Tang district of Nankang in the north.

49 The *Zizhi tongjian* addresses the military governor as Jia Kuanghao 賈匡浩.

50 *Zizhi tongjian*, 283.9252.

51 *Zizhi tongjian*, 283.9237.

52 *Zizhi tongjian*, 283.9248. On Song's alleged role as leader of the "Five Demons" faction (*wugui* 五鬼) in the Southern Tang administration, see Johannes L. Kurz, "The invention of a 'faction' in Song historical writings on the Southern Tang", *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 28, 1998, 1–35; Zhang Xingwu 張興武, "Nan Tang dangzheng: Tang Song dangzheng shi fazhan de zhongjie" 南唐黨爭:唐宋黨爭史發展的中介, in *Zhangzhou shifan xueyuan xuebao* 42.1, 2002, 68–74; He Jianming 何劍明, "Nan Tang guo dangzheng yu Tang Song zhi jiao de shehui zhuanxing" 南唐國黨爭與唐宋之交的社會轉型, in *Suzhou daxue xuebao* 6.6, 2005, 95–9.

vain to elicit a response from the spirit. He was captured by Li Tai 李台, one of the rebel commanders who, we are told, never believed in the existence of the spirit.⁵³ Zhang Yuxian was consequently executed in Jinling.

Ma Ling *Nan Tang shu*, 1105

The *Nan Tang shu* 南唐書 (1105) by Ma Ling 馬令⁵⁴ provides a general description of the rebellion in the annals of Li Jing, and dedicates a biography to Zhang Yuxian under the subcategory *yaozei* within the chapter on Buddhists (*futu* 浮屠).⁵⁵ Much of the material Ma Ling used for the annals and particularly for the biography derives from older texts such as the *Wudai shiji* and the *Zizhi tongjian*.

Ma Ling reintroduces Huang Boxiong who was first mentioned in the *Jiangnan yeshi* as the deputy of Zhang Yuxian in his text, and adds a monk called Cao Jingquan 曹景全 as another deputy. We learn about rewards conferred on the two successful Southern Tang commanders, as well as Jia Hao's punishment for failing to contain the rebels. However, Ma Ling dropped Bai Changyu from his account of the decisive battle between the rebels and the Southern Tang forces. He specifies the place where the spirit appeared for the first time as Kebin zhen 刻彬鎮 in Luo district.⁵⁶

In Ma Ling's text Zhang Yuxian is the sixteenth *luohan* as opposed to the eighteenth *luohan* in the *Yuhu qinghua*. The sixteenth *luohan*, Pantha the Younger (*zhucha bantuojia zunzhe* 注茶半托迦尊者), according to popular Buddhist belief destroyed evil.⁵⁷ He began as the lowest of the disciples of the Buddha and was ridiculed by his peers for his ignorance and stupidity but, once he attained enlightenment, he became a spiritually strong being and a favourite of the Buddha.⁵⁸ The sixteen *luohan* were preparing the way for

53 *Zizhi tongjian*, 283.9255.

54 Ma's was the second of three works with the same title, the earlier being the no longer extant work of Hu Hui 胡恢, the latter that of Lu You 陸游 (1125–1230). For a study of the three *Nan Tang shu* see Yang Hengping 楊恆平, "Sanjia *Nan Tang shu* zhuanben kao" 三家南唐書傳本考, *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 6, 2007, 57–61. Recent treatments of Ma's work are Zhu Hequn 朱荷群, "Lun Ma Ling *Nan Tang shu*" 論馬令南唐書, *Songdai wenhua yanjiu* 2, 2009, 139–49, and Zhang Gang 張剛 and Sun Wanjie 孫萬潔, "Ma Ling *Nan Tang shu* shuping" 馬令南唐書述評, *Jinri nanguo* 121.4, 2009, 135–6.

55 Ma Ling, *Nan Tang shu*, 2.5268, and 26.5426, respectively.

56 The text in the *yaozei* category in Ma Ling's *Nan Tang shu* in *Congshu jicheng* refers to Xunzhou as Qinzhou 秦州. See Ma Ling, *Nan Tang shu* (*Congshu jicheng*), 26.172. This is clearly a xylographic error which has been corrected in the new edition of the text in Fu, Xu, and Xu (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian*, vol. 9.

57 Mircea Eliade (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religions* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 403–5.

58 For a characterization of the sixteenth *luohan* see Thomas Watters, "The eighteen Lohan of Chinese Buddhist temples", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4, 1898, 343–4. I would like to thank Charlotte Galloway for referring me to this article, as well as Barend ter Haar for pointing me to Liang Tingyu 梁婷育, "Liu Songnian 'luohan' sanchou hua shi yiyi de yanjiu: jian lun qi zongjiao yihan yu tuxiang biao xian 劉松年 '羅漢' 三軸畫史意義的研究：兼論其宗教與圖像表現 (A Study on Significance of Lohan by Liu Sung-nien: With Faith and Iconography of the Luohan)" [sic], PhD diss., Nanhua Daxue, 2008.

the appearance of Buddha Maitreya, upon whose arrival a new and prosperous age would begin.⁵⁹

Ma Ling explains that both Yan En and Bian Hao independently led forces of “several thousand” men. This suggests that the Southern Tang commanders either did not view the threat of the alleged 100,000 followers of Zhang Yuxian as a danger to the stability of the southern regions of the Southern Tang empire, or that they knew that the rebel fighting force constituted only a small percentage of Zhang’s group. One indication of this was that the rebels could seize only villages and small towns, and were unable to capture Qianzhou.

Lu You *Nan Tang shu*, 1186

Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210) treats the rebellion only briefly in the annals of Li Jing in his *Nan Tang shu* 南唐書,⁶⁰ and embellishes the bare essentials of the narrative with elements found in earlier sources in the biography of Bian Hao.⁶¹

According to Lu You, once the spirit had settled in what he refers to as Keshan zhen 刻衫鎮,⁶² it declared: “Zhang Yuxian is extraordinary, he should serve me (張遇賢非常人, 當事我)”. Only then does Zhang move to the place, and consequently the spirit recommends him to the rebels as leader. Lu You, like Ma Ling, took advantage of the material available to him. For example, he borrowed Bai Changyu’s plan from the *Zizhi tongjian*, as well as Li Tai, the traitor to the cause of the rebels. He also included Cao Jingquan, but referred to him as “monk Jingquan”. Both entries on the rebellion in Lu You’s work constitute a factual description of Zhang Yuxian, but in general terms, Ouyang Xiu and Ma Ling’s texts provide better narratives because they are more coherent and detailed. In Lu’s text the spirit merely refers to Zhang Yuxian as being “extraordinary” (非常人) which seems rather a weak argument for making him the overall rebel leader.

Descriptions of the rebellion in texts from the Ming and Qing dynasties

Subsequent histories, i.e. those compiled during the Ming and Qing dynasties, followed the earlier texts in their treatment of the rebellion. The *Tangyu jizhuan* 唐餘紀傳 by Chen Ting 陳霆 (*jinshi* of 1502), for instance, scavenges the annals of Yuanzong in Lu You’s work, and adds after the relevant passage “The remaining bandits were all pacified” (餘賊悉平). Chen similarly makes

59 On the sixteen arhat and their connection to Maitreya, see John S. Strong, “The legend of the lion-roarer: a study of the Buddhist arhat Pindola Bharadvaja”, *Numen* 26.1, 1979, 52; on the function of the arhat see James Bissett Pratt, *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism and a Buddhist Pilgrimage* (Ottawa: Laurier Books, 1996), 226–7. An early study of the sixteen arhat is Sylvain Lévy and Edouard Chavannes, “Les seize Arhat protecteurs de la loi”, *Journal Asiatique* 8, 1916, 189–304.

60 For a critical appraisal of the work see Zhu Zhiwei 朱志偉, “Qian lun Lu You *Nan Tang shu* de jidian quehan” 淺論陸游南唐書幾點缺憾, *Heilongjiang shizhi* 280.15 (2012):11–12.

61 Lu You, *Nan Tang shu*, 2.5473 and 5.5504 respectively, in Fu, Xu, and Xu (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian*, vol. 9.

62 In the Shijie shuju-edition of the text, the characters for the market town are given as 刻衫鎮. See Lu You, *Nan Tang shu*, 5.20, in *Lu Fangweng quanji* 陸放翁全集 (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1992).

use of the *Zizhi tongjian* and Lu You's *Nan Tang shu* in the biography of Bian Hao, slightly changing the wording of the spirit's first announcement to the villagers: "Zhang Yuxian is extraordinary, if he can serve me, he will receive great fortune" (張遇賢非常人, 彼能事我, 當得鉅福).⁶³ In addition, Chen Ting has the rebels rather than Li Tai surrendering Zhang to Bian Hao, who transfers Zhang to Jinling where he is brought to justice.

Wu Renchen's 吳仁臣 (1628–89) *Shiguo chungiu* 十國春秋 equally copies the annals of Yuanzong from Lu You's *Nan Tang shu*.⁶⁴ The information on the red clothing comes from the *Jiangnan yeshi*. Bian Hao's biography appears to be a truncated version of the *Zizhi tongjian* account, completely omitting the spirit.⁶⁵ The rebellion as such does not feature at all in the biographies of Liu Hongchang and Liu Honggao.⁶⁶ Wang Jingxin's rescue of the two princes in the first encounter with the rebel band is recorded without giving the location.⁶⁷

Zhang Yuxian's biography is part of the Southern Han section of the *Shiguo chungiu*.⁶⁸ Richard Davis raises the *Shiguo chungiu* to the level of a source for tenth-century history that is "exceptionally readable and reliable", and it is therefore worthwhile to examine closely the composition of the text of Zhang Yuxian's biography.⁶⁹

The readability and reliability of the text in fact derive directly from its frequent cutting and pasting of passages from previous works. Like all the works starting with the *Zizhi tongjian*, the *Shiguo chungiu* relies on earlier information and appears to follow a modular principle in the arrangement of that material. It is evident that the work neither produces any new information nor provides any new insights into Zhang Yuxian's rebellion. This raises serious doubts about Davis' statement and the value of the work as an original historical source.

In addition, Wu Renchen claims to have had access to texts he could not possibly have seen because they did not survive the transition from the Yuan to the Ming, i.e. the *Wu lu* 吳錄, the *Shu shu* 蜀書 or the *Shiguo jinian*.⁷⁰ His reference

63 Chen Ting, *Tangyu jizhuan*, 2.5636 and 13.5723, respectively, in Fu, Xu, and Xu (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian*, vol. 9.

64 Wu Renchen, *Shiguo chungiu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 16.207.

65 *Shiguo chungiu*, 22.316.

66 *Shiguo chungiu*, 61.880–1, and 61.882.

67 *Shiguo chungiu*, 63.901.

68 *Shiguo chungiu*, 66.925–6.

69 See Richard L. Davis' review of Kurz, *Southern Tang*, in *China Review International* 18.1, 2011, 83. One wonders if Davis' statement was based on the fact that the work was one of the first on Five Dynasties and Ten States history published in a modern edition. In the meantime the majority of texts on that period have been published in the *Wudai shishu huibian*. For a short introduction to texts dealing with Southern Tang history, see Kurz, "Sources", 217–35. See moreover Zou Jingfeng 鄒勁風, "Xiancun you guan Nan Tang de wenzi shiji yanjiu" 現存有關南唐的文字史籍研究, *Jianghai xuekan* 2, 1998, 136–40.

70 *Shiguo chungiu*, 7. Chen Jun 陳潛 began writing the *Wu lu* under the Wu regime. It was completed in 20 *juan* by Xu Xuan, Gao Yuan 高遠, Qiao Shun 喬舜 and Pan You 潘佑 during the Southern Tang. The *Shu shu*, sometimes referred to as *Qian Shu shu* 前蜀書, was the work of the pre-eminent Shu historian Li Hao 李昊 (892–965). When the *Song shi* was compiled the work comprised only 20 of the original 40 *juan*. See Kurz, "Survey", 216–7.

to these works could have been an attempt to give the *Shiguo chungiu* a more authentic appearance and lend it credibility. It is indeed difficult to find any material in the chapters on the Southern Tang that is not copied or paraphrased from the older sources. Hu Xiaoli 胡小麗, in her recent study of the material used for the Southern Tang chapters in the *Shiguo chungiu*, arrives at a similarly critical judgement, stating that while the *Shiguo chungiu* does preserve older historical texts it does not add any new insights or material.⁷¹

One may also note the valid reservations Edward Schafer formulated with regard to this work as a “primary” source.⁷² Before using the *Shiguo chungiu* as a historical source one has to examine carefully the chapters dealing with the various states and the origin of the information contained in the annals and biographies. The same cautious approach needs to be applied to the *Xu Tangshu* 續唐書 by Chen Zhan 陳鱣 (1753–1817)⁷³ who made creative use of the available sources in such a way that the description of Zhang Yuxian’s rebellion in the annals of Yuanzong as well as in Bian Hao’s biography are verbatim copies of the relevant sections in Lu You’s work.⁷⁴

Key features of the historical records

It would be of great value to know more about the structure of the leadership of the rebellion, but apart from Zhang Yuxian only three men (Li Tai, Huang Boxiong, monk/Cao Jingquan) are identified as rebel leaders. Similarly, one would like some insights into the composition of the rebel group apart from general statements about “bandits” and “bandit groups”. Did they include indigenous elements such as the Man and Lao (*manliao* 蠻獠) that were residents of Xunzhou,⁷⁵ in addition to Chinese peasants and bandits?⁷⁶ Information on districts and prefectures comes either from the Tang or the Song dynasties; hence the number of families

71 Hu Xiaoli, “‘*Shiguo chungiu* Nan Tang’ zhengyin shumu kao – jian lun *Shiguo chungiu* de shiliao jiezhi” 十國春秋南唐徵引書目考 – 兼論十國春秋的史料介質, *Tushu qingbao gongzuo* 55.19, 2011, 137–41, 147. Both Luo Wei 羅威 and Zhang Meilan 張梅蘭, in contrast to Hu, regard the *Shiguo chungiu* as essential when it comes to studying the state of Chu in Hunan or Buddhist biographies respectively. See Luo Wei, “*Shiguo chungiu* de banben yuanliu yu xueshu jiazhi yanjiu” 十國春秋的版本源流與學術價值研究, *Tushuguan* 5, 2001, 60–1, and Zhang Meilan, “*Shiguo chungiu* chanseng liezhuan jiaodu ji” 十國春秋禪僧列傳交讀記, *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 3, 2002, 77–9.

72 Edward H. Schafer, *The Empire of Min: A South China Kingdom of the Tenth Century* (Tokyo/Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1954), xi–xii.

73 On Chen Zhan see Chen Hongsen 陳鴻森, “Chen Zhan shiji bianzheng” 陳鱣事跡辯證, *Zhuantong zhongguo yanjiu jikan*, 2006, 324–33.

74 Chen Zhan, *Xu Tang shu* (Congshu jicheng), 6.36 and 49.442–3. Chen left out all passages referring to the spirit and his communications with Zhang Yuxian in Bian Hao’s biography.

75 *Taiping huanyuji*, 159. 3061. See also Edward H. Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird: T’ang Images of the South* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 49.

76 Chan Wing-hoi provides a study of the She 畬 who were perceived as ethnically different from the Chinese. The She were residents of eastern Guangdong, southern Jiangxi, and southern Fujian. See Chan Wing-hoi, “Ethnic labels in a mountainous region: the case of the She ‘bandits’”, in Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu and Donald F. Sutton (eds), *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*

resident in those places at the time of the rebellion is guesswork at best.⁷⁷ A related question is how the rebels, who are said to have numbered more than 100,000 at one point, were able to sustain themselves in the mountainous regions of Guangdong and Jiangxi. What kind of food and what quantities were available to them? While no answers to these questions can be given at present, it is possible to make some observations about the historical record.

In what follows I will scrutinize some of the significant features shared in the extant historical texts concerning the description of Zhang Yuxian. These are: the red clothes worn by the rebels; the royal title Zhang Yuxian assumed; the appearance of the spirit; the identification of Zhang as a *luohan*; and his labeling as a *yaozei*.

Red clothes

Red clothes, referred to as early as the *Jiangnan yeshi*, are a recurring feature in uprisings. During the Fang La rebellion different combinations of red cloth marked the rank of the bearer, while all rebels wore red during the Red Turban rebellion.⁷⁸ Information is lacking in regard to the dresses of Zhang's partisans, i.e. whether they were clad completely or only partially in red, or whether red garments were also used as markers of rank and position. As a signal colour red may have served primarily to identify the rebels among themselves in battle, and to intimidate the enemy. Red clothing, however, seems not to have been of particular interest to historians for only the *Wudai shiji*, Ma Ling in his *Nan Tang shu*, the *Tangyu jizhuan* and the *Shiguo chunqiu*, mention it again. The designation "red troopers" (*chi junzi* 赤軍子), likewise, is recorded only in the *Tangyu jizhuan* and was probably copied from the original entry in *Jiangnan yeshi*.

King of the Eight States of Middle Heaven

Zheng Xueming 鄭學檬 reads the character *ba* in the title "Zhongtian baguo wang" as a xylographic error and suggests replacing it with *da* 大, making Zhang the great king of the middle heaven.⁷⁹ Du Wenyu by contrast retains the reading "Eight Kingdoms" and alleges that Zhang had an agenda of unification of Chinese territory by explaining that the eight kingdoms referred to were those that existed at the time. These comprised (in addition to the Southern Han and

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 259–60. The sources for the Zhang Yuxian rebellion do not mention any involvement of the She.

77 The *Taiping huanyuji* gives 12,000 registered families in Xunzhou for the Kaiyuan era (713–741) of the Tang, and 6,115 families for the early Song dynasty. See *Taiping huanyuji*, 159.3061. The numbers for Qianzhou for the same periods are 37,600 and 67,810, respectively. See *Taiping huanyuji*, 108.2173. In addition to the taxable households, the *Taiping huanyuji* lists numbers for non-taxable households (*ke* 客) for both prefectures for the early Song, namely 2,224 for Xunzhou, and 17,336 for Qianzhou. On non-taxpaying families who worked as tenants, see Kao, "A study of the Fang La rebellion", 49.

78 Kao, "A study of the Fang La rebellion", 36; David M. Robinson, *Empire's Twilight: Northeast Asia under the Mongols* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 76–7.

79 *Zhongguo lishi dacidian: Sui Tang Wudai shi juan*, 431.

Southern Tang) Wu-Yue 吳越 (907–978), Min (909–945), Chu (907–951), Jingnan 荆南 (also 南平, 924–963), Later Shu (Hou Shu 後蜀, 933–965), and the Later Jin (Hou Jin 後晉, 936–947). Du views the proclamation of the reign title Yongle in similar fashion, namely as an attempt by Zhang to bring peace to a state united under his rule.⁸⁰ Zhou Jiasheng 周加勝 suggests that the “Eight Kingdoms” were eight original rebel groups that came together under the leadership of Zhang Yuxian.⁸¹ Since no material survives to support any of these statements, they must remain speculative.

The spirit

The spirit is invisible and has no-one to transmit its predictions, which would otherwise have qualified that person as a spirit-medium or *tongji* 童乩. Zhang Yuxian did not hold power over the spirit and thus we cannot refer to him as a shaman (*wu* 巫) either. He communicated with the spirit without an intermediary, and the spirit always remained anonymous, never claiming the identity of a deity. This is why it forfeited the use of a medium for its pronouncements and it could be the main reason why Zhang was accused of being a sorcerer. In Song times, as attested in many incidents, people were not only used to the idea of gods speaking through spirit-mediums, but they also accepted the necessity for interpreters of the gods’ pronouncements.⁸² After all not only the real world but also the “spirit realm” had to be managed by government officials.⁸³ In that respect Zhang not only interfered with the administration and illegally claimed a position for himself, but he did so through a spirit that similarly escaped official control.

Ma Ling provides an example of another historical instance of an invisible spirit, which went by the name of Wang Biao 王表.⁸⁴ This spirit appeared in Luoyang 羅陽 district of Linhai 臨海 prefecture (in modern-day Zhejiang) in the summer of 251 during the reign of the Wu ruler Sun Quan 孫權 (r. 222–251). Like the spirit in Boluo, it spoke, ate and drank “like the people”, but could not be seen. When the authorities were informed of its existence, an official was dispatched to confer a title on the spirit, and invite it to the capital of Wu, which it accepted. On the voyage it was accompanied by a servant girl named Fangji 紡績 (Weaver, probably after her profession) who communicated questions to the spirit and received its replies. The spirit – and we may assume

80 Du Wenyu, *Nan Tang shilüe*, 108.

81 Zhou Jiasheng, “Nan Han guo yanjiu” 南漢國研究 (PhD diss., Shaanxi shifan daxue 陝西師範大學, 2008), 25–6. Chen Xin 陳欣 also deals with the rebellion, but does not explain the provenance of Zhang’s title (See “Nan Han guo shi” 南漢國史 (PhD diss., Jinan daxue 暨南大學, 2009), 118–9).

82 See Robert Hymes, *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 201–2.

83 Judith Magee Boltz, “Not by the seal of office alone: new weapons in battles with the supernatural”, in Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory (eds), *Religion and Society in T’ang and Sung China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993), 244–5.

84 Ma Ling, *Nan Tang shu*, 26.173. Ma refers to the anecdote contained in *Jiankang shilu* 建康實錄 by Xu Song 許嵩 (fl. mid-eighth century).

the girl as well – stayed in a lodging especially built for it by Sun Quan, and was frequently consulted by officials. In the following year, shortly after the death of the imperial consort Fan 番, the spirit disappeared.⁸⁵

The parallels between the Luoyang and the Boluo spirit are obvious: first, there is the matter of their appearing in a commoner's home whom we may identify as a farmer or peasant; second, the spirits speak, after a preliminary period without a specified person, to a select contact person; third, the spirits have the ability to move and maintain their invisibility; lastly, in a time of crisis both spirits disappear.

The mobility of both spirits as well as their *modus operandi* – being able to communicate directly and independent of an intermediary – speaks against the ideas of either spirit-mediums or shamans.

Luohan

As to *luohan*, in popular Buddhist belief they were considered to possess special powers for defeating evil. The regime of the Southern Han's second ruler failed to espouse the traditional doctrine of benefitting the people, and it appears obvious that the possibility of Zhang being a *luohan* attracted people. The early successes of Zhang Yuxian in encounters with official troops may have convinced people of his status and of the veracity of the spirit's statement.

The expected arrival of Maitreya was at the core of numerous millenarian rebellions, hence it is tempting to speculate that Zhang tapped into the messianic potential of this Buddha to bolster his position and credentials. We cannot be sure whether the original context of the rebellion was millenarian or whether authors, starting with Ouyang Xiu, ascribed that aspect to it on the basis of such incidents as Wang Huaigu 王懷古 predicting the imminent coming of the Buddha in 713 or the Maitreya Society (Mile hui 彌勒會) in 880 in Chengdu that allegedly planned to overthrow the Tang emperor.⁸⁶ The evidence provided by the texts under scrutiny is too scarce and insubstantial to assume that Zhang indeed led a millenarian movement. The only markers are his identification as a *luohan* and his association with the Buddhist monk Jingquan.

Yaozei

The attribute *yao* in the term *yaozei* used to describe Zhang Yuxian has been translated as “heretical”,⁸⁷ while Davis understands it as a noun meaning “renegade”.⁸⁸ For ter Haar the use of *yao* in connection with “bandits” suggests a religious component.⁸⁹ In the context of descriptions of Zhang's rebellion the term covers the whole spectrum of meanings depending on whether or not the text

85 Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 47.1148–9. The story as found in *Sanguo zhi* is also contained in Li Fang 李昉 *et al.* (comps), *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), 293.2332–3.

86 See Hubert Michael Seiwert, *Popular Religious Movements and Heterodox Sects in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 152–3.

87 Kao, “A study of the Fang La rebellion”, 18.

88 Ou-yang Hsiu, *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties*, trans. Richard L. Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 491.

89 Barend J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 188.

mentions Zhang's communications with the spirit. The document by Xu Xuan does not link Zhang to a religious movement; hence I have chosen the translation "wicked" for *yao*.

The inclusion of the *yaozei*-category in the section on Buddhists in Ma Ling's *Nan Tang shu* suggests that he understood Zhang in a religious context. Since no detailed information survives, the religious context has to remain an unverifiable assumption.

In addition to Zhang Yuxian, only Zha You 諸佑,⁹⁰ is listed under the *yaozei*-category.⁹¹ In Lu You's work Zha You appears in the biography of Chen Qi 陳起⁹² which is to a large extent the same text as that found in Ma Ling's work. The two *Nan Tang shu* are the only Song texts that refer to Zha You or Chen Qi.⁹³ Zha You had gathered a group of followers in Qizhou 蘄州 (modern Qichun 蘄春, Hubei) promising them riches, and claiming that having refrained from eating meat he had lived for several generations already. The followers, both men and women, mingled freely, and a number of children were born out of their relationships. Gradually the group increased to several hundred people who told others that Zha could move through "the air, walk through fire and water", and that he possessed the skill to find hidden valuables. Ma Ling says that they slept during the day and became active at night, when they were earning a living by stealing from others. Chen Qi, a newly graduated *jinshi* arrived in Qizhou during the Shengyuan era (937–943) and became suspicious of Zha. He tried to give him orders, but Zha refused and threatened to kill Chen. Chen consequently enlisted the troops of a military commander who was passing through and rounded up Zha's group. They were fettered and sprinkled with pig's blood, so that Zha "could not perform his magic".⁹⁴ Even though the military commander pleaded for the lives of the women and children, Chen ordered their execution, saying: "These are a troublesome and rebellious rabble and they must be rooted out completely".

Zha You's obvious vegetarian diet, the sexual interactions between the men and women, and their activities at night are, according to ter Haar, stereotypes used to denounce religious phenomena deemed suspicious by authorities. Without using the exact phrases, Ma Ling refers to "men and women intermingling indiscriminately" (*nannü hunza* 男女混雜), "gathering at night and dispersing at dawn" (*yeju xiaosan* 夜聚曉散), and "eating vegetables and serving the devils" (*chicai shimo* 嚙菜事魔). The last qualification of "serving the devils" is not present in the text, but taken as a whole, Zha You's group certainly fell under the category of "heterodox methods" (*yaofa* 妖法) which constituted an offence under Song law.⁹⁵ Similar to the Zhang Yuxian case, we are not being told exactly what kind of deity Zha's group was following.

90 The pronunciation of the first character is given in the commentary to his biography.

91 Ma Ling, *Nan Tang shu* 26.5427.

92 Lu You, *Nan Tang shu*, 14.5577.

93 The biography of Chen Qi in *Shiguo chunqiu* is composed in its entirety of elements taken from both *Nan Tang shu*. See *Shiguo chunqiu*, 23.327–8.

94 Sprinkling of pig's blood on alleged sorcerers was used to neutralize their magic powers. This is attested in a story set at the end of the Zhenguan era of the Tang dynasty contained in *Taiping guangji* 73.475.

95 Ter Haar, *White Lotus Teachings*, 44–55.

In both cases practices are condemned as heterodox without giving any information on their exact nature. The mere fact that Zhang and Zha were heading groups outside the religious mainstream was reason enough to condemn them as illegal, which in Zhang's example is more easily understandable because he headed a full-fledged rebellion. In contrast Zha, until the arrival of a new magistrate, seems to have got on peacefully within his community, even though Lu You maintains that he had become so powerful as to intimidate officials in adjacent districts. The sources do not suggest that the rebels used magic nor do they indicate the use of magical counter-measures by the troops of either the Southern Han or the Southern Tang.

In the case of the "yaozei" Wuyi 毋乙 and his adherents, the circumstances are much clearer: they are reported to have followed Buddhist teachings and established their own cult in Chenzhou 陳州 (in modern Henan) during the Later Liang dynasty (Hou Liang 後梁, 907–923). When the number of cult members grew and they had spread through three districts, Wuyi declared himself emperor,⁹⁶ and started to attack village altars. Only after metropolitan troops had been dispatched were the authorities able to catch the *yaozei* and execute them in 920.⁹⁷ For Zeng Guofu this and Zhang's example show how religion was used to bolster local peasant rebellions. He does not say explicitly how far and in what way Zhang was connected with any religious movement, other than referring to his relationship with the spirit.⁹⁸ Du Wenyu, in a similar vein, declares the spirit an outright ruse by Zhang Yuxian to garner support for his rebellion.⁹⁹

Concluding remarks

What are the consequences of the above findings for our understanding of the historical situation and the sources purportedly reporting on it? With the extant sources we cannot trace a continuous development of the description of the rebellion. Between Li Jing's order of the suppression of the rebellion and the first – surviving – records of the rebellion in the early eleventh century more than 60 years had passed. It took another 50–60 years to establish Zhang Yuxian as a *luohan* and the involvement of the spirit as major features in the historical texts starting with Ouyang Xiu's work.

In addition to the *Wudai shiji*, the *Zizhi tongjian* has been crucial in providing the basic framework of information relating to Zhang's rebellion. From Ma Ling's *Nan Tang shu* onward the historical record is basically set for all later works, including Lu You's *Nan Tang shu*, and the subsequent histories from Ming and Qing times.

The reasons for inclusion or non-inclusion of the description of Zhang Yuxian's rebellion in the works mentioned are impossible to reconstruct on the basis of the sources available. Mention of Zhang's alleged position as a

96 According to *Xin Wudai shi*, 3.27, this occurred in the seventh month of the sixth year of the Zhenming era.

97 In the tenth month of the sixth year of the Zhenming era. See *Jiu Wudai shi*, 10.144.

98 Zeng, "Wudai 'daozei' jianlun", 106.

99 Du, *Nan Tang shilüe*, 105.

luohan, for instance, may have hinged on the personal trust of each historian in its historical validity. The important point to note is that the story about the spirit and its selection of Zhang as leader of the rebels is included in the majority of surviving texts. All authors may have had access to an original description of the event and there is at least one such text that may have provided the necessary information, namely the *Jiangnan lu*. This work most likely drew on original documents held by the Southern Tang imperial library which were seized by the second Song emperor Taizong in 976 and are no longer extant.¹⁰⁰ Notably no histories of the Southern Han state, except those in the dynastic histories of the Five Dynasties and the Song, are older than the nineteenth century, such as the *Nan Han ji* 南漢紀 by Wu Lanxiu 吳蘭修 (*juren* of 1808), the *Nan Han chungiu* 南漢春秋 by Liu Yinglin 劉應麟, and the *Nan Han shu* by Liang Tingnan.¹⁰¹

With regard to the historical situation it is worthwhile to contrast the present case with James C. Scott's work on people who attempted to defy control by administrative centres in Zomia, a region that stretches across the mountainous regions of South-East Asia to those in southern China including Guangxi and western Guangdong.¹⁰² In Scott's framework people with more or less articulated ideas about the organization of their lives clash with ideas of governments that want to manage them.

The Zhang Yuxian case is different in that the rule of the third Southern Han emperor had resulted in an almost complete loss of government control in eastern Guangdong. When Zhang emerged as leader of the rebels he did so because rebel groups had already formed in the two major prefectures. What the rebel groups were looking for in Zhang Yuxian was not an alternative to state control, but one multilaterally recognized leader presiding over a hierarchical system with a bureaucracy, a royal title and a reign title. This is obvious from the consequent development the rebellion took.

The mobility that marks the rebellion in its early stages in eastern Guangdong was sustained as long as government forces could be held in check and worked in favour of the rebels. They used their mobility to ambush government forces; however, with a number of defeats by the Southern Han forces, mobility became

- 100 A large number of texts perished in the fire that gutted the imperial palace in 1015. Though efforts were made to reconstitute the holdings of the Institute for the Veneration of Literature (Chongwen yuan 崇文院) and the Imperial Archive (bigu 祕閣) one must assume that original documents were lost forever. See Cheng Ju 程俱, *Lintai gushi canben* 麟台故事殘本, 2.266, in *Lintai gushi jiaozheng* 麟台故事校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000).
- 101 On the rediscovery of the history of Guangdong by local scholars in the nineteenth century, in addition to Miles, "Rewriting the Southern Han (917–971)", 39–75, see Zhang Jinxian 張金銑, "Nan Han shiliao shiji shuping" 南漢史料史籍述評, *Anhui daxue xuebao* 5.27, 2003, 23–6. Zhang explains that the *Nan Han chungiu* is extant in a block-printed edition dating to 1827. The text in 13 *juan* consists of excerpts from the *Shiguo chungiu*. The works by Wu Lanxiu and Liang Tingnan are accessible through Fu, Xu and Xu (eds), *Wudai shishu huibian*, vol. 10.
- 102 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). I would like to thank the reviewers of an early version of this paper for directing me to this study and a number of others that have proven useful.

essential to avoid annihilation. In contrast to the people in Zomia who withdrew to inaccessible territories, everywhere the rebels turned, land was already cultivated and protected to various degrees by prefectural and provincial forces. Hence the rebels had to revert to fighting if they wanted to carve out a niche for themselves. Since large groups of people cannot be kept on the move indefinitely, the plan to capture Qianzhou, allegedly inspired by the advice of the spirit, was a logical consequence of the growth of the rebellion. After a period of foraging by both the rebels and the government troops, eastern Guangdong must have been depleted of provisions.

Zhang Yuxian's leadership of the uprising consisted of providing "spiritual" guidance only. As a negotiator between the spirit and the people Zhang held a position that allowed him to assume nominal overall control. He owed his status in the first place to the fact that the different bandit groups could not agree on one leader from among their number. Second, his position as overall leader of the rebels depended on his ability to realize the predictions of the spirit. His authority was thus not based on bureaucratic or military power, but solely on charismatic authority. The captains of Zhang's rebel forces did not aim to organize their efforts but independent of each other attacked individual targets. It was men such as Li Tai, who may have been one of the original bandit chieftains, who provided the military leadership of the rebels in their campaigns.

From the little we know about Zhang Yuxian, we cannot deduce an ambition to set up a state using historical precedents such as the Han or Tang. Though he adopted royal trappings, there are no indications that he wanted to become an emperor in his own right. What he was after was a safe haven for his followers, which ultimately the Southern Tang commanders denied him. At a time when three states used historical precedents for their designations (Southern Han, Southern Tang, Later Jin), dynastic historical precedent may not have held any strong attraction for Zhang Yuxian and may ultimately have appeared trivial to him.