



10-2018

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Recommended Citation

Su, Pengfei (2018) "Comparing Post-Expansion Integration Policies of the Early Roman Republic and the Early Chu State from a Geopolitical Perspective," *Comparative Civilizations Review*. Vol. 79 : No. 79 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol79/iss79/4>

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Comparing Post-Expansion Integration Policies of the Early Roman Republic and the Early Chu State from a Geopolitical Perspective

Pengfei Su

Keywords: Geopolitical, Autonomy, Alliance, Annexation, Colonization

Abstract

The Early Chu state (705 BC – 476 BC) in Zhou Dynasty China was an excellent object for comparison with mid-Roman Republic (390 BC – 200 BC) regarding the policies adopted for integrating and consolidating the new territories they had each acquired. Such comparison was based upon similar geopolitical environments that early Chu and Roman states were each situated in, if we consider (i) early Rome's position vis-à-vis Hellenistic civilization and (ii) early Chu state's position vis-à-vis Zhou civilization.

A series of expansionary wars by early Roman and Chu states had similar backgrounds and produced similar effects, if assessed in civilizational maps. In order to integrate its new territories in Italy, Roman Republic adopted three key policies: (i) Annexation, (ii) Colonization and (iii) Alliance. In its new territories, early Chu state implemented three integration policies that were very similar to each of the abovementioned three Roman policies.

This paper provides narratives and analyses on Chu state's integration policies that mirrored each of the three Roman policies, with historical examples provided in support of such thesis. In conjunction with policy comparisons, this paper also discusses the following aspects that were comparable between Rome and Chu states: (a) geographical regions that they were situated in, (b) elite persons who originated from subjugated territories and were then integrated into ruling circles of Roman and Chu states, and (c) how soldiers from new territories were positioned in the military formations of Rome and Chu states.

After assessing the civilizational implications of their expansions, this paper posits that the similarities between early Roman and Chu states can be regarded as a prologue to the similarities that would later emerge between Roman and Han Empires.

Introduction

Much academic research has been conducted regarding a wide range of similarities that existed between ancient Roman and Chinese civilizations.¹ Close parallels have been drawn between the evolutions of the Roman states and Qin-Han (秦汉) Empires, and step-by-step comparisons have been made regarding each stage of the gradual developments of the Qin and Rome states into ecumenical world empires.² Much attention has been paid to the growth of Qin state/empire as a parallel to the emergence of Roman hegemony. However, one very crucial early Sinic state has been ignored in nearly all such comparative studies, even though this ignored state is arguably a better polity for comparisons between early Sinic and the Roman states, i.e. the state of Chu (楚). The author of this article believes that in drawing civilizational parallels between the early Roman Republic and the Sinic world, the state of Chu during the Spring & Autumn period (rather than the state of Qin during the Warring States period, 475 to 221 BCE) was an excellent entity for comparison with the early Roman Republic.

On the surface, we can clearly see some distinctions between Rome and Qin states: the state of Qin during late Warring States adopted a wide range of domestic policies for centralization and bureaucratization on a level far higher than that of contemporary Roman Republic. Later on, the Qin state pursued an aggressive policy of total war and conquered the other six Sinic states in a series of blitzkriegs that had no parallels since Rome annexed the Mediterranean world on a more piecemeal basis. Furthermore, the short-lived Qin regime lasted only for a matter of fifteen years before being overthrown, while the rule of the Roman Republic in the Mediterranean world was never overthrown by any force (despite a series of civil wars).

On a more profound level, in Sinic classical civilizational growth, the state of Chu played a role that most closely resembled the role played by the Roman states in the expansion of Hellenistic classical civilization.

- While the intense particularism of Greek city states and the jealousy with which they guarded their citizenship made it extremely difficult for the Greek polities to integrate neighboring non-Greek peoples into sustainable states, the Romans excelled among the Mediterranean states in building a well-integrated classical empire.³ In this process, Rome consciously absorbed the cultural fruits of the Hellenistic civilizations and spread them to the western territories of the Roman state at large.

¹ See Walter Scheidel, *Rome and China, Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*, p 4 – p 9.

² Ibid, at p 15 – 17.

³ Arthur Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War and the Rise of Rome*, p 256 – 257.

- Similarly, the state of Chu successfully integrated the territories it acquired in southern and central China, without undergoing the disintegration (e.g. in the state of Jin 晉) or regime change (e.g. in the state of Qi 齊) that took place in major northern Sinic states that had only completed territorial expansion at a more modest level. More importantly, Chu played a crucial role in adopting the cultural fruits of the northern Sinic civilizations and spreading them to the vast territories of central and southern China at large.

As will be analyzed below, early Chu state bore a series of surprising structural similarities to the early Roman Republic in terms of the policies for integrating their newly-acquired territories into an organic body politic. While the policies and rules they employed carried drastically different nomenclature, the functional outcome produced by their integration policies was very similar.

The Chu state to be discussed in this article is that of the Spring & Autumn period, or more exactly, starting in the year in which Chu state irrevocably declared itself as a kingdom (705 B.C.) and ending in 476 B.C. The early Roman state to be discussed in this article is for the period between about 390 B.C. and 200 B.C. In at least the following four aspects, the Chu state of the above period bore resemblances to contemporary Roman Republic:

- (1) geopolitical surroundings prior to the commencement of their territorial expansions;
- (2) the impact of certain major wars as milestones in their territorial expansions;
- (3) the key policies they each implemented for the purpose of consolidating and integrating their newly-acquired territories; and
- (4) the roles played by various Chu regions in territorial consolidation vis-à-vis the roles of certain Italic regions in Roman territorial consolidation.

Some special emphasis needs to be made on the third similarity above. In its territorial expansion in the Italian peninsula during the abovementioned era, the Roman Republic developed multiple innovative methods aiming at consolidating newly acquired communities into the Roman polity. Depending upon the specific circumstances of each subject community, the most frequent methods used by the Romans were, respectively, Annexation, Colonization and Alliance. By means of these policies, the Romans managed to both achieve domestic peace and multiply Roman military strength. Half the globe away, in its territorial expansion in central China a few centuries earlier, early Chu state employed exactly the same three policies to consolidate various newly-acquired communities into the Chu polity. By means of such policies, Chu managed to achieve substantial territorial growth and consolidate dozens of subject communities into a well-integrated nation.

The structure of this article is as follows: Part I draws comparisons between the geopolitical situations of pre-expansion Roman and Chu polities, showing that they were surrounded by states and communities whose relationships were comparable in terms of civilizational growth. Part II provides very brief narratives of the expansion wars of the early Roman Republic, showing that they each had close parallels and comparable outcomes in Chu history with respect to territorial expansion. Regarding the various integration policies adopted by the early Roman Republic, Part III analyzes how the Roman policy of annexation was closely mirrored in Chu's territorial expansion; Part IV analyzes how Chu state implemented population relocations that reflected the policies and motives of Roman colonization in the Italian peninsula, and Part V analyses show Chu's alliance policy with vassal states was comparable to the Roman alliance policy in its expansion in the Italian peninsula. Such policies proved to work well for Rome during the Second Punic War, and this article discusses how similar Chu policies proved to be useful when Chu was under massive invasion from the neighboring state of Wu. Part VI provides broader insights into the implications of the above comparative studies and discusses why the thesis of this article can be well integrated with prior academic research that compared the Roman and Han Empires.

Part I: Comparison of Pre-Expansion Geopolitical Environments

The geopolitical environments from which these two states emerged seemed to be different on their faces: the Roman Republic was situated in the middle of a long peninsula dominated by the Mediterranean type of climate, with mountainous regions to its northeast, while Chu's base area before its formal establishment was in the fertile subtropical plains in the valleys of mid-Yangtze River and Han River, facing mountainous areas to the west. On closer look, however, we can find these two early states actually grew in comparable environments, if we disregard superficial physical geographical factors and instead focus on their positions within abstract civilizational maps. We find that early Rome and Chu states were both situated on the exterior fringes of the then-acknowledged "civilized" worlds in western and eastern Eurasia respectively: early Republican Rome was adjacent to the northern fringe of the Greek-speaking Hellenistic cities in the Italian peninsula and was directly (through trade and cultural links with Magna Graecia) and indirectly (from the Etruscans to the north) influenced by Hellenism in culture. The nascent Chu state bordered upon the southern fringe of the vast constellation of Zhou vassal states dotted throughout the Central Plains (中原), and Chu attempted to play cultural catch-up for centuries with their northern neighbors. In folk legends, the founding father of the city of Rome could be traced to Greek heroes who fled from the city of Troy. By Chinese historical records, the founding fathers of the state of Chu could be traced to pre-Zhou tribal chieftains in the Central Plains who made contributions to the founding of the Zhou regime.⁴

⁴Sima Qian, *Records of Grand Historian, Chu Hereditary House* (史记·楚世家).

After its foundation in 509 BC, the early Roman Republic was surrounded by the following groups of peoples and communities:

- (i) Neighboring Latin peoples, with whom Rome shared linguistic and cultural affinities,
- (ii) Oscan-speaking mountainous tribes to the east and southeast, with the Samnites being most prominent among them,
- (iii) Etruscan city states to the north, separated by River Tiber from the city of Rome,
- (iv) Greek-speaking Hellenistic city states in southern Italy, which represented a generally higher level of cultural development, and
- (v) multi-ethnic Campanians to Rome's southeast, who had been heavily Hellenized in culture by the early Roman Republic era.

Similarly, when Chu was formally declared as a kingdom around 705 BC in what is now west-central Hubei province to the west of Han River, early Chu state was surrounded by the following groups of peoples and polities:

- (i) Several small states whose rulers were descended from the same ancestors as Chu rulers were;
- (ii) Mountainous tribal groups to the north and northwest of Chu's home region;
- (iii) Several Zhou vassal states situated to the east of Chu and separated by Han River from Chu's home region;
- (iv) Numerous Zhou vassal states situated to the north of Chu, representing a generally higher level of cultural development; and among such Zhou vassals were:
 - a) a series of small states situated in Nanyang (南阳) Basin, such as the states of Shin (申),⁵ Tang(唐) and Lv(吕).

If viewed in the perspectives of territorial expansions by Roman and Chu states, each neighbor of Rome played a very similar role to the corresponding neighbor of Chu that carries the similar serial number, i.e. there exist various functional similarities between Rome's neighbor number (i) and Chu's neighbor (i), between the Rome's neighbor number (ii) and Chu's neighbor (ii), and so on. Some of the ascribed functional similarities between these two groups of polities will be discussed below.

⁵ As the names of the states of 申 and 沈 are both pronounced as "shen" in Mandarin *pinyin*, to distinguish them in English in this article, the translation by James Legge of the former state (i.e. Shin) is used for 申, while the name 沈 is translated as "Shen".

A key factor in the growth of an ancient state was how it was geopolitically situated in a civilizational map. While a key challenge for the new-born Republic of Rome was how to survive and expand in the shadow of a vast Hellenistic civilization sphere that shed its light directly from the south and indirectly from the north (Etruria), the essential challenge for the newborn Chu kingdom was how to assert its power in the shadow of a giant Zhou civilization sphere which shed its light directly from the north and indirectly from the east. After accomplishing their initial steps of territorial expansion, both Rome and Chu were faced with similar secondary tasks, i.e., to integrate each of the newly acquired polities and to withstand invasions from mountainous tribes. In the end, Rome and Chu both accomplished all the above tasks brilliantly, each building and consolidating a thick web of interstate networks that retained its respective original political control and that integrated the newly-acquired territories.

Part II: Comparison of Expansionary Wars

As we can see below, the early Roman Republic and Chu state encountered comparable challenges from each of the above five groups of polities, and both states defeated their opponents through a series of wars which resulted in the expansion of their territories.

2.1 Chu equivalent of Rome's Latin wars

The early Romans were in close ethnic affinity with various communities in the neighboring Latium region. Although the early Roman Republic was in alliance with its Latin neighbors, as the Roman power grew increasingly strong, the alliance relationship deteriorated. The Latin War (340 BC – 338 BC) broke out between the Latin cities and Rome, in which Rome defeated its Latin neighbors and annexed them into the territory of the Roman Republic.

Near the nascent Chu state, there existed several polities whose rulers had been descended from the same ancestor as Chu rulers; these kindred polities were among the earliest group of states that were incorporated into Chu territory. While Rome defeated and dissolved the league of Latin states through one major war with the Latin cities, Chu subjugated and annexed its kindred states through a series of wars with each of them:

A. The states of Luo (罗) and Yun (郢)

The rulers of the states of Luo, Yun and Chu shared the same prominent ancestor of Zu Rong (祝融)⁶ and their home territories were closely adjacent to each other.

⁶Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian, Chu Hereditary House* (史记·楚世家); see also He Guang Yue (何光岳), *chu mie guo kao*(楚灭国考) , p 46 – 47, p 53.

Despite such affinities in ancestry and location, Luo and Yun adopted an aggressively anti-Chu policy and tried to build a wide range of alliances among the surrounding polities to contain Chu's expansion. Such rivalry evolved into wars with the early Chu state, which defeated and annexed both states.

The general background to the war between Chu and Luo/Yun was comparable to that of the Latin War. It was the anxiety of the other Latin cities concerning the growth of Roman power in the mid-fourth century BCE that led to the war between Rome and its Latin neighbors, and it was the anxieties of Luo/Yun over the rapid growth in Chu power that led to their hostilities with Chu. In 701 BC, the king of Chu entered into alliances with some neighboring states, sweeping them into Chu's sphere of influence. Alarmed by such expansion by Chu, Yun entered alliance with some other neighboring states of Chu to prepare for joint military operation against Chu. Chu then launched a preemptive attack against the Yun army and won a major victory.⁷ Yun territory was probably annexed into Chu soon afterwards.

In 700 BC, when Chu's army was about to launch counterattacks against a neighboring state, they realized they were being stalked by Luo officers who closely spied upon Chu troop movements.⁸ Such covert acts of espionage gave Chu the excuse for starting a war against Luo. In a battle in 698 BC, the Luo army won a major victory over Chu troops, causing the latter's commander to commit suicide.⁹ However, this victory was short-lived; it did not save Luo from its final demise and subjugation by Chu about 10 years later.

B. The state of Kui (夔)

The state of Kui was founded by Xiong Zhi (熊摯), who was a descendant of Chu ancestral ruler Xiong Yi (熊绎). Xiong Zhi abdicated from the Chu throne due to his poor health, moved to the southwest of Chu territory and established the state of Kui. Later, the Chu king granted to Kui's ruler the title of viscount, virtually turning Kui into a vassal state of Chu. Kui remained in existence until the year 634 B.C. when it was annexed by Chu with military forces, on the grounds that Kui rulers had failed to worship the common ancestors of Chu and Kui.¹⁰

⁷Zuozhuan, Duke of Huan 11th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 56 – 57.

⁸Zuozhuan, Duke of Huan 12th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 59.

⁹Zuozhuan, Duke of Huan 13th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 61. In contrast with such suicide of Chu commander, the Roman consul Publius Decius Mus voluntarily sacrificed his own life (fulfilling the Roman religious ritual of *devotio*) to ensure Roman victory over the Latin army in the Battle of Vesuvius in 340 BC.

¹⁰Zuozhuan, Duke of Xi 26th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 199.

C. The state of Jun (麋):

The rulers of Jun and Chu states shared the same ancestor of Jilian (季连). In early Spring & Autumn, Jun people lived to the northwest of Chu and were in alliance with Chu. However, Jun's alliance with Chu was rather fragile and tended to easily break down,¹¹ just as the relationship between early Roman Republic and the Latin states was fraught with tension and prone to break down into wars.

In 611 B.C, when the Chu people were suffering from a major famine, Jun combined forces with the various mountainous tribes of Pu (濮) and the nearby state of Yong (庸) to launch a major offensive against Chu, which successfully counterattacked and conquered Jun. After that, Chu ordered Jun people to relocate to the Han River Valley that was much closer to the Chu heartland.

2.2 Chu equivalent of Rome's Samnite wars:

The Samnites were a confederation of militaristic tribal people who lived on the stretches of the Apennine Mountains to the southeast of Rome, and for many years they posed serious military threats to the Roman Republic and its other neighbors until the Romans subdued the Samnites through three long drawn-out wars.

Similarly, the state of Yong (庸) was situated in the mountainous regions to the northwest of Chu's base region, and they built a loose alliance with the barbarians of Pu (濮) who resided in the neighboring mountainous regions to the south. Just like the militaristic Samnites who seriously threatened the Romans, Yong state put Chu security in great jeopardy. In 611 BC Yong took advantage of the great famine that had recently occurred in Chu and invaded into the depths of Chu territories. Many other barbarian tribes and the state of Jun revolted as well and also attempted to invade Chu. Feeling deeply threatened, Chu's ruling elite considered evacuating from the capital.¹² With Yong troops marching on other fronts in northern Chu territory, the Chu-dominated cities of Shin (申) and Xi (息) felt threatened and kept their city gates shut.¹³

What happened next was a major military turnaround, in which Chu army joined with the forces of the neighboring states of Qin (秦) and Ba(巴), defeated the Yong army and extinguished the Yong state.¹⁴

¹¹ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Wen 11th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 258.

¹² *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Wen 16th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 275.

¹³ The geopolitical position of Shin and Xi to early Chu state was comparable to that of Campania to the early Roman Republic. A parallel incident to the Yong threat to Shin/Xi was that the First Samnite War was ignited by the Samnites' invasion of Campania.

¹⁴ See *supra* note 12.

The level of Yong resistance met by Chu was not comparable to the hardship endured by the Roman army in the three lengthy Samnite wars; still, the end results were very much the same for both states.

While a feature of the Samnite wars was that various participants in the wars (e.g. the Sabines, Lucanians and Etruscans) frequently shifted their allegiances among the warring parties, similar shifting of sides was a major factor in Chu's quick victory over Yong: soon after Chu's military attack started, Pu (濮) and other barbarian tribes either exited from the war or even switched sides to ally with Chu.¹⁵

2.3 Chu equivalent of Roman war with Pyrrhus:

When the Hellenistic city of Tarentum in southern Italy had a dispute with Rome relating to the presence of Roman warships near Tarentine territory, Tarentum turned to the Greek king Pyrrhus for military support. After Pyrrhus's army invaded Rome from Greece in 280 BC, a series of battles broke out. Pyrrhus won a number of victories with Rome but was dragged into a war of attrition in which the Roman strength in mobilizing Italian manpower began to assert itself. Eventually, Pyrrhus had to withdraw from the war due to the heavy casualties that his army suffered in the battles. Roman domination of southern Italy then became established.

Similarly, when the Central Plains state of Xu (许) to the north of Chu had an internal political dispute relating to whether to ally with the states of Chu or Jin, the ruler of Xu turned to the state of Jin for military support. Jin invaded Chu in 557 B.C. and won a number of victories inside Chu territory. The Jin army attacked the garrison of Xu and overran Chu territories outside the Chu Great Wall before finally returning to Jin territory.¹⁶ However, Jin's victories against Chu were largely Pyrrhic and did not lead to any territorial transfer or diplomatic success in favor of Jin. In the subsequent interstate peace conference attended by 14 states in 546 BC, Jin and Chu mutually acknowledged the sphere of influence controlled by the other power.¹⁷ During the four decades that followed, Chu's hegemony on the southern peripheral of the Central Plains was not challenged by other major states from north China.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Xiang 16th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 472.

¹⁷ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Xiang 27th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, pp. 532 - 533.

3 Chu equivalent of Second Punic War

The federation policy of the Roman Republic underwent its gravest test during Hannibal's invasion of Italy in the 2nd Punic War (218–201 BC), in which Hannibal pursued a strategy aiming at breaking up the Roman alliances and inducing them to rebel against Rome's hegemony. However, he only made very limited success towards this end:

- (i) Most of Campanians (the major city of Capua in particular) defected to Carthage;
- (ii) Not a single Latin city defected to Carthage;
- (iii) Central Italians (such as Etruscans) remained loyal to Rome; and
- (iv) A minority of the Hellenistic cities in southern Italy (including Tarentum) defected or tried to defect to Carthage.

After the Roman victory in the Second Punic War, the defector cities were subject to a series of punishments. For example:

- (i) Tarentum lost its autonomous status and was put under direct rule by the Roman praetor Titus Quinctius Flaminius;¹⁸
- (ii) In the Campanian city of Capua, its communal organizations were abolished, its inhabitants lost their civic rights, and its territory was declared *ager publicus* (Roman state domain); its lands were sold, divided among the citizens of the newly-established colonies, or reserved by the Roman state for future division or award.¹⁹

A similar pattern of events occurred to the state of Chu in 506 B.C., when two geopolitical attempts were made at attacking Chu:

In the spring, at the proposal of the state of Jin, 18 states convened at Shaoling (召陵) to discuss a joint military attack against Chu. It was notable that the convening states included a number of alliance states of Chu, such as Chen (陈), Cai (蔡), Dun (顿) and Hu (胡).²⁰ Although this convention failed to produce any outcome due to internal strife, the Cai ruler soon launched an attack against Chu's vassal state of Shen (沈) and annihilated the Shen regime.²¹

When Chu counterattacked against Cai, Cai formed an alliance with Wu, which started a major invasion westward into Chu territory.

¹⁸ Plut. Flam. 1'4-5.

¹⁹ Liv. 26.16.6-8.

²⁰ *Chun Qiu*, Duke of Ding 4th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 752.

²¹ *Zuo Zhuan*, Duke of Ding 4th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 753.

Wu's attack in 506 B.C. was efficient, well-planned and well-organized, and it posed to the very existence of the Chu state a threat that was as serious as the threat from Hannibal toward Carthage during the Second Punic War. After a series of battles, Wu decisively defeated the Chu army and marched triumphantly into Chu's capital. Chu's Zhao King (楚昭王) had to flee northward to Chu's vassal state of Sui, where he would probably have been captured by Wu army if the Sui ruler had not provided loyal protection for him.²² Chu was able to restore its territories and defeated the invaders' army only after the neighboring state of Qin generously launched military operations in support of Chu.²³

After recovering from Wu's attack, Chu started a series of retaliation acts against the previously-defecting polities:

- (i) In 505 BC, Chu subjugated the state of Tang;²⁴
- (ii) In 496 B.C., Chu subjugated the state of Dun;²⁵
- (iii) In 495 B.C., Chu subjugated the state of Hu.²⁶

Some parallels can be drawn here between Chu state and Roman Republic when they were both under very grave military invasions:

- (i) The state of Sui remained staunchly loyal to the Chu king, which was comparable to the support by Etruscan cities for Rome during the Second Punic War;
- (ii) Several years after the Wu invasion, Chu annihilated the renegade states of Dun and Hu in the Central Plains, comparable to postwar Rome extinguishing the autonomy of Tarentum in *Magna Graecia*; and
- (iii) Chu promptly annihilated the renegade state of Tang, which was situated in Nanyang Basin and was geographically more proximate to Chu's capital than the other defecting polities were. This was comparable to postwar Rome's elimination of the autonomy of Capua, which was nearer the city of Rome than the other defecting cities were.

²² *Ibid* at 757.

²³ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Ding 5th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 760.

²⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁵ *Chun qiu*, Duke of Ding 14th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 787.

²⁶ *Ibid* at p. 790.

Part III: Chu equivalent of Roman policy of Annexation

3.1. Annexation Policy in General

After the Roman victory in the Latin War, the Roman Republic dissolved the Latin League and incorporated most of the Latin communities into the territory of the Republic; at the same time the Republic granted substantial autonomy to the subject communities. After subsequent military victories in central Italian regions, similar policies were adopted towards the residents of Campania, southern Etruria and Sabine. Members of such communities were granted either full Roman citizenship or citizenship without voting rights (*civitas sine suffragio*). The latter case meant the residents of such autonomous cities (*municipia*) did not have rights to vote or be elected as Roman officials but were put under the protection of Roman law in terms of commerce (*commercium*), marriage (*connubium*), and property succession. The pre-existing political structures of the subject communities largely remained the same, and their traditional customs were kept intact. Meanwhile, in terms of foreign policy and military matters, they were supposed to obey Roman direction, and most importantly, these communities should send troops to fight together with Roman legions in wars.

One of the earliest records of such arrangements was contained in the Treaty of Cassius between Rome and the Latin cities. Although the treaty was nullified in the Latin War, many treaties that the Roman Republic entered into with defeated communities after Roman military victories contained similar arrangements. Altogether around 150 treaties were entered between Rome and various communities in the Italian peninsula, building a multi-layered thick web of security in defense of a body politic with Rome lying in the center. The external buffer zones of this security web were the Roman alliances (*socii*), which retained their sovereignties and constitutions and were further away from the city of Rome. The internal buffer zones of this web were the Roman autonomous cities (*municipia*) which lost their sovereignties and were situated closer to the city of Rome. Both groups of communities were obligated to follow Roman direction in foreign relations and defense matters, and to send troops to fight on the side of the Romans in wars. Through this political network reaching into the depths of numerous Italic communities, the Roman Republic effectively mobilized the manpower of much of the Italian peninsula for military defense.

In parallel to the expansion by the early Roman Republic, among all the Sinic states that expanded during this period, the state of Chu subjugated the biggest number of lesser polities and drastically expanded its territories in the middle reaches of Yangtze Valley and southern Central Plains.

After subjugation of the Nanyang Basin, the state of Chu built a long series of defense fortifications along its northern frontier line; these stretches of fortification walls were called the Chu Great Wall (方城). After further territories north of the Chu Great Wall were subsequently put under Chu dominion, Chu applied different policies with regards to its territories:

- (i) Inside the Chu Great Wall, Chu's policy was to annex the territories into Chu sovereignty and convert them into newly-created administrative units of prefectures (县). Substantial autonomy was granted to the Chu-appointed governors of the prefectures, which were comparable to the partially autonomous *municipia* established by Rome in central Italy.
- (ii) Outside the Chu Great Wall, Chu granted a higher degree of autonomy to the vassal states, which retained their nominal existences as sovereign states. Their existing rulers continued to reign, except that they were to follow Chu's direction on diplomatic and military affairs. These Chu vassal states were comparable to Roman allies (*socii*).

Chu state tried to maintain at least three layers of defense lines: "barbarian" polities as the outermost ring, then the exterior neighbors of Chu's vassal states, then the territories of Chu proper.²⁷ In typical cases, the state of Chu would convert annexed polities into prefectures, force the pre-existing rulers of such polities to relocate to other regions in Chu, and appoint governors who were from the same clan as the Chu king. At the same time, the pre-existing nobility of the annexed polities who chose to collaborate with the Chu regime tended to retain substantial political power, and such prefectures enjoyed substantial autonomy under the administration of Chu-appointed governors.²⁸ As a result, it was possible that some ruling elites of Chu's central government could utilize the prefectural autonomous organization to advance their own political agenda in some manner. Sometimes these were surprising.

For example, the state of Cai (蔡) was annexed by Chu's Ling King into Chu in 531 BC and was converted into a Chu prefecture, with a governor appointed as its prefectural governor. Chaowu (朝吴), who had previously been a senior official in the state of Cai, was also appointed to a senior position in the Chu prefecture. Chaowu colluded with a Chu nobleman Guan Cong (观从) to set up a plot to topple the Chu king. They started a rebel force in Cai's suburb and launched an attack into the prefecture city. After the Chu-appointed Cai governor fled, Guan Cong spread the rumor among Cai people that the governor had sided with the rebel forces.

²⁷ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Zhao 23th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 700.

²⁸ Liu Jia He (刘家合), *gu dai zhong guo yu shi jie* (古代中国与世界), p 236.

An assembly of Cai people gathered and wanted to have Guan Cong arrested. They gave up this attempt only after Guan convinced them of the futility of such arrest. Chaowu delivered a public speech to the Cai people and urged them to support the Cai governor who switched to the side of the rebels.²⁹ The crowds of Cai people roared in consensus and proceeded to gather around their governor. The rebel faction declared that the subjugated state of Cai would be restored, and they eventually succeeded in overthrowing the Chu Ling King.³⁰ After that, the governor of Cai ascended to the Chu throne, and the new king ordered that Cai be restored as a state.

Judging from the process of the coup d'état, the former organization of Cai nobility had probably been maintained after Chu's annexation of the Cai polity. Such maintenance of a political status-quo made it possible for Chaowu to retain his senior position and heavy influence in Cai public life after the annexation by Chu. Post-annexation Cai subjects remained able to promptly assemble for political purpose and to make collective decisions on vital issues, displaying a high degree of self-organization. They regarded the new governor of Cai as their "superior", whose status was comparable to the previous Tsai monarch in their minds. Although the true engineer of this coup d'état behind the scene was actually the Chu-appointed Cai governor rather than local Cai people, it importantly did show that if tapped by Chu's central elites, the potential power of a Chu prefecture for influencing central politics could be greater than that of a Roman *municipium* or *socii*.

3.2 Integrating Local Elites in Government

After annexing various territories in Italy, the Roman Republic adopted a conscious policy of incorporating into the Roman ruling elite those capable nobles who came from the annexed communities. Rome recruited into its ruling elite many members of the aristocratic families of the annexed communities. For example:

- The family of the Plautii, which produced five Roman consuls, probably came from the Latin city of Praeneste.³¹
- Being of Sabine origin, Manius Curius Dentatus served as consul four times and was a conqueror of the Sabines and Samnites.³²
- In 48 AD, in a speech addressing the Senate, Roman Emperor Claudius praised the virtue of the Roman integration policy, listed many earlier examples of Roman ruling elites who originated from outside the city of Rome, and stressed that such policy was a key reason for Rome's rise over certain prominent Greek city states.³³

²⁹ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Zhao 13th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 648.

³⁰ *Ibid* at 649.

³¹ Klaus Bringmann, *A History of the Roman Republic*, p. 53.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.24.

Similarly, Chu integrated into its government many members of the previous ruling elite of the territories that had been acquired by Chu state. As commented by an official of Chu's rival state Jin, when the king of Chu appointed individuals to offices, interior regions appointments tended to be made from his own kinship, and exterior regions appointments tended to be made from pre-existing noble clans.³⁴

For example, the geopolitical situation of Nanyang Basin to Chu state was comparable to that of Campania to the early Roman Republic,³⁵ and similar integration measures were adopted for both regions. In 340 BC, the Roman Senate granted full Roman citizenship to sixteen hundred Capuan aristocrats as reward for their help in the Latin war.³⁶ In parallel, after the conquest of Nanyang Basin, the king of Chu took integrative measures towards the local nobility for similar purposes.

For example, in the war between the state of Chu and the state of Shin, Peng Zhongshuang (彭仲爽), a member of the Shin nobility, was captured by Chu as a prisoner of war. However, Chu's Wen King (文) took note of Peng's remarkable capabilities and appointed him to be the prime minister of Chu. Peng lived up to the expectations of the Chu king. Acting as the Chu prime minister, he subjugated the states of Shin (申) and Xi (息) and established Chu's prefectural governments in the two regions; as a result of his efforts, the rulers of the states of Chen (陈) and Cai (蔡) had to come to the court of Chu to pay homage to the Chu king. Besides that, he expanded Chu territory to the region of Ru (汝) to the north.³⁷

Based upon excavations in the Nanyang region, we understand that after the state of Shin was subjugated by Chu, Peng Yu (彭宇), another member of the Peng clan from the same region, was appointed governor of the newly-established Shin Prefecture.³⁸ Over one century later, Peng Zishou (彭子寿), another member of the clan, was appointed to Shin governorship.³⁹

³⁴ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Xuan 12th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 317.

³⁵ At the beginning of the Spring & Autumn Period, the polities in the Nanyang Basin were surrounded by mountainous tribes to the west, Zhou vassal states to the north, east and immediate south, with Chu's kindred states and Chu home land lying to its further south; during the early Roman Republican period, Campania was surrounded by warlike mountainous tribes to its east and straight north, Hellenistic polities to its southeast, Latin cities to its immediate northwest, with the city of Rome lying to its further northwest.

³⁶ Livy, 8.11.16

³⁷ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Ai 17th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 850.

³⁸ Qiao Baotong: "zuixin kaogu faxian: nan yang chu pengshi jiazhu mu" (最新考古发现: 南阳楚彭氏家族墓), *wenwu yu kaogu* (文物与考古), 6th issue 2009, 148–149.

³⁹ Artifact & Archeology Institute of Nanyang City: "henan nanyang chunqiu chu pengshe mu fajue jianbao" (河南南阳春秋楚彭射墓发掘简报), p 30.

In the administration of Shin territory, Chu apparently kept intact the local governance structure, recruiting members of the pre-existing Shin nobility to prominent positions not only in local governments but also in Chu's central government.

The Peng clan can be compared with their Roman counterparts at least in the following aspects:

- (i) Given the similarity in geopolitical positions between Nanyang Basin and Campania during this period, we can make comparison between the political attainments of the Peng clan with those of the Decii clan of Campanian origin: in 340 BC, one member of the clan, Publius Decius Mus, became the first Roman consul of Campanian origin. His son served as Roman consul four times in all, and in 295 BC won a decisive victory over the Celts and Etruscans at the battle of Sentinum by sacrificing himself.⁴⁰
- (ii) Given Peng Zhongshuang's armed resistance against Chu invasion in his early career, we can compare the Peng clan to the Fulvii clan: either L. Fulvius Curvus or his father had led the city of Tusculum against Rome in the Latin War. However, after the Latin defeat he was admitted to Roman political circles and was elected to be Roman consul in 322 BC. Fulvius Curvus won a victory over the Samnites and was awarded a triumph by the Roman Senate; his son was elected consul in 305 BC, and the Fulvii long held prominent positions in Roman politics.⁴¹

The following Roman example of integration was mirrored in a non-Chu clan that was well integrated into Chu's political life:

Tiberius Coruncanius was a consul of the Roman Republic in 280 BC. His clan originated in Latium and later moved to the annexed city, Tusculum. He led military expeditions to Etruria and was known for leading the battles against Pyrrhus of Epirus. Besides, he served as the chief high priest (*Pontifex Maximus*) of the Roman state religion.⁴²

The military achievements of Tiberius Coruncanius were mirrored by the career of Guan Ting Fu (观丁父). Guan Ting Fu was a native of the state of Ruo (郿) situated to the northwest of Chu.

⁴⁰ Klaus Bringmann, *A History of the Roman Republic*, p. 53.

⁴¹ Arthur Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War and the Rise of Rome*, p. 255.

⁴² Klaus Bringmann, *A History of the Roman Republic*, p. 53.

He was captured by Chu in a war between Ruo and Chu, but Chu's Wu king employed him as a marshal of the Chu army, and in that position, he conquered the states of Zhou (州) and Liao (蓼), subjugated the states of Sui (随) and Tang (唐), and expanded Chu territories into the Man (蛮) tribes.⁴³

The religious achievements of Tiberius Coruncanius were mirrored by the careers of two other members of the Guan clan: Guan Cong (观从) played an important role in helping Chu's Ping King ascend to the throne from Cai governorship. After the Ping King came into power, Guan Cong chose to serve as the Minister of Divination (卜尹), the chief state priest for Chu's religious worship activities.⁴⁴ This position was succeeded to by some of his descendants, such as Guan Shefu (观射父), who was reputed as a "national treasure" of Chu and was consulted by Chu king on crucial matters relating to religious worship.⁴⁵

3.3 Providing Military Support

The Roman Republic granted internal autonomy to its *municipia*, which were obligated to pay military tax (called *tributum*) to Rome, and to send soldiers to serve in the Roman army. As a result of the integration in its annexed territories, the Roman Republic had a huge reservoir of military manpower against which none of the Hellenistic city states could compete: Pyrrhus was one of the first Greek/Hellenistic rulers who were defeated by the prowess of this system. For example, in 225 BC, based upon the figures provided by Polybius, we estimate that maximum military reserve in Italy was 900,000 men, of whom more than a third were Romans and Roman subjects (325,000) and the rest were allies, including 85,000 Latins.⁴⁶

Similarly, after Chu state subjugated a polity, each annexed polity ceded its diplomatic and defense powers to Chu but retained substantial autonomy in local administration matters. The regular policy of Chu on annexed lands was not to grant them to Chu aristocrats as hereditary fiefdoms, but to hold them in the name of Chu kings and to levy military tributes to provide for war needs. Many such subjugated communities were converted into prefectures of Chu, and able-bodied male subjects of such a prefecture were recruited into a military unit called "prefectural army" (县师), which was put under direct command of Chu generals.

⁴³ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Ai 17th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 850.

⁴⁴ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Zhao 13th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 649.

⁴⁵ *Discourses of the States*, Chapter 18, *Discourses of Chu* (国语卷十八楚语).

⁴⁶ Klaus Bringmann, *A History of the Roman Republic*, p. 34.

For example, in 594 BC, after Chu nobleman Zizhong (子重) made a major contribution in Chu's siege war against the state of Song, on the return march, he made a request to the Chu king that he receive certain lands in the prefectures of Shin (申) and Lv (吕) as reward. The king wanted to grant this request when Wu Chen (巫臣) (Chu's governor of Shin) challenged it, stating, "it is these lands which maintain Shin and Lv as *municipia* (邑). From such lands, the two *municipia* derive the levy with which they resist invasions from the northern States. If the lands are taken away, there will be no Shin or Lv, and the States of Jin and Zheng will march down to the Han River". Upon hearing this, the Chu king gave up his thought on the land grant.⁴⁷

The status of Shin and Lv during this period was comparable to a Roman *municipium*. The two communities retained substantial autonomy in local governance but were completely subject to the directions of Chu's central government on military and foreign affairs. The two communities were supposed to pay "levies", which were associated with military costs and are analogous to the Roman notion of "*tributum*" levied upon its citizens. The land grant as requested by Zizhong would fundamentally disrupt the existing status of lands in Shin and Lv and could not fit into a Chu state that treated its military support system as a vital need of the polity.

Prefectural armies actively participated in Chu's external military actions and substantially increased Chu's military strength. For example, for a brief time during the reign of Chu's Ling King (楚灵王), the former alliance states of Chen, Cai, East Bulang (不羹) and West Bulang were annexed into Chu as prefectures,⁴⁸ after which the king exclaimed that from each of these four prefectures 1,000 chariots can be levied. One of his ministers replied that the military strength of those four *municipia* alone were sufficient to inspire great awe in Chu's neighboring states to the north.⁴⁹ As each chariot during this period was matched by about 25 soldiers, each prefecture as mentioned could have about 25,000 soldiers under the command of Chu. Given that during this period Chu subjugated in total approximately 48 polities,⁵⁰ most of which were annexed into Chu territories, Chu gained a huge reservoir of military manpower against which none of the other Sinic states could compete.

⁴⁷ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Cheng 7th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 363.

⁴⁸ After Chu Ling King was dethroned, the annexed communities of Chen and Cai regained nominal independence and restored their statuses as Chu's alliance states.

⁴⁹ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Zhao 12th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 641.

⁵⁰ Tan Li Ming (谭黎明), *chunqiu zhanguo shiqi chuguo guanzhi yanjiu* (春秋战国时代楚国官制研究), p 122 – 123.

Part IV: Chu Equivalent of Roman policy of Colonization

The territorial expansions of the Roman Republic and Chu state both involved constant movement of peoples who were resettled or relocated to other regions. The primary motives in relation to such resettlement or relocation could be one of the following three:

- (i) to relocate politically-unreliable populations away from newly-acquired territories,
- (ii) to relocate politically-reliable populations to newly-acquired territories, and
- (iii) to relocate politically-reliable populations to geographically safer regions to avoid military threats from alien states

After closer examination, we find that the Roman Republic widely conducted relocation types (i) and (ii), while Chu state conducted all three types of relocations.

4.1. Two Types of Population Relocations by Rome

Below are some examples of type (i) relocations that occurred in the course of Roman expansion:

- In 338 BC, as the city of Velitrae had joined the rebellion in the Latin War and then was defeated, the land of its Senators was confiscated by Rome and they were deported to the other side of the Tiber.⁵¹
- In 329 BC, after the city of Privernum attacked the Roman colonies of Setia, Norba and Cora, the city was besieged and the walls destroyed by Rome. Its senators were deported to the other side of the Tiber.⁵²
- In 210 BC, after Capua defected to the side of Hannibal and then was defeated by Rome, some Capua people were deported to southern Etruria.⁵³

For type (ii) relocations, after an Italic community was conquered by Rome, it was often forced to cede to Rome some land, on which Rome would establish colonies that were populated by either Roman citizens or members of the Latin cities. The former were referred to as “Roman colonies”, whose members enjoyed full rights of Roman citizenship, while the latter were called “Latin colonies”, whose members had an equal status with Roman citizens in civil law in terms of marriage and commercial exchange.

⁵¹ Liv. 8.14.5-7. – Should “Liv.” be Livy or?? Unclear.

⁵² Liv. 8.20.9.

⁵³ Liv. 26.34.10.

Being founded as military settlements, these colonies had fortified municipal centers and could be regarded as bastions of Roman rule amidst newly-conquered populations. It was estimated that at least 31 Latin colonies and about 22 Roman colonies were established in the Italian peninsula between the fifth and second century B.C.⁵⁴

4.2. Three Types of Population Relocations by Chu

Chu's territorial expansions involved population relocations that were at least as intense as those of Roman conquest in Italy.

4.2.1. Chu Population Relocation Type (i)

After Chu subjugated a polity, Chu often conducted type (i) relocations so that some of the subjugated population (typically its ruling elite) would be moved to the interior of Chu territory. Located in the hinterland of Chu territory, the post-relocation populations would pose much less threat to Chu's national security and would instead made contributions to Chu's development of sparsely-populated territories in deep south regions.

Below was the initial recorded incidence of Chu's relocation of subjugated populations, which could be deemed as type (i):

During the first decade of the 7th century BC, Chu subjugated the polity of Quan (权) and had Dou Min (斗缗), was a member of Chu's royal clan, serve as the governor of the Quan community. However, Dou Min launched a rebellion against Chu on the basis of the local support he received as the governor of Quan. After Chu crushed the rebellion, the Quan population was moved by Chu to the town of Nachu (那处), which had been annexed into Chu territory in an earlier period.⁵⁵

Another example of type (i) relocation occurred to the state of Luo (罗): after this state was annihilated, Luo people were relocated from their homeland in the mid-Han River Valley down south to Zhijiang (枝江) near the north bank of the Yangtze River. Subsequently, they were moved further down south to the Miluo (汨罗) valley region in Hunan.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Klaus Bringmann, *A History of the Roman Republic*, p. 28.

⁵⁵ Zuo Zhuan, Duke of Zhuang 18th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 97.

⁵⁶ Li Daoyuan, *Shui Jing Zhu* (水经注), Volume 34.

4.2.2. Chu Population Relocation Type (ii)

Previously we made mention of two incidents of garrison-building in Chu; as the building of such military establishments would very likely be followed by civil populations (family dependents of stationed soldiers), they can be deemed as type (ii) relocations:

- In 506 BC, when the Wu army invaded Chu's hinterland, the previously-subjugated Jun (麇) people collaborated with the Wu army by letting in that army into their city.⁵⁷ The king of Chu took note of such act of infidelity by the Jun people and, immediately after the retreat of Wu army, had a garrison built adjacent to the Jun city.⁵⁸
- After subjugation of Kui (夔) in 632 BC, the king of Chu ordered that one of his generals build a garrison at the former site of Kui on the bank of Yangtze River. Chu's building of such garrison was comparable to Rome setting up citizen colonies Antium and Terracina on the Tyrrhenian Sea after the Latin war.

4.2.3. Chu Population Relocation Type (iii)

Occasionally Chu state had to relocate relatively politically-reliable populations to more secure land to avoid threats from major states in the north. The following are some examples of motive (iii):

- In 511 BC, when the state of Xu (徐) was invaded by Wu army and Chu army failed to come to Xu's rescue, Chu established a garrison at Yi (夷) which was colonized by the ruler of Xu.⁵⁹
- In 510 BC, when the states of Qian (潜) were invaded by Wu army, Chu troops relocated the population of Qian to Nangang (南冈).⁶⁰

4.2.4. Chu Population Relocation of Mixed Types: Case of Xu

It was possible that one polity under Chu domination underwent multiple relocations, each of which were motivated by different reasons. The relocations of the polity of Xu (许) best illustrates the logic of the different policies involved:

⁵⁷ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Ding 5th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 760.

⁵⁸ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Ding 5th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 761.

⁵⁹ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Zhao 30th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 734.

⁶⁰ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Zhao 31th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 737.

- The state of Xu was located in southern Central Plains, facing Chu to its south and the increasingly-aggressive state of Zheng (郑) to its north. The ruler of the state of Xu feared threats from Zheng, and in 576 BC he requested to the king of Chu for permission for relocation into Chu territories. The king of Chu agreed and arranged Xu's move to the garrison of Sheh (叶) which was located just on the outside of the Chu Great Wall⁶¹. Such relocation was clearly a reflection of above motive (iii).
- Judging from historical records, we found such relocation to Sheh had a profound effect on the attitude of Xu rulers to Chu hegemony. Before the relocation, Xu was often neutral or even resistant to Chu's demands in interstate politics. After the relocation, the pattern of Xu elite to Chu lordship became much more suppliant, and they actively followed and participated in Chu's actions in interstate politics. Using Roman terminology, we might say that the polity of Xu was "*Latinized*" to a certain degree after it was relocated to Sheh. When the kings of Chu subsequently requested Xu population to relocate to another region for various geopolitical reasons, Chu's mentality was not totally different from the Senate of the Roman Republic in dispatching a group of Latin residents to establish a Latin colony in an acquired territory.

Below are some examples of relocation type (ii) arranged by Chu:

- In 538 BC, after Chu conquered the state of Lai (赖), the king of Chu wanted to relocate Xu people to the site of Lai and he requested two senior nobles to launch a project for building a garrison at Lai. He gave up this relocation plan only because there arose in the same winter a major flood in the region of Lai, making it impractical to build such garrison.⁶²
- The relocation idea seemed to linger with the king. In 533 BC, after Chu conquered the city of Chengfu (城父) from the state of Chen (located in Central Plains), the same Chu king ordered that Xu people should be relocated to Chengfu, and this order was subsequently implemented.⁶³ In connection with the relocation, the king of Chu added to Xu's territory the land of the newly-acquired state of Zhoulai (州来) north of Huai River and had certain land granted to the ruler of Xu.⁶⁴ The king of Chu obviously considered the Xu population as more trustworthy than the newly-conquered Chen population in the heartland of the Central Plains, so his motive behind such resettlement by Xu was comparable to Roman founding of Latin colonies in *Magna Graecia*.

⁶¹ Zuozhuan, Duke of Cheng 15th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 389.

⁶² Zuozhuan, Duke of Zhao 4th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 598.

⁶³ Zuozhuan, Duke of Zhao 9th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 625.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Part V: Chu's equivalent of the Roman policy of Alliance

5.1 Overview of Chu's alliance policy

After the Roman Republic conquered territories in the Italian peninsula further away from Latium or southern Etruria, by treaties Rome entered into alliance (*socii*) relationships with many polities. These polities would maintain their own laws and autonomy and pay no taxes to Rome. A typical alliance polity owed two vital obligations to the Roman Republic: it must follow Roman direction in foreign relations; and, in case of war, it must provide their own units of military troops to fight together with the Roman army under the direction of Roman generals.

The greatest challenge that the Roman alliance system underwent during this period took place during the Second Punic War, when Hannibal led the Carthaginian army into the Italian peninsula and tried to stir up resentment among Italians who had felt the loss of sovereignty under Roman rule. For example, after the Battle of Lake Trasimeno, Hannibal addressed the Italians,

*I have come not to fight against the Italians, but to fight against Rome on behalf of Italians; and therefore if the Italians were wise, you would attach yourselves to me: because I have come to restore freedom to the Italians, and to assist you to recover your cities and territory which you have lost to Rome.*⁶⁵

Hannibal tried hard to break apart the Roman alliance system and woo existing members of Roman confederacy. He succeeded in winning over many former Roman alliances states in southern Italy (as close as Capua in Campania), but achieved little diplomatic success in Latium and Etruria whose cities had long been integrated as Roman *municipia* or citizen communities.

Similarly, after Chu conquered northern territories that were further and further away from its home region, Chu granted a higher degree of autonomy to some of the newly-dominated vassal states, which would retain their nominal sovereignties and survive as alliance states of Chu. A typical alliance state owed two vital obligations to Chu: it must dispatch troops to fight on the side of Chu army, and it must follow Chu direction in foreign relations. Their military obligations will be discussed in below Section 5.2.

Examples of such alliance states include Chen (陈), Cai (蔡), Xu (许) and Sui (随). Even though Chu annihilated the regimes of Chen and Cai several times or reduced them into Chu prefectures, each time soon afterwards due to changes in geopolitical situations, Chu would restore their statuses as sovereign alliance states.

⁶⁵ Polybius, 3.77.

While most of such alliance states of Chu were located outside the Chu Great Wall, one notable exception was the state of Sui, which was located south of the Chu Great Wall. Sui entered into alliance with Chu first around the end of 8th century BC and retained its *de jure* independence for several centuries.

The greatest challenge that Chu's alliance system underwent during this period took place in 506 BC, when the Wu army invaded Chu's home region and tried to induce the defection of Chu's vassal states or prefectures that had suffered living under Chu suzerainty. Wu state succeeded in winning over support from some Chu vassal states in the Central Plains (e.g., Cai, Dun and Hu) and in Nanyang Plains (e.g., Tang) but achieved little success in the Chu prefectures that had long been integrated into the Chu polity.

During Wu's invasion, the state of Sui proved itself as a very loyal ally of Chu. In 506 BC, after Chu's capital fell to the invading Wu army, the king of Chu fled to Sui and hid himself at a location in the north of Sui palaces. He was closely followed by the troops of Wu. A Wu general entered the southern quarters of Sui palaces and addressed Sui people in a tone that sounded similar to Hannibal's message to Italians: after denouncing that Chu had subjugated all the Zhou-affiliated States (including Sui) in the Han Valley, he promised that if Sui could collaborate by giving away the Chu king in hiding, Wu would grant to Sui all the lands to the immediate north of Han River.⁶⁶ After careful deliberations, however, the Sui ruler declined Wu's request stressing, "for generations there have existed between Chu and Sui engagements of alliances, which Sui does not want to violate."⁶⁷

In gratitude for the crucial rescue provided by Sui, the king of Chu pledged a blood oath of alliance with the ruler of Sui.⁶⁸ It was probably based upon such renewed alliance that Sui's existence as a vassal state continued for many decades afterwards inside deep Chu territories, while most of the other subjugated states had been completely deprived of their sovereignty and annexed into Chu territory.

5.2. Military obligations of Chu Alliance States

In a typical battle that the Roman legion participated in during the Republican days prior to the Social War, soldiers from Rome and Latin regions would appear in the center of the formation while soldiers from the alliance regions would appear as *alae* in the two wings of the central consular army. *Alae* soldiers were supposed to fight under the command of Roman officers.

⁶⁶ *Zuo zhuan*, Duke of Ding 4th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 757.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Similarly, in a typical battle that the Chu army participated in the Spring & Autumn period, soldiers from Chu native lands would appear in the center of the formation, on its left wing were placed troops sent from Chu's annexed territories (mostly prefectures), while on the right wing were troops dispatched from Chu's vassal states. Both wings fought under the command of Chu generals. For example, at the battle between Chu and Jin armies in Chengpu (城濮) in 632 B.C., the native Chu army was placed in the center, on its left flank were troops from Shin and Xi, and on its right flank were troops from Chu's alliances of Chen and Cai.⁶⁹

There are many historical records that the king of Chu combined his troops with troops from Chu's alliance states to fight interstate wars. For example,

- In 537 BC, the king of Chu led the rulers of Cai, Chen, Xu (徐), Dun, Hu and Shen and Huai barbarians to launch an attack against the state of Wu.⁷⁰
- In 494 BC, the king of Chu led the rulers of Chen, Sui and Xu to lay a siege to the state of Cai.⁷¹

As previously discussed, with its wide use of troops recruited from its *municipia* and *socii*, the Roman Republic mobilized manpower in the Italian peninsula at an unprecedented level, and therefore gained access to a potential military force against which none of the other Mediterranean powers could compete.⁷² Meanwhile, such a broadened base of military mobilization to add quantity might occasionally compromise the quality of Roman troops, if the enemies spotted the weaker points that might exist at either wing of the Roman army in the battlefield.

For example, at the battle of Cannae in 216 BC during the Second Punic War, the cavalry from the Roman allies stationed on the left wing of the Roman formation, native Roman cavalry stationed on the right wing, with the consular army stationing in the middle. The Roman allies started by fighting Hannibal's Numidian cavalry, but when the Carthage general Hasdrubal came charging in support of the Numidians, the Roman allied cavalry quickly broke and fled. Such early collapse of Roman allies made it possible for Hasdrubal's men to turn around to launch a surprise attack on the back of the advancing central Roman legions, thus sealing the encirclement and defeat of the Roman army.⁷³

Similarly, when the state of Chu combined troops from multiple alliances into its own army for military actions, the comparatively lower morale of the alliances could also undermine the overall fighting power of Chu army.

⁶⁹ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Xi 28th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 210.

⁷⁰ *Chun qiu*, Duke of Zhao 4th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 591.

⁷¹ *Chun qiu*, Duke of Ai 1st Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 793.

⁷² Klaus Bringmann, *A History of the Roman Republic*, p. 34

⁷³ Polybius, *Histories*, 3.116.

For example, at the battle of Jifu (鸡父) in 519 BC, the king of Wu set up a strategy that was based on the lack of coordination between the armies of Chu and its alliance states Dun, Hu, Shen, Cai, Chen and Xu. First, the king of Wu sent 300 criminals in the front to attack the troops of Hu, Shen and Chen; behind these criminals Wu's regular army followed in three divisions. The troops of Hu, Shen and Chen were thrown into great confusion by the chaotic fleeing of the Wu criminals on the battlefield and were caught by surprise when they were suddenly attacked by the advancing regular Wu army. Armies of these three alliances were defeated, with their commanders and many soldiers being captured by Wu. Then the Wu army suddenly released the captured Hu and Shen soldiers, and had them fleeing over to the fronts of Xu, Cai and Dun and exclaiming, "Our rulers are dead!" Wu soldiers followed the fleeing captives, charging along and shouting the same slogans. The troops of Xu, Cai and Dun also began to flee, and the Chu army was routed even before they had the chance to establish formations for the battle.⁷⁴

During the Second Punic War, Hannibal treated the prisoners of war from Roman allies kindly and set them free without ransom.⁷⁵ In doing so, Hannibal wished to alienate the Roman allies away from Rome, but the effect of such freeing of prisoners seemed to be limited. If he had known how the Wu army had applied the same tactics to successfully disrupt the enemies' alliance at the battle of Jifu, Hannibal would probably have wanted to use it against the Romans in a more dramatic manner.

5.3 Benefits from Becoming Alliance States

The hegemony that Roman Republic built substantially ended the anarchical chaos that had plagued the Italian peninsula for centuries. Although the Italian allies had to surrender their military sovereignty over to Rome, they gained much from the nascent emergence of domestic peace and security, and they could call on Rome for help in dealing with external threats and domestic conflicts. For example, in 270 BC, the citizens of the Greek city of Rhegium were driven out by a Campanian force garrisoned in their town; when they appealed to Rome for help, Rome helped them return to their city and restore to their rights; in 263 BC, the aristocracy of the allied city Volsinii had yielded to a domestic revolt but were restored back to their position after Rome launched a military campaign in their support; when coastal towns of southern Italy appealed to Rome for help against Illyrian pirates, Rome intervened and put a violent end to such piracy.⁷⁶

Similarly, Chu undertook a systematic policy of protecting its alliance states from external aggressions. For example,

⁷⁴ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Zhao 23th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 699.

⁷⁵ Polybius, 3.77.

⁷⁶ Klaus Bringmann, *A History of the Roman Republic*, p. 36.

- In 564 BC, a senior general of Chu launched an attack against the state of Zheng as retaliation against Zheng's recent invasion of the state of Cai.⁷⁷
- In 490 BC, when the state of Wu invaded the state of Chen, the king of Chu said, "there has been an alliance between my predecessor king and the state of Chen, and I must by all means now go to its rescue", and therefore he sent troops to Chen's rescue.⁷⁸

Part VI: Initial Conclusions on Comparisons Between Rome and the Han Empires.

By persistently pursuing the various integration-oriented policies as discussed above, numerous Italic polities, cities and tribes conquered by Rome were consolidated into the Roman state not only politically but also psychologically, and the spread of Roman language, legal system, customs and architecture followed the expansion of Roman territory. The Roman Republic substantively changed the meaning of the terms "Roman" and "Latin", which came to refer to legal status rather than actual ethnicity and the terms became infinitely extendable geographically.⁷⁹

Similarly, the rise and expansion of Chu state during Spring & Autumn and Warring States periods was more significant than those of other feudal states of Zhou's making. By the mid-4th century BC, Chu's territory alone accounted for nearly half of the combined area of all Sinic states. A key reason for Chu's vast territorial expansion was its abilities around integration and consolidation of the various polities, kingdom and tribes subjugated by Chu state. These integrated communities identified themselves with Chu state or culture not only while they were under Chu's rule, but also after the Chu state had vanished as political unit. The concept of Chu had expanded enormously from its tiny homeland to the bulk of southern China. According to the historian Sima Qian, by the 2nd century BC the region of Chu encompassed three disparate vast regions of Western Chu, Eastern Chu and Southern Chu,⁸⁰ whose combined areas include what are now the provinces of Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, Jiangsu, and southern Henan. As the overwhelming majority of the populations living in such greater Chu region originally were not Chu people, the term of "Chu" had also undergone a profound change and had proved to be vastly extensible in the geographical sense.

In a deeper sense, the Chu state represented a new era of the evolutionary growth of Sinic civilization. Early Zhou dynasty kings officially recognized Chu's reign on Zhou borderlands without dispatching Zhou subjects to Chu territory, which left a much greater degree of autonomy for Chu's own development.

⁷⁷ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Xiang 8th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 435.

⁷⁸ *Zuozhuan*, Duke of Ai 6th Year; James Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 5, p. 809.

⁷⁹ Arthur Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War and the Rise of Rome*, p 254.

⁸⁰ Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian, Huo Zhi Lie Zhuan* (史记·货殖列传).

Compared with most of the contemporary states in the Chinese Central Plains, Chu performed better in inventing and developing a new model that integrated numerous local princedoms and tribes into an organic body politic without falling victim to internal strife. Just as Rome fared well where Athens and other Greek city states failed at the task of consolidating the Mediterranean cities, Chu fared better than contemporary bigger Sinic states in annexing and integrating smaller states. For centuries, it seemed that it was the state of Chu that was best qualified candidate for grabbing the Holy Grail of uniting the ancient Sinic states, just as the Roman Republic would become the mistress of the Mediterranean Basin before its demise.

Such an expectation might have omitted the element of chance in the unfolding of historical events. Historical fate had been kind to the Roman Republic in sparing it from the hurricane of military conquest marshaled by Alexander the Great. Historical fate had been too harsh on the Chu state in interjecting the more powerfully expansionist state of Qin. Qin exerted epic stratagems and efforts in launching unprecedented total wars hitherto unthinkable for other Sinic polities. If the life spans of the empires of Alexander and Qin were equally ephemeral, the staying powers of the states of Rome and Chu were equally enduring: just as the Roman Republic had the Roman Empire as its direct successor, the Han Empire was predominantly a successor of the Chu state. Although the Han Empire borrowed from Qin in its administrative system, most of the founding fathers of the empire were former Chu subjects, and the cultural ethos of the Han Empire was decisively Chu-originated.⁸¹

If the myriad of historical similarities between Roman and Han Empires deserve in-depth research, the parallels between their predecessors of Roman Republic and Chu state warrant even closer examination with fresh eyes, because the surprising convergence between early Roman and Chu states was not a historical coincidence, but was a prologue to the abundant similarities between the two world-systems whose numerous resemblances would gradually and subtly emerge in the following centuries.

⁸¹ Li Ze Hou (李泽厚), *mei de li cheng* (《美的历程》), p 72.