Chapter Five

Rise of the Xianbei in Manchuria
Presaging a Tripolar East Asia

Trial Performance of Murong-Xianbei Proto-Conquest Dynasty
142

Rise of the Xianbei of Western Manchuria

Beginning of the Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States with the Xiongnu Zhao States (304-439)

Xiongnu

Former Zhao (304-29)

Later Zhao (319-52)

Han Chinese Eastern Jin

Mongol-Xianbei Headgears

Former Yan, Chaoyang

Mongol Hui (r. 285-333),
Mongol Huang (r. 333-49)

Former Yan (337-352-370)

Northern Yan (364-436)

Southern Yan (357-420)

Later Yan (364-436)

Mongol Jun (r. 349-60)

Former Qin (351-94)

Han Chinese Eastern Jin (317-420)

Excavated in 1982.

Later Han Horseman without Stirrups

武威市雷台漢將軍墓 甘肅省博物館

4th century Mongol-Xianbei Horseman with Stirrups 朝陽 袁台子村古墳
CHAPTER FIVE
RISE OF THE XIANBEI IN MANCHURIA PRESAGING A TRIPOLAR EAST ASIA
TRIAL PERFORMANCE OF MURONG-XIANBEI PROTO-CONQUEST DYNASTY

Because of numerical inferiority and administrative deficiency, the Maodun’s Xiongnu had never tried to conquer mainland China, and remained as an extorter. The occupation of North China by the two Xiongnu Zhao states that triggered the Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States turned out a failure. Former Zhao was so much in the Chinese style that it was unpopular among the tribal chieftains, breeding the seeds for internal revolt. Later Zhao was more amenable to the steppe tradition, and hence was popular with the Xiongnu, but the regime was too cruel to govern Chinese subjects, and was destroyed by the Chinese rebellion.

The conquest of North China by the Former Yan in 352 with less than 200,000 mounted soldiers was an epoch-making event, though ephemeral, not only in the sense that it presaged the advent of a series of full-fledged conquest dynasties of Manchurian provenance, but also in the sense that the Murong-Xianbei experimented the prototype of the “dual system” that served as a source of inspiration for those latter-day conquerors. The Murongs ruled the Han Chinese masses through the Han Chinese collaborators, selected informally, under the control of the conquest elite. The Murong-Xianbei of western Manchuria innovated an archetype of the dual system of governance, taking advantage of both the tribal militaristic specialty and the efficiency of Chinese-style bureaucracy. The centralized but tribally based military organization functioning together with the civil bureaucracy for the Chinese farmers and city dwellers compensated for the weakness of numerical inferiority and administrative deficiency. The civil bureaucracy was filled mostly by Han Chinese scholars and ex-officials recruited from the old Chinese settlers in the Liaodong and Liaoxi area, together with fresh refugees from mainland China. The tribal army was mostly commanded by the Murong ruler’s brothers, sons, and nephews. The Murong’s deeds in their final days, however, especially the reckless recruitment of more than one million Han Chinese peasants (to conquer South China), an excessive Sinicization of the court, and the rapid expansion of tax-exempt landholdings by the Xianbei aristocrats and high-ranking officials, illuminated the cause of downfall to the latter-day conquest dynasties.
1. Five Barbarians and Sixteen States in the Eastern World

**DROUGHT, STIRRUPS, AND FOLK MOVEMENT**

Lamb (1995: 161-2) contends that: the “migrations of peoples during the long decline of the Roman empire is characterized, like that in the last millennium before Christ, by migrations predominantly in one direction. But, whereas in the previous case the direction was from north to south, this time it was from east to west. … In the former case, it seems clear that there was … a spreading out of Arctic cold air. This time the trouble was … more likely to have to do with drought – of which we have, in fact, unmistakable evidence.”

A gradual, global warming began after 300 CE together with “increasing dryness until about 400 CE.” According to Lamb (1995: 159), for centuries during the heyday of Roman rule, “from about 150 BCE until 300 CE or a few decades later, caravans of camels used the Great Silk Road across Asia to trade luxuries from China. But by the fourth century CE, as we know from changes of level of the Caspian Sea and studies of the intermittent rivers and lakes and abandoned settlements in Xinjiang and central Asia, drought developed on such a scale as to stop the traffic along this route.” According to Huntington (ibid: 161), “it was the drying up of pastures used by the nomads in central Asia that set off a chain reaction of barbarian tribes and unsettled peoples migrating westwards into Europe, where they ultimately undermined the Roman Empire.”

According to Wittfogel and Feng (1949: 505), as early as 852 BCE a crude board supported the foot of a royal Assyrian rider, and in the last centuries before the turn of the era, a leather foot sling was depicted on certain Scythian and Indian monuments, but the true stirrup that “made the horse a military weapon of extraordinary effectiveness” was carried “from Inner Asia to China” sometime between 200 and 400 CE, and then to western Asia and Byzantium sometime between 400-600 CE.

Farris (1998: 77) states that the Xianbei “learned to use the stirrup, at first slung over only the left side of the animal,” around 300 CE, and “by 400, the Xianbei were dangling footrests from both sides of the saddle; these early stirrups were circular and composed of wood in the middle surrounded by riveted iron.” According to Graff (2002: 42), “the earliest figurine with...
two stirrups probably dates from about 322, and the first actual specimens of stirrups that can be dated precisely and with confidence are from a southern Manchurian burial of 415.” According to Watt (2004: 131), the pair of stirrups dated 415 CE was excavated from the Northern Yan tomb of Feng Sufu at Beipiao, but “somewhat earlier stirrups have been found in other territories associated with the Murong Xianbei. One day the Murong Xianbei may be credited with the invention of this important device or its introduction into China.”

The drought period of 300-400 CE apparently coincides with the innovation of stirrups and the Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States in the eastern world (304-439), and also with the Völkerwanderungen that was followed by the arrival, though belated, of stirrups in the western world. We now examine what Lamb calls the “east-to-west movements” in the eastern world after Christ.

THE XIONGNU OCCUPY NORTH CHINA WITH UNWORKABLE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE: THE FAILURE CASE

According to Wright (1978: 24), “between 281 and 302 a frightful sequence of natural disasters—famine, plague, locusts, floods—devastated the north.” In Western Jin (265-316), the control of land and population by the powerful magnate families had been expanding rapidly at the expense of government tax revenue. Klein (1980: 22) states that Western Jin was “basically a regime of large landholders, led by the strongest landholding clan, the Sima,” and hence there was no attempt to check the growth of tax exempt lands. In place of the universal farmer-conscripts, there was an increasing reliance on professional military forces as well as on the barbarian cavalry auxiliaries under the authority of regional military leaders. Full-scale civil war, the War of Eight Princes, raged in mainland China between 291-305.

The occupation of north China between 304-52 by the two Xiongnu Zhao states commenced the Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States. The Wei-Jin policy of keeping the son of Shanyu as a hostage at court had produced a new type of sinified and educated Xiongnu leader such as Liu Yuan (劉淵 r.304-10) who was proclaimed king (漢王) in 304 and then emperor in 308, establishing “a replica of the Jin court” at Pingyang (平陽). Liu Yuan’s son, Cong (聰 r.310-18), captured the Jin emperor at...
Luoyang in 311, and Liu Yao (曜 r.319-29), a member of the ruling clan who had been orphaned and raised by Liu Yuan, was proclaimed emperor in 319 with his capital at Xi’an (Chang’an).

The first ruler of Former Zhao (304-29), Liu Yuan, “decided to become a Chinese emperor,” giving up the Xiongnu tradition. “Great Han” was the name of his state until 318, acting as if the legitimate heir of the Han dynasty punishing the usurpers, the Sima family. Liu Yuan, as Eberhard (1965: 123) notes, “appointed officials in the Chinese manner.” Graff (2002: 56) states that “from the very beginning the Liu rulers had made a point of adopting the trappings of Chinese imperial government, including the rituals, sacrifices, official titles, and a variety of symbolic gestures.” The Xiongnu chieftains, according to Eberhard, “were not trained enough to take over court charges, and they hated the ceremonialism of the Chinese court.” As a result, Liu Yuan “had to appoint more and more Han Chinese to the important positions,” and this “created tensions between the tribesmen and tribal leaders and the ruler.” The Former Zhao dynasty was so much in the Chinese style that it was unpopular among the tribal chieftains from the Mongolian steppe, breeding the seeds for internal revolt. The Han Chinese bureaucrats at the court were deemed a threat to tribal supremacy. Liu Yuan failed “in transforming his tribal units into military cadres” of a centralized army, and the disillusioned tribal leaders went over to Shi Le in the east whose method of rule was more to their taste. 4

The Later Zhao (319-52) dynasty, established by the famous bandit Shi Le (r.319-33) with its capital at Xiang’guo (襄國), was more amenable to the steppe tradition, and hence was popular with the Xiongnu. 5 While serving Liu Yuan as his general, Shi Le had indulged in terror and wanton destruction of northern China’s farm lands. Shi Le annexed Liu Yao’s remaining territory in the west by 329, and came to rule the whole of North China. The rulers of the Later Zhao, especially the notoriously cruel despot Shi Hu (r.334-49 with its capital at Ye (邺) after 335), could secure tribal support but were ignorant of the art of governing farmers. 6 According to Eberhard (1965: 122-3), the Xiongnu tribes “simply set up their military camp in the heart of China and from there made excursions into all four directions … The whole

6 資治通鑑 卷八十七 晉紀九 懷帝 311 石虎 殘忍無道……凶暴無賴……每屠城邑 鮮有遺頸……勒遂寵任之

7 資治通鑑 卷九十七 晉紀十九 成帝 咸康八年 [342]…皆三五發卒……肆殺無時 懸民祛穢……興役無時 廢民廩穢……興繕滋繁 游察自若……穆帝 永和五年 [345] 虎好獵……乃造獵車千乘 刻期校獵……自靈昌津 南至榮陽 東極陽都 爲獵場……郡縣務求美色 多強奪人妻 殺其夫

8 Hu’s adopted son Ran Min (冉閔) was a 12-year old follower of the roaming Chinese rebels (乞活) when captured by Shi Le in 311. He killed 200,000 Jie-Xiongnu (胡羯) people in 349, founded Wei (冉魏) in 350, and exterminated the entire Shi lineage by 352. Graff (2002: 59-60) notes that Former Zhao “assigned Chinese [the tax-paying subjects] and non-Chinese [the steppe ruler-warrior compatriots 國人, guoren] to separate system of administration in 314 [左右司隷/單于左右補]. As emperor, Liu Cong ruled over some 400,000 households (戶) of Chinese who were organized into units of 10,000 households,” and his heir apparent, with the title of Great Shanyu, ruled “some 200,000 encampment groups (luo 落)” split into units of 10,000 luo, placed under the military leaders [宗室 王]. “Since all of their men were expected to be warriors, there was not much difference between the ‘barbarian’ side of the administrative structure and the military establishment. The Great Shanyu…commanded the army in the field.” The Chinese auxiliary
troops were mostly used for “hauling supplies or constructing siege works,” and were sent home at the end of the campaign. Graff (ibid: 61) contends that the institutional distinction between Former and Later Zhao was overdrawn:

“Shi Le, like his counterparts in Pingyang and Chang’an, relied heavily on the cooperation of Chinese fortress chiefs — to make his power effective in the outlying areas.”

9 See Holcombe (2001: 123). Sima Rui (司馬睿) was appointed as governor of Jian’ye (建業/建康) in 307. According to Graff (2002: 80), about 0.9 million people in the south were registered as northern migrants or their descendants as of the late fifth century. Dien (2007: 4-5) notes: “The majority of... émigré families [僑民] were landless and... their area of influence was in the court and the army. … [A]ttempts at enforced recruitment of the serfs of the southern landlords [土豪] into army led to rebellions ... The crucial element of power... was... army raised in Shandong and moved south. … The soldiers were given land just north of the capital and became military households ... [T]he junior officers rebelled ... Liu Yu (劉裕) ... in 420, declared himself emperor ...”

10 Wright (1957: 24-5) states: “The Chinese ruling class which fled the north to establish a series of weak dynasties in Nanjing had suffered a severe psychological shock. They found themselves in a rich but recently colonial area, much of it still populated of China became their ‘hunting ground.’ ... [T]his system permitted them to preserve their old pattern of culture almost entirely. ... It is obvious that such a system could not last very long.”7 The regime, so cruel in its governance of the Han Chinese subjects, was destroyed by the Chinese rebellion.8

THE HAN CHINESE ÉMIGRÈ REGIME BELOW THE YANGZI RIVER

A member of the Western Jin imperial family, Sima Rui, who had been serving as governor of the Jian’kang (建康/建業 Nanjing) area, founded the Eastern Jin dynasty in 317 that lasted until 420. More than a million Han Chinese seem to have escaped to the relatively placid south ruled by the Jin émigré regime during the fourth century. A succession of short-lived southern dynasties, the Liu Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen, were established by military coups. Sheltered by the Yangzi River, Nanjing was to assume the role of Chang’an and Luoyang, according to historians, as if Constantinople was to replace Rome, until unified by Sui in 589.9

Ledyard (1983: 331) contends that “the year 317 marks not only one of the most important social and political divisions in Chinese history, but also one in which a major part—better, the major part—of China’s land is taken over by non-Chinese aliens.” The area north of the Yangzi River at that time was not the North China of today; for the Han Chinese of that time, it was China. The south where the Chinese elite mass fled had been only a colonial hinterland of the Qin-Han dynasties, characterized by the Wu dialect of the semi-native Han Chinese, and by aboriginal peoples, wet-rice cultivation, and alien climate and landscape.10

The Han Chinese inhabitants in the warm and watery south were concentrated on the ancient heartland of the lower Yangzi, including the fertile lands around Lake Tai and Hangzhou Bay. This was the heart of the ancient Wu and Yue, and the Wu of the Three Kingdoms period. The other population center was the low-lying plains located upstream where the Han River enters the Yangzi from the north and the Xiang River from the south, with well-populated valleys on both sides (the modern-day Hunan). Between the population centers lay vast expanses of heavily forested mountains inhabited by the aboriginal peoples, bringing about the southern tradition of waterborne transportation. The area between the Huai River and the Yangzi became the contested territory between north and south.
The émigré families, Twitchett (1979: 5) notes, "considered themselves to be the pure heirs of Han Culture, and developed a distinctive highly refined literary style, their own schools of philosophy and of Buddhism, and their own sophisticated social mores."

RISE OF THE MURONG-XIANBEI, A BRANCH OF DONGHU PEOPLE

One of the Tan Shihuai's (r.156-80) vassals in his empire's Middle Province was named Murong. At the time of Western Jin (265-316), we find quite a number of small Xianbei states, including the state of the Murong (慕容 around Chaoyang), the Tufa (秃髮), the Qifu (乞伏), the Tuoba (拓跋), the Yuwen (宇文 in the valley of the Xilamulun River), and the Duan (段 in the south around Shan'haiguan).

When Sima Yi of the Cao Cao's Wei (220-65) launched an attack on Gongsun Yuan in 238, he secured active support not only from the Koguryeo king but also from Murong Mohuba (莫護跋), who had settled in the Liaoxi area (棘城) at about this time. Mohuba's son Muyan (木延) also aided the Wei campaign in 246 against Koguryeo. Muyan's son Shegui (涉歸), however, fought against the Jin, and was pushed back to the upper Liao River region. Shegui died in 283, and his younger brother Shan (刪) usurped the leadership. Murong Shan was killed in 285, and the people proclaimed Shegui's son Hui (廆 b.268 r.285-333) as their chieftain. Hui attacked Puyeo in the very year he became the chieftain of the Murong tribe, capturing ten thousand prisoners.

In 289, Hui returned to Liaoxi and married a daughter of the Duan Shanyu (who gave birth to Huang 皝, Ren 仁 and Zhao 昭). Hui founded a new capital nearby the modern-day Chaoyang in 294 and "developed farming, and started the raising of silkworms, activities which his father had initiated." 12

"With a victory over the Yuwen" in 302, Schreiber (1949-55: 401) notes, several thousand Xianbei families "living in Liaodong and until then under the protection of the Yuwen went over to Murong Hui." Hui became "the chieftain of several Xianbei groups [and] took for himself the title Great Shanyu" in 308 (ibid: 402). The Murong, the Duan, and the Tuoba in Liaoxi by aborigines. They felt themselves exiles, and behaved like émigrés." 13

See also Wright (1959: 43, 54-5).

Wright (1979: 5) states: "Arable lands...lay along the valleys of tributaries...each valley separated...by...mountain ranges. In the sixth century, Chinese settlement was just beginning here."

11 Schreiber (ibid: 460) says that "Although Gongsun Yuan [淵 d.238; the grandson of Gongsun Du] was of no advantage whatsoever to Wu (222-80), the ruler of Wu, nevertheless, bestowed upon him the title King of Yan [in 233]."


were, however, still fighting each other for tribal hegemony. The Liaodong area was completely disconnected from the Western Jin court because everything in Central China was in great confusion. Liaodong was constantly under attack by all sorts of Xianbei tribes, and hence “the Chinese settlers in Liaodong could not apply themselves to their usual occupation (ibid: 402).” In 311, the Xiongnu sacked the Jin capital at Luoyang. It was the final days of the Western Jin dynasty that, long been engaged in fratricidal civil war, lost most of North China to the Xiongnu.

The Han Chinese governor of Pingzhou was jealous of the rapidly expanding power of Hui, and conspired together with Koguryeo, Duan and Yuwen to jointly launch an attack on the Murong and divide up Hui’s territory. In 319, the Koguryeo, Duan, and Yuwen jointly attacked Murong Hui. Hui, however, could make those three armies “suspicious of each other,” and let them take back their armies. Hui destroyed the Yuwen army shortly thereafter, and conquered the Liaodong area. Schreiber (1949-55: 419) states: “Hui made Murong Han Commander…of Liaodong, assigned Murong Ren to Ping’guo. … Han was very successful in getting Chinese and foreigners to live harmoniously. … Ren…was as successful as his brother Han. … A year later [321], when an army of Koguryeo again had invaded Liaodong, Murong Ren had defeated them so decisively that for years afterwards they did not invade the territory of Murong Ren.”

2. The Murong-Xianbei Commencing the Dual System

ABSORBING THE HAN CHINESE SETTLERS AND FRESH REFUGEES

The Xianbei was counted as one of the Five Barbarians, and the Former Yan (337-70) one of the Sixteen States. The Murong Xianbei, Schreiber (1949-55: 374) notes, had “lived inside the boundaries of China for several generations, absorbing Chinese culture and customs before they started an independent state of their own.” Hui became the chieftain at the age of seventeen, but had the opportunity to receive a Chinese education that emphasized the importance of agriculture and bureaucracy. Hui occupied the entire Liao River basin by 319. Hui encouraged agriculture, employing the Han Chinese in Liaodong and Liaoxi as farmers and administrators. A large number of Chinese refugees
from North China also went over to Murong Hui.  

North China was in great turmoil under the savage Xiongnu at that time, but the émigré regime in the south was too far away for the Chinese scholars and ex-officials to join. No one was, after all, sure about the possibility of arriving in the south safely. Many Han Chinese fled from the disaster in North China and took refuge in Liaodong. Some had arrived in Liaodong from the Shandong Peninsula “by boat with over a thousand families.” Hui was insightful, and therefore respected Han Chinese scholars and officials, and made full use of them. From 302-20, according to Schreiber (1949-55: 405), Hui “secured the collaboration of many able Chinese who joined him because there was order in his state, and Hui appreciated the help of able men. Whoever of the Chinese refugees had talent and experience was given an office by Hui.” The indigenous Han Chinese settlers from of old around the Liaodong and Liaoxi area, and the fresh new refugees from North China, mostly farmers but also including a large number of scholars and former officials, vastly increased the population under the rule of Hui.

Schreiber (1949-55: 406-9) states that, among the Han Chinese scholars and ex-officials who joined Murong Hui, there were “mature and experienced men from noble families,” men of “skill in drawing up memorials or other official documents,” “learned Confucian scholars,” former high-ranking Western Jin officials, and experts in “astrology and the explanation and application of the I-ching (Book of Changes).” These men were appointed by Hui as chief counselors, director of school, tutors for the heir apparent and the sons of high Xianbei dignitaries, or high ranking officers. Ex-Jin officials joined Hui with their Chinese settlers. These were the core members of the Chinese who had collaborated in the Murong’s stylistic development into the imperial Confucian dynasty. Hui, Schreiber (ibid: 409) writes, “really understood how to win over people and officials.”

What the Han Chinese had in mind at that time is revealed in a statement such as this (ibid: 408): “The Murong are known for their virtue and justice. They have the ambition to become the first among the feudal lords. Moreover, their state is prosperous and their people live in peace. If we join them now, we may get a position where we can distinguish ourselves and, incidentally, can protect our own people. Why do you hesitate?”
Hui seems to have been genuinely grateful to the Chinese collaborators for teaching him how to rule the Chinese people in Confucian ways, and was apparently never contemptuous of these turncoats for their moral compromise. Rather, it was the latter-day nationalistic Chinese chroniclers who despised and condemned their collaboration with the “barbarian” conquerors.

Since the former Western Jin officials felt uncomfortable about serving a non-Chinese “barbarian” chieftain, they urged Hui to receive a legitimate imperial appointment from the Eastern Jin (317-420) court in the south. The Han Chinese counselors urged Hui to be on good terms with Sima Rui, saying: “Though you are master over this region..., the tribes in the northeast are not yet your subjects. They ... refuse to acknowledge your leadership because you have not yet received the recognition of the Emperor.” Hui sent an envoy to the Eastern Jin court in 317, and the court conferred on him the title of Longxiang Jiangjun, Great Shanyu, in 318.

Schreiber (1949-55: 418-9) quotes the Zizhi Tongjian: in December 321, the Eastern Jin Emperor authorized Hui to be in charge of “all the military affairs of the two provinces Ping and You, and of the foreign peoples in the northeast of China” and gave him “permission to establish his own government, as well as name his own officials of state.” Apparently, Schreiber further states, Hui’s “Chinese friends got a lion’s share of the appointments” for all the “customary officials of a Chinese province.” Most Xianbei tribes were incorporated into one large people, and all the Han Chinese settlers in this region also acknowledged Hui as their rightful superior. Schreiber (1949-55: 422) states that, “after the year 325, Hui was the ruler of a well consolidated state.” The state of Former Yan was basically founded under Hui’s long reign of 49 years (285-333).

The state which Hui left to his son Huang (r.333-49) was bounded on the north by the Gobi desert; on the east it reached Koguryeo; on the west it extended into the region of Datong; and on the south it reached the area of modern Beijing. Owing to the good Chinese education which Hui had made available to his sons, Huang was also “well versed in Chinese literature and had learned to esteem Chinese classical learning.” Schreiber (ibid: 478-9) states: “Huang was a patron of literature and education. His former palace served as a school for over a...
thousand students, the sons of his officials. … He…sometimes taught or held examinations. In the school a monthly archery competition was held in which … Huang himself participated.”

For many years, Schreiber (1949-55: 474) notes, “an uninterrupted flow of refugees from Central China had flowed into Yan… In addition to these, the prisoners of war who had been transplanted from surrounding territories to Yan heightened the need for more land reforms. Murong Huang designated a part of the royal pasture for agricultural purposes.”

In November, 337, Huang proclaimed himself “King of Yan,” and “converted his officialdom into that of a kingdom.” Huang established a copy of the traditional Han Chinese bureaucratic hierarchy, all with Chinese office appellations.

DUAL SYSTEM: ROYAL MURONG COMMANDERS FOR TRIBAL ARMY, AND CHINESE SCHOLARS AND EX-OFFICIALS FOR THE BUREAUCRACY

Lewis (2009b: 147) states: “the Murong built a large state …as far south as the Huai River. Refugee Chinese literati served as bureaucrats while nomad tribesmen formed the core of an army that also included Chinese infantry and siege equipment.”

When Murong Hui, Schreiber (1949-55: 374) says, “laid the foundation of his state, he got advice and collaboration from many Chinese officials and scholars who purposely tried to develop Murong State into a Chinese Empire.” According to Schreiber (1956: 124), Hui could develop a unique Chinese-style centralized bureaucracy within a few years “so that the Chinese settlers and refugees could feel at home,” and yet did not alienate his tribal followers. According to Barfield (1989: 110), “it was an attempt to graft Chinese agricultural, political and social policy onto the Murong’s tribal military power,” and “the Chinese advisors never strayed into tribal affairs—there was not even a hint that excess Xianbei become farmers, only that refugees under Chinese-style administration be better employed.” The Xianbei armies were commanded mostly by Hui’s sons and nephews, and the Chinese officials seldom acted as army commanders. Military units retained the Xianbei tribal organization, but the local tribal leaders had to take orders from the supreme commander, Hui.

While the emperor’s sons and brothers of the Chinese dynasties “often used the income of their feudal domains for a life of leisure and luxury, the Murong princes assumed the most

24 “Unfortunately in fixing the taxes Murong Huang followed the advice of …an avaricious Chinese. … High taxes were demanded supposedly to prepare an efficient defense against a new attack from Shi Hu (r.334-49).” (ibid)

25 See Schreiber (1949-55: 442). Huang made appointments for the positions of Chancellor of State (國相), Minister of Military Affairs (司馬), Master of Ceremonies (奉常), Colonel of the Censure (司隷), Grand Servant (太僕), President of the High Court of Justice (大理), Prefect of the Masters of Documents (尚書令), Attendant within the Palace (納言令/常伯/侍中), Superintendent of the Record Office (記室監), and General who Disperses the Enemy’s Cavalry (散騎常侍). The Eastern Jin court endorsed Huang as King of Yan on April 23, 341 (Ibid: 462).

26 Quotes from Schreiber (1956: 121). According to the Jinshu, when Huang sent his son Ke (恪) on an expedition against the Puyeo, Ke braved the arrows and stones of the enemy and, advancing with the vanguard, broke through the lines of the enemy.
son Huang…in command of the vanguard of the best troops. …Han (翰) with 1,000 horsemen invaded the camp of…(ibid: 415); in 346, Huang "sent…Jun, the three generals Murong Jun (軍), Murong Ke, Muyu Gen (慕輿根), and seventeen thousand horsemen against [the Puyeo] (ibid: 474); and sent "an army under the command of his two sons Ke (恪) and Ba (霸=儂垂) against a group of Yuwen (ibid: 457)."

27 This statement of Klein is based on Schreiber (1956: 106-8). Following the Fu Jian's defeat in 383, Murong Chui murdered the Qin general assigned to supervise him and laid siege to Ye in 384. Chui's son Nong and nephews, Jie and Shao, raised troops to support Chui's siege. Murong Hong, the younger brother of the last emperor of Former Yan, and Chui's other nephew Murong Chong, raised troops and established Western Yan (384-94). See Klein (1980: 45-6).

28 Hui politely answered: "What you propose is too ambitious for me. But … help me to build up my State." Hui made him "Changshi (長史), adviser on military and civil affairs. One by one he attacked the various weak and small Xianbei groups and incorporated them into his people (ibid: 411-2)."

The transformation of the Murong Xianbei from a tribal group to a Dual-System state was the work of Murong Hui and his son Huang. They established a centralized but tribally based military organization commanded by their brothers, sons, and nephews, and a Chinese-style civil bureaucracy for the farmers and city dwellers of Liao River basin. A proto-conquest dynasty, even ephemeral, could not have been founded in North China by Huang's son without the collaboration of Chinese administrative experts. According to Barfield (1989: 97-107), the Murong Xianbei founded a state with this type of dual military-bureaucratic organization for the first time in East Asia during the Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States.
It was only natural for the innovative Manchurian nomads to take over part of the Chinese domain and rule it, taking advantage of both their militaristic specialty and the efficiency of Chinese-style bureaucracy. According to Fairbank (1992: 111-2), “this pattern of dual Sino-nomadic government was visible from the fourth century AD in southern Manchuria. It would reach its peak in the complete control that followed the Mongol and Manchu conquerors.” Barfield (1989: 106) contends that “the organization that the Murong created was the base on which their cousins the Tuoba built to unite north China.”

Schreiber (1949-55: 477-8) writes the following decree issued by Murong Huang: “Loyal persons, alone, should be recommended to the court as candidates for high governmental positions. … With regard to clearing unfit persons out of officedom, I do not wish to effect changes at present, because we still have to reckon with war and have to bestow official posts as rewards for bravery and effectiveness in battle. We may start to talk about changing officials when Central China is freed from its oppressors.” Huang died three years before the conquest.

The advent of the Murong-Xianbei conquest dynasty coincided with the appearance of stirrups in East Asia. The conquest of North China by Former Yan (337-70) in 352 was an epoch-making event, though ephemeral, not only in the sense that it presaged the advent of a series of full-fledged conquest dynasties of Manchurian provenance, but also in the sense that the Murongs experimented with an institutional framework that served as a source of inspiration for those latter-day conquerors.

3. The Murong-Xianbei Conquer Central China: A Preview of Conquest Dynasty

MURONG-XIANBEI YAN NEUTRALIZES YEMAEK KOGURYEO

Murong Huang proclaimed himself King of Yan in 337; destroyed Koguryeo and relocated the capital to Longcheng (龍城) in 342; and crushed the last uprisings of the Duan in 338, and of the Yuwen in 344. In 346, Huang dispatched three of his sons, including the crown prince, with 17,000 cavalrmen to attack the Puyeo, capturing the king and over fifty thousand prisoners. Huang could further cement the alliance with the Duan-Xianbei...
through marriage. Huang, his fifth son Chui (垂 the founder of Later Yan), and Chui’s son, Bao (寶), married Duan women.

The Zizhi Tongjian records the advice of Murong Han given to his brother, Huang, sometime before November 342: “Our nearest neighbors, the Koguryeo, are always vigilant. They know that as soon as we have annihilated the Yuwen, we will attack them. Therefore, if we move to invade the territory of Yuwen, they surely would attack our country while our army is abroad. Were we to leave a few of our troops to guard the home country, the army of Koguryeo would ravage the country. Were we to leave a sufficient number of troops to prevent an invasion, our expeditionary army would be too weak to conquer the Yuwen. We should, therefore, first conquer Koguryeo.” Huang invaded Koguryeo in November 342 with forty thousand of his elite soldiers, and captured its capital Hwan-do. At that time, Huang was further advised by one of his generals: “It is impossible to keep Koguryeo occupied. The king managed to escape and the people are scattered and hidden in the mountains. Upon our departure they will emerge from their hiding places and gather together. Let us take Chao’s mother along as prisoner, and remove the corpse of his father to Longcheng. Under such circumstances Chao [King Koguk-won r.331-71] will beg for the restoration of his parents. Then you may return the corpse of his father and may treat Chao with kindness and give him your confidence. In my opinion this is the best way of handling Koguryeo.” Huang gave his consent.

The Murong-Xianbei could not leave standing the threat to their rear posed by the Yemaek people in central Manchuria before proceeding with their campaign against mainland China. Apparently, Huang effectively neutralized Koguryeo in 342, and hence cleared the stage for his son to conquer north China. There were no further armed conflicts between the Koguryeo and the Murong-Xianbei until the downfall of Former Yan in 370.

When the Later Zhao state collapsed under the Han Chinese rebellion, Murong Jun (r.349-60), Huang’s second son, occupied north China and declared himself emperor in November 352. According to Schreiber (1956: 123), “the vast majority of the Chinese, made pliable by a series of ferocious civil wars, welcomed any ruler who could promise peace and order. The people [were] fed up with tyranny; they [looked] for a ruler

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29. Zizhi Tongjian 卷九十六 咸康七年
30. The Zizhi Tongjian records the advice of Murong Han given to his brother, Huang, sometime before November 342: “Our nearest neighbors, the Koguryeo, are always vigilant. They know that as soon as we have annihilated the Yuwen, we will attack them. Therefore, if we move to invade the territory of Yuwen, they surely would attack our country while our army is abroad. Were we to leave a few of our troops to guard the home country, the army of Koguryeo would ravage the country. Were we to leave a sufficient number of troops to prevent an invasion, our expeditionary army would be too weak to conquer the Yuwen. We should, therefore, first conquer Koguryeo.” Huang invaded Koguryeo in November 342 with forty thousand of his elite soldiers, and captured its capital Hwan-do. At that time, Huang was further advised by one of his generals: “It is impossible to keep Koguryeo occupied. The king managed to escape and the people are scattered and hidden in the mountains. Upon our departure they will emerge from their hiding places and gather together. Let us take Chao’s mother along as prisoner, and remove the corpse of his father to Longcheng. Under such circumstances Chao [King Koguk-won r.331-71] will beg for the restoration of his parents. Then you may return the corpse of his father and may treat Chao with kindness and give him your confidence. In my opinion this is the best way of handling Koguryeo.” Huang gave his consent.

31. Zizhi Tongjian 卷第九十七 晉紀 十九
32. Schreiber (1956: 32) quoting Taiping-yulan (太平御覽) by Li Fang (李昉) 925-96). In November 352, Jun proclaimed himself Emperor, saying: “I have, urged by the Chinese people... ascended the throne (ibid: 35).” When Huang and Jun proclaimed themselves King and Emperor, “they stressed...that they assumed the dignity at the insistence of the Chinese (ibid: 124).
who will rescue them from slaughter and chaos.”

**SINICIZATION AND CORRUPTION OF THE RULING NOBILITY**

The death of Shi Hu, the Xiongnu emperor of Later Zhao, on April 23, 349, threw North China into turmoil. By April 350, Ran Min of rebel provenance (乞活), the founder of Wei (冉魏), could notify the Jin court in South China that he had already exterminated the Xiongnu bandits who had been occupying the Central Plain. Murong Jun mobilized 200,000 Xianbei horsemen, equipped with stirrups, destroyed the Ran Min’s infantry army (步卒) in April 352 in Hebei, and captured Ye on August 13, 352. The Han Chinese officials at Murong’s court were the first to urge Jun to proclaim himself emperor. They wanted an imperial court so that they could advance to the high positions which only such a court offered. Following the Chinese tradition, Jun feigned refusal of their request at first, saying: “Our home originally was the desert and the steppe, and we were barbarians.”

In January 353, Murong Jun established a full-fledged imperial court at Jicheng. The capital was moved to Ye in 357. When Jun died in 360, an eleven year old child (Wei 暐 r.360-70), instead of Murong Ke, the capable younger brother of Jun who was a natural leader commanding the loyalty of Xianbei soldiers, ascended the throne. Somehow, Sinicization of the Murong’s court was very rapid and so was the disintegration of the Former Yan. The Murong’s deeds in their final days illuminated the anathema to the later conquest dynasties.

After his successes in the west and in the south, “Emperor” Jun began to contemplate final campaigns against the Eastern Jin, the Chinese dynasty in the south, and against the Fu Jian’s Qin, the Tibetan state in the west. At the beginning of the year 359, Jun gave orders to the provinces and districts to survey all Han Chinese men fit for military service. Every family was allowed to keep one of the men; all the others had to enlist. The Murong Yan were able to conquer Central China with 200,000 Xianbei mounted soldiers. And yet Jun intended to have at his command an army of 1,500,000 foot soldiers to do away with the Eastern Jin and the Former Qin. When Jun was lying on his sickbed, the recruiting of the new [Han Chinese] army, which had been postponed until that winter, was in full swing. From all the districts and feudal states of Yan recruits flocked into the capital,
Mobilizing 1,500,000 Chinese Peasants

Ye. Organized robbery became rampant. Bandits raided from dusk till dawn and interrupted all communications. After Jun's death, the Great Army of Yan (the newly recruited army) simply dispersed. Traveling from the capital Ye southwards was hazardous at that time because many of the conscript peasants had become highwaymen. 34

Eberhard (1965: 125) declares that “the Xianbei, as the Turks, were pure horsemen. Infantry troops had no place in their system.” When the Murong ruler conscripted more than one million Chinese peasant soldiers to conquer Eastern Jin, Northern Yan plunged into chaos. Nevertheless, the horsemen of Xianbei were still strong enough to deal with rebellions within the empire.

How ineffective were the conscript Han Chinese soldiers can best be seen in a memorial presented by Shen Shao, the Grand Administrator of Changshan: “The strength of our bowmen and cavalry [was] feared by Qin and Jin. Our [Xianbei] soldiers have always been noted for flocking by the colors like clouds and rushing against the enemy like the wind; yet why is it that recently they [the new Han Chinese soldiers] are often tardy in arriving at the appointed time or ineffective in combat? … The local officials, when assessing labor and taxes, always … put the poor and weak in first place. The ones who go to war and labor and the ones who are left behind are in distress and without any means to support themselves. … [T]he result is that they become fugitives, and thereby … leave undone the important work of agriculture and sericulture. What is of prime importance with soldiers is not their number, but their willingness to give their lives. One ought to train the [conscript peasant] soldiers and teach them the art of war. When the soldiers are not actually on a campaign, they should be allowed to follow the occupation they have in private life.” 35

On his deathbed, Murong Ke, the regent, requested his nephew, the child Emperor, to entrust the care of the whole nation to his younger brother Murong Chui. Murong Ke died in 367. The young Emperor was not interested in governing, and let the covetous Murong Ping, another uncle, take over the army and officialdom. Ping plotted Chui’s assassination, driving Chui into the arms of Fu Jian in 369. 36

The Murong nobility (貴戚/豪貴) had been entitled to a certain amount of tax-exempt land and tenants (隱戶). They
began avariciously enlarging their domains, inducing free farmers to become their tenants by asking less tribute than the government tax collectors. In a short time the state treasury became empty, while the court nobles accumulated riches. 37 Klein (1980: 22 and 39) states: “the diversion of tax revenues away from the state treasury and into the hands of noble landowners” became as serious as in the Sima regime of Western Jin.

After occupying North China in 352, the Murong rulers do not seem to have prudently selected the provincial Grand Administrators and Magistrates from among the upright and capable local Han Chinese. Rather, according to Shen Shao, they selected them simply from the rank and file of the Xianbei military officers or the members of noble families born into silk garments who were without administrative experience, and extorted taxes and corvée unfairly and avariciously. 38

Shen Shao continues: “Today the population of our entire Empire amounts to no more than that of a large district of the Han Dynasty; but we have their complete hierarchy of officials; there are now more than four thousand ladies in the harem and altogether ten times as many attendants and menials in the palace while the armaments are neglected.” 39 The Murong rulers had apparently established a complete duplicate of the Chinese style imperial palace and bureaucratic hierarchy. Schreiber (1956: 125) notes a cynical compliment: “As soon as the Murong became sinicized, they gained the respect of the local [Han Chinese] high officials and even of the Court in the South.”

The Murong Xianbei captured Luoyang in 365, only to be conquered by Fu Jian (r.357-85) in 370. The compilers of the Jinshu state that, at the end, Murong Ping’s soldiers were so disappointed with the corrupt Yan regime that it was impossible for Ping to repulse the Qin army, who had employed the defected Murong Chui as a guide. 40 Murong Ping fled to Koguryeo, but he was arrested by the people of Koguryeo and sent to Qin. Fu Jian accepted and honored the surrendered Murong ruling class, including the corrupt Murong Ping; retained the Yan local officials; and unified all of North China by 380. Fu Jian resettled the Yan dignitaries together with 40,000 Xianbei households to Chang’an in December 370. 41

Former Yan had 157 commanderies (郡), 1,579 xians (縣), 2,458,969 households, and a 9,987,935 population as of the
catastrophic droughts that seriously weakened the Yan state. See Schreiber (1956: 72-5).

41 資治通鑑 卷一百二 晉紀二十四
太和五年[370]十一月…評議高句麗…
執評送于秦..其餘州縣 牧守令長 皆
因舊以按之 十二月遣慕容浩及燕后
妃王公百官 升鮮卑四萬餘户于長安

Rogers (1968: 228) notes that the extradition of Murong Ping “doubtlessly indicates Koguryeo’s desire to make an amicable settlement with the new master of the Central Plain; this would be in contrast with Koguryeo’s long-standing hostility toward the now defunct Yan, based on the conflicting aspirations of the two states for control of the Liaodong region.”

42 資治通鑑 卷一百十三 載記 第十三

43 Fu Jian’s (符堅) grandfather, Fu Hong (苻洪), was a chieftain of the shepherd-agriculturalist Di (氐) people. Fu Jian’s uncle (符健) had served the Xiongnu Later Zhao court as a leader of Tibetan auxiliaries, and then declared himself emperor of Qin (秦) in 351. See Klein (1980: 37-44), Eberhard (2005: 114), and Graff (2002: 64-5).

44 資治通鑑 卷一百五 晉紀二十六 太
元七年十月 秦王堅…寵育鮮卑羌羯
布滿畿甸 皆我之深仇…[弟符]融諫
曰…且國家 本 戎狄也

The Qiang and the Di are traditionally regarded as proto-Tibetans. According to the brother (苻) of Fu Jian, Di (氐)

year 370.42

FU JIAN’S FORMER QIN AND MURONG CHUI’S LATER YAN: SINICIZATION AND DISINTEGRATION

The Tibetan tribes (including the Di and the Qiang) were characterized by “weak tribal structures.” The Fu clan (of the Di people) had forced the Yao clan (姚 of the Qiang people) to submit to its rule. 43 Contrasting sharply with the Murong rulers, Fu Jian did not depend on tribal organization, tribal chieftains, hereditary nobility, or even his own kinfolk, but instead organized the Former Qin state (351-94) on the basis of Chinese-style bureaucracy, filling top governmental and military positions with the Han Chinese, who apparently looked capable but had questionable loyalty to the alien rulers. According to Klein (1980: 35-7), Fu Jian “staunchly supported his able Chinese ministers, headed by Wang Meng (王猛 325-75), over the complaints and objections of the Di nobility.” Fu Jian’s regime of meritocracy depended upon the “bureaucratic system of rule” for its survival. The structural vulnerability was evident because, as Klein (1980: 41-2) contends, “beyond selfish opportunism, there could be no motivation for [the Chinese] officials unrelated to the ruling house to remain dedicated to their” alien regime in critical moment. According to the Zizhi Tongjian, Wang Meng, on his deathbed in July 375, told Fu Jian to eschew the conquest of the Jin dynasty in the south, and instead to eliminate the Qiang and Xianbei people who had surrendered to him. Indeed, the 400,000 Xianbei men and women who had been settled at Chang’an in 370 went back to the east in March 386 after the death of Fu Jian in July 385 and then established Western Yan. 44

Fu Jian mobilized 270,000 cavalry soldiers and as many as 600,000 peasant foot soldiers, conscripting one out of every ten, and then mounted against Eastern Jin a massive campaign. 45 The military debacle at the Battle of the Fei River in 383 led to the death of Fu Jian, and a complete disintegration of the fragile Qin state that was dependent upon the Han Chinese ministers and generals as well as the defeated Xianbei people. The battle at the Fei River depended on the support of the Han Chinese army ranks and generals who could never be very enthusiastic in attacking the pure-blooded Han Chinese state in the south. 46 The Chinese support for Fu Jian’s rule was, Klein (1980: 40) notes,
“contingent upon a sustained concentration of the power which had forced them to submit.” When that strength faltered, their support evaporated. The debacle at the Fei River in 383 and the death of Fu Jian in July 385 opened the way for the re-establishment of various Yan states, activating all sorts of Murong leaders who had submitted to Fu Jian. Murong Chui (垂 326-96), Huang’s fifth son, declared himself Emperor of Yan on February 8, 386, establishing what came to be known as Later Yan (386-407), with its capital at Zhongshan (中山 modern Dingxian). Tuoba Gui followed suit, proclaiming himself King of Wei in April 386 in the Dai region of northern Shanxi. A group of Murongs had established Western Yan (385-94), conquered by Chui in 394, and yet another group of Murong fugitives would found Southern Yan (398-410) in modern Shandong province.

Unlike Fu Jian, and in keeping with the Murong tradition, Chui adhered to the tribal tradition of assigning the key military commands to his brothers, sons, and nephews, and never gave real power to any Han Chinese officials. When Chui fell ill and died in 396, Bao (instead of Bao’s brother Lin, who seems to have been a more capable military leader) succeeded his father and started reorganizing the Xianbei state into a Chinese state not only in form but in real power, ensuring the demise of Bao himself within two years, and the demise of Later Yan by 407. Bao (r.396-8) dissolved the military camps, and distributed soldiers among the commanderies and counties. The Jinshu says that Bao had delineated the old registers of gentry scholars (士族舊籍). Klein (1980: 72) contends that Bao “made the troops into feudal retainers” in order “to wipe away the distinctions between the Xianbei military and the Han populace, and to take the final step towards establishing a ‘Chinese state.’ ”

Challenged by the Tuoba, Emperor Bao had to flee to the Murong’s home base, Longcheng in Liaoxi, in 397. Bao was killed in 398, and his son Sheng (盛) was killed in 401, but Bao’s brother Xi (熙) continued the Later Yan dynasty in Liaoxi until 407. The Later Yan kings kept fighting against King Kwang-gae-to of Koguryeo (during 400-6). Peace was restored after the downfall of the Murong rulers in 407 by a coup d’état staged by Ko Un, who was enthroned as Emperor in November 407. According to the Jinshu, Ko’s grandfather was of Koguryeo descent. Ko Un (Gao Yun) was murdered by a person named Li Ban in September originated from the Rong-Di (戎狄) and were the enemy of the Qiang-Jie(羌羯).
Yan, the population was carefully examined. The military encampments were brought to an end, and their inhabitants divided among the prefectures and counties. The old registers of the shi clans were given definitive form.49

In 417, the Eastern Jin general Liu Yu came to occupy Chang’an, the capital of Later Qin (後秦 384-417) founded by the Qiang people, but returned south in order to establish his own Liu Song dynasty (劉宋 420-79). Klein (1980: 91-2) states: “the South was not, however, destined to conquer the North for another nine hundred and fifty years, when Zhu Yuanzhang [r.1368-98] drove another set of foreign rulers out of China from his base in the Yangzi River valley.”

Former Yan recorded 2.5 million households and 10 million individuals in 369, and Northern Wei had a registered population of nearly 5 million households and 32 million individuals on the eve of the Six Garrisons revolt. By contrast, the Liu Song dynasty in South China recorded only 0.9 million households containing 4.7 million individuals in 464, and Chen recorded 0.5 million households and 2 million individuals only, because so many people escaped government tax and corvée as the tenants of powerful magnate families. And yet the northern conquest dynasty could not subjugate the émigré dynasties in steamy-damp southern soil that commanded highly mobile water forces on warships armored with ox hides.50

The chaos in East Asia depicted as the Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States was quelled at last by the Tuoba-Xianbei Northern Wei, occupying the whole of North China by 439, and the Koguryeo of Yemaek-Tungus, occupying the central and eastern Manchuria by the early fifth century. Sheltered by the Yangzi River, a series of Han Chinese dynasties (called Jin-Song-Qi-Liang-Chen; 317-420-479-502-557-589) survived in the south until the time of unification by Sui in 589, reminiscent of the East Roman Empire that, centered at the impregnable Constantinople, survived the onslaughts of the Huns and the Germans.

**THE DISTINCTIVE STYLE OF MURONG-XIANBEI ART**

The exhibition “China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 AD,” held in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (October 12, 2004 - January 23, 2005), included a group of bronze and gilt-bronze objects, all from the area of present-day Chaoyang and Beipiao in western Liaoning Province that could be

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49 載記 卷九十 安帝 義熙三年 [407] 冬十一月…是世 高雲馮跋殺慕容熙 趙僭卽帝位 五年 [409] 九月 離班殺高雲 趙將馮跋攻班殺之 趙僭卽王位 僞號燕

晉書 卷一百二十四 列傳第八十一 僞僞 馮跋...慕容 永僭號長子 以跋 父安為將 永為 垂所滅 安東 徙昌黎...

資治通鑑 卷一百九 晉紀三十一 隆安元年 [397] 宝以高雲為建威將軍...

北史 卷九十三 列傳第三十一 僞僞 馮跋...慕容孔德之子也 祖父和 高句麗之支屬也 燕王 破高句麗 [342] 後於青州 由是 世為燕臣

When Murong Huang destroyed Koguryeo in 342, Ko Un’s grandfather (高和) came to serve the Murongs.

資治通鑑 卷一百十四 晉紀三十六 义熙四年 [408] 高句麗遣使 使北燕且獻宗族 北燕王雲 遣…報之

409. Ko’s general, the Han Chinese Feng Ba, killed Li Ban and established Northern Yan (409-36), proclaiming himself the King of Yan.49

49 The exhibition “China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 AD,” held in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (October 12, 2004 - January 23, 2005), included a group of bronze and gilt-bronze objects, all from the area of present-day Chaoyang and Beipiao in western Liaoning Province that could be
identified as specific to the Murong Xianbei. The openwork pattern on a pair of saddle plates excavated at Chaoyang (composed of hexagons surrounding animals and birds) is believed to be unique to the Murong Xianbei. Watt (2004: XIX) states that “the typical design on Murong Xianbei artifacts would later be seen in the arts of the Northern Wei in China and the Silla kingdom in Korea.”

4. The “East-to-West” Movements in the Western World

THE ERA OF VÖLKERWANDERUNGEN (c.323-374-453 CE)

We now examine the “east-to-west movements” after Christ in the western world. Hubert (1934: II-11) declares that “these queer-looking [Celtic] barbarians, coming from so far, were to the Italy of the fourth century before Christ what the Scourge of God [the Huns] was to the Gaul of the fifth century after Christ, an unavoidable, irresistible, God-sent calamity.” Grousset (1970: 73) states: “For what reason did the historic Huns—the descendants of the western Xiongnu—leave the steppes north of the Aral Sea and enter Europe? We do not know.”

The Han Chinese dynasties of Qin-Han-Jin (221 BCE-316 CE) prospered through most of the Little Ice Age (c.400 BCE-300 CE) in warm mainland China, accommodating the nomadic incursions in one way or the other. Being located at the center of the warm Mediterranean region, the Roman Empire also flourished during most of the Little Ice Age, containing the barbarous Germans. The advent of global warming coupled with droughts in the fourth century CE, however, began to activate all sorts of barbarians in the east as well as in the west. The drying up of pastures in central Asia had forced nomads and unsettled peoples to migrate east and west. This drought period coincided with the beginning of the Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States in mainland China (304-439). It also coincided with the triggering of a chain reaction in central Asia that resulted in the invasion of Europe by the Huns, in 374, and the ensuing great Germanic folk-movements. The whole of Europe was ravaged by the wild Huns in continuous pursuit of runaway Germanic tribes. With Attila’s death in 453, most of the Huns themselves withdrew back toward the Russian steppe, but the once-dislocated

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[436] 弘..入于高麗..弘子朗..朗子熙 北史 巻八十 列傳 第六十八 外戚 馮熙...祖弘 北燕王...熙父朗內徙...熙生於長安...妹為文成帝
[452-65] 后
51 The pattern was adopted not only by the Silla, but also by the Kaya in the Korean Peninsula, and later by the Yamato people in the Japanese Islands. The Koreans are very familiar with these sorts of patterns and designs, and are rather amazed by their discovery in the Xianbei sites.

52 According to Grousset (1970: 67-72), a Mongol tribe called Yetai, initially Rouran’s vassal, came down from the Altai region to present-day Turkestan. By c.440, they came to occupy Sogdiana, Transoxania, Bactria and eastern Iran. In the early sixth century, the Yetai rulers “entrenched themselves on both sides of the Hindu Kush, in Bactria and Kabul,” replacing the last Kushan rulers. They laid ruin the Greco-Buddhic civilization of Gandhara, and played “Attila of India” from their Punjab base camp between 502-30, but
then somehow “vanished from history.”
A band of “Mongol stock” called Avars reached Europe (ibid: 171-2) and, acting as confederates of the Byzantine Empire between 557-65, destroyed the Hunnic kingdoms founded by the descendants of Attila’s people. They occupied Hungary, possibly introducing “the use of the stirrup into the West (ibid: 176),” and “reigned from the Volga to Austria (ibid: 173)” until subjugated by Charlemagne in 805. The Avar khagan was “baptized with the name of Theodore (ibid: 175).” Beckwith (2009: 113-6) identifies the Rourans (whose empire on the Mongolian steppe collapsed in 552) with the Avars.


54 At the First Council of Nicaea held in 325, Constantine declared that Jesus was “of one substance” with God. Constantine and his successors funded meetings of Christian leaders to define the religion’s doctrines. See Grant (1993: 173) and Heather (2006: 441).

55 Cary and Scullard (1979: 550) state that the “temporary reunion under Constantius II (r.337-81) and Julian (r.362-3), and again under Theodosius I (r.379-95), merely emphasized the difficulty of holding it together.”

56 See Heather (2006: 456-7). Davies (1996: 222-4) classifies the Germanic peoples into three groups. The Scandinavian (Viking) group gave rise to the later Danish, Norwegian, Germanic barbarians remained to become the new rulers of Western Europe à la the Tuoba-Xianbei rulers in North China.52

CONSTANTINE MAKES BYZANTIUM THE CAPITAL OF ROMAN EMPIRE

Emporer Diocletian (r.284-305) had established the short-lived Tetrarchy, dividing the control of the Roman empire between two Augusti and two Caesars, in order to meet, according to Grant (1993: 17), “the increasing, simultaneous pressure on the frontiers from the Germans in the north and the Persians in the east” by providing “every potential trouble-spot…a commander with imperial authority within a few days’ riding.” The Tetrarchic division was not only “expedient for dealing with the military emergencies of the day (ibid: 19)” but was also “a safeguard against internal usurpers (ibid: 17)” characteristic of the latter half of the third century.

In the eastern world, the Xiongnu Zhao states (304-52) occupied North China, commencing the so-called Era of Five Barbarians and Sixteen States, and beginning in 317, the Chinese managed to establish a series of émigré regimes in the south.

In 306, the Roman troops in Britain hailed Constantine (r.306-37) as Augustus. In 312, Constantine struck across the Alps into Italy and killed Maxentius (r.306-12), son of Maximian (r.286-305), at the Tiber River. Licinius (r.308-24), who had ruled over the entire eastern part of the Roman world from Illyricum to the Euphrates, was able to throw the invading Visigoths back across the Danube in 323, but he was defeated and executed by Constantine.53 The first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine the Great, established new forts along the Rhine and Danube that stabilized the frontier for a time, and founded a new city on the site of Byzantium, making it the official capital of the Roman Empire in 331.54 After the death of Constantine, a series of civil wars between his sons and other claimants kept the Roman Empire in a more or less permanent state of division. In 364, the brother generals Valentinian I (r.364-75) and Valens (r.364-78) partitioned the Empire as did the two sons of Theodosius, Honorius (r.395-423) and Arcadius (r.395-408), in 395. Legally, however, they might be regarded as “joint rulers of an undivided realm.” 55

It was around this time that the drying up of pastures in central Asia seems to have triggered a chain reaction that in due
course resulted in the invasion of Europe by the Huns and the ensuing Germanic folk-movements.

Until the first century CE, the German tribal societies had been fragmented and disorganized. The Roman legions could indulge in punitive campaigns, destroying everything and everyone that did not submit to them. By the beginning of the fourth century, Germanic tribes were stretched along the whole length of the Roman frontier, from the Rhine to the Black Sea. Powerful coalitions began to emerge that pushed the Germanic agriculturalist society towards greater social differentiation, larger power blocks, and greater cohesion, and enabled more organized predatory warfare across the Roman frontier. The Roman strategy, according to Heather (2006: 458), just like the strategy of Han Chinese rulers, was “to alight on a leader who was willing to help keep the peace, then seek to promote his hold over his subjects by targeted foreign aid, combined, very often, with trading privileges. Annual gifts were a feature of Roman foreign policy from the early centuries AD.”

Local German chiefs, Grant (1993: 55) notes, “competitively desired access to Roman goods, and to the capacity for doling out prestigious largesse which these goods afforded them … engaging in petty border raids … in order to gain or seize this type of benefit.” Just like the Han Chinese emperors, Constantine was handing over huge subsidies in gold and favorable trade, so-called “gift payments,” in order to keep the barbarians quiet.57

The Visigoth tribes came to gravitate towards a single leader, and organized incursions into the Roman Empire in 315 and 322. According to Grant (1993: 56), the cavalry of Visigoths “rose rapidly in strength, borrowing its methods from the nomad lance riders [the Sarmatians] of their neighbors in the eastern interior.” To protect the agriculturalists in frontier areas, Constantine drove the Visigoths away from the Danube in 328, and hence they had to settle in Transylvania. Constantine, however, imported a large number of Visigoths and other barbarians to farm the deserted lands and to provide recruits for the depleted frontier garrisons. The Goths “became settled,” were “partly Romanized,” and “assimilated Roman military techniques,” Grant (ibid: 55, 71) declares, “largely due to the initiative of Constantine, and so, therefore, was the subsequent transformation

57 Edward Gibbon (1737-94) notes that “A regular payment of money and silk was stipulated as the condition of a temporary and precious peace; and the wretched expedient of disguising a real tribute under the names of a gift or subsidy was practiced by the emperors of China as well as by those of Rome.”

58 Hence many historians ask whether Constantine was “the last Roman or the first Byzantine [East Roman] emperor,” implying that he was, as the founder of a new empire, “responsible for the downfall of the [West] Roman Empire” in the hands of the Germans (ibid: 224). The enlisted and disciplined Roman soldiers had been rapidly replaced by German mercenaries. The military men “who stood nearest to” Constantine were almost all the
Germans: “The two top military officers, who were now so often Germans, held the posts, from the early 320s, of Masters of Cavalry and Infantry (ibid: 69). … A very large proportion of the … Roman army was likewise German auxiliaries [led by their own tribal chieftains]. The Germans were admitted … both as top generals and as rank-and-file soldiers, especially into the mobile striking force (comitatenses), on an unprecedented scale (ibid: 72).”

A Xiongnu tribe was driven out of the Mongolian steppe by a rival tribe in 44 BCE and had to emigrate to the Balkhash-Aral region. Grousset (1970: 55) believes that this Xiongnu tribe of the west became the adversaries of the Roman world under the name of Huns.

In 48 CE, a civil war broke out and the Maodun's Xiongnu Confederation disintegrated. In 89-93 CE, the allied forces of Han Chinese, Southern Xiongnu, and Xianbei crushed the Northern Xiongnu, making a large number of them flee to the west. Many scholars believe that the Huns were the descendants of these Northern Xiongnu people. According to Beckwith (2009: 94), the Huns had settled themselves in an area northeast of the Sea of Azov c.200 CE, and around 370 they entered the Pontic Steppe proper under their leader, Balamber.

In 374, the Huns crossed the lower Volga, driving out the Alans across the Don, and then the Ostrogoths to the west of the Dniester by 375. This chain of events led to the Visigoths from the lower Dniester region appearing on the northern bank of the Danube in the summer of 376, culminating in the fall of the West Roman Empire exactly 100 years later in 476.

In the eastern world, Tuoba Gui declared himself king of Wei in 386 at the northernmost Shengle, just inside the Great Wall, culminating in the unification of North China by 439.

The Visigoths who arrived on the Danube, requesting asylum inside the Roman Empire, were likely able to put about 20,000 fighting men into the field. The Visigoths were allowed to cross the Danube into the East Roman Empire. Heather (2006: 445-6) states: “Around 110,000-120,000 armed outsiders played some part in bringing down the western Empire” that maintained a 300,000-600,000-man army as of 376.

The whole of Europe was ravaged by the Alans and Goths escaping from the Huns, who were rapidly spreading from
the Volga to the Danube. The portrait of the Xiongnu, or the Huns, left both by the Chinese annalists and Roman chroniclers sounds all identical: “flattened noses, high cheekbones, below average height when afoot, and yet mounted those stocky savages seem riveted to their ugly little horses, discharging their murderous arrows.” 61 The sixth century historian Jordanes also recounted the appearance of Attila (in *Getica*, translating into Latin what Priscus had seen in person and said in Greek): “He was short, with a broad chest and large head; his eyes were small, his beard sparse and flecked with grey, his nose flat and his complexion dark.” 62

The Scythians were lightly equipped horse archers with a composite bow measuring some 80 cm in length. The Sarmatians, who replaced the Scythians in the first century as the dominant power north of the Black Sea, specialized in heavily armored cavalry using lance and long saber, and operated in a compact mass. The Huns were highly maneuverable horse archers, but were equipped with an asymmetric composite bow measuring some 130 cm in length and able to penetrate Sarmatian armor while keeping the archer at a safe distance. The Huns waited until their opponents broke formation to finish them off with the saber. 63

While the Murong-Xianbei, who had conquered North China by 352, were apparently equipped with stirrups, according to Heather (2006: 157), “the Huns did not [yet] have stirrups, but used heavy wooden saddles which allowed the rider to grip with the leg muscles and thus create a firm firing platform.”

We have no information about the pre-374 activities of the Huns in the further east. Furthermore, a great deal of history about the German movements for the post-Constantine period (337-75 CE) seems to have been lost, or has not been recorded at all. The Vandal coalition that conquered Carthage in 439 was a new political entity encompassing Alans, Hasdings, Silingis, and Suevi. The Franks started to feature as a significant force only from the mid-460s. Heather (2006: 451) states: “All of the major successor states to the west Roman Empire were created around the military power of new barbarian super-groups, generated on the march.”

**WEST ROMAN EMPIRE SUCCUMBS TO THE GERMS**

Immediately after crossing the Danube in 376, the Visigoths rebelled, and the East Roman Emperor Valens (r.364-
The connivance of the East-Roman emperor Arcadius) left their new homes in the Balkans in search of better land. The Roman legions began to evacuate Britain in 383. The Vandals, Alans, and Suevi invaded Spain in 409.

66 See Beckwith (2009: 95-8).

67 Heather (2006: 449) notes that "in the Carolingian Empire, the army consisted of local landowners leading armed contingents of their own retainers." In the Later Han and Western Jin dynasties, the local landed magnates also commanded armed forces of their own retainers.

Under the Roman Empire, "a relatively simple political deal...bound together Roman center and [conquered] locality. In return for tax payments, the machinery of the state, military and legal, protected a relatively small landowning class from outside enemies and internal ones (ibid: 448)." Local landowners were civilians. See also Cary and Scullard (1979: 550, 557).

By 420, the Vandals devastated Gaul and Spain before conquering North Africa, the breadbasket of the West Roman Empire, in 439, the year the Tuoba-Xianbei conquered the whole of North China in the eastern world. In 449, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes began the "conquest" of Britain (or simply "massive migrations" into England), defeating the Celtic Britons at Crayford in 457. Attila herself crossed the Alps and invaded Italy. With Attila's death in 453, however, most of the Huns began to withdraw back toward the Black Sea region of the Russian steppe, and by c.470 the Huns disappeared from the European stage. In 476, the last West Roman emperor (Romulus Augustulus r.475-6) was deposed by a Sciri German general, Odovacar (r.476-93), who declared himself king of Italy but was killed in 493 by Theoderic of the Ostrogoths (r.474-526), who conquered Italy in 489-93. Theodoric established an Ostrogothic kingdom that included Italy, Sicily, and Dalmatia.

The East Roman Empire, to be called a Hellenistic Byzantine Empire, passed through a critical period after 378, when the emperor Valens was killed in a battle against the Goths. The Eastern Empire survived the collapse of its western counterpart in 476. Cary and Scullard (1979: 556-7) state: "it preserved Roman institutions for two further centuries, and retained the use of Latin in its courts... [It is by] the seventh and
eighth centuries … Greek ousted Latin as the official tongue.”

The eighth century saw the rise of Carolingian Franks (751-843-987), and with the ninth century came the Northmen, Magyars, the Viking’s siege of Paris, and the division of Charlemagne’s (r.768-814) empire. Surprisingly, the line of East Roman emperors, presumably the lineal descendants of Augustus, went unbroken until the capture of Constantinople by Muhammed II in 1453, thanks to the impregnable of its heavily fortified walls, defensible both by land and by sea, and industrial resources and reserves of military man-power that Asia Minor provided.

In mainland China, the Tuoba-Xianbei of Western Manchurian provenance conquered and ruled North China. The southern Han Chinese émigré dynasties below the impregnable Yangzi River could maintain, even precariously (either with conquest dynasties in the north or being unified by the Sui-Tang dynasties), the ancient Qin-Han cultural traditions ever after 317, until subjugated by the Mongols in 1279.

The rulers of the émigré dynasties below the Yangzi River firmly believed that they were the true heirs of Han Chinese civilization, maintaining the irredentist dream quite a long while. The rulers of the Byzantine Empire also believed that they were the true heirs of Roman civilization. The East Roman Justinianus emperors (518-610) tried their best to regain the Italic Peninsula from the Germanic barbarians.

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69 The Tuoba Wei rulers recruited the provincial officials from the Chinese landed gentry. The ambitious Han Chinese tried to learn the Xianbei language to become high officials in the Tuoba court. Under the Roman Empire, Heather (2006: 440-1) states, the “conquered [provincial] elites [tried to join] the imperial bureaucracy, which became the new path to local dominance. …The literary education… of… elites –Latin in the west, Greek in the east-- was not cheaply bought. It required… a decade’s intensive instruction with the grammarian, and only the landowning class could afford to invest so much in their children’s education. … It was… necessary for most forms of advancement. The vast majority of the state’s new bureaucrats came from the old town-council… classes” of the conquered provinces. In the post-Roman German kingdoms, however, “military service for one’s king, rather than a foot on the bureaucratic ladder” became “the main path to advancement,” and hence they did not bother “any more with a full Latin education.”